A comparison of American and Canadian foreign policies: the significance of identities, values, and perceptions on policy toward Cuba.

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A COMPARISON OF AMERICAN AND CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICIES: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF IDENTITIES, VALUES AND PERCEPTIONS ON POLICY TOWARD CUBA

A Dissertation Presented

by

LANA L. WYLIE

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Political Science
A COMPARISON OF AMERICAN AND CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICIES: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF IDENTITIES, VALUES AND PERCEPTIONS ON POLICY TOWARD CUBA

A Dissertation Presented

by

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To the wonderful Chloe Isobel Hewitt
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ABSTRACT

A COMPARISON OF AMERICAN AND CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICIES: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF IDENTITIES, VALUES AND PERCEPTIONS ON POLICY TOWARD CUBA

SEPTEMBER 1, 2003

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Long-time friends, Americans and Canadians share many world-views and values. Yet, important differences exist. This study examines one foreign policy where these differences are striking. The United States and Canada have had very different policies toward Cuba, especially since Fidel Castro assumed power in 1959. Canada’s policy of constructive engagement stands in marked contrast to the isolationist solution adopted by the American government. Much of the current literature offers traditional economic or domestic interest group explanations for the two policies. This study challenges these conventional narratives.

By examining each country’s policy toward Cuba in tandem this study demonstrates that there is far more than domestic political or economic calculations involved in the formulation of these foreign policies. Adopting a constructivist approach, this study will show that differences exist over Cuba because the two countries are different in other ways- they have their own identities, values and perceptions that contribute to the formation of very distinct approaches toward this island regime.

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Canadians and Americans perceive Cuba through different lenses. The American identity as an exceptional country and their corresponding view of Cuba as inferior as well as the perception that Cuba is within the American sphere of influence has affected the relationship between the United States and Cuba since the days of the Monroe Doctrine. The American identity as the guardian of freedom and democracy helped to construct American policy. After 1959, Cuba was seen to be an anathema to everything the United States represented. In contrast, the Canadian identity as “not American” and the need to assert this in foreign policy, as well as their identity as a good international citizen with its emphasis on values such as dialogue and compromise have greatly influenced the Canadian perception of Cuba.

In sum, the examination of identity and its related values, perceptions, and norms offers an alternative way of making sense of US-Cuban and Canadian-Cuban relations. These two case studies reveal how these variables influence foreign policy and enable us to better understand Canadian and American foreign policy as well as international relations.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Long-time friends, Americans and Canadians share many world-views and values. Yet, important differences exist. Even before the world stood on the brink of nuclear war over Cuba in 1962, the United States and Canada had very different policies toward Fidel Castro’s regime. These same differences persist in the twenty-first century and have, at times, caused considerable tension between the countries on either side of the 49th parallel. The American isolationist approach is in many ways antithetical to Canada’s policy of constructive engagement. Much of the current literature offers traditional economic or domestic interest group explanations for the two policies. This study questions these conventional narratives. It hypothesizes that ideational variables have compelling explanatory power.

This study demonstrates how each explanation is incomplete without an examination of the normative and cultural influences over these policies. Canadians and Americans perceive Cuba through different lenses. The United States has long thought of itself as an exceptional nation. The perception of other countries as inferior and the belief that Cuba is within the American sphere of influence has affected the relationship between the United States and Cuba since the days of the Monroe Doctrine. Furthermore, after 1959, Cuba was seen to be an anathema to everything the United States represented, especially to the American identity as the guardian of freedom and democracy. Thus, relations between the two countries have been tense and, at times, hostile. The end of the
Cold War did not have the expected moderating effect on U.S. policy toward Cuba and in fact, American policy has become, in many ways, more hardline since the early 1990s.

In contrast, Canada has pursued a policy of engagement with the regime. At times, Canada has been referred to as Cuba’s closest friend in the West. Connections between the two countries are wide ranging. Ottawa has often encouraged greater economic, cultural and diplomatic ties to the regime. The Canadian identity as “not American” and the need to assert this in foreign policy has influenced Canadian policy toward Cuba. Likewise, the Canadian self-perception as a good international citizen and their identity as a peacekeeper have shaped the Canadian policy toward the island.

By examining each country’s policy toward Cuba in tandem this study will demonstrate that there is far more than domestic political, security, or economic calculations involved in the formulation of these foreign policies. Prior to the ascent of the Cuban American community the most popular explanation put forth for U.S. policy was a security based argument. It asserted that the policy of isolation was a reflection of the threat posed by the Castro regime. After the consolidation of the Cuban American community, a domestic interest group explanation became the most popular narrative. It argues that the American policy is a direct result of the power of the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF). This theory asserts the electoral clout of the Cuban American community in Florida and New Jersey practically guarantees that they can dictate policy toward Cuba.

The most popular explanation for the Canadian policy of engagement is the national economic interest argument. It maintains that Canada has engaged with Cuba for economic reasons. Canadian scholars argue that the opportunity for Canadians to invest
in Cuba, free of American competition, drives Canadian engagement.¹ This study problematizes these explanations and demonstrates that the policies are distinct because the two countries are different in other ways- they have their own identities, values, and perceptions that contribute to the formation of very distinct approaches toward this island regime.

Lastly, this study highlights how evolving values and identities are continuing to affect each country’s relationship with Cuba. Both Canadian and American policies toward Cuba are changing. Each approach reflects new perceptions of the island nation that began to emerge in the late 1990s and are slowly gaining strength. Ironically, the two strategies became more similar as both sets of perceptions about the island and Castro evolve.

In summary, this study demonstrates that the traditional narratives of both policies have ignored ideational and cultural factors. It offers an alternative view of both policies, one that reveals the importance of perceptions, culture, norms, ideas and identities.

The Outline of the Study

The following chapters will examine Canadian and American policies toward Cuba in detail, highlighting the socially constructed elements. The next two chapters set the stage for the rest of the study. Chapter Two briefly traces Cuban history and Chapter Three reviews the history of Canadian and American relationships with Cuba. Chapter Four explores the connection between identity, values, and culture and American foreign

¹ See tables in chapter 3 for more information on Canadian trade and investment in Cuba.
policy. Chapter Five analyzes the U.S. approach toward the island, demonstrating the relevance of ideational factors and the failings of other paradigms to offer complete explanations. Chapter Six similarly ties identities, values, and perceptions to Canadian foreign policy. Chapter Seven examines the Canadian approach toward Cuba, revealing that the Canadian identity, norms, and ideas have greater explanatory power in this case than the traditional accounts. Chapter Eight directly compares the Canadian and American reactions to first, the Brothers to the Rescue shoot-down and, second, to the possibility that Castro's regime supports terrorism. Chapter Nine reviews recent developments in the bilateral relationships and looks at where U.S.-Cuban and Canadian-Cuban relations are likely to head in the next decade. However, first, this chapter will examine the treatment of these ideational variables by International Relations, Comparative Politics and Foreign Policy Analysis scholars.

The Study of International Relations and Comparative Politics

In the 1980s and early 1990s, both the fields of International Relations (IR) and Comparative Politics eschewed studies based on "soft" explanations like ideas and culture. IR was dominated by varieties of Realism, an approach that dealt in hard power calculations and notions of balance between powers. By that time, Comparative Politics had dismissed most of the early political culture studies as ethnocentric. The field of

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2 However, it is necessary to note that European scholars of international relations did not abandon these factors. The rise of realism and behavioral methods in the study of IR was never as popular in Europe. Thus, when we speak of the "return" of the study of culture and identity we are speaking of primarily a change in American scholarship.
Comparative Foreign Policy was focused on behavioral studies that only touched on cultural or ideational factors in a cursory manner.

Yet, the end of the Cold War and the failure of Realism and other models to explain the seemingly sudden change in Soviet domestic and foreign policy, and the rapid reconfiguration of global politics that followed, forced scholars to take another look at the earlier "soft" explanations. They found that cultural and ideational factors could help them understand the demise of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. Richard Ned Lebow and Thomas Risse-Kappen’s edited volume, *International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War* examines the failure of International Relations theory to explain the end of the cold war. Many of the authors in this volume reveal that ideational factors had a central role in the formulation of foreign policy and were crucial factors in the transformation of the international system in the early 1990s.

Furthermore, the questions that had dominated the study of world politics for decades: superpower rivalry, and the arms race and bipolarity became, almost overnight, the relics of an earlier era. Instead, the oft-considered secondary, or even irrelevant, issues of international relations drew increasing scholarly attention. The increase in ethnic tensions, questions of nationality, and the spread of democratic values that were the byproducts of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the breakup of the Warsaw pact alliance, came to the forefront of political science. Culture and identity variables were at the heart of these now important issues. Political cultural studies enjoyed a "renaissance."

Realizing the relevance of these variables, a greater number of political scientists began to apply norms, beliefs, identity, and cultural factors to other research questions. As the 1990s drew to a close, these variables were being increasingly used both in conjunction with traditional explanations or to provide alternative hypotheses for a wide-variety of international behavior. The next sections examine the treatment of these variables in greater detail.

International Relations (IR)

Culture and other ideational variables have been studied by a number of International Relations scholars over the years. For example, during the 1950s and 1960s, Karl Deutsch, Ernst Haas, and other functionalists discussed the role of values and culture in the integration of Europe. Deutsch argued that contact between peoples (trade, communication etc.) produced similar values in the two societies. This created trust which in turn, produced increased cooperation, economic integration and eventually political integration. Though not focusing on ideational variables like culture or identity, the neoliberal and regime literature that rose to challenge neorealism in the 1970s and 1980s, also addressed some of these factors. In fact, Jennifer Sterling-Folker argues that neofunctionalism, neoliberalism and constructivism have far more in common than most

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scholars acknowledge.\textsuperscript{5} She argues all three come to many of the same conclusions and "rely on the same functional-institutional logic to explain social change."\textsuperscript{6} 

Though these are excellent research programs, the main goal of neofunctionalism and neoliberalism was not to integrate these variables into the study of International Relations. They often treated these variables as secondary. Thus, IR scholars interested in these variables often had to turn to other disciplines. Anthropology, sociology, and psychology, as well as comparative politics, all produced works that integrated these variables. For example, many International Relations theorists drew from Clifford Geertz’s 1973 work in anthropology.\textsuperscript{7} International Relations scholars would often turn to these works to supplement their cultural discussions.

However, IR scholars no longer rely on other disciplines for information about ideational variables. There is now a rich literature in International Relations itself. In the past two decades, cultural studies have been embraced by a new scholarly tradition in International Relations. Known as constructivists, or sometimes as reflectivists, they posit that culture and identity are integral to a complete understanding of the dynamics of international relations. Unlike most other IR theories (such as neorealism or neoliberalism) constructivists do not treat the identity and interests of international actors as given. Constructivism problematizes the identities and interests of actors, revealing


\textsuperscript{6} Ibid.

that they are socially constructed. These scholars emphasize that our perceptions, beliefs, assumptions, ideas, actions and interactions create the world we live in.

Constructivists claim to occupy the ground between rational choice and postmodern theories of International Relations. Rational choice scholars argue that norms and ideas, at the most, limit the choices of rationally behaving states. Neorealism, the reigning IR theory, and one that treats states as rational actors, marginalizes norms, arguing that, if anything, norms merely reflect existing power structures. In contrast, constructivists assert that variables like norms, culture, ideas and beliefs can fundamentally change the interests of states. Constructivists maintain that social structures mold the identity and interests of actors who, in turn, create social structures through their interactions and beliefs. It is a mutually constituting process. This goes significantly beyond even the neoliberal and regime literature that contend that norms are important because they are capable of constraining or facilitating choices of states and thus have a role in explaining the behavior of states. However, unlike their constructivist cousins, neoliberal theorists do not believe that norms can affect the very identity or interests of states.

Constructivism shares a number of significant similarities with postmodern or critical theory. As Richard Price and Christian Reus-Smit maintain, like postmodern scholarship: “constructivism problemizes both agents and structures, it explores the dynamics of change as well as the rhythms of stasis, and it calls into question established understandings of world politics, it is analytically open not closed.”

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However, there are important differences. Critical theory draws on the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche and on the more recent work of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida whereas, constructivism finds its roots in Max Weber and Emile Durkheim. Unlike postmodern scholars, most constructivists do not reject the scientific study of political interactions. Postmodern writings reject social science and positivist research as suspect and question the possibility of being able to truly “know” anything. There are no truths in postmodern research. In contrast, most constructivists (for example Alexander Wendt and John Gerard Ruggie) believe that there is an objective reality. However dependent it might be on social construction, it does exist and it can be understood.

The Rise of Constructivism

The intellectual roots of constructivist thought have been traced to Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, and other sociologists. Ruggie argues that social constructivists owe a debt to Emile Durkheim for his elucidation of social facts (“linguistic practices, religious beliefs, moral norms, and similar ideational factors”) and their influence on social behavior. Ruggie explains that Max Weber took this exercise further by exploring “actual processes whereby certain ideas had become social forces.”

In 1989 Nicholas Onuf gave rise to the term constructivist in political science. In World of Our Making Onuf argued that people use language to understand the world and also use it to bring their influence to bear on the world itself. Language is used as a tool to influence how others understand the world. Onuf states “Fundamental to

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constructivism is the proposition that human beings are social beings, and we would not be human but for our social relations. In other words, social relations make or construct people...Conversely, we make the world what it is... [and] talking is undoubtedly the most important way that we go about making the world what it is.”

In World of Our Making Onuf was building on the recent work of other scholars such as Friedrich Kratochwil and John Ruggie, who in 1986, stressed the necessity of “[o]pening up the positivist epistemology to more interpretive strains.” The work of Alexander Wendt, who brought attention to the agent-structure question in 1987, and John Ruggie who, in 1989, criticized IR for its inability to account for historical transformations were also important precursors to constructivism in International Relations. Similarly, in 1988, Robert Keohane argued for the creation of a “reflective” research program in IR. These, and many other, works in International Relations in the mid to late 1980s formed the basis of what would soon become widely understood as constructivist thought.

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However, Wendt’s 1992 article “Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics”\(^{14}\) has become the seminal work in constructivism. Wendt uses the concept of anarchy to show that many things that are taken as given are actually created by our ideas, perceptions, norms, culture and interactions. Wendt argues “that people act toward objects, including other actors, on the basis of the meanings that objects have for them.”\(^{15}\) For example, he explains that “if a society ‘forgets’ what a university is, the powers and practices of professor and student cease to exist... It is collective meanings that constitute the structures which organize our actions.”\(^{16}\) He asserts that just as people have identities (like daughter, wife, nurse) so do states (like superpower, leader of the western alliance, peacekeeper). Identities are defined as “relatively stable, role-specific understandings and expectations about self.”\(^{17}\) How others relate to those people (or states) and how those people or states act is often based on those identities. “Identities are the basis of interests.”\(^{18}\) Interests will differ based on “who you are.” It is in the interests of a professor to conduct research, publish and teach so that they can obtain tenure. In contrast, it is in the interests of a student to learn and achieve good grades so they can graduate. Similarly, it is in the interests of a state who


\(^{15}\) Ibid, 396.

\(^{16}\) Ibid, 397.

\(^{17}\) Ibid, 398.

\(^{18}\) Ibid, 398.
identifies itself as a “champion of democracy” to promote the development of free and fair elections amongst its neighbors. Another democratic country that did not see itself as the “champion of democracy” would be less insistent that its neighbors conduct their elections in certain ways and consequently have a different relationship with those neighbors.

Contrary to neorealism, Wendt argues that the structure of the system (anarchy) does not produce the identity and interests of the actors, but, instead that the states themselves (i.e. their interests and identities) have created the structure of the system which in turn influences those very interests and identities. He explains that anarchy as we know it is a creation of the social context. States act like they are in an self-help environment – they believe that other states are threatening and as a consequence engage in activities (building up their own armaments etc.) that appear threatening to others. Other states in turn do the same in response, which creates a security dilemma- and thereby creates anarchy. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. “Self-help security systems evolve from cycles of interaction in which each party acts in ways that the other feels are threatening to the self, creating expectations that the other is not to be trusted.”19 In other words, we make our own reality – in this case an anarchic self-help international system.

Since Wendt and Onuf helped to clarify the constructivist methodology a number of other IR scholars have tried to further test or implement this approach. By now, constructivist writings have ably demonstrated that norms have constitutive effects. For

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19 Ibid, 406.
example, Martha Finnemore in *National Interests in International Society* examines the influence of cultural norms on the development of institutions in developing countries. Finnemore reveals how certain international norms are spread via international organizations. She shows that states have adopted or changed their policies because of the successful diffusion of an international norm. For example, Finnemore demonstrates that a number of states adopted similar science bureaucracies at the same time because of an international norm promoted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).\(^{20}\) Similarly, Peter Katzenstien’s edited volume on national security, *The Culture of National Security*, addresses the role of norms in the construction of state interests. The chapter by Thomas Risse-Kappen demonstrates that norms influenced the formation and persistence of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In another interesting chapter in that volume, Richard Price and Nina Tannenwald examine the impact of norms about the use of biological, nuclear, and chemical weapons on state actions. They demonstrate that norms of “civilization” and self-identification as a “civilized” country prevent the spread and use of these types of weapons.\(^{21}\)

The late 1980s and 1990s also saw an increase in studies that addressed the role of ideas in international political economy and foreign policy. These studies drew on both


the international relations and comparative politics fields. Judith Goldstein’s two articles published in *International Organization* in 1988 and 1989 explored the effect of ideas on trade policy. A few years later Goldstein and Keohane’s edited volume, *Ideas and Foreign Policy* identified three types of beliefs (world-views, normative beliefs and causal beliefs) and explained the three ways they can influence foreign policy (as road maps, focal points and through institutionalization).

Goldstein and Keohane, as well as many other scholars who study the influence of ideas on policy, acknowledge a debt to Peter Haas’ work on epistemic communities. The Special Issue of *International Organization (IO)* published in Winter 1992 explored “the channels through which new ideas circulate from societies to governments as well as from country to country.” These epistemic communities are "a network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area" The members of

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an epistemic community share a set of normative and principled beliefs, causal beliefs, notions of validity, and have a common policy enterprise. The work on epistemic communities highlights an important pathway between ideas and norms and policy.

Other articles and books primarily examine the role of state identity in the formulation of state interests. The end of the Cold War has been traced to changes in Soviet self-identification and, thus, interests. Michael Barnett argues that the pan-Arab identity of countries such as Iraq, Saudia Arabia, Syria, and Egypt influenced many aspects of their foreign policies. He also maintains that the U.S.-Israeli relationship is based on shared identity.26

Barnett and many of the contributors to the Katzenstein volume tie state identity to domestic characteristics. However, the majority of the constructivist IR scholarship focuses on the impact of international norms, rules and ideas on the formulation of state interests and action.27 Wendt’s seminal article has been criticized for treating the state as a unitary actor and ignoring the role of domestic level factors. He emphasizes that identities and interests of states are created via the interaction among states, ignoring the role of domestic variables such as politics and national history.28


27 The interplay between domestic norms and foreign policies have been studied by scholars such as Kier who asserts that military culture in France had a significant influence on foreign policy behavior. However, most of the literature remains focused on international norms.

Most of this literature also ignores why some international norms take hold in some countries and not in others. Jeffery T. Checkel, A. Florini, and Andrew Moravcski have criticized constructivist scholarship on this point.\textsuperscript{29} Checkel states “Lacking a theory of domestic agency, constructivism thus overpredicts international normative influence and cannot explain cross-national variation in the constitutive impact of systemic norms.”\textsuperscript{30}

Thus, the rise of constructivism in International Relations has filled a gap that none of the leading theories or approaches attempted to fill. Constructivism brought a renewed energy to the study of ideas, identities, values, culture, and norms to the field. However, most of constructivist scholarship ignores domestic level variables. In contrast, Comparative Politics has long studied domestic factors. The next subsection will review the contributions made by Comparative Politics scholars to this research program.

**Comparative Politics**

As Paul Kowert and Jeffery Logo assert in *Culture of National Security* if “norms matter to the conduct of international politics- then the origins of norms is a natural subject for further study.”\textsuperscript{31} The origins of ideational factors are more likely to be studied

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\textsuperscript{31} Paul Kowert and Jeffery Logo, “Norms, Identity and Their Limits,” in *The Culture of National Security*. 

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by comparative politics scholars. Indeed at times, this field has explored both the norms, values or identities of particular cultures, societies or states and the origins of those norms in the particular history of the entity in question. However, most of this research is not consciously constructivist. As Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink explain “[w]hen we look for constructivists in comparative politics, we find instead more eclectic scholars who at times make compelling arguments about discourses, language, ideas, culture, or knowledge relevant to specific thematic areas.”32

The most well known subset of this research in Comparative Politics has focused on political culture. Political culture has been defined in a variety of ways but a relatively well-accepted definition is “the general ‘pattern of orientations’ to political objects such as parties, government and the constitution, expressed in beliefs, symbols and values.”33 Gabriel Almond traces the history of the study of political culture to thinkers such as Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, Walter Lippman, and Harold Lasswell, among others.34

Most political culture research is concerned with the relationship among culture and political and economic development. The seminal work in this field was The Civic


Culture, written by Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba in 1963. After analyzing the politics of five countries, they argue that a nation’s political culture influences the social and political behavior in that nation by establishing the norms that are followed in a society. Almond and Verba demonstrated that the cultural characteristics of Anglo-Saxon democracies differed from those of Italy and Germany. They found greater levels of trust and subjective political competence in the United States and Britain and linked those factors to democracy.

After the release of the Civic Culture other scholars adopted similar models to explain the effect of culture on political behavior. Aaron Wildavsky made a contribution to our understanding of this relationship by developing a typology of cultures. Wildavsky borrowed from the work of anthropologist, Mary Douglas, to posit that there are five types of cultures (egalitarian, hierarchical, individualistic, fatalistic, and hermit). Lucian Pye’s examination of culture and politics in Asia demonstrated that cultural differences between the societies resulted in distinct political patterns. Larry Diamond’s edited volume Political Culture and Democracy in Developing Counties presented extensive

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cross-national evidence linking culture and democracy. Lawrence Harrison’s controversial, Underdevelopment is a State of Mind: The Latin American Case argued that the culture in most Latin American countries hampered development.

Working from an understanding of Southern European and Latin American culture and history, Howard J. Wiarda has long maintained that cultural factors have a significant explanatory role. Wiarda asserts that to properly understand Latin America or Southern Europe it is necessary to first understand the historical cultural background and society of the countries in the region. In The Soul of Latin America he argues that the key to understanding Latin America lies in its distinct political culture. Latin American political culture has evolved from a corporatist, Catholic, conservative political theory and tradition. Similarly, Wiarda and Margaret MacLeish Mott’s Catholic Roots and Democratic Flowers examine such ideational features as national identity and Catholic tradition on the political development of Spain and Portugal.

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38 Larry Diamond, ed., Political Culture and Democracy in Developing Countries, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993).

39 Lawrence E. Harrison, Underdevelopment is a State of Mind: The Latin American Case (Cambridge, Center for International Affairs, Harvard University; Lanham MD: University Press of America, 1985).


Furthermore, Wiarda argues that Western scholars often make the mistake of assuming that other societies have Anglo-American worldviews and cultural assumptions. He has also pointed out that the United States’ foreign policy suffers from ethnocentrism, especially in its dealing with developing regions, and more recently, Wiarda and others examined the impact of indigenous traditions in social, economic and political development.43

Seymour Martin Lipset, who compares Canadian and American values and their related behaviors, is another example. Lipset argues, among other things, that Americans are less elitist and law abiding than their northern neighbors and ties the origins of these cultural differences to the American Revolution.44 In another important study, Robert Putnam published the results of a comparative examination of different regions in Italy in which he concluded that good government depended on a political culture of civic engagement.45 Though often criticized, scholars of political culture have provided an important basis for understanding the roots and influence of these normative factors.

Ronald Inglehart’s ongoing empirical research has complemented the work of political cultural studies. During the last thirty years Inglehart has conducted a series of extensive surveys in North America and Europe that traced the influence of generational


change on culture (including political culture) and its effect on the political system. Inglehart describes the rise of postmaterialist values in prosperous societies. His survey data supports the view that more and more people in these countries are caring less about issues related to economic or physical security and more about values like free speech or protecting the environment. In Culture Shift he argued that political culture is integral to both economic and political development.46

Other scholars have discussed the international implications of cultural differences. In 1993, Samuel P. Huntington hypothesized that culture has a greater influence on individuals than other variables including economic or political systems. He argued the cultural differences among civilizations (Western, Islamic, Confucian, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American, and Hindu) will produce inevitable conflict.47

However, the study of political culture has had numerous critics. For example, the civic culture framework came under fire for downplaying the importance of citizen participation in democracies, ignoring the diversity of culture within nations, and for being deterministic (political culture as a cause of democracy, not as a result of democracy) among others.48


48 For example, dependency theory argued that international factors, not political culture, explained the lack of economic development and democracy in developing countries. See Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, Dependency and Development in Latin America (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).
Comparative Politics research has not been limited to studies of political culture. The field has also addressed other ideational variables. Comparative politics research on identities comes the closest to the type of constructivism employed by International Relations theorists. In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Benedict Anderson describes the rise of nationalism. Anderson argues that the rise of creative ways of thinking about time and territory, the development of print capitalism and vernacular languages allowed people to imagine themselves as a community. He maintains that almost all, but the earliest communities, were imagined.49

In summary, Comparative Politics has long studied a number of ideational variables; most notably, political culture and its influence on political development. However, most of these studies have not deeply examined the relationship between these variables and foreign policy, as we do in this study.

**Comparative Foreign Policy**

Just as the general Comparative Politics literature has widely -other than a few notable exceptions50- ignored foreign policy, the scholars that study comparative foreign policy do not emphasize the importance of cultural or constructivist variables.

Comparative foreign policy as a discipline has only become recognized in the last 40 years. In many respects, James Rosenau was the seminal scholar of the field. He


50 Some comparative politics scholars such as Howard Wiarda do address both cultural factors and foreign policy. In *American Foreign Policy: Actors and Processes* he addresses the role of numerous factors in foreign policy, including political culture.
argued that the field of foreign policy that had traditionally utilized the single case study could benefit from the comparative method that was at that time, very popular with scholars studying domestic level politics. However, he explained in order to conduct meaningful comparisons, we need to develop general theories. A starting point, he asserted, was to formulate a pre-theoretical framework that would assess the relative importance of the numerous variables involved in foreign policy behavior. In this 1966 article he provided readers with an example of a pre-theory that organized variables important in explaining foreign policy behavior into five categories and then demonstrated how we could rank the variables in terms of relevance for different types of states.\(^{51}\)

In the 1970s and 1980s the field of comparative foreign policy emphasized the behavioral approach. A number of large-scale, cross national research projects such as the Comparative Research on the Events of Nations (CREON) and the Interstate Behavioral Analysis (IBA) were produced. CREON researchers investigated the influence of a wide scope of variables ranging from leaders' personality characteristics to the international system.\(^{52}\) In these studies, cultural and ideational factors were only touched upon, mainly in discussions of personality types or national attributes, in which “cultural homogeneity”


\(^{52}\) CREON produced many articles and books but the most comprehensive summary of the project is found in Maurice East, Stephen Salmore, and Charles Hermann eds. Why Nations Act (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1978). For information about IBA see Jonathan Wilkenfeld et al., Foreign Policy Behavior: The Interstate Behavioral Analysis Model (Beverly Hills, Sage Publications, 1980).
was one of the many factors discussed along side others, such as territorial size and level of development.  

In the 1980s a subtle shift began to occur in the study of comparative foreign policy. Laura Neack claims that the blurring of the division between the international relations and comparative politics fields had an impact on comparative foreign policy. The field began to rely more on domestic factors studied in comparative politics. More scholars began to look at the relationship between societal factors such as culture, and foreign policy. A good example was Robert Dallek’s *The American Style of Foreign Policy: Cultural Politics and Foreign Affairs*, written in 1983. However, most of these studies focused on political culture, reflecting the blurring of the divisions between these two fields.

By the mid-1990s, the field had undergone a significant transformation, to the extent that today’s scholarship no longer refers to itself as Comparative Foreign Policy, but instead as Foreign Policy Analysis. Some of the main features of the transformed field include a return to the case study method and the utilization of wider body of literature, including comparative politics, international relations, political economy, and psychology.

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53 See East et al., *Why Nations Act*.


55 See Neack, et al., *Foreign Policy Analysis* for a discussion of the transformation of the field.
Though the majority of scholars of foreign policy do not utilize the concepts developed in constructivist research, there has been some attempt to integrate these concepts into the study of foreign policy. One of the most notable efforts was Judith Goldstein and Robert Keohane's edited volume *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions and Political Change.* Goldstein and Keohane and the other contributors argued that people's beliefs helped to explain foreign policy decisions.

The new literature on comparative foreign policy includes a number of studies about the role of constructivist concepts like culture, metaphors and cognitive models and a few others have adopted a self-consciously constructivist approach. For example, Patrick Haney's 1997 article, "Soccer Fields and Submarines in Cuba: The Politics of Problem Definition," argues that crises are, to a large extent, politically and socially constructed. In 1970, the United States discovered that the Soviets were building a submarine base in Cienfuegos, Cuba. Haney uses a constructivist framework to explain the U.S. reaction. He argues that perceptions determined that the issue would be considered a non-crisis. Studies like Haney's are likely to become more numerous since

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56 The bibliography of *Foreign Policy Analysis* does not include any constructivist scholarship. However, the chapter by V Spike Peterson, "The Politics of Identity and Gendered Nationalism," and the chapter by Keith L. Shimko, "Foreign Policy Metaphors: 'Falling Dominos' and Drug 'Wars'" utilize constructivist concepts and ideas (although the Peterson chapter does not address foreign policy).


divisions among the subfields seem to be blurring, reflecting the shared emphasis on these variables.

In summary, though this is changing, the role of domestic level ideas, perceptions, identity and other ideational and cultural variables have been largely neglected by both International Relations and Foreign Policy. In contrast, Comparative Politics has addressed many of these factors, yet many comparativists do not study foreign policy. The constructivist IR approach comes the closest to elucidating the relationship between these variables and foreign policy, but often neglects the constitutive effects of domestic ideational factors on foreign policy and international relations.

Thus, this current study endeavors to combine International Relations, Comparative Foreign Policy and Comparative Politics to account for the dissimilarity in the American and Canadian approaches to Cuba. I argue that domestic level ideational variables are mainly responsible for the widely divergent Canadian and American approaches to Cuba.

Definitions

The key variables that are used to identify ideational influence are defined below:

**Identity** has been defined as “the state of being similar to some actors and different from others in a particular circumstance. Identity involves the creation of boundaries that separate the self and other.”\(^{60}\) Identity can be based on territory, ethnicity, culture or ideas and international actors (like the rest of us) can have multiple and sometimes conflicting

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\(^{60}\) Chafetz et al., viii.
identities. Identity creates norms that tell us who we are and what we should do in a particular situation.

**Ideas** "are defined as mental constructs, views or beliefs political actors have about some aspect of the world around them."\(^{61}\) Shared ideas (or culture) influence identity.

**Culture** "refers to a set of ideas or beliefs that are institutionalized, persist over time and are associated with a particular community. Cultures, in other words, adhere to specific groups by definition and differentiate them from other groups in a system."\(^{62}\) Constructivistically speaking, culture is socially shared ideas. Though it can exist independently, culture is one of the elements of identity.

**Perceptions** are understandings of people, things, or situations. Perceptions are immediately formed but often persist over time. Perceptions both construct identities and are constructed by identities. Perceptions can create and reinforce norms.

**Norms** are often defined as standards of behavior. "In a descriptive sense, a norm refers to a behavioral regularity, that is, the way an actor *usually* behaves, and it often refers to a pattern of behavior developed over an extended period. In a prescriptive sense, a norm refers to the way in which an actor *ought* to behave."\(^{63}\)

\(^{61}\) Ibid.


Interests are “those beliefs that actors actually have about how to meet their identity needs,” and “are the proximate motivation for behavior.”64

A National Level Theory

Though most constructivist theorizing addresses the systemic level, this study employs constructivist concepts to explain foreign policy behavior. This study, though recognizing the importance of force and self-interest in foreign policy formation, emphasize the role of socially shared ideas and perceptions. Constructivists focus, to varying degrees, on ideas, identities, cultures and norms.

Constructivism can help explain how states respond differently to the same international situation or issue. This study will demonstrate that the different responses arise from the different cultures, ideas, perceptions, and identities of the states in question. These differences cause states to view, understand, and interpret situations differently. Wendt explains: “actors need to define the situation before they can choose a course of action.” He asserts that: “these definitions will be based on at least two considerations: Their own identities and interests, which reflect beliefs about who they are in such situations; and what they think others will do, which reflect beliefs about their identities and interests.” Thus, “when these various beliefs are not shared, when there is no cultural definition of the situation, then actors are likely to be surprised by each other’s behavior....”65

64 This is Alexander Wendt’s definition of subjective interests in Social Theory of International Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 232.

65 Wendt, Social Theory, 186.
Much of constructivist theorizing ignores domestic contexts. However, many scholars allude to national level variables. In passing, Wendt allows that states can have competing knowledge. He explains “states know a lot about each other, and important parts of this knowledge are shared – not all, to be sure, but important parts nonetheless. States and scholars alike treat these shared beliefs as the background, taken-for-granted assumptions that any competent player or student of contemporary world politics must understand: what a “state” is, what “sovereignty” implies....”\(^66\) But what happens when knowledge is not shared at the system level? This study looks at Wendt’s “not all” category- when knowledge isn’t shared between states, when states have their own, competing, taken-for-granted assumptions. Wendt refers to this knowledge as “private.” He recognizes that, “[p]rivate knowledge consists of beliefs that individual actors hold that others do not. In the case of states this kind of knowledge will often stem from domestic or ideological considerations. It can be a key determinant of how states frame international situations and define their national interests.”\(^67\) This study departs from the mainstream constructivism of scholars like Wendt by focusing on this “private” knowledge. Competing cultures, ideas and identities are a major source of tension in the international system and thus are important for a complete understanding of international relations.

This study is interested in comparative politics, foreign policy and international relations. The state is the main actor in the international system but to fully understand

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\(^{66}\) Ibid, 158.

\(^{67}\) Ibid, 141.
the "why" of state action it is necessary to open the black box and delve into domestic
level factors. It is not just international culture that constructs a state’s identity and
responding behavior but also domestic level culture, identity and ideas. A state’s ideas
about itself and its environment influence the state’s actions and in turn those actions can
reinforce the state’s identity, culture and ideas; thus creating reality as they understand it.
The constructivist adage that “we want what we want because of how we think about it”68
is just as true for national foreign policy formation as it is for system level processes.
Foreign policy is based on norms and interests that are, in turn constituted by identities
(identities are constructed by a combination of ideas, culture and values) and perceptions.
The following schematic illustrates the connections among the variables:

Figure 1: Pathways

Identity (Includes values/ideas/culture) → Norms/Interests → Actions/Policies

For simplicity, this schematic does not reveal all the causal pathways among the
variables. Each variable, to varying degrees, is able to influence the other variables.
However, the solid lines represent the main lines of causality. The following eight
chapters will demonstrate that the United States and Canada have been continually
puzzled by the other’s approach to Castro’s Cuba because of the identity differences and
the lack of ideational and cultural consensus.

68 Ibid, 119.
Methodology

Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink discuss the methodology used by constructivists. They assert constructivists:

judge an interpretation of evidence by comparing it with alternative explanations. They search for evidence that would confirm alternatives and disconfirm the explanation being assessed. They ask if an explanation is supported by multiple streams of data. For example, they examine whether speech acts are consistent with other kinds of behavior in a case under investigation; whether qualitative findings are supported by or at least consistent with relevant statistical data; and whether actors explain and justify action in similar ways in different settings (e.g. in private versus in public). 

Finnemore and Sikkink list the variety of methods used by constructivists, including:

“discourse analysis, process tracing, genealogy, structured focused comparisons, interviews, participant observation, and content analysis.”

This study will utilize many of these methods including comparisons, process tracing, interviews, and content analysis and will demonstrate that the conclusions drawn are supported by multiple data streams. One of the main methods used in this study is process tracing. According to Andrew Bennett and Alexander George the “general method of process tracing is to generate and analyze data on the causal mechanisms, or processes, events, actions, expectations, and other intervening variables, that link putative causes to observed effects.” This involves both narrowing the list of alternative


explanations and gathering evidence that supports your hypothesis. Bennett and George acknowledge that “it will be difficult to resolve fully the problem of equifinality, or of similar outcomes occurring through different causal processes, and to eliminate all potential rival explanations but one, especially when human agents are involved who may be doing their best to conceal causal processes. But process tracing forces the investigator to take equifinality into account…”

I use the following three research tools to link causal mechanisms to outcomes, in this case to link ideational factors (ideas, values, culture, perceptions, norms and identities) to each country’s approach and policy toward Cuba.

Interviews have been conducted with contemporary and past Canadian and American policymakers, including ambassadors, and other high level officials in both capitals as well as in Cuba. Similar questions were asked of all people interviewed. My questions were designed to reveal the interviewee’s basic perceptions of their country’s relationship with Cuba. All those interviewed were first asked broad open-ended questions about factors that they felt explained their country’s relationship with the island. They were also asked more specific questions that addressed alternative explanations (for example the role of the Cuban-American lobby in the U.S. and the role of economic factors in the Canadian policy). They were also asked if they thought that their country’s culture, history and international standing (ie a superpower or middle power) had any influence. In addition, more specific questions about the relationship were posed that revealed the importance of certain perceptions, ideas and identities. For

72 Ibid.
example, I was in Havana during the Elian crisis and asked Canadian and American officials in Cuba for their opinions of the situation.

Second, I have researched archives, primary documents and secondary literature on both Canadian and American policy toward Cuba. For example, I examined legislation and speeches for evidence of the beliefs and ideas that dominate the discourse about relations with Cuba. I have also examined public opinion polls and the content of major media (newspapers) to determine the general public opinion of Cuba and its relationship to both countries. I demonstrate that norms, identities, and perceptions correlate with domestic policy statements and debates as well as public opinion. Answers obtained during confidential interviews were then compared with public statements and documents (both declassified and public) to further determine the accuracy of the information.

Lastly, I consider alternative explanations of both policies to determine their relevance and to minimize the possibility that the actors are only responding as though they were influenced by the constructivist variables under consideration but in reality their actions and rhetoric were in response to other variables.

Summary

This study uses the constructivist framework but studies a topic more frequently addressed in the comparative foreign policies scholarship, as it examines the interplay between domestic factors and foreign policy. It shows that these domestic factors can have considerable constitutive effects and can, at times, counter strong international norms.
It will demonstrate the connection between ideational variables and foreign policy by examining the Cuba policies of the United States and Canada. The traditional explanations do not offer complete accounts of the reasons for each policy nor can they explain the difference in the two approaches. I will show that Realism and other theories examined offer some valuable insights but that they have difficulty explaining crucial aspects of the policies. This study offers an alternative view of both policies, one that reveals the importance of culture, norms, values, ideas, perceptions, and identities. Not only can these variables provide explanations for each approach but they can also explain why Canadian and American policies continue to diverge, even well after the end of the cold war.
CHAPTER 2

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CUBA

Even though Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) was largely correct when he said: “History is the version of past events that people have decided to agree upon,” we cannot understand the present without first attempting to understand history. This chapter provides the historical context for the rest of the study by briefly outlining the history of Cuba, from the time of the European explorers to the Post Cold War era.

The Colonial Period

Christopher Columbus was the first European to explore Cuba. In the fall of 1492 Columbus landed on the largest island in the Caribbean; totaling 44,218 square miles (114,525 square km), 760 miles long and 120 miles wide at its widest, it is about the size of England. He had found an island that would prove to be very attractive to the Europeans. Cuba’s location at the entrance to the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico made it an excellent port of call on the journeys between Latin America and Spain. Conquistadores such as Hernan Cortés visited Cuba in the early 1500s on their way to and from the continent.

Given the favorable climate and landscape, it was not long before other Europeans began to look toward Cuba as more than a way-station. Cuba seemed to have the perfect climate- warm, but not too hot, with an average temperature of 27°C /81°F in the summer and 22°C /72°F in the winter months, blessed by cooling northeast trade winds and ocean currents. Furthermore, the island has adequate rainfall and relatively flat
plains suitable for agricultural production. In 1511, another Spaniard, Diego Velázquez, established the first European permanent settlement on the eastern end of the island. As Governor of Cuba until 1524, Velázquez expanded the Spanish hold over the island by fighting the indigenous peoples (the Tainaos, Ciboney and Guanahatabeyes were almost completely wiped out soon after the arrival of the Europeans) and settling Spaniards into the newly created towns.

Havana, one of the settlements established by Diego Velázquez, became an important port. Havana was established around a naturally deep harbor and was considered the ideal meeting point for Spanish ships returning to Spain. After collecting cargo from various Latin American colonies the ships would meet and form a flotilla in Havana, returning to Spain together. The harbor was well protected by the Spanish built forts and by the heavy chain that was placed across the entrance to the harbor. The chain was installed each evening to prevent enemies from attacking the ships under the cover of darkness. The well-fortified city soon became center of European life in Cuba, despite being destroyed by fire twice in its first fifty years.

The rich soil and the promise of mineral wealth (which never really materialized) soon led to the influx of another group; Europeans brought African slaves to Cuba in the mid-1520s. In this early period, slaves worked in the gold mines, in early industries or

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1 The three mountain ranges- the Sierra Maestra, the Trinidad Mountains and the Sierra de los Organos comprise approximately 25% of the land area.

2 Much of this information was drawn from Jaime Suchlicki, Historical Dictionary of Cuba (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1988).

3 The forts built to protect Havana were the Castillo de los Tres Reyes del Morro and Castillo de San Salvador de la Punta.
as servants in Havana households. In contrast to systems of slavery in other New World colonies, many of the slaves brought to Cuba were eventually freed, especially those working in Havana. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the significant number of freed slaves distinguished Cuba from other colonial holdings in the region at this time.4

Cuba remained in Spanish hands for most of the following four centuries. At various points during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, Spanish control over Cuba was challenged by French and Dutch pirates as well as by representatives of the English throne. Cuba fell to the English in 1762 but was, once again, under Spanish control by 1763.5 However, in that short period, the British had an enormous influence over the island. British merchants flocked to Havana, opening up the Cuban market to foreigners. They also dramatically increased the number of slaves on the island.6

The Catholic Church played an important role in early Cuban life. Initially devoted to converting the indigenous populations, the church soon insinuated itself into all aspects of the Cuban society and economy, even owning and operating their own

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4 This tradition did not survive into the eighteenth century. The slaves bought to the island by the British in 1762 and the rise of the sugar industry in the 1800s contributed to a large increase in the number of slaves.

5 See Allan J. Kuethe, Cuba, 1753-1815: Crown, Military and Society (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1986) for additional information on this period in Cuban history.

6 The Spanish controlled Cuban government had limited the number of slaves being brought to the island because of the fear of a slave revolt. See Hugh Thomas, “Cuba, c. 1750-1860,” in Cuba: a short history Leslie Bethell, ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 1-20.
sugar mills.\textsuperscript{7} Even so, the church in Cuba never achieved the control it did in other Latin American countries during this same period.

During the eighteenth century tobacco was Cuba’s primary export crop. However, it was soon discovered that the island was perfect for growing sugar, especially after the Haitian revolt (1795-1805) ruled out sugar production there. By the beginning of the nineteenth century the island economy had become structured around the production and export of this commodity, foreshadowing Cuba’s life-long reliance on foreign markets and the havoc that this type of dependency would wreak on the economy. Even in the early eighteen hundreds, Cuba’s economy suffered from the unreliable nature of a monocrop economy reliant on foreign markets. In 1807, the United States, the largest market for Cuban sugar, had refused to trade with any of the belligerents of the Napoleonic wars. Spain’s involvement in the wars effectively eliminated the American demand for Cuban sugar.\textsuperscript{8} Consequently, only one-third of the sugar produced on the island was sold that year.

The Napoleonic wars also strained Spain’s control over the colonies. Spain was much too busy fighting European enemies and the Spanish fleet too crippled, to maintain Spain’s heretofore secure reign over the island. The people of Cuba, aware of the successful American and French revolutions and of revolts in other Latin American colonies, began to think about launching their own attempt for independence. Thus,\

\textsuperscript{7} Thomas, “Cuba, c. 1750-1860.”

\textsuperscript{8} Thomas, “Cuba, c. 1750-1860.”
Cuba's first of many unsuccessful bids for independence from colonial control erupted in revolt in 1809.  

After the Napoleonic wars the Spanish re-established firm control over their Cuban colony. Moving forty thousand troops into Cuba and refusing repeated offers by the Americans to purchase the island, Spain was determined not to lose another valuable colonial holding in the Americas. By 1815 Cuba's population had reached almost 600,000. Cuba was becoming a very profitable colony, exporting sugar as well as coffee, rum and tobacco. The many Cuban towns and cities were thriving as the surrounding lands were consumed by agricultural production. Spain was determined to hang onto the colony at all costs.

Writings of this period in Cuban history describe a rich and beautiful country. For example, one visitor to Cuba in the mid-nineteenth century wrote: "Passing the suburbs of the city... the road breaks out into the beautiful open country, threading its narrow way through rich plantations and thriving farms, whose vegetable treasures of every description can scarcely be paralleled on the face of the earth." In addition, a substantial infrastructure was evolving to support the flourishing agricultural production.

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10 Thomas, "Cuba, c. 1750-1860."

11 Kuethe, 175.

For example, the first railroad in the Caribbean and Latin America was built in Cuba in 1837 to transport sugar cane.\textsuperscript{13}

Despite economic success, the idea of Cuban independence continued to percolate under the surface of Cuban economic and political life. By the middle of the nineteenth century this idea was once again gaining strength. The high taxes imposed by Spain, the lack of control over their own government and bureaucracy, increasing discrimination by the Spaniards in Cuba, and the failure of Spain and other European powers to conquer other independence movements in the region, contributed to support for independence. The push for independence came to a boiling point in 1867 when the proposals of the \textit{Junta de Información}, an elected body of Cuban, Puerto Rican and Philippine representatives created to discuss reforms in the colonies, were ignored by the Spanish government.\textsuperscript{14} This insult added to the resentment caused by the recent economic decline and the injustices of the Spanish government, and created a renewed wave of interest in independence.

Consequently, in 1868 a group led by a sugar planter, Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, freed their slaves and formed a rebel army. They issued the ‘Grito de Yara’ that declared Cuban independence and started the Ten Years War (1868-1878). Though the rebels eventually lost this war, the Cuban sense of nationality that was solidified during the ten-year struggle, inspired future attempts to achieve independence.

\textsuperscript{13} Thomas, “Cuba, c. 1750-1860,” 15.

The war and the failure of the rebel forces led to the creation of the Autonomist party. This political party was dedicated to the goal of Cuban autonomy, but not necessarily independence, and to achieving that end by peaceful means only. The Autonomist party enjoyed considerable support for awhile, but since they were not able to gain many concessions from the Spanish government, their voice was eventually drowned out by José Martí’s Cuban Revolutionary party that was formed in 1892.

To this day, José Martí is revered in Cuba as the father of the nation. Martí devoted his life to the cause of Cuban independence. As a young man he was deported to Spain in 1870 for being critical of the Spanish government. After living in Europe, Mexico, Guatemala and Venezuela, he moved to New York, where he organized the various Cuban exile groups and planned for a war to free his homeland.

The economy once again helped spark rebellion. The Ten Years War struck a serious blow to the landed aristocracy, forcing many of them sell their land and sugar mills, often to rich Americans.15 Though the United States already had considerable influence over the Cuban economy, over the next few decades, the American involvement in the Cuban economy continued to grow.16 Consequently, in 1895, when the United States imposed the Wilson Tariff on sugar, dramatically reducing the amount of Cuban sugar being purchased by Americans, the Cuban economy took a serious downturn. The economic crisis initiated by the Wilson Tariff gave José Martí’s movement the impetus it needed.

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15 Aguilar, “Cuba, c. 1860-1930.”

16 Ibid.
José Martí planned a fast and powerful rebellion that would occur simultaneously throughout the country. However, before he could launch his rebellion the United States government discovered his plans, and confiscated his arms and ships. Since Spain had become aware of his plot, Martí was forced to follow through with the planned rebellion, minus the confiscated war materials, before the Spanish authorities had time to clamp down on the rebels in Cuba. Thus, on February 24, 1895, Martí's bands rose in opposition in five regions of the country. Spain did not have a problem initially overpowering the insurgents in the western areas of Matanzas and Havana. The rebels had better luck in the eastern regions of the country where they took on much smaller Spanish forces.17

In April of 1895 the Spanish struck a blow to the revolutionaries when Martí was killed in battle. The leadership of the rebellion was assumed by General José Miguel Gómez and Captain Antonio Maceo. They set up a government council and drafted a constitution. Salvador Cisneros Betancourt was named president. Yet, the war continued to rage, killing thousands, including Maceo, and destroying property. Cubans who were not personally fighting on either side were corralled into compounds, often without enough food. Herding people into these concentration camps also completely destroyed the economy. It wasn't long before news of the brutality of the war and its economic consequences reached an international audience, including Americans, who were emotionally and financially invested in Cuba.18

17 Ibid.

U.S. Involvement: 1898 and the Aftermath

Thus, in 1898 the Americans, under the pretext that the U.S. battleship Maine was destroyed in the Havana harbor inserted themselves into the conflict. Under the leadership of President McKinley, the Americans fought against the Spanish but distanced themselves from the Cuban rebels and ignored the rebel government. After defeating the Spanish, American forces occupied the island and a peace treaty that ended Spanish control over Cuba was signed without Cuban participation. The American occupation lasted from 1899 until 1902. In 1901, the U.S. Congress added the Platt Amendment to the Cuban Constitution which gave Cuba the status of an American protectorate, allowing the United States to intervene in the internal affairs of the island. Cuba had substituted one “colonial” master for another.

The sheer magnitude of US involvement and Cuba’s history of frustrated nationalism laid the groundwork for the tension in Cuban-American relations that would dominate the bilateral relationship for much of the next century and beyond. The failure of the Cubans to achieve independence in 1815, in the 1860s, and again in 1895 contributed to an unfulfilled sense of nationalism. Thus, when the Cubans were finally rid of the Spanish they were loathed to accept domination by another power.20

Despite the Cuban desire for economic and political independence, American influence was felt throughout Cuba. The tobacco industry, the railways and public utilities soon became, like the sugar industry, dominated by American capital. The

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19 Aguilar, “Cuba, c. 1860-1930.”

Reciprocity Treaty of 1903 solidified the rapidly growing economic ties between the two countries. By 1909 the United States controlled almost half of all foreign investment in Cuba.21

After the war, the political situation in Cuba deteriorated as corruption, patronage and electoral fraud removed any legitimacy of the new government, increasing cynicism and prompting another rebellion in 1906. The President, Estrada Palma, asked the United States to step in to put down the rebellion. However, to Palma’s surprise, Washington’s solution was to replace Palma with a United States governor. The U.S. remained in control of the island until 1909 when they installed a new electoral system and oversaw the election of José Miguel Gómez as president. In 1913 Mario García Menocal, who led Cuba until 1921, replaced Gómez. Menocal was followed by Alfredo Zayas, who ruled Cuba with the assistance of an American special envoy, General Enoch Crowder, until 1925.

The Liberal Party candidate, Gerardo Machado was elected in 1924 on a platform of “water, roads and schools.”22 He followed through on many of his campaign promises during his first term. For example, Machado completed the construction of the Central Highway from Havana to Santiago de Cuba and expanded the University of Havana. However, arguing that he needed more time to meet his economic goals, Machado had the Constitutional Assembly extend presidential terms to six years and offer him the chance to run for re-election, unopposed.


22 Suchlicki, Historical Dictionary, 168.
This turn toward dictatorship, Machado’s growing use of repression, and the Great Depression, which had a devastating effect on the Cuban economy, sparked resistance to Machado’s rule.\textsuperscript{23} Resistance to the regime became widespread and violent as opposition groups turned to terrorist tactics to fight the regime, prompting further repression from the state. University students, members of the middle class, intellectuals and professionals all joined opposition leaders, Mario García Menocal, Cuba’s third president, and Colonel Carlos Mendieta. The resistance lead to an uprising against the Machado regime in 1931, which was quickly subdued by Machado’s forces. Though this uprising was contained, opposition to the regime continued. The cycle of state repression and opposition violence did not abate. The United States, attempting to avoid another revolution in Cuba, stepped in again in 1933.

\textbf{Batista’s Cuba: 1933-1959}

In 1933, Washington sent Benjamin Sumner Welles to Havana to mediate between the regime and the opposition. Welles soon became convinced of the need to remove Machado from power. The American contingent assisted Carlos Manuel de Céspedes to assume power.\textsuperscript{24} However, Céspedes lacked the support of the troops.\textsuperscript{25} After less than a month in power, Céspedes was overthrown by the army sergeants, led by Fulgencio F.

\textsuperscript{23} The Great Depression compounded the economic crisis of 1920-21. The earlier crisis was brought on by a decline in sugar prices.

\textsuperscript{24} See Dur and Gilcrease for an in-depth article on the role of the United States in the fall of Machado.

\textsuperscript{25} The troops were initially angry about the poor pay and housing offered to the enlisted, but soon became the leaders of a movement that opposed the Céspedes regime.
Batista Zaldivar. Ramón Grau San Martín was appointed President but much of the power was held by one of his ministers, Antonio Guiteras. The new revolutionary government abrogated the Platt Amendment and reduced the influence of Americans in the Cuban economy. Given these changes, the United States, and a number of groups within the Cuban population including business leaders, grew to oppose the new government.

With American support, Batista stepped in to again alter the political landscape. He forced the revolutionary government to resign. The abrupt end of the 1933 revolution with its nationalist goals had serious consequences for Cuba’s future. The frustrated nationalism of the previous century was reawakened. Furthermore, the events of 1933 solidified the influence of Batista and the army over Cuban politics. As such, Jaime Suchlicki argues 1933 was “a turning point in Cuba’s history.”

Batista appointed Carlos Mendieta president in 1934. However, opposition to the Mendieta regime was strong and was voiced in a general strike in 1935. Though immediately unsuccessful, the strike weakened Mendieta and led to his resignation within months. But the strike did not take down the real source of power behind the regime-Batista and the army. Batista appointed a series of presidents throughout the rest of the decade but power remained in his hands. This period in Cuban history was characterized by corruption and some repression but also by economic growth and reduced unrest.

In 1940 a new constitution was adopted, finally replacing the constitution created under the American occupation that contained the Platt Amendment. The new constitution provided for universal suffrage, free elections, prohibited discrimination, and

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mandated public education, as well as many other similar provisions. However, most of these provisions were not applied.

The election of 1940 was one exception. That year Batista was elected president in what was reported to be an unusually fair election.\(^{27}\) Now a civilian authority along with his role as army chief, Batista transferred power back to the office of the president, reducing the size and power of the Cuban military.\(^{28}\) Batista also brought back the political patronage machine. Corruption, bribery, and political violence characterized the Batista government and the regimes of the next two presidents, Ramón Grau (1944-1948) and Carlos Prio (1948-1952), both of the Auténtico Party. Though the Auténticos attempted to respect democratic processes, they were unable to secure democracy and soon their own party became dominated by corruption.\(^{29}\)

The Cuban economy prospered in this period. Yet, the prosperity only served to obscure the deeper problems of the Cuban economy—reliance on a single export, corruption and mismanagement—and did not have a long-term positive influence on Cuban development. When the economy began to fail in the late 1940s, the Auténticos were unable to meet the challenge, creating an ever-growing sense of disillusionment with their political and economic management of the country.

Consequently, when Batista wanted, once again, to reinsert himself back into power, it was relatively simple for him to do so. In 1952 he engineered a quick military


\(^{28}\) Ibid.

\(^{29}\) Ibid.
coup that put him and the army in power and ended this most recent experiment with constitutional government. But Batista was unable to cure Cuba's economic ills and political crises. Wealth was not evenly distributed, the economy was still reliant on the export of a single crop, foreigners (mainly Americans) owned a large percentage of industry and Cubans, comparing their economic progress to the United States, were frustrated. Politically, Batista ruled by repression. He became increasingly dictatorial. Yet, neither of the Auténtico nor Ortodoxo political parties was strong enough to organize an effective resistance.

A number of smaller groups formed in opposition to the Batista regime. Among them was Fidel Castro's Twenty-Sixth of July movement. When his forces attacked the Moncada army garrison in July of 1953, he was captured. However, Castro used his arrest as an opportunity to present his case against the government, to demand a return to constitutional rule, and to advocate for social and economic reform. Upon his release, after one year in prison, Castro began to organize another uprising. During this period many groups staged small rebellions or demonstrations against Batista. Thus, while Castro's group was gaining strength and staging attacks on the government's rural guards in the Sierra Maestra mountains, others were resisting the regime in the cities. In 1958 these groups came together to oppose Batista, and Fidel Castro emerged as their leader. The United States, seeing that Batista had lost support of key elements of society as well as the backing of a large percentage of his armed forces, withdrew their support from their former ally. As 1959 entered its first day, Batista and his supporters fled Havana.30

Fidel Castro’s Cuba

In January of 1959, Fidel Castro and his rebel army assumed power and began to dismantle the “old” Cuba. On February 16, Fidel Castro became Prime Minister of Cuba. The first President of the new regime, Manuel Urrutia, was forced out within a few months and he was replaced by Osvaldo Dórticos Torrado (1959-1976), whose role was limited essentially to ceremonial functions, leaving Castro to rule alone. The main political parties were disbanded. Castro quickly set out to punish members of Batista’s circle. Many were put on trial, imprisoned or executed.

One of the first measures passed by the new government was the Agrarian Reform Law. This act prevented large-scale land ownership by limiting the maximum any one person or corporation could own to 1,000 acres. Under this law, millions of acres of land became state-owned. In 1963 this limit was reduced to 165 acres and many more acres fell under state control.31

Castro also reorganized the education and health systems on the island. The number of schools was dramatically increased, enrollment doubled and literacy rates rose to levels characteristic of developed regions. State money poured into the health system as an elementary level of health care was provided to all citizens. The number of health care workers, hospitals and clinics rose to meet the increased demand. Life expectancy and infant mortality figures improved.32 In addition, the government took over the banks,

31 Jaime Suchlicki, Historical Dictionary, 7.

transportation companies, and communication systems on the island. The size of the bureaucracy ballooned to manage it all. Many Cubans, especially the poor, were happy about these changes but the wealthier Cubans, realizing that they stood to lose greatly from Castro’s polices, began to leave the country. Most of these exiles sought, what they thought to be temporary refuge, in Florida.

Castro also made considerable changes to Cuban foreign policy. Relations with the United States changed most dramatically. Even before the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion, U.S.-Cuban relations had deteriorated. Castro had imposed the Agrarian Reform Law that significantly reduced the American holdings on the island. Tensions were further heightened when Castro nationalized most foreign companies operating in Cuba and re-established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union.

As Cuban-American relations deteriorated, Castro continued to strengthen economic and political ties to the Soviet Union. A new, enlarged Communist Party that included the 26th of July Movement was formed. Then in April of 1961, the Cubans who had fled the island when Castro assumed power, invaded with the assistance of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The rebel invasion was quickly put down by Castro’s forces. Tension between Havana and Washington further escalated. In December 1961, Castro announced that he was a Marxist-Leninist and asserted that the Cuban revolution was a socialist revolution.

U.S.-Cuban hostilities reached a fever pitch in 1962 when the United States discovered that the Soviets had installed missiles, capable of carrying nuclear weapons, in Cuba. In response, on October 22, 1962, President John F. Kennedy set up a naval blockade of Cuba. These thirteen days were the closest the United States and the Soviet
Union came to a nuclear showdown during the Cold War. Nuclear war was averted when the Soviets agreed to remove the weapons, which they did even before consulting with Castro, and the United States pledged not to invade Cuba.\textsuperscript{33}

State ownership over the economy proceeded throughout the 1960s. By the late 1960s, most businesses were state controlled. Even though almost everyone was employed, the Cuban economy did not do very well in the early years after the revolution. The economy was inefficient and average Cubans struggled to improve their lot. Consequently, Castro turned to his new ally, the Soviets, who provided Cuba with massive military and economic aid. For example, the Soviets allowed Cuba to trade sugar for oil at preferential prices. The economy benefited immensely from Soviet support. In 1969 Castro called their contribution “inestimable and decisive.”\textsuperscript{34} In 1972 Cuba formally became a member of COMECON, the Eastern Bloc’s economic group.

Yet, the Castro regime was disturbed by its persistent trade deficit with the Soviet Union. In an effort to reduce the deficit, Castro abandoned his efforts to diversify the Cuban economy and attempted to capitalize on Cuba’s comparative advantage in sugar.\textsuperscript{35} Castro never met his goal to produce 10 million tons of sugar in 1970. However, he did manage to raise sugar production to its highest level, producing 8.5 million tons that


\textsuperscript{34}Quoted in Thomas, \textit{Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom}, 1475.

year. Consequently, when world sugar prices soared in the early 1970s Cuba was able to take full advantage. Fetching top dollar for sugar on the world market and benefiting from low fixed prices for Soviet oil during the oil crisis, the Cuban economy was prosperous in the early 1970s.

During the late 1970s, Castro allowed some liberalization of the economy. For example, private financial transactions were allowed in some sectors, wages were allowed to fluctuate based on merit, and in 1982, restrictions on foreign investment were partially lifted. However, by the 1980s, due to factors such as declining sugar prices and economic woes in the Soviet Union, the Cuban economy was falling into another recession. In 1986 Castro put the blame on the market reforms he had allowed and began "rectification" which overturned many of the early liberalizations.

Cuba's foreign policy also underwent a series of changes between the 1960s and 1980s. In the 1960s Castro had aligned his regime with the USSR but was at times critical of Soviet policies, especially their decision to trade with countries Castro considered enemies. Castro considered Cuba to be a truer example of a communist society than the Soviet Union. In 1968 Cuban- Soviet tension escalated over a number of issues including the reduction of Soviet petroleum deliveries to Cuba, Castro's criticism

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37 Ibid.


of Soviet-style communism, and charges that some Soviets were attempting to undermine the Cuban revolution. However, by the mid-1970s, the Soviet-Cuban relationship had been mended. Cuba collaborated with the USSR in Africa, sending Cuban troops to the continent.

The African involvement was the culmination of Cuba’s efforts to spread rebellion and assist communist groups in other countries. After being expelled from the Organization of American States (OAS) in 1962, Castro issued the “Second Declaration of Havana” in which he urged the peoples of other countries to follow Cuba’s example and use guerrilla warfare against their oppressors. Though limited, Cuban resources would be used over the next few decades to aid revolutionary movements in Latin America and Africa. By 1974 Cuba was supporting Communist groups in a number of African countries. In 1975 it became known that Cuban troops were assisting the MPLA in Angola and by 1976 Cuban troops had also become involved in the conflict in Ethiopia. The Castro regime was also implicated in Latin American revolutionary struggles. Cuban advisers assisted the consolidation of the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua, assisted the guerrilla movements in El Salvador, and provided some arms and technical support to revolutionary Grenada. Cuba’s participation in these conflicts complicated Cuba’s relationship with western countries and, what Castro did not know at the time was, that soon, Cuba would need friends in the West more than he could ever imagine.

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40 Ibid, 73.

The End of the Cold War and Cuba

The world changed dramatically at the end of the 1980s as the Soviet Union, almost overnight, went from a superpower to nonexistence. This transformation had a profound impact on all aspects of life in Cuba. Prior to 1989, before Mikhail Gorbachev began the economic and political transformations (known as perestroika and glasnost) of the Soviet Union, Cuba's economy, financial system and military power were heavily dependent on the USSR and its allies. For example, prior to the collapse of the Eastern Bloc 85 percent of Cuba's trade was with the Soviet Union. Consequently, as reforms increased in the Warsaw Pact countries, Cuba's trade with those countries declined substantially, weakening the Cuban economy.

Castro was forced to institute austerity measures as Soviet aid and subsidies were terminated. Emphasizing the temporary nature of these measures, he referred to this time as the "Special Period in Time of Peace." From 1989 to 1993 Cuba's GDP declined by 35 percent. Massive economic ills and resulting shortages of most goods and services caused an increase in political dissent and growing efforts by the regime to suppress it.

In an attempt to halt the free-fall, Castro began another round of economic liberalizations after 1993. Changes included allowing the existence of small-scale private companies, legalizing the U.S. dollar, freezing wages, reducing the state bureaucracy,

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instituting personal income tax on independent activities and taxes on luxury items such as liquor and tobacco. These changes helped to turn the economy around. In 1993 the state had a budget deficit of 33.5 percent but by 1994 it was operating with a 7.4 percent surplus. The economy continued to recover, but anemically, throughout the 1990s.

However, these changes have had side-affects. Tourism, no longer sugar, is Cuba's primary source of hard currency. Remittances from relatives in the U.S. and foreign investment help to fill the void left by the end of transfers from the Soviet Union. Ten years later Cuba was still experiencing unemployment and increasing income disparities due to the legalization of the dollar and the introduction of market-based features. It is now common for well-educated doctors and teachers to earn significantly less than the waiters and chamber-maids working in the tourist hotels. Thus, directly and indirectly the demise of the Soviet Union led to profound changes in the society as well as the economy.

Other areas of Cuban society also underwent meaningful changes during this turbulent period. The end of Soviet military aid catalyzed changes in Cuba's military and foreign policies. The number of people in the armed forces declined both because the regime could no longer afford them and because Cuba was no longer participating in foreign conflicts.

\[45\] Ibid.

\[46\] Monreal, 78.

\[47\] Hamilton, 18-39.

Civil society has also changed in Cuba. The church has regained some of its status. Even by the late 1980s the conflict between the Castro regime and the church had diminished. By the early 1990s the regime had eliminated its policy of official atheism. This process was amplified during the preparations for the visit of Pope John Paul II in 1998. In the lead-up to the visit, Castro allowed the Church to communicate directly with the people of Cuba on television and in the newspapers for the first time in over three decades. He made other concessions including giving his permission for direct charter flights originating in the United States to touch down on the island, providing some additional transportation for Cubans wishing to go to a papal mass and allowing more priests and nuns to transfer to Cuba.49 Despite these changes, the tension between the Catholic Church and the Castro regime remains, as many of the restrictions on religious freedoms in Cuba have not been eliminated.50

Conclusion

A number of themes recur throughout Cuban history. The numerous failed bids for independence have contributed to a strong sense of frustrated nationalism on the island. The defeat of Cuban independence efforts in 1815, the 1860s, in 1895, and again in 1933 have made the Cubans intensely protective of their sovereignty. The repeated American interventions heighten their resolve. Yet, even after Fidel Castro took power,


the island remained very vulnerable to forces beyond its borders. In an attempt to purge American influence Castro threw Cuba into the hands of the Soviets, inadvertently placing Cuba in the center of great power politics and attracting the attention of the world. Though, only a small country, Cuba has garnered more attention than many larger and more powerful countries, making Cuban independence that much more difficult to maintain.

Many scholars have described and analyzed Cuban history. Some have written thousands of pages about this island. In contrast, this chapter has presented a very brief synopsis of Cuba’s long and complex history. However, most students of Cuban history will agree that this island’s past has been profoundly influenced by peoples beyond its borders. The next chapter looks at the history of Cuba’s relationship with two of the countries that have influenced the course of Cuban history.
CHAPTER 3

U.S. AND CANADIAN RELATIONS WITH CUBA: A HISTORY OF DIFFERENCES

Introduction

From the earliest points in Canadian and American history, these two countries have had very different relationships with Cuba. Even prior to the 1898 war the United States was actively involved in domestic level Cuban politics and was heavily invested financially in the island. In contrast, though always having a presence of one sort or another in Cuba, Canadian involvement was, in comparison, minimal and understated. This chapter begins by chronicling the long and tumultuous relationship between the United States and Cuba. It then reviews the quiet, yet often controversial, relationship between Canada and the island nation. This chapter provides the background to the analyses of both bilateral relationships undertaken in the rest of this study.

U.S.-Cuban Relations: A Short History

Extremes of closeness and animosity have characterized U.S.-Cuban relations. Even when Cuba was a Spanish colony, the U.S. was developing ties to the island. During the American War of Independence, trade flourished between Cuba and the United States. Over the next one hundred years, commercial ties between the Spanish colony and the U.S. broadened. Americans became involved in many sectors of the Cuban economy. For example, Americans participated in almost all aspects of the construction of the Cuban railroad in 1830s. By the middle of the nineteenth century the

The United States was also interested in closer political and strategic ties with this Spanish colony and attempted to purchase Cuba from Spain beginning in the early 1800s. In 1808 President Jefferson offered to buy the island because the United States believed that Spain, embroiled in the Napoleonic wars, could not maintain adequate control over the colony. The southern states were particularly interested in adding Cuba to the union since Cuba was obviously pro-slavery. The idea of annexation to the United States grew popular with Cuban planters in the mid-1800s because they thought the institution of slavery, and consequently, their wealth, would be protected if Cuba joined the United States. This movement in Cuba coincided with a campaign in the United States, urging the government to obtain Cuba under the rubric of manifest destiny. Cuba became an issue in the 1848 presidential election. During this period, the United States made numerous offers to purchase the island from Spain.\footnote{Jenks, 9-13.}

Thus, by the end of the nineteenth century, the American people and their government were heavily invested in Cuba. American interest in Cuba had grown throughout the century. American jingoism was directed toward the island. Annexation was frequently put forth as not only a possibility but often presented as a natural evolution of the relationship and U.S. investors saw their future in the expanding Cuban economy.
This interest culminated in the American involvement in Cuba’s war with Spain in 1898. The struggle for independence that began in 1895 destroyed property in Cuba without regard for the citizenship of the owner. It was also catastrophic in human terms. By 1898, reports of the devastation appeared daily in American newspapers. Though annexation was debated in the United States, the McKinley government stopped short of outright annexation. That option was effectively removed by the Teller Amendment to the American declaration of war, that stated that Cuba would not become a U.S. colony, leading the United States to pull out of Cuba in 1902.

However, the influence of the United States on the island did not abate and annexation was considered a likely possibility. In fact, the American settlers in Cuba counted on it. Many had based their decision to come to the island on the belief that Cuba would soon become a state. Carmen Diana Deere explains that the number of American colonies in Cuba almost doubled between 1903 and 1913. The sixty-four American colonies present on the island in 1913 were for the most part dedicated to growing fruit and vegetables sold to the United States.

Furthermore, Cuban economic dependence on the United States continued to grow. The United States-Cuban Reciprocity Treaty gave Cuban exports to the U.S. a trade advantage by reducing tariffs on goods from Cuba by 20 percent. The treaty

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3 Jenks, 43-45.

4 Jenks, 50.

influenced further American investment in the sugar industry.\textsuperscript{6} Within ten years of the treaty American investment in Cuba made up almost 20 percent of the total of American investment in all of Latin America, and most of that was invested in Cuban sugar.\textsuperscript{7} The United States also had investments in other areas such as produce, tobacco, cattle and railroads, among others.\textsuperscript{8}

During the occupation the U.S. government had attached the Platt Amendment to the Cuban constitution, which gave Cuba the status of an American protectorate. The United States intervened again in 1906 in order to suppress a rebellion. Washington remained officially in control of Cuba until 1909 but American influence over the political affairs of the island continued unabated after the end of this second intervention. For example, an American General, Enoch Crowder, was one of the most influential people in Cuban politics during the first quarter of the century. He established the electoral system put in place in 1909 and, as the U.S. envoy to the island a decade later, he had considerable influence over the government of President Alfredo Zayas (1921-1925). Crowder forced Zayas to reorganize his cabinet and appoint people acceptable to Crowder and the United States.\textsuperscript{9}

The United States played an integral role in the fall of President Machado in 1933 and in the rise of General Fulgencio E. Batista y Zaldivar. Philip Dur and Christopher

\textsuperscript{6} Deere, 738.

\textsuperscript{7} Thomas, 536.

\textsuperscript{8} Jenks, 162.

Gilcrease maintain that the American Ambassador, Sumner Welles, was the architect of the events of 1933 and 1934 in Cuba. For example, they argue that Welles engineered the overthrow of Machado and hand picked Céspedes as the next president.¹⁰

After 1933, power in Cuba belonged to General Batista, who had secured the support of the United States early in his political career. Though he was only intermittently Cuba’s president, Batista and the army controlled Cuban politics from then until Castro’s forces removed him from power in 1959.

Under Batista, American political and economic influence in Cuba was enormous. The Cold War increased Batista’s value in Washington since he was an ardent anticommunist and consistently supported American foreign policy goals. In 1958, the American Embassy in Havana reported that the Batista government, “has a record of excellent cooperation and solidarity with the United States in the international field on all issues of major importance. Cuban representatives have on occasion taken the lead in opposing Communism and in advocating policies and courses of action desired by the United States.”¹¹

Just as his regime was pro-American in politics, Batista’s Cuba was also friendly to American economic interests. During the first half of the twentieth century, Americans owned large tracts of real estate, including as many as half of the sugar plantations.¹² The Great Depression had dramatically diminished trade between the two countries and


reduced American economic ties to Cuba. Under Batista, the United States sought to regain those losses.

Though the economic connections never reached the earlier levels, much was done to strengthen the ties. Tariffs were lowered to permit increased trade, raising the value of U.S. imports from under 23 million in 1933, to 81 million in 1940.\(^\text{13}\) By that time, almost 65 percent of Cuba’s imports came from the United States.\(^\text{14}\) Due to low tariffs on Cuban sugar and the American decision to allot Cuba a large percentage of the US sugar market at a premium price, Cuban sugar exports became highly dependent on the American market.\(^\text{15}\) Similarly, though the amount of American investment in Cuba was lower than it was three decades earlier, it was also on the rise in the 1950s. Batista’s regime was particularly generous to American firms, exempting them from many of the taxes paid by investors.\(^\text{16}\) In 1959, Americans had one billion dollars invested in Cuba.\(^\text{17}\) Although officially sovereign, Cuba was, for economic purposes, just as dependent on the United States in this era as it was when American forces occupied the island after the Cuban war of independence.

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\(^\text{16}\) Morley, 50.

While the American government eventually became concerned about Batista’s abuse of power, they did not support the revolution led by Fidel Castro. Consequently, they greeted Castro’s early months in office with apprehension. The initial relationship, while strained, was not openly antagonistic. On January 7, 1959 the United States recognized the Cuban government but had serious reservations about Fidel Castro.18 Philip Bonsal, who had replaced Earl T. Smith as the new ambassador in Havana, was instructed by the State Department to be “cool and distant” to the new regime.19

Events such as the 1959 agrarian reform and the warming of Cuban-Soviet relations from 1960 onwards were viewed with increasing suspicion in the United States. After American companies in Cuba refused to process crude oil that the regime had bought from the Soviet Union, Castro responded by expropriating the companies. The nationalization of U.S. owned oil companies worsened an already tense situation. The U.S. response, to suspend Cuba’s sugar quota, was regarded by Castro as an act of economic war. In retaliation, he nationalized the remaining American assets.20 By this time the rhetoric between Havana and Washington had become fairly confrontational as the U.S. accused Castro of Communist leanings and he claimed the U.S. was behind an explosion on a ship in the Havana harbor that was full of arms purchased by his regime.21


19 Quoted in Morley, 74.

20 Aguila, Cuba, 58.

In October of 1960, the United States imposed an economic embargo on Cuba, restricting trade on all products except for food and medicine. This measure became the cornerstone of American policy during this early period. Referred to as a “program of economic denial,” the embargo sought to increase the cost to the Soviet Union of “keeping” Cuba in their alliance, make it difficult for Castro to export revolution and to demonstrate to the Cuban people that communism was not a viable option for their country. The United States closed their Havana embassy in January 1961. The table below demonstrates the effect of the embargo on US-Cuban trade by comparing it to Canadian trade with Cuba for the same years.

Table 1: Canadian and American Merchandise Trade with Cuba

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<td>United States (US $)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exports to Cuba</td>
<td>458 million</td>
<td>225 million</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.4 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Imports from Cuba</td>
<td>422 million</td>
<td>357 million</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canada (CDN $)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exports to Cuba</td>
<td>14 million</td>
<td>13 million</td>
<td>59 million</td>
<td>163.5 million</td>
<td>170 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Imports from Cuba</td>
<td>10 million</td>
<td>7 million</td>
<td>9.5 million</td>
<td>416.5 million</td>
<td>130 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: US Census Bureau, Foreign Trade Division; John Kirk and Peter McKenna, Canada-Cuba Relations (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997); and The Canadian-American Committee of the Private Planning Association of Canada and the National Planning Association, USA. “Canada’s Trade with Cuba and Canadian–American Relations.” (February 6, 1961).

Between 1959 and 1962, approximately 250,000 Cubans who were outraged by Castro’s reforms, left the island to live in the United States. While tensions were escalating between Washington and Havana these exiles had begun a campaign against


the Castro regime, which included bombing targets in Cuba from planes launched from Florida. Castro's accusation that the United States supported the exiles was accurate. As the tension increased between Washington and Havana, the CIA, under President Eisenhower, had begun to aid the exiles by providing arms, supplies, and training. With U.S. assistance the leaders of the different Cuban groups formed the Cuban Revolutionary Council. Since Washington wanted Castro overthrown but did not want American troops involved, they assisted the exiles to plan and execute the invasion that would take place in April of 1961. On April 17, the exile army landed at a beach on the Bay of Pigs but were quickly defeated by the Cuban army led by Castro.

Despite the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion, the CIA continued its efforts to oust Castro from power. However, they never again attempted an invasion, replacing military force with covert measures including attempting to assassinate Fidel Castro on multiple occasions. The Alliance for Progress (an extensive economic and military aid program directed at Latin America) was another major tool in the Kennedy administration's Cuba policy. This program sought to limit the influence of Cuba in Latin America with massive infusions of aid to countries in the region.

In 1962, when the Americans discovered that the Soviets had installed medium-range missiles in Cuba, the island became the center of an intense superpower confrontation. President John F. Kennedy and Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev, after a tense 13 days, resolved the crisis without any consultation with Castro. President Kennedy said that the U.S. would refrain from invading Cuba, end the naval blockade,

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and remove the American Jupiter missiles from Turkey and Khrushchev agreed to remove the missiles from Cuba. Nevertheless, the United States tightened the embargo, preventing Americans from visiting Cuba and forbidding all trade with the island.

However, the embargo did not prevent Cubans from coming to the United States. The 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act made it easier for Cubans to become legal U.S. residents. The U.S. government also aided the Cuban exiles economically. Money, often from the CIA, was given to assist Cuban businesses and to provide for families of the men fighting Castro. Cuban immigrants were also the beneficiaries of a special refugee program that included food and financial assistance. Over the next decade, hundreds of thousands of Cubans made their way to the United States. They came by boat and via the Freedom Flights program that lasted until 1973.

In the mid-1970s, it appeared as though change in U.S.-Cuban relations was imminent. The Ford administration began secret talks with the Castro government. Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, William Rogers, and the Assistant to the Secretary of State, Lawrence Eagleberger, met with Cuban officials on numerous occasions in an attempt to normalize relations. However, in 1975 the talks broke off over Cuba’s military and financial support of the Neto government of Angola.

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25 The agreement to remove missiles from Turkey was not made public at the time.


27 Ibid. 63.

President Jimmy Carter (1976-1980) was particularly interested in rapprochement and made numerous moves toward warming the relationship. His administration halted reconnaissance flights over Cuba, negotiated fishing and maritime agreements with the regime, and once again, permitted Americans to travel to the island.\(^{29}\) In 1977, Cuba and the United States opened interest sections in each other’s countries. However, it was not long before the relationship began to cool off because of the regime’s continued involvement in African conflicts.\(^{30}\) Any movement toward normalization was put on hold.

The 1980 mass migration of over one hundred thousand Cubans to the United States, referred to as the Mariel exodus, increased the tension between Havana and Washington.\(^{31}\) The exodus was the result of disillusionment with the economic difficulties of life on the island, especially when compared to the lives of their friends and relatives living in Florida. During the prior year, almost one hundred thousand Cuban Americans had visited the island, bringing with them stories of a good life in the United States and gifts of consumer goods unavailable to average Cubans.

The exodus was sparked by an incident at the Peruvian embassy in Havana. Peru granted asylum to a group of Cubans who, in their attempt to enter the embassy, had shot


\(^{30}\) A senior US government official with the Carter administration told the author that President Carter was very interested in normalization. He stated that the administration’s subsequent focus on Cuban involvement in Africa was the result of pressure from those within the government who did not want to see warming of relations between the US and Cuba. Confidential interview conducted by the author in Washington DC, 2000.

a Cuban guard. The Castro government retaliated by removing the guards around the Peruvian embassy, essentially allowing Cubans to leave the country via Peru’s embassy. Thousands of Cubans made their way to the embassy, overwhelming the Peruvian authorities. The numbers also surprised the regime and created an intolerable situation for the Cuban government. The ten thousand Cubans that descended on the compound created havoc in Havana. The government had promised the people they could leave. They began an airlift but, according to Wayne Smith, the head of the U.S. Interest Section at the time, that seemed to play into the hands of the Americans as they could use the refugees as evidence of the dissatisfaction in Cuba but not have to deal with the human flood themselves.

The decision to open the port of Mariel to small boats was also in retaliation for the American refusal to condemn marine hijackings began in October 1979 by Cubans attempting to secure a way to Florida. The Cuban government had asked that the United States prosecute the Cuban hijackers. Washington had refused and allowed the hijackers to enter the United States as ‘normal’ Cuban immigrants. More hijackings occurred. The United States continued to welcome the hijackers as immigrants. The Cubans warned the United States that inaction on this issue might result in opening a port for Cubans bound for the United States. Washington had still not taken action when the Peruvian embassy was flooded with Cubans in April of 1980. Washington had further aggravated the Cuban government by using the affair as further evidence of the political and economic failures of the Cuban regime. Thus, Havana ended the airlift and announced that small boats could come to the port of Mariel to transport Cubans to the United States. The resulting
exodus that lasted until September of 1980 brought 120,000 additional Cubans to the United States.

The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 brought even more tension to the bilateral relationship. Washington’s approach toward Cuba under the Reagan, and subsequent Bush, administration remained antagonistic. In an effort to communicate directly with the Cuban populace, the Reagan administration approved Radio Martí in 1985. Based on Voice of America, it broadcast anti-Castro, pro-American radio programming into Cuba. In 1990 the Bush administration followed with TV Martí.  

The next major milestone in U.S.-Cuban relations came in 1992 with the passage of the Cuban Democracy Act (CDA). This act, also known as the Torricelli Bill, contained both positive and negative inducements for change in Cuba. It tightened the embargo by attempting to prevent subsidiaries of American companies located in other countries from doing business with Cuba; prevented ships that had stopped in Cuba in the past 180 days from entering U.S. ports; and made it difficult for any country providing aid to Cuba to receive American aid or to qualify for free trade deals with the United States; and increased the disincentives for Americans to illegally visit the island.  

It also contained provisions to increase “people-to-people” contact between Americans and Cubans and to strengthen Cuban civil society. Known as Track II, this part of the Torricelli Bill authorized the resumption of telephone and direct mails services with the

32 Since its inception, the Cuban government has successfully jammed the transmission of the TV signal.

island, allowed private entities to deliver medicine and food to Cuba, as well as ensured additional support for TV and Radio Marti.

During his election campaign, William Clinton had pledged support for the CDA, and for the first couple of years of his administration he did not attempt to alter the basic framework established under the act. Soon after he assumed office, immigration issues took center stage in the relationship. In the spring and summer of 1994, numerous Cubans, determined to immigrate to the United States due to the severe economic crisis in Cuba, resorted to hijacking boats visiting Cuban ports. Castro, frustrated by his inability to guarantee the safety of ships in the Bay of Havana and by the apparent refusal of the United States to discourage these departures, removed restrictions on Cubans leaving the country. As he expected, this prompted thousands to take to boats and rafts and set out for U.S. shores.

This influx of Cubans now threatened to become a major American immigration fiasco along the lines of the 1980 Mariel exodus. The Clinton administration, attempting to put a lid on the growing crisis in Florida, announced a major change to a long entrenched immigration policy. Under the 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act, Cubans attempting to reach the U.S. were automatically granted asylum. After the repeal of this act by Clinton, the Coast Guard no longer assisted Cuban rafters to reach the United States. Instead they began to intercept them at sea and transport them to the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo. The outcome of this crisis was a new immigration agreement between the U.S. and Cuba. Under this 1994 accord, the Castro regime agreed to prevent Cubans from setting out for American shores and the U.S. agreed to accept a minimum of
20,000 Cubans each year. Another agreement, signed in 1995, stipulated that from then on the United States would return Cuban rafters intercepted at sea.

Cuban Americans were upset with the new immigration policy and after a meeting with representatives of the Cuban American community, the Clinton administration announced a series of changes to the policy that would mollify the community. These included greater restrictions on travel and cash remittances to the island as well as increased support for Radio and TV Martí broadcasts.34

Despite these changes it appeared as though policy toward Cuba would emphasize measures contained in Track II of the CDA. In 1995, Clinton chose Richard Nuccio, Torricelli’s former aide, as special advisor on Cuban affairs to both the State Department and the White House. Nuccio, who drafted the CDA for Torricelli, was the driving force behind the innovative provisions to strengthen Cuban civil society.35 Also in 1995, Clinton announced changes to Cuba policy that would strengthen the links between American and Cuban civil societies.36

At this time, the Clinton administration opposed tightening the embargo, including the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (Libertad) Act (also known as the Helms-Burton bill) making its way through Congress. In an interview on CNN on April


35 Confidential interviews with senior U.S. government officials conducted in Washington DC and Havana in 1999.

36 This October 1995 executive order eased some travel restrictions, authorized the exchange of news bureaus, allowed some donations to Cuban NGOs, and allowed Western Union to open offices in Cuba to facilitate money transfers.
13, 1995 the President stated that he thought that Helms-Burton was unnecessary. As the year began to draw to a close, the administration became more vocal against the bill. According to Dan Fisk, Clinton instructed the State Department to attempt to kill the bill before it reached his office. Warren Christopher, the Secretary of State, conveyed his opposition to the bill to the House Speaker, Newt Gingrich. It seemed as though the bill did not have much of a chance.

However, the events of February 24, 1996, changed the outlook for the bill. On that day, Cuban planes shot down two Brothers to the Rescue planes. Four members of this Miami-based, Cuban American group that had been conducting flights over Cuba to distribute anti-Castro flyers were killed in the downing. In response, the Clinton administration announced it would support Helms-Burton. Thus, the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (Libertad) Act was signed into law on March 12, 1996. This act authorizes penalties on foreign companies that conduct business in Cuba; allows U.S. citizens to sue foreigners for attempting to profit from property that was owned by Americans prior to it being seized by the Castro regime; and prohibits those foreigners from entering the United States. The provision to sue foreigners has been consistently suspended by Presidents Clinton and Bush every six months.

In 1998, following the visit of Pope John Paul II to Cuba, President Clinton authorized the resurrection of the licensing of direct humanitarian flights between the two countries, re-instated remittances at 1994 levels, and made it easier to sell medicine to


38 Vanderbush and Haney, 403; and confidential interviews with senior American government officials, 1999.
Cuba. In 1999, Washington implemented further changes to the policy. President Clinton permitted all U.S. residents, not just those with family in Cuba, to send money to Cuban citizens; sanctioned more direct flights to Cuba from additional American airports; allowed the resumption of direct mail service between the U.S. and Cuba; increased the categories of groups allowed to participate in two-way exchanges with Cubans; and authorized food sales to nongovernment groups in Cuba.

In 1999, the focus of U.S.-Cuban relations took a detour. The plight of Elián González, a small boy who lost his mother and the other Cubans he was traveling with when his boat sank off the coast of Florida in November, had gained international attention and became the symbol of U.S.-Cuban enmity. Elián González was turned over by U.S. Immigration (INS) to his relatives living in Miami, causing an international custody incident that would wage well into the next year. The decision of Attorney General Janet Reno to support the INS decision to return the boy to his father in Cuba, caused a rift between the Cuban-American community and the Clinton administration. Reverberations from this decision continued to have consequences for the bilateral relationship over the next few years.

Since 2000 there have been further developments in U.S.-Cuban relations. The crucial role of Florida in the 2000 presidential election; the election of a Republican President; the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington; the charges that Cuba supports bioterrorism; and former President Jimmy Carter’s visit to the island, are among

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the events that have continued to shape the relationship between these two countries since 2000. The relevance of these recent developments will be discussed in subsequent chapters and what they mean for the future of U.S.-Cuban relations will be addressed in the conclusion.

**Canada’s Cuba Policy: A Brief History**

Canada’s early relationship with Cuba mirrored its relationships with most Latin American countries at the time. Since the British officially controlled Canadian foreign policy until 1931, Canada could not direct its political affairs with the states in the hemisphere. Consequently, Canada’s initial interactions with the countries of Latin America were dominated by economic exchanges.

In comparison to the U.S.-Cuban relationship, Canada’s relationship with Cuba has enjoyed a rather quiet history. That is not to say that Canadians do not have a long history with Cuba. Samuel de Champlain spent a few months exploring Cuba in 1601 before he went on to found New France (present day Quebec). Canadians fought in the ten years war and in the 1895-1898 war of independence.41 One Canadian, William Ryan, was appointed brigadier general in the ten years war. He transported men and war materials between New York and Cuba, and after being captured in 1873, was executed by the Spanish.42

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42 Ibid., 10. For more information see William Ryan’s biography at (http://www.famousamericans.net/williamalbertcharlesryan/) (December 31, 2002) or information about his last expedition as a general on the “Virginius,” which was captured by the Spanish man-of-war "Tornado" on October, 31, 1873.
Though the number of Canadians in Cuba and the level of involvement of Canadians in the Cuban economy paled in comparison to the intensity and scope of the American connection to the island, Canadians did have an interest in Cuba prior to Castro’s revolution. Canadians, along with Americans, Germans, English and Scandinavian, were among the many farmers who settled in Cuba in the early nineteenth century. For example, in the 1920s a large group of Canadian farmers moved to Cuba to grow tropical fruit. Their colony lasted until a hurricane hit the island in 1926. Canadians had also invested in Cuban sugar. For example, in 1915 one of the three new centrales, the large social and economic hubs surrounding sugar production and distribution formed by the union of large plantations, was Canadian. Canadian financial institutions were also active in Cuba prior to the revolution. Both the Royal Bank and the Bank of Nova Scotia had many branches in Cuba. The Royal Bank was the largest commercial bank in Cuba in 1950. Also by the 1950s, Canadian insurance companies held a majority of Cuban insurance policies.

Trade considerations dominated the relationship in its early period. Cuban rum and sugar were traded for Canadian lumber and other natural resources. After Confederation trade between the countries continued. Overall, trade increased steadily in the first quarter of the twentieth century. In 1902 Canada exported US$265,000 worth of goods to Cuba and imported US$396,000 in Cuban goods from the island. By 1910 these

43 Deere, 729-765.

44 Thomas, 275 and 537.

figures were US$1,871,000 and US$1,259,000 and by 1925 they had reached US$8,619,000 and US$6,455,000 respectively.46 The depression years and Canadian sugar protectionism in the 1930s resulted in a decline in trade. However, the disruption in European exports caused by the Second World War once again increased bilateral trade between the two countries. By 1950, the value of Canada’s exports to Cuba had reached Cnd$17.5 million.47

Canada established diplomatic relations with Cuba in 1945 and exchanged ambassadors in 1950. When Fidel Castro’s rebel movement overthrew the government of Fulgencio Batista in 1959, the Canadian government was clearly surprised. Reports from the Canadian embassy prior to the revolution describe Castro as somewhat mad, his group as relatively weak and the government as “virtually impregnable.”48 Despite these inaccurate assessments and Ottawa’s apparent willingness to discount Castro, officially the Canadian government recognized his revolution as legitimate and consequently maintained normal relations with the new regime.

Canadian economic interests were treated very favorably by the Castro regime. Cuban officials cited the “excellent political, social and economic relations between Canada and the Cuban revolutionary government,” as a reason for exempting many

46 Harold Boyer, “Canada and Cuba: A Study in International Relations,” Ph.D. Dissertation, (Simon Fraser University, 1972), and James Rochlin, Discovering the Americas: The Evolution of Canadian Foreign Policy Towards Latin America (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994).

47 Rochlin, 238.

Canadian companies and individuals from the expropriations. John Kirk and Peter McKenna believe the preferential treatment was “in essence because the revolutionary government needed to retain a link with the West and obtain badly needed spare parts for Cuban machinery.” Thus, while American companies were being nationalized and U.S. property was being expropriated, Canadian assets in Cuba were often protected or mutually satisfying agreements were reached between the regime and Canadians. For example, many Canadian property holders were not held to the limits of the Agrarian Reform legislation. In addition, when all foreign banks were nationalized only two banks, both of them Canadian, were exempted. One wealthy Cuban, recognizing the apparent preferential treatment accorded to Canadians, asked the Canadian embassy to lease his home to prevent it from being confiscated by the regime.

Despite this preferential treatment, Canadian – Cuban relations were not overly warm during this period. The Canadian government made it clear to the Cubans that their loyalties were with the Americans and other NATO allies. Ottawa’s official policy was to treat Cuba as a sovereign state.

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49 Quoted in Kirk and McKenna, *Canada-Cuba Relations*, 46.

50 Ibid., 46.

51 Since there were no longer any American banks operating in Cuba at the time of the Bay of Pigs invasion, the Royal Bank of Canada helped to solve the problem of the 1,200 Cuban exiles caught by Castro’s army during the Bay of Pigs invasion. They facilitated the exchange of the prisoners for food and medicine.

52 Kirk and McKenna, *Canada-Cuban Relations*, 45.

53 Ibid., 52.
Tension between Canada and the United States over Cuba grew as the hostility between Washington and Havana increased. Ottawa was critical of the Bay of Pigs invasion and did not believe Washington’s claim to be completely uninvolved in the affair. The strain in Canadian-American relations about Cuba came to a head during the Cuban missile crisis. When the United States discovered that the Soviets were installing missiles in Cuba, Kennedy ordered Livingston Merchant, the American ambassador to Canada, to obtain assurances from Prime Minister Diefenbaker (1957-1963) that Canada would follow the NORAD agreement. Merchant wanted to be guaranteed that Canadian forces would automatically reflect the level of readiness assumed by the American forces.

Diefenbaker and his cabinet refused to place the Canadian forces on the same level of alert. The External Affairs Minister claimed that if Canada agreed to this U.S. request then Canadians would “be their vassals forever.”54 Furthermore, Prime Minister Diefenbaker implied that the American version of events was possibly unreliable and recommended that the United Nations investigate to determine the actual facts.

At this time, Canada and Mexico were the only countries in the Americas that did not acquiesce to U.S. demands to sever relations with Cuba in accord with the hemispheric vote at Punta del Este in 1962. Canada’s next Prime Minister, Lester Pearson (1963-1968), was much more willing to follow the American lead on other matters but refused to significantly alter Canada’s policy toward Cuba. Pearson was careful not to alter Canada’s official relationship with Cuba but he also did not encourage a closer

relationship with Havana. Pearson’s relationship with Cuba has been characterized as ‘coldly correct.’

In contrast, Prime Minister Trudeau (1968-1979; 1980-1984) was very interested in warming relations between Havana and Ottawa. He was the first leader of a U.S. ally to officially visit Castro in Cuba. Castro and Trudeau developed a close relationship that could be considered a friendship. After Trudeau’s death in 2000, Fidel Castro said, “I remember him as one of the most decent men and one of the most outstanding statesmen that I have met and I have met a lot of people. And the regard I felt towards him was like that towards a member of the family. I didn’t just like him, I was very fond of him.”

Prime Minister Trudeau was instrumental in expanding trade with the island. He strongly believed that the transition to democracy in Cuba and elsewhere could be furthered through trade. He developed trading connections with many Latin American countries, which included right wing dictatorships as well as Cuba during his early years in office. As a result, Canadian -Latin American trade expanded much during the 1970s. In 1970 Canada exported $500 million worth of goods to Latin America. By 1980 this figure had risen to $3,493 million. Cuba was definitely part of this trend. Canadian

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55 Kirk and McKenna, *Canada-Cuban Relations*, 66.


58 Rochlin, 238-9.
exports to Cuba had increased from $58.9 million in 1970 to $421.8 million in 1980.\textsuperscript{59} By 1981 Cuba looked to Canada as its main non-Communist trading partner.\textsuperscript{60}

Despite early attempts by Trudeau to move Canada and Cuba closer, the warming trend could not weather the storm growing in Canada over Cuba’s involvement in Africa. Trudeau came under increasing criticism from other quarters of the Canadian government for maintaining his friendship with Castro while Cuban troops were involved in Angola. Though Trudeau had repeatedly voiced his concern to Castro about Cuba’s role in the African conflicts, he was pressured to make a change in official policy to register Canada’s disapproval. After months of debate, it was finally decided that Canada would suspend their aid program in Cuba to underscore Ottawa’s objection to the presence of Cuban troops in Africa.

Prime Minister Mulroney (1984-1993) oversaw a shift in Canadian foreign policy toward Latin America. At the urging of the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Joe Clark, Canada finally joined the Organization of American States, initiated more high-level visits to the region and provided considerable funding to the Canada-Latin America Forum (FOCAL).\textsuperscript{61}

However, Mulroney was widely recognized as being the most pro-American Canadian Prime Minister. Mulroney’s oft-quoted line that: “Good relations, super relations with the United States of America will be the cornerstone of our foreign policy”

\textsuperscript{59} Rochlin,, 238-9.

\textsuperscript{60} Kirk and McKenna, Canada-Cuban Relations, 106.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 130.
characterized his leadership. Consequently, Cuba did not benefit from the increased attention paid to the region by Ottawa. Mulroney’s approach toward Cuba was somewhat reminiscent of Lester Pearson’s policy toward the island. He maintained diplomatic and trade ties with Cuba while very carefully sending the message to Havana that Canada was foremost an American ally. In 1989, a Canadian diplomat, Richard Gorham, described Canada’s relationship with Cuba as:

.correct, cordial and as close as can be expected for two such countries with different outlooks and systems and security concerns... We are an ally of the United States against possible threats from the Soviet Union -- we are not unaligned.

Thus, under Mulroney, Canadian-Cuban relations remained distant. However, after Jean Chrétien’s Liberal Party trounced the Conservative Party in the 1993 election, Ottawa’s policy toward Cuba was one of the many policies the new government believed it had a mandate to change.

The Canadian-Cuban relationship warmed during the first few years of Prime Minister Jean Chrétien’s (1993-) Liberal government. Official development assistance to the island was reinstated in 1994. According to a 2002 Canadian government report, since 1994 the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) had granted almost $65 million to Cuba in multilateral and bilateral initiatives. CIDA supports a large

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number of civil society-based ties including connections between Canadian and Cuban universities and community organizations.\(^6^4\)

Also, for the first time in decades, high-level Canadian officials visited Cuba. The Speaker of the House of Commons, Gilbert Parent, personally took medical aid to Cuba in 1995. Lloyd Axworthy, Prime Minister Chrétien’s first Minister of Foreign Affairs, made a highly publicized trip to the island in early 1997. Then in 1998 the Prime Minister himself met with Castro in Havana.

Trade between Canada and Cuba increased after the Liberal government came to power in 1993. Trade between the two countries rose to Cnd $753 million in 2001, a

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Canadian Total Exports ($ CND)</th>
<th>U.S. Total Exports ($ CND)</th>
<th>Canadian Total Imports ($ CND)</th>
<th>U.S Total Imports ($ CND)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>146,210,248</td>
<td>3,206,518</td>
<td>171,501,193</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>124,871,430</td>
<td>6,294,833</td>
<td>194,417,592</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>279,375,855</td>
<td>8,023,822</td>
<td>320,914,410</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>291,990,504</td>
<td>7,456,934</td>
<td>401,164,558</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>364,054,484</td>
<td>13,142,477</td>
<td>353,126,763</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>481,192,778</td>
<td>5,129,562</td>
<td>333,464,942</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>396,911,298</td>
<td>6,648,792</td>
<td>305,201,552</td>
<td>964,770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>333,128,405</td>
<td>10,227,958</td>
<td>408,515,143</td>
<td>479,864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>394,325,217</td>
<td>10,619,949</td>
<td>361,275,529</td>
<td>8,617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>276,431,269</td>
<td>226,759,653</td>
<td>325,050,525</td>
<td>489,952</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Industry Canada, Trade Data Online (http://strategis.ic.gc.ca)

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Cnd $12 million increase from the year earlier, though less than the Cnd $817 million traded in 1998. Table 2 compares Canadian and American trade with Cuba from 1993 to 2002.

Canadian companies are especially active in the travel and tourism industry. Canadian hotel and restaurant chains are common on the island, as are Canadian food and beverages. Ottawa reports that Canadians are the single largest group of tourists in Cuba. In 2001, 400,000 Canadian tourists visited Cuba. Mining companies have also heavily invested in the country. For example, Canadian Sherritt International, a nickel and cobalt refining company, is one of the largest foreign investors in Cuba and consequently, was one of the companies targeted by the American Helms-Burton legislation. Overall, Canada remains one of the top sources of foreign investment in Cuba. See table 3 below for the top investors in Cuba during the 1990s.

Trade was not the only focus of Canadian policy in the 1990s. The Chrétien government maintained that their policy of “constructive engagement” is the most effective way to foster change in Cuba. This policy attempts to create linkages between the people and government of Cuba and their Canadian counterparts in order to influence

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Cuba to open their economy, to give greater respect to human rights, and to encourage the development of representative government. In 1997, Ottawa and Havana signed a Joint Declaration, which established cooperation between the two governments in a number of areas including on human rights and good governance issues.

Table 3: Foreign Direct Investment in Cuba ($ U.S.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Direct Investment in Cuba from 1990 to March 1999</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>1,807,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>1,806,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>599,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>500,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>400,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S.-Cuba Trade and Economic Council, Inc. “Foreign Investment in Cuba”.

However, after the 1998 visit by Prime Minister Chrétien to Cuba, relations between Havana and Ottawa took a downturn. During that visit, the Canadian Prime Minister personally raised the case of four dissidents that were scheduled to be tried in Cuba. Castro ignored the Prime Minister’s request which lead to a suspension of visits between the countries’ highest officials. Relations continued to deteriorate at the 1999 PanAmerican games held in Winnipeg. Fidel Castro accused the Canadian officials of


70 See Canada, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, “Canada’s Relations with Cuba” (http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/latin/cuba/81600-e.htm). In recent years, the success of the Joint Declaration has been called into question as there appears to be little progress on these issues in Cuba. Canadian government officials respond that they did not expect rapid change in Cuba and maintain that constructive engagement is a long-term policy. Based on confidential interviews with senior Canadian government officials, Ottawa and Havana, 1999 and 2000.
many things including trying to disadvantage Cuba’s teams and allowing sports scouts to
promote the defection of Cuban athletes.\textsuperscript{71} In addition, some Cuban students attending
Canadian universities defected, CIDA programs in Cuba began to encounter difficulties
and Canadian investment in the island started to decline.

Since 2000 there have been further developments in the Canadian-Cuban
relationship including Castro’s visit to Ottawa in 2000 for Pierre Trudeau’s funeral; the
rift between the two countries over Cuba’s exclusion from the Summit of the Americas
meeting in Quebec in 2001; and the visit in November 2002 by Denis Paradis, Secretary
of State for Latin America, Africa and La Francophonie, to Havana. These and other
recent developments will be highlighted in the concluding chapter of this study.

Conclusion

The previous two chapters have reviewed hundreds of years of history. Cuba, the
United States and Canada have changed enormously over the last few hundred years.
Canada and the United States have gone from colonial outposts to modern states. Cuba’s
history and development has been much more rocky and uneven than its’ northern
neighbors but the island has also dramatically transformed itself.

Though each country’s relationship with Cuba stretches back to the period when
all three were mere colonial holdings, it is possible to see foreshadows of the current
policies. For example, the repeated attempts of the United States to annex Cuba, their
involvement in Cuba’s war with Spain, and the Platt Amendment are evidence of the

\textsuperscript{71} “Castro: 1999 on PanAm Games, Excerpts from the speech given by Dr. Fidel Castro, President
of the Rebuplic of Cuba, related to the Pan American Games in Winnipeg, Cienfuegos, Cuba, July 26\textsuperscript{th},
American perception of Cuban sovereignty and foretell much of the contemporary approach including the Helms-Burton bill. The Canadian exemptions from many of Castro’s first expropriations demonstrate the long history of amicable relations between Havana and Ottawa. Likewise, the reasons for Canada’s decision not to support an isolationist approach toward the regime in the 1960s are still relevant today. Though this chapter has mainly served to provide a historical backdrop to the rest of the study, it also demonstrates that parts of the contemporary policies have historical roots.

Both countries would like to see greater respect for human rights and democracy on the island, but they have chosen very different means to that end. The United States has used their economic and military power to attempt to force the end of Castro’s “socialist experiment.” In contrast, Canada has used their “soft power” resources to encourage a change within the Castro regime.

The Americans have economically and politically isolated the regime, sponsored various plots to overthrow or assassinate Castro, and tried to pressure other countries to impose sanctions on the regime. In contrast, Canada has sponsored numerous meetings with Cuban officials to discuss the issues, actively pressed for academic and cultural exchanges, given financial aid to the regime to support projects that they hope will lead to improvements on the island, sponsored readmitting Cuba to international organizations, and attempted to mediate between the United States and Cuba. Though especially noticeable since 1959, the differences in approaches stretch back many years because, as the next chapters will reveal, the two policies go to the heart of the identities and cultures of the nations involved.
CHAPTER 4

AMERICAN IDENTITY AND VALUES AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON FOREIGN POLICY

Introduction

Scholars have studied the American identity for centuries but it has not received the attention it deserves as an explanation for American actions on the world stage. However, by definition, a state’s identity is integral to its policies toward others, since identity “is the mechanism that provides individuals with a sense of self and the means for comprehending the relationship of the self to the external environment.”¹ All societies have certain collective identities through which individuals in that society give their actions meaning and through which they make sense of international and domestic situations. Identities produce certain patterns of thinking and help construct behavior and policy.

Scholars are now recognizing the connection between American identity and foreign policy. Samuel Huntington, writing about American foreign policy asserts “Efforts to define national interests presuppose agreement on the nature of the country whose interests are to be defined. National interest derives from national identity. We have to know who we are before we can know what our interests are.”² John G. Ruggie argues that American identity shaped America’s decisions regarding NATO security


commitments, the features of the United Nations and US support for the European Defense Community, among other things. Identity is now widely understood to have influence over major American foreign policy decisions.

Americans generally see their country as not only the best country in the world but, also as the embodiment of democracy, the champion of freedom and human rights and the leader of the West. These representations are accepted as obvious and natural in American foreign policy circles. This chapter will describe these crucial elements of American identity and demonstrate how they have influenced US foreign policy. Many of these elements of American identity are encompassed within the idea of American exceptionalism.

The United States as an Exceptional Nation

The origins of the exceptionalist identity have been addressed by many scholars. Louis Hartz argued that the American isolation from Europe and the lack of religious and class conflict during the founding period created an American political culture that emphasized individual liberty, equal rights, and government by consent. Fredrick Jackson Turner argued that the American frontier that allowed individualism to flourish was the basis of the American democratic tradition. Others have pointed out that religion played a crucial role in the creation of the unique American identity. The first European settlers in the United States had strong religious beliefs. These Puritans and other Christians, believing that it was a state’s duty to enforce morality, built institutions with

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religious overtones. Their conviction that the United States was favored by God, contributed to the idea that the U.S. had a mission to spread its God-given values to others. Theories about America’s historical experience, religious basis, and frontier past, offer insight into the foundation of American political culture and identity.

Regardless of its origins, the belief that the United States is an exceptional nation is firmly entrenched within the American self-consciousness and has contributed to the development of U.S. foreign policy. One of the best articulations of exceptionalism was voiced by John O’Sullivan, a journalist and the author of Mainfest Destiny. The following, written in 1845, encapsulates the most accepted ideas of exceptionalism:

Yes, we are the nation of progress, of individual freedom, of universal enfranchisement. Equality of rights is the cynosure of our union of States, the grand exemplar of the correlative equality of individuals; and while truth sheds its effulgence, we cannot retrograde, without dissolving the one and subverting the other. We must onward to the full fulfillment of our mission -- to the entire development of the principle of our organization -- freedom of conscience, freedom of person, freedom of trade and business pursuits, universality of freedom and equality. This is our high destiny, and in nature's eternal, inevitable decree of cause and effect we must accomplish it. All this will be our future history, to establish on earth the moral dignity and salvation of man -- the immutable truth and beneficence of God. For this blessed mission to the nations of the world, which are shut out from the life-giving light of truth, has America been chosen; and her high example shall smite unto death the tyranny of kings, hierarchs, and oligarchs, and carry the glad tidings of peace and good will where myriads now endure an existence scarcely more enviable than that of beasts of the field. Who, then, can doubt that our country is destined to be the great nation of futurity?  

To John O’Sullivan and many Americans since, the United States represents the best of what a nation could aspire to be and was destined to lead other, lesser, nations.

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American exceptionalism asserts that the United States is unique and superior to other countries due to its political system, economy, society, culture and values. This identity contains a number of elements, including: that democracy and related values such as freedom and other political rights are among the most important principles that can be held by a state; and that the United States has achieved unparalleled success in these areas. Exceptionalism also contains a missionary norm. It asserts that since the United States is superior it has special rights and duties associated with promoting these values internationally. The next part of this chapter highlights the relationship between the elements of exceptionalism and foreign policy.

The United States as Superior

Alexis de Tocqueville first coined the term exceptionalism, but the notion that America was unique and superior has roots in early American history. The first settlers that arrived in present day New England believed they were creating a new, superior society. In the seventeenth century, John Winthrop declared that this new world was a “City on a Hill,” a model that others should follow. The people of America turned to these ideas during their bid for independence. In Common Sense Tom Paine wrote: “We have it in our power to begin the world over again.” These sentiments appear over and over in documents from early American history.

Though most revolutionaries believe that they will create a superior society, these sentiments are still articulated by American policy makers of the twentieth and twenty-
first centuries. Before he was president, Woodrow Wilson contrasted the people of the Philippines with Americans. He said “They are children and we are men in these deep matters of government and justice. If we have not learned the substance of these things no nation is ever likely to learn it...” President Ronald Reagan’s inaugural address quoted John Winthrop’s famous words. Reagan said that the United States was “shining city upon a hill.” President George H. W. Bush Sr. declared that the Gulf War “demonstrated our special role as the world’s preeminent moral, political, economic, and military power.” This belief, born in the days of John Winthrop, remains a stable element of the American identity in the twenty-first century. The United States believes that it is a special nation, superior to others, and consequently, that the U.S. has the authority to judge other countries’ social, economic and political systems.

Democracy, Freedom and Human Rights

Americans are especially convinced that their political system is superior. This belief has been embraced by all policy makers, regardless of political party. For example, Republican President George Bush Sr. said, “For two centuries, America has served the world as an inspiring example of freedom and democracy.” In his 1993 Inaugural Address, Democratic President William Clinton told Americans: “our greatest strength is


the power of our ideas, which are still new in many lands. Across the world, we see them embraced, and we rejoice. Our hopes, our hearts, our hands, are with those on every continent who are building democracy and freedom. Their cause is America's cause.  

Michael Cox argues that Clinton's focus on democracy promotion was in part, based on: the American experience and the widely shared belief that the United States was not just a successful democracy but a shining example for others to follow. Clinton, in fact, was quite adamant that the character of a nation's foreign policy had to reflect its core values: and there was nothing more important in the American value system, he believed, than the principle of democracy.  

The belief that the United States is the best example of democracy is firmly rooted in the American identity and has furthered the emphasis on democracy and human rights in foreign policy.  

Democracy and freedom are considered important goals of US foreign policy by Washington insiders and policy makers. Though also important to average Americans, survey data indicates that support for democracy promotion does not trump most other goals of American foreign policy. However, democracy and human rights are not dismissed by the public as unimportant foreign policy priorities. A 1995 survey asked: "Here is an argument for and against emphasizing democracy and human rights in our  

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10 For a review of the relationship between democracy, public opinion and foreign policy see chapter 4 "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy," in Howard J. Wiarda's American Foreign Policy: Actors and Processes and also Ole R. Holsti, "Democracy Promotion as Popular Demand?" in American Democracy Promotion, Michael Cox, John Ikenberry and Takashi Inoguchi, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 151-180.
foreign policy. These values are what we stand for as a people and we must uphold them in foreign policy. How close does this come to your own view?” Eight-four percent answered that this came very or somewhat close to their view.11 Similarly, a 2003 Gallup poll found that 86 percent of Americans said that they thought “promoting and defending human rights in other countries” was a very important or somewhat important foreign policy goal.12 That same poll also found that 75 percent of those asked said that “building democracy in other countries” was a very important or somewhat important goal of American foreign policy.13 A June 2002, Chicago Council on Foreign Relations (CCFR) survey revealed that 90 percent said that “promoting and defending human rights in other countries” should be an important goal. Forty-seven percent of those asked said this should be a “very important” goal.14 Thus, even though goals such as fighting terrorism or preventing the spread of nuclear weapons rank higher than spreading democracy and defending human rights, these goals are still important to the American public.

Democracy and its related values have been guiding principles of American foreign policy for centuries. According to Tony Smith, since the United States intervened in Cuba’s war with Spain in 1898, “no theme has figured more prominently in American


13 Ibid.

foreign policy than the repeated presidential calls to promote the creation of democratic governance abroad.\textsuperscript{15} Since the end of the Cold War and what is perceived to be the triumph of American democracy, the United States has further embraced this element of its identity.\textsuperscript{16} Michael Cox, John Ikenberry and Takashi Inoguchi agree that democracy has become even more central to American foreign policy since the end of the Cold War. They state, “democracy promotion has rather neatly filled the missionary gap left behind by the collapse of international communism.”\textsuperscript{17} Thus, the perception is that as a superior example of democracy, the US has a responsibility to promote the development of democracy in other countries.

American Democracy: Liberalism and Open Markets

The American understanding of democracy, not surprisingly, resembles US style liberal democracy. According to Tony Smith the “distinguishing mark of American liberal democracy (even by comparison with other liberal democracies) has been a state limited by strongly organized social forces acting through freely organized political


\textsuperscript{16} For a thorough treatment of the role of democracy in American foreign policy see Cox, Ikenberry and Inoguchi eds. \textit{American Democracy Promotion}.

\textsuperscript{17} Michael Cox, G. John Ikenberry and Takashi Inoguchi, “Introduction,” in \textit{American Democracy Promotion}, Michael Cox, G. John Ikenberry and Takashi Inoguchi, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1-17.
parties.” 18 Tony Smith continues “[I]t is inevitable that the meaning of liberal democracy in domestic American life should deeply mark the conduct of its foreign policy.” 19

Further, the United States sees democracy as intimately connected with free trade and open markets. American foreign policy has historically espoused a laissez-faire approach toward trade. Open economies are seen as incompatible with authoritarian political systems. Economic and political development are thought to go together. In 1959 Seymour Martin Lipset argued that economic development resulted in a more educated populace and a larger middle class, both of which he said were important to democracy. 20 Though many of the assumptions made by the modernization school have been called into question, the relationship between economic and political development remains widely accepted by the architects of American foreign policy. American democracy promotion, thus, attempts to encourage open economies and free trade along side democratic institutions and values. The perception that true democracy does not vary greatly from the American model, shapes U.S. foreign policy.

**Exceptionalism in Action: A Missionary Foreign Policy**

Both the importance placed on democracy and freedom, and the idea that the United States represents the apex of these and other values, contributes to the norm that

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19 Ibid.

the United States is on an international mission to assist others to adopt similar political
and economic systems and values.

Since WWII Americans have consistently supported an active role for the United
States in world affairs. Though there have been periods when isolationism has been
preferred, polls as far back as the early 1950s reveal a preference for an active foreign
policy. 21 Recent polls indicate continued support for American involvement in world
affairs. In 2000, 78 percent of Americans agreed with the statement that “[b]ecause the
world is so interconnected today, the US should participate in efforts to maintain peace,
protect human rights, and economic development.” 22 In 2002, the Chicago Council on
Foreign Relations asked “Do you think it will be best for the future of the country if we
take an active part in world affairs or if we stay out of world affairs.” Seventy-one
percent of those polled advocated that the United States take an active part in world
affairs. 23

The belief that the United States has a responsibility beyond its borders has been
contested by many leading figures. One of the most well-known advocates of
isolationism was John Quincy Adams, who in 1823, warned that the United States
should not go “abroad, in search of monsters to destroy.” He continued “[s]he is the well-
wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only

21 Wiarda, American Foreign Policy, 64-65.


23 Marshall M. Bouton and Benjamin I. Page, “Vulnerable, vigilant, engaged,” Chicago Tribune
(September 11, 2002) (http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/specials/911/showcase/chi-
of her own." Though contested by Adams and other prominent Americans such as Henry Kissinger, much of the history of American foreign policy has been dominated by an internationalist, missionary sentiment.

Americans perceive that it is their duty as the superior state to lead others. The 1950 articulation of U.S. Cold War policy, the then top secret, NSC 68, declares that the United States has, "the responsibility of world leadership. It demands that we make the attempt, and accept the risks inherent in it, to bring about order and justice by means consistent with the principles of freedom and democracy." Fifty years later, Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, reaffirmed that the United States had a "responsibility, as the world's leading democracy, ... to work in partnership with others to help nations in transition move to a higher stage of democratic development." In 2003, President George Bush told the American public:

America's duty is familiar.... Once again, this nation and all our friends are all that stand between a world at peace, and a world of chaos and constant alarm. Once again, we are called to defend the safety of our people, and the hopes of all mankind. And we accept this responsibility.

The United States continues to believe it has a responsibility to lead, to assist other countries to democratize and enhance human rights.

24 John Quincy Adams, "Warning Against the Search for 'Monsters to Destroy,'" 1821.


A Recent History: Exceptionalism and Foreign Policy

These ideas encompassed by exceptionalism that were prevalent in the doctrines and foreign policies of past centuries, have been just as relevant to the foreign policies of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This section will briefly highlight the influence of this identity and its related values and norms on American foreign policy over the last one hundred years.

The decision of the United States to join the allies in World War I was, like most major foreign policy decisions, based on numerous factors. However, there is considerable evidence that American exceptionalism played a crucial role. It was certainly used to justify American involvement. For example, in his War Message, President Woodrow Wilson declared: "...we shall fight for the things which we have always carried nearest to our hearts- for democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own governments... the day has come when America is privileged to spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth... God helping her she can do no other."28 He later argued that "America is necessary to the peace of the world."29 Though the United States entered an isolationist period after WWI the values and beliefs inherent in exceptionalism remained influential (for example, the United States still saw itself as a model for the rest of the world). After WWII American


foreign policy again became characterized by a preference for active international leadership.

Although Cold War policies were often dominated by other material and realist goals, the ideas embodied by exceptionalism played a significant role in the period. The American perception of their country as the leader of the "free world" and as the exemplar of democratic governance translated into the foreign policy arena. Almost by definition, American foreign policy championed democracy and defended freedom.

Many scholars have described the influence of these ideas on American foreign policy during this period. Siobhán McEvoy-Levy argues that "[b]oth orthodox and revisionist theories of the origins of the Cold War contain at their cores a conception of American exceptionalism. In the orthodox view, the United States’ cause was the righteous and inevitable one. Revisionist historians contended that exceptionalism was a large part of the motivation for the United States’ aggressive expansion abroad." 30 The editor of the World Policy Journal, James Chace wrote:

The other America, equally though often quixotically moral, is the America of Woodrow Wilson and John Foster Dulles, the crusader nation prepared in 1917 to "make the world safe for democracy" or to roll back communism by liberating Eastern Europe in the Eisenhower-Dulles years. Even as the United States grew from 13 colonies into creating a global imperium, with military bases flung far across the world, American leaders could with some justification view this as the fulfillment of Jefferson’s "empire of liberty." True, the United States departed time and again from moral behavior—covert action to ensure that governments friendly to us did not become communist reached its apogee in the Eisenhower years—but always our actions could be justified by appealing to the larger cause of overthrowing Soviet oppression. Whatever wrongs we committed, surely, we believed, they were in the service of a higher end—the establishment of democracy and free markets, which would bring about prosperity for all and Immanuel Kant's ideal of perpetual peace.

In his analysis of American foreign policy, Howard Wiarda, maintains that in this period the United States had three basic goals, one of which was to “stand firmly for democracy and freedom.” 31 In his analysis of American involvement in the Vietnam War Loren Baritz writes “The myth of the city on a hill became the foundation for the ritualistic thinking of later generations of Americans. This myth helped to establish nationalistic orthodoxy in America. It began to set an American dogma, to fix the limits of thought for Americans about themselves and about the rest of the world, and offered a choice about the appropriate relationship between us and them.” 32

These ideas appear over and over in both the public and classified documents and in the rhetoric of the period. In 1945 President Truman declared that: “Whether we like it or not, we must all recognize that the victory which we have won has placed upon the American people the continued burden of responsibility for world leadership.” 33 The NSC 68 of 1950, then highly classified, refers to the “American responsibility” and “democracy and freedom.” 34 The ideas of American exceptionalism were repeated in similar documents and speeches throughout the early Cold War period.

31 Wiarda, American Foreign Policy, 38.

32 Loren Baritz, Backfire: a history of how American culture led us into Vietnam and made us fight the way we did (New York : W. Morrow, 1985), 29.


34 U.S. Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States: 1950, Volume I.

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However, the Vietnam War raised serious doubts about the guiding principles behind the conduct of the United States abroad. McEvoy-Levy argues that Vietnam eroded the American belief in their exceptional character and in their desire to spread their vision and “save the world.”\textsuperscript{35} Many other scholars have also described the effect of Vietnam on U.S. policy in similar ways. Howard Wiarda asserts that, “Vietnam destroyed the Cold War consensus and undermined the possibilities for an effective American foreign policy... The result was a severe questioning of the basic foreign policy premises that had drawn the United States into the war in the first place. Was it really democracy and freedom that the United States was standing for in Vietnam?”\textsuperscript{36}

The break with these ideas most clearly occurred during the Nixon and Ford administrations. Henry Kissinger (1969-1977) believed that the United States should not attempt to export its values but recognized that these ideas have had considerable influence over American foreign policy. He explained:

...the singularies that America has ascribed to itself throughout its history have produced two contradictory attitudes toward foreign policy. The first is that America serves its values best by perfecting democracy at home, thereby acting as a beacon for the rest of mankind; the second, that America’s values impose on it an obligation to crusade for them around the world.”\textsuperscript{37}

Kissinger was convinced that the United States should limit itself to the first option. The United States was still seen as a model for others to follow but Kissinger’s views

\textsuperscript{35} McEvoy-Levy, 29.

\textsuperscript{36} Wiarda, \textit{American Foreign Policy}, 39.

reflected the strong push for isolationism in the United States during this period. The American failure in Vietnam drove foreign policy in that direction during the Nixon and Ford presidencies.

However, it was not long before all the ideas embodied by American exceptionalism reasserted themselves. Though many of the consequences of Vietnam were long lasting, the break with exceptionalist thought was not permanent. Tony Smith writes:

By the mid-1960s, following the setbacks in Indochina and the evident failure of the Alliance for Progress, the voices calling for the promotion of democracy abroad were momentarily stilled. By 1973, congressional opposition to what many termed the ‘amorality’ of the foreign policy crafted by President Richard Nixon and his national security adviser, Henry Kissinger, led to demands that democratization be fostered in a variety of areas....

McEvoy-Levy argues that President Carter renewed the idea of exceptionalism that was eroded by the Vietnam War. He quotes Carter’s May 1977 speech at Notre Dame. Carter said: “through failure [of Vietnam] we have now found our way back to our own principles and values, and we have regained lost confidence.” Similarly in his 1977 inaugural address, Carter declared:

Ours was the first society openly to define itself in terms of both spirituality and of human liberty. It is that unique self-definition which has given us an exceptional appeal, but it also imposes on us a special obligation, to take on those moral duties which, when assumed, seem invariably to be in our own best interests.... The passion for freedom is on the rise. Tapping this new spirit, there can be no nobler nor more ambitious task for America to undertake on this day of a new beginning than to help shape a just and peaceful world that is truly humane. We are a strong nation, and we will maintain strength so sufficient that it need not

38 Smith, America’s Mission, 6.

be proven in combat—a quiet strength based not merely on the size of an arsenal, but on the nobility of ideas. Carter brought the ideas of American exceptionalism back into the American consciousness and they quickly regained influence in foreign policy.

Though the results were dramatically different, President Ronald Reagan’s policies were also informed by the idea of American exceptionalism. In his 1981 inaugural address, President Reagan, echoing Winthrop, referred to the United States as a “shining city upon a hill” that could “remake the world all over again.” The former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations and one of the most important foreign policy architects of the Reagan era, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, has described the intimate connection between exceptionalism and foreign policy during this period. She asserted, “American exceptionalism expresses the conviction that the U.S. has a moral mission which flows out of its identity and which should guide its policies. Our exceptional character, which was originally used to justify disdaining alliances and quarrels of the so-called old world, has often been cited as the grounds to improve the world.” Tony Smith argued: “no administration since Wilson’s has been as vigorous or as consistent in its dedication to the promotion of democracy abroad as that of Ronald Reagan.”


43 Smith, America’s Mission, 304.
The idea that the United States is an exceptional country and a leader of
democratic nations did not fade with the end of the Cold War. The fall of the Soviet
Union buttressed the notion of American exceptionalism. As Ole Holsti points out both
Presidents Bush and Clinton were devoted to America’s moral mission to expand
democracy. Holsti claims that these two presidents used their State of the Union
addresses and other means to direct American foreign policy in this direction. Both
believed that the United States should be committed to advancing democracy
worldwide.44 President George Bush Sr. told Americans on the eve of the Gulf War, that:

For two centuries, America has served the world as an inspiring example of
freedom and democracy. For generations, America has led the struggle to
preserve and extend the blessings of liberty. And, today, in a rapidly changing
world, American leadership is indispensable, Americans know that leadership
brings burdens and sacrifices. But we also know why the hopes of humanity turn
to us. We are Americans. We have an unique responsibility to do the hard work of
freedom. As Americans, we know there are times when we must step forward and
accept our responsibilities to lead the world away from the dark chaos of
dictators, toward the brighter promise of a better day.45

James Baker, President Bush’s Secretary of State, called American foreign policy:

the compass of American ideals and values—Freedom, democracy, equal rights,
respect for human dignity, fair play – the principles to which I adhere...Finally
and above all, I believe, like Lincoln, that the United States has a special role in
this world, a special contribution to make—as he put it, “the last, best hope for
dictators, toward the brighter promise of a better day.” 46

Like many presidents before him, George H.W. Bush committed the United States to
these goals. Though his rhetoric often out paced many of his foreign policy decisions, his


in Smith, America’s Mission, 313.
policies toward many countries including those of Eastern Europe reflected this emphasis.47

The Clinton administration was also focused on the American mission. President Bill Clinton claimed: “In an era of peril and opportunity, our overriding purpose must be to expand and strengthen the world’s community of market-based democracies.”48

The ideas, values, and norms encapsulated by exceptionalism influenced a great deal of American foreign policy during the twentieth century.

As the twenty-first century begins it appears as though these ideas will endure. In 2003 President George W. Bush declared:

Like other generations of Americans, we will meet the responsibility of defending human liberty against violence and aggression. By our resolve, we will give strength to others. By our courage, we will give hope to others. And by our actions we will secure peace and lead the world to a better day.49

As the Head of U.S. Delegation to the Commission on Human Rights in 2003, Jeanne Kirpatrick stated:

Why should we care that everyone has a right to life, liberty and security of person that is respected by his government, that no one should be subjected to arbitrary or brutal intrusions into his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to mendacious attacks on his honor or reputation? Why do we believe that everyone has the right to freedom of thought, speech, conscience, religion, including the right to change his religion or teach it to others? We believe in these principles because they are the principles on which the United States of America was founded, and by which we have lived and thrived. We believe they are right for individuals and right for states.... Our Declaration states a dream and


a doctrine of government by consent. An important part of the history of the United States has been devoted to making a reality of this dream for all Americans. As the world has shrunk, we have sought to share the dream beyond our borders. For the United States, the enjoyment and protection of the rights stipulated in our Declaration of Independence and institutionalized in our Constitution lie at the heart of our identity as a nation.50

Throughout American history the same themes have been echoed in American foreign policy. The United States, as a special nation, politically, economically and socially superior to others, has additional rights, and feels a responsibility to further democracy and freedom worldwide.

The Missionary Zeal in the Western Hemisphere: A Special Case

The American missionary zeal has particularly shaped the course of U.S.- Latin American relations. The countries of the Western Hemisphere are understood to be part of the U.S. sphere of influence and are thus of special concern to the United States. The rights and duties of the U.S., as expressed by exceptionalism, are intensified in this sphere of influence. The Monroe Doctrine, delivered to Congress on December 2, 1823 by the fifth president of the United States, declared that the American hemisphere was off limits to European powers. President James Monroe justified this policy on the basis that European countries were monarchies and thus could only have evil designs on the newly independent countries of Latin America. In contrast, President Monroe asserted that since the United States was a republic it did not pose a threat to its southern neighbors.

In 1904, President Roosevelt reinterpreted Monroe’s message, giving the United States the role of policeman in the hemisphere. The Roosevelt Corollary was the embodiment of many of the elements of exceptionalism. It declared:

...it follows that a self-respecting, just, and far-seeing nation should on the one hand endeavor by every means to aid in the development of the various movements which tend to provide substitutes for war, which tend to render nations in their actions toward one another, and indeed toward their own peoples, more responsive to the general sentiment of humane and civilized mankind; and on the other hand that it should keep prepared, while scrupulously avoiding wrongdoing itself, to repel any wrong, and in exceptional cases to take action which in a more advanced stage of international relations would come under the head of the exercise of the international police. A great free people owes it to itself and to all mankind not to sink into helplessness before the powers of evil.  

As such the United States was the judge that determined that if:

a nation shows that it knows how to act with reasonable efficiency and decency in social and political matters, if it keeps order and pays its obligations, it need fear no interference from the United States. Chronic wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society, may in America, as elsewhere, ultimately require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the Western Hemisphere the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power.  

Thus, the United States was the civilized nation that had a duty to lead other nations, especially its neighbors in the Western Hemisphere. Not only are Latin American countries within the ‘sphere of influence’ but historically, they have also been considered inferior and thus, in need of U.S. guidance.  

In Beneath the United States Lars Schoultz argues that “[a] belief in Latin American


52 Ibid.
inferiority is the essential core of United States policy toward Latin America..." This view has influenced American policy toward the region and has most certainly influenced the history of U.S. interventionism in the region. The United States has consistently used its foreign policy in an attempt to mold Latin America in its own image. For example, the United States' Agency for International Development (USAID) pressed for birth control in these countries (contrary to the Catholic tradition) during the 1970s and open markets in 1980s. Lars Schoultz explains the "U.S. Agency for international Development is paying to install U.S. style adversarial criminal procedures in four different Latin American countries." He goes on to point out that creating Latin America in its own image and seeing Latin America as inferior are two sides of the same American coin. Schoultz illustrates "the government-funded National Endowment for democracy is prepared to assist any Latin American country to hold a clean election, while no Latin American country has ever offered to help the United States boost its low voter turnout..." The Americans have attempted to reconfigure Latin American political systems into American style democracies although democracy means different things to Latin Americans. Howard Wiarda points out the differences. For example, he shows that welfarism is the most important feature of democracy in Uruguay and that strong


55 Schoultz, xiii.
government often defines many conceptions of democracy in the region. Wiarda reminds us that, “those, to North American ears, are very strange definitions of democracy and smack of the statist, mercantilist, top-down, and paternalistic regimes of the past.”\textsuperscript{56} Steve Smith similarly explains, “[o]ne of the main limitations of US democracy promotion is that the policy has been accepted as universally applicable when in fact it is a culturally and historically specific version of what democracy means.”\textsuperscript{57} Wiarda also points out that the Western -style elements of democracy that were imported or imposed on Latin America by the United States and others, are encountering difficulty and putting much of the region’s experiment with democracy in jeopardy.

\textbf{Conclusion}

Certainly, many other states espouse democracy and freedom and many believe that their political and social systems are excellent, if not superior. However, the degree to which these values and ideas influence US policy is unique. Henry Nau explains: “the United States is not unique because its domestic democratic ideals influence its foreign policy. It may be unique because its foreign policy promotes domestic ideals more self-consciously than the foreign policy of other countries.”\textsuperscript{58} Nau continues, “…while the


United States tends to moralize in foreign policy, Europe has a penchant to ideologize, and Japan to commercialize foreign issues." Owen Harries, an Australian diplomat, and founder of an American foreign policy journal, The National Interest, compares the influence of these ideas in the United States with similar ideas in other countries. He writes:

What it translates into is the doctrine of American Exceptionalism: the belief that America is exceptional, in the double sense that it is superior and that it is different, not only in degree but in kind. This has been and is a powerful force in the country.... One could multiply such examples over and over. Now it is true, of course, that other countries—France, Britain, Russia—have from time to time in their history felt a sense of mission, of carrying their civilisation to other peoples and territories. But in their cases it has been episodic and not deeply rooted—usually limited to when their power was at its zenith and usually clearly recognisable as a rationalisation for what they were doing for other reasons. In the case of the United States, it has been constant and central.

From era of Alexis de Tocqueville to time of George W. Bush, exceptionalism has been a constant and central element in American foreign policy.

The identity and role of the United States in the world as understood by Americans has an indisputable influence over U.S. actions throughout the globe. Americans see themselves as an exceptional country with special rights particularly in the Western Hemisphere, but also globally. Foreign policy documents and official and unofficial rhetoric repeatedly stress these same themes. Obviously, the United States chooses to take certain actions on the world stage for many reasons, some decisions are based primarily on strategic calculations or economic motives and have little do to with

\[59\] Ibid., 147.

the ideas or values inherent in exceptionalism. However, scholars that emphasize these
factors and dismiss the influential role played by ideational variables are missing a
crucial piece of the puzzle. The next chapter will argue that this identity and the ideas,
cultures, values, and norms within it are crucial to the understanding of American policy
toward Cuba.
CHAPTER 5

US CUBA POLICY

Introduction

A decade after the end of the Cold War the American relationship with Cuba appears to be one of the last vestiges of this bygone era. Despite the much diminished security threat posed by Cuba, this island country continues to be thought of as an enemy of the United States and relations between the two countries remain tense. Although having gone through various modifications since the early 1990s American policy toward Cuba has remained, in its essence, the same approach adopted by President Kennedy at the height of the Cold War. U.S. public opinion continues to have a significantly negative association with Cuba. A 2001 Gallup poll showed that almost 70 percent of Americans had an unfavorable opinion of Cuba.¹

This chapter explores the reasons why the United States’ policy toward Cuba has developed in this way. To fully understand this policy it is necessary to problematize many elements of the U.S.-Cuban relationship including Cuba’s status as a threat and the power of the Cuban American community. Adopting a constructivist approach and applying methods used by comparative politics scholars I will demonstrate that social context matters.

Constructivists claim that we make or construct our realities. It is easy to see how many things exist simply because humans have given them meaning. Concepts like

marriage and sovereignty exist because we act like they do. John Searle refers to these as social facts. Other things are more than social facts. They exist in a physical reality. For example, cars, fields, buildings, or guns have a physical existence beyond any meaning we might give them. But Constructivists demonstrate that the significance people or whole societies give these things have great relevance and make them much more than their physical existence. Money is more than printed paper and stamped metal, and a flag assumes significance beyond its cloth. Constructivists point out that different people or societies give different meanings to the same things and thus treat those things very differently. More and more scholars are beginning to look at relations between states through a constructivist lens. They are discovering that how and why states interact with each other often emerges from the perceptions shared by policy makers of their state’s role in the world and their perceptions of other international actors.

Jutta Weldes argues “state officials do not approach international politics with a blank slate on to which meanings are written only as a result of actions among states. Instead, they approach international politics with an already quite comprehensive and elaborate appreciation of the world, of the international system and of their place within it. This appreciation, in turn, is necessarily rooted in meanings already produced, at least in part, in domestic political and cultural contexts.”

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The United States does not have a blank slate upon which to understand Cuba. I will reveal that the American interpretation of “Cuba” has had a significant impact on foreign policy toward the island country. This interpretation is rooted in a particular American identity and the set of ideas, values, norms, and perceptions that contextualize the relationship.

The American exceptionalist identity has influenced the course and content of U.S. policy toward Cuba in numerous ways. First, exceptionalism asserts that the United States is not only special but superior to other nations. From the earliest times, the United States has thought of Cuba as inferior. Secondly, exceptionalism influenced the development of the Monroe Doctrine and helped to perpetuate its longevity. This doctrine implies that the United States has additional interests, rights and duties in the hemisphere because of the geographic proximity of the countries to the United States. Cuba is not only within this “American sphere of influence” but is especially close to America’s shores. This idea has affected the relationship between the United States and Cuba since the government of President Monroe, often implying that intervention in Cuban affairs was considered an American right or obligation. Thirdly, the American emphasis on the values of democracy and freedom and their desire to influence the development of American-style democratic institutions and values in other countries have had an especially important influence on the relationship, especially since the Cuban revolution. After 1959 Cuba was seen to be an anathema to everything the United States represented. The American self-identification as the guardian of freedom and democracy and their contrasting images of Cuba helped to construct American policy.
In this chapter, I will also examine the conventional explanations for the continuation of U.S. policy. Both traditional realist and domestic political/interest group explanations have been advanced to explain the U.S. relationship with Cuba. Both have provided considerable insight into this policy question, but, I argue they are incomplete because they ignore the weight of ideational factors such as ideas, perceptions, identity and norms. Thus, I will both causally link these norms and ideas to actual policy outcomes and show how the traditional explanations are incomplete.

U.S. Identity and Cuba Policy

U.S. policy toward Cuba emerges from the way American officials and more generally, American society, understand what it means to be “American.” This policy is also influenced by their understanding of Cuba and their perception of the American-Cuban relationship. Cuba policy is constructed by foreign policy officials in the State Department, White House, Congress, and in the various other agencies involved in making foreign policy decisions. It is also heavily influenced by the large and electorally powerful Cuban American community, based primarily in Miami and represented by the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF). Each of these decision-makers make sense of the Cuban-American relationship within a context that contains certain assumptions and worldviews. One of these worldviews revolves around the notion of what it means to be American.

The American perception of the United States as an exceptional nation, and as such, the protector of democracy and freedom and as a world leader has had a major

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impact upon their approach toward Cuba. In the early days of the US-Cuban relationship American exceptionalism influenced the US approach toward the island. For centuries, the United States has been intimately involved in Cuban affairs. Elements of American exceptionalism were, even prior to the Spanish-American War, seen to be a factor behind the U.S. interest in the island. José Martí, the revered father of Cuban independence said that the United States is “a nation that, due to geographic morality, has proclaimed its right to crown itself ruler of the continent and has announced… that it is entitled to all of North America and that its imperial right should be acknowledged…” Senator Albert Beveridge justified American involvement in the 1898 war because God has made Americans “the master organizers of the world to establish system where chaos reigns… He has made us adept in government that we may administer government among savage and senile peoples… He has marked the American people as His Chosen nation finally to lead in the regeneration of the world…” Woodrow Wilson echoed these same sentiments. In 1902 in a speech about the Spanish American War and American responsibilities in Cuba and the Philippines he referred to Americans as “apostles of liberty and self-government” and to the Filipinos and Cubans as children. These

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elements of the American identity have continued to influence foreign policy toward Cuba ever since.

**Democracy and Freedom**

Within the exceptionalist identity is an emphasis on democracy and freedom and a belief that the United States represents the embodiment of these ideals. When combined with the American missionary spirit, the United States assumes an identity as the defender of democracy and freedom, especially in its own 'backyard.' This identity has considerable influence over American policy toward Cuba.

References to democracy and freedom appear consistently in documents, speeches, interviews, and other public declarations of policy toward Cuba. More importantly, they also appear in confidential documents, and were repeatedly mentioned during confidential interviews. This identity and its related norms have been institutionalized in American policies and actions.

The perception that Cuba is antithetical to the values of democracy and freedom influence the content and intensity of US statements and policies toward the island. Cuba is represented as an enemy of democracy and freedom in U.S. legislation, official speeches and most media reports. President George W. Bush emphasized these images in a July 13, 2001 speech. He stated that the Cuban government:

routinely stifles all the freedoms that make us human. The United States stands opposed to such tyranny and will oppose any attempt to weaken sanctions against the Castro regime until it respects the basic human rights of its citizens, frees political prisoners, holds democratic free elections, and allows free speech."

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How the US sees itself and how the US sees Cuba go hand in hand, each reinforcing the other identity. Policy toward the island is constructed in a large part by these images and identities that are taken for granted.\textsuperscript{10}

The American perception of human rights under Castro is consistently more critical than any other state. Most countries perceive that human rights are not fully respected in Cuba but they disagree on the extent of the violations. The American comments on this matter are almost always more vehement than other countries. Helms-Burton describes the human rights abuses in Cuba as “massive, systematic, and extraordinary.”\textsuperscript{11} The United States has, by far, been the most critical and outspoken opponent of the Castro government’s human rights record.

In 1998, it appeared to many that the human rights situation in Cuba was improving. For example, that year the Organization of American States reported that “some positive steps have also been taken on human rights [in Cuba].” The OAS report listed eight categories of positive change including greater religious freedom and advances in press freedom, among others.\textsuperscript{12} Similarly, Lloyd Axworthy, the Canadian Foreign Minister, defended Cuba, stating that there have been “major changes” in the

\textsuperscript{10} Just as important, for the bilateral Cuban-American relationship is how Cubans perceive the United States. However, that is beyond the scope of this work.


human rights situation in Cuba. Though the United States recognized some of these changes, they were much more skeptical of the developments, declaring:

The Government's human rights record remained poor. It continued systematically to violate fundamental civil and political rights of its citizens.... The Government denied citizens the freedoms of speech, press, assembly, and association. It limited the distribution of foreign publications and news to selected party faithful and maintained strict censorship of news and information to the public. The Government restricts some religious activities but permits others. It allowed a visit by Pope John Paul II, permitted some public processions on feast days, and reinstated Christmas as an official holiday, but has not responded to the Papal appeal that the Church be allowed to play a greater role in Cuban society... The American perception of the democracy and human rights situation in Cuba is generally more adamant and critical than other countries' perceptions of the island. Cuba is consistently represented as the antithesis of everything the United States represents.

Official policy decisions and statements faithfully reflect the values and ideas contained in the American exceptionalist identity. According to the U.S. Interests Section in Havana: “U.S. policymakers have agreed on the overall objective of U.S. policy toward Cuba -- to help bring democracy and respect for human rights to the island.”

Vicki Huddleston, then Principal Officer at the US Interests Section in Havana asserts: “there are three pillars of United States policy: 1- The promotion of human rights,

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democracy and the rule of law-, 2- The promotion of open economic and communications systems; and 3- A reduction of global scourges to the environment of disease, terrorism and crime around the world.”\(^{16}\) A January 1997 government document declares: “Once Cuba has a transition government -- that is, a government committed to the establishment of a fully democratic, pluralistic society -- the United States will be prepared to begin normalizing relations and provide assistance to support Cuba’s transition.”\(^{17}\)

American government officials both publicly and privately emphasize that democracy and freedom (including respect for human rights) are among the top, if not the top priority of their policy toward the island. State Department officials in Washington and American diplomats in Havana emphasized the importance of democracy promotion in US policy toward Cuba during interviews conducted by the author in 1999 and 2000.\(^{18}\) Michael Kozak, a former head of the U.S. Interest Section in Cuba began a recent speech with “I have spent major portions of the past 20 years working on the problem of how to bring about a transition to a democratic Cuba.”\(^{19}\) Richard Nuccio, the top advisor on Cuban affairs during the first Clinton administration, maintains that democracy is a top


\(^{18}\)Confidential interviews with senior government officials, 1999-2000.

\(^{19}\)Michael Kozak, “Doing Business in Post-Castro Cuba.” Ambassador Kozak gave the author a copy of this speech he delivered in Miami. It was not dated.
priority of U.S. policy. Daniel W. Fisk, a senior staff member of the Council of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that drafted the 1996 Helms-Burton Act, has explained: “US foreign policy contains a “democracy agenda,” especially in its relations towards the Western Hemisphere.” Jeffrey Davidow, the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs stated: “It is Cuba’s implacable hostility to the concepts of democracy and freedom that make our relationship with the Cuban government so different from our relationship with the other nations of the hemisphere. The Cuban government actively opposes the aspiration of its people to democracy.”

Democracy and human rights are slated as a top priority in almost every major post-cold war American document concerned with Cuba. The promotion of democracy is listed as one of the top US goals in the region as stated by the Presidential Review Directive process (PRD-21) for the Latin American and Caribbean region. The Americas Free Trade Act introduced in the Senate on January 22, 2001 to authorize negotiation of free trade agreements with the countries of the Americas heavily emphasizes these factors. The Act states that Cuba will remain an exception to free trade until:

freedom has been restored in Cuba, for purpose of subsection (a), unless the President determines that--


(1) a constitutionally guaranteed democratic government has been established in Cuba with leaders chosen through free and fair elections; 
(2) the rights of individuals to private property have been restored and are effectively protected and broadly exercised in Cuba; 
(3) Cuba has a currency that is fully convertible domestically and internationally; 
(4) all political prisoners have been released in Cuba; and 
(5) the rights of free speech and freedom of the press in Cuba are effectively guaranteed. 

Similarly, bills that aim to remove restrictions on trade with Cuba also emphasize human rights and democracy promotion. For example, the Free Trade with Cuba Act, introduced in the Senate on February 22, 2001 states that “the United States can best support democratic change in Cuba by promoting trade and commerce, travel, communications, and cultural, academic, and scientific exchanges.” These types of statements and corresponding policy decisions reflect the American exceptionalist identity and its emphasis on these values.

This is more than just a desire to see Cuba democratize. The United States’ foreign policy establishment considers it a duty to ensure that Cuba democratizes. This is where US policy, particularly, stands out. The Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (Libertad) Act (also known as the Helms-Burton Act) declares “The United States has shown a deep commitment, and considers it a moral obligation, to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms as expressed in the Charter of the United

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Nations and in the Universal declaration of Human Rights.” Helms-Burton also declares: “The Cuban people deserve to be assisted in a decisive manner to end the tyranny that has oppressed them for 36 years, and the continued failure to do so constitutes ethically improper conduct by the international community.” Daniel Fisk explained US policy toward Cuba this way. He said many accounts of the policy totally miss “an essential element of American foreign policy, that is, the views of a significant segment of the foreign policy elite of America’s mission in the world and how this ‘mission’ is played out through the structure and interaction of the policy-making institutions.” The United States considers itself to be on a moral mission in Cuba. Americans feel obligated to promote democracy and freedom in Cuba.

Democracy promotion and its related values has been an important element of American policy toward Cuba for the past half century reflecting the American identity and their corresponding duty to advance freedom and democracy. Democracy promotion in Cuba is more than just a means to another end. However, when these values are combined with other elements in American exceptionalism it becomes even more apparent how they work together to direct this US policy. The next two subsections will demonstrate how these values, in combination with additional elements of

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25 “Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (Libertad) Act of 1996.” P.L. 104-114. (http://www.usinfo.state.gov/regional/ar/us-cuba/libertad.htm) August 26, 2001. The Helms-Burton Act was a tightening of the embargo. Among other things it expanded the categories of parties that were targets of sanctions including foreign individuals and companies. It also sets out the conditions that Cuba must meet before the U.S. can re-engage with Cuba including the ouster of Fidel and Raul Castro. The Act also codifies these regulations and thus removes the President’s power to significantly alter U.S.-Cuban policy.

26 Ibid.

27 Fisk, 45.
exceptionalism, account for the content and intensity of the American approach toward Cuba.

The United States as Superior

The belief that the United States is politically, socially, economically and morally superior is fundamental to exceptionalism. The closer a state is to the United States’ model the better (and less inferior) it is. Cuba, for most of its history, has been considered distant from the United States in all these categories and thus seen as quite inferior. For centuries the Cubans were looked upon as well meaning children in need of tutelage. Prior to the revolution Cubans (and other Latin Americans) were portrayed as a naïve, uncivilized and child-like people who required American guidance. For example, President McKinley said that Cuba, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico were a “great trust” that the United States taken on “under the providence of God and in the name of human progress and civilization.”28 Cartoons as late as the 1950s portrayed Cubans as children in need of American guardianship.29 Even as Castro assumed power this image was alive and well. At this time, senior Washington statesmen viewed Cuba’s leader as a wayward child. Nixon talked about needing to lead Castro “in the right direction.”30

The American view of human rights and democracy in Cuba is re-inforced by the comparison between the US and Cuba. For example, in 1984 the Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, Dante Fascell asserted “just come to my State and look


29 Ibid, 6.

at the smiling, happy faces of almost 1 million people who came from Cuba to the land of freedom, and I’m sure many others in Cuba would like to do the same thing if they had the opportunity.”

More recently, Vikki Huddleston, the Chief of the American Mission in Havana from 1999 until 2002 remarked that “[i]t is fundamental that Cubans begin to learn how to govern themselves.”

Surveys of the American public reveal that they also believe that Cuba is inferior. A 2000 poll asked “Generally speaking, is the US system of economics and government morally superior to the Cuban system of economics and government?” Sixty-three percent said yes, another 28 percent answered that they were not sure and only nine percent disagreed with the statement.

Another survey asked respondents to compare Fidel Castro to “Adolph Hitler, when he was dictator in Germany during World War II.” Over 43 percent said Castro was as bad as Hitler and an additional 12.5 percent said he was worse than Hitler.

American policy makers and the US public share the opinion that in numerous categories, Cuba is inferior to the United States. This contributes to the sense that the United States knows what is best for the island and the corresponding policies that

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32 Vicki Huddleston, “US-Cuba Relations After Elian Gonzalez.”

33 Polling the Nations (1986 through 2001), Portrait of America (Matthews, NC: Rasmussen Research, 2000).

attempt to dictate Cuba’s future. The idea that Cuba is intimately tied to the United States strengthens the “US knows best” attitude. The next section will address the role of this factor in American Cuba policy.

Cuba is Within U.S. Sphere of Influence

American foreign policy makers have historically conceptualized the western hemisphere as being within their own “sphere of influence.” This is both a perception and a norm as it encapsulates consequential behavior. Behavior that would be considered inappropriate in other areas of the globe is considered normal within the western hemisphere. The reference to Latin America and the Caribbean as America’s “backyard” reflects the American perception that these countries are not wholly independent. Consequently, the United States government believes they have latitude to intervene in the internal affairs of the countries in the region. This attitude was officially expressed in 1823, when President Monroe warned European powers that Latin America and the Caribbean were the exclusive concern of the United States of America. This policy, known as the Monroe Doctrine, marked the beginning of an historical pattern that has characterized U.S. policy toward the region ever since. The American annexation of the territories now known as Texas, New Mexico, and California from Mexico in the first half of the nineteenth century, and the confrontation with the British over the Venezuelan border, after the American civil war, were early examples of the Monroe Doctrine in action.

Cuba, by virtue of it proximity and historically close ties to the United States is perceived to be even more within the American sphere of influence and in need of
American guidance. In fact, a former senior U.S. government official asserted that “Geography was the most important factor determining U.S.-Cuban relations.” Americans were interested in the island as early as the colonial period when they traded with Cubans. Once Florida was purchased from Spain in 1819 American leaders became even more aware of the island. Strategic concerns over Cuba were complemented by the growing perception that Cuba would one day become part of the U.S. and that Cubans needed American guidance. President Martin Van Buren thought that Cuba should be tied to Spain or to the United States because Cubans were incapable of governing the island themselves. Consequently, the U.S. made repeated attempts to purchase Cuba from Spain.

When the U.S. intervened in Cuba’s war with Spain in 1898, President McKinley declared that the U.S. was carrying out its duty because the island “is right at our door.” American intervention ended the war that same year, but the United States continued to occupy Cuba until 1902. The Platt Amendment, which the U.S. government subsequently attached to the Cuban constitution, listed numerous conditions under which the Cuban government should operate and stated that the United States had a right to

35 Jorge Dominguez makes the argument that U.S.-Cuba policy is a continuation of a pattern going back to the Monroe Doctrine in his paper, “US-Cuban Relations: From the Cold War to the Colder War.” Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs 39, 3 (Fall 1997): 49-73.


39 April 11, 1898, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1898, 757.
intervene in Cuban affairs. American leaders fully believed in this right and continued to exercise immense influence on the island. By 1906, the U.S. military was once again in control of Cuba. This second intervention only lasted three years, but it reinforced the American attitude that Cubans could not govern themselves.

Americans continued to view Cuban sovereignty as pliable. For example, in 1933, the U.S. refused to recognize the new nationalist government that declared the Platt Amendment invalid and initiated reforms that would reduce American influence and holdings on the island. In 1934, the United States assisted the more conservative and pro-American faction in the revolutionary coalition, lead by Fulgencio Batista, to assume power.

During the first half of the twentieth century American economic and political influence in Cuba was enormous. At this time, Americans controlled all of the oil refineries, ninety percent of the mines and eighty percent of Cuban public utilities. Although investment in Cuba was on the decline from its height in the early 1920s, by 1959, Americans still had one billion dollars invested in Cuba. The statement made by the American Secretary of War, Elihu Root, in 1902 remained relevant in Batista’s Cuba,

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42 Paterson, Contesting Castro, 5.

43 Ibid, 14.

44 Ibid.
fifty years later. He said, “Although [Cuba] is technically a foreign country, practically and morally it occupies an intermediate position.”

Cuba by virtue of its’ location and its’ history of ties to the United States was seen to be intimately connected to the United States. Since the end of Spanish domination, the United States had looked upon Cuba as a parent would an irrational child, in need of U.S. control for its own good.

The American norm that Cuba was in its sphere of influence continued to influence U.S. policy even after Fidel Castro tore the island away from the U.S. fold in the early 1960s. When Castro challenged American domination of Cuba, it was natural for the United States to assume they could buy Castro off and, when that failed, to oppose him. Castro came to power touting Cuban sovereignty and denouncing American interference. The perception that Cuba was not wholly independent from the United States is revealed by the language used to describe Cuba and US-Cuban relations at the time. Government officials frequently spoke of the “loss” of Cuba. Consequently, tension characterized even the earliest relationship between the United States and Castro’s regime.

Castro’s challenge to the U.S. perception that Cuba was firmly within the American sphere of influence intensified the growing animosity between Havana and Washington. In 1960 Congressman Mendel Rivers (D-SC) told Congress “We should assert the Monroe Doctrine. We should threaten Castro with Blockade. We should, if necessary, and, if conditions demand it, occupy Cuba.”

During the Cuban missile crisis

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45 Quoted in Paterson, Contesting Castro, 5.

the United States policy makers turned back to the Monroe Doctrine asserting that it “is just as valid in 1962 as it was in 1823, though the old imperialism of Western Europe has been replaced by the new and far more menacing political and ideological imperialism of international communism.”

Not understanding the strong support within Cuba for independence from their northern neighbors, American leaders thought that the Cuban people would welcome a U.S. invasion. Consequently, President Kennedy and his advisors were shocked when the Cuban people supported Castro during the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion. Even after the Bay of Pigs, American policy makers still believed they had a special relationship with Cuba that entitled them to intervene in Cuban affairs. Yet, throughout the rest of the Cold War, Castro remained ardently protective of Cuban sovereignty and continued to challenge the American perception of U.S.-Cuban relations. These different perceptions go to the heart of the U.S.-Cuba hostility. Each side is convinced that they occupy the moral high ground. To many Americans, Cuba is a state run by an evil totalitarian dictator who threatens his own people and American values. They believe it is their duty to protect Cuba from Castro. To many Cubans, the U.S. is an imperial power that wants to control their island and reduce Cuba to a dependent position.

The norm that Cuba should be under American influence, that it did not have a legitimate right to complete sovereignty, continued to influence the American approach toward Cuba after the end of the Cold War. Cuba is still considered to be within the American sphere of influence. Jeffrey Davidow told an audience in 1997 that the

“repression and hardship is happening just 90 miles from our shores to, among others, the parents, brothers, and sisters of U.S. citizens in a country of 11 million people.”\(^{48}\) The end of the Cold War has done nothing to erase this long held perception of Cuba within the United States.

Cuba’s location, and all that it implies, continues to influence policy. The Helms-Burton Act, more strongly than any American document of the Cold War era, demonstrates that the United States still believes it has a right to dictate Cuban affairs.\(^{49}\) Section 205 states that Cuba will have a transitional government when the Cuban government releases all political prisoners, makes all political activity legal, and establishes free and fair elections. In addition, Helms-Burton also states that both Fidel and Raul Castro must be absent from the new Cuban government.\(^{50}\) Essentially, if the Cuban people chose Fidel Castro as their leader in a free and fair election, the United States, under Helms-Burton, would automatically declare the election invalid. According to Helms-Burton, the new government must also allow for the unfettered transmission of Radio and TV Marti. Furthermore, this Act dictates that Cuba give up its socialist system and return property to American citizens.\(^{51}\) Jorge Dominguez, a well-respected expert in Cuban affairs at Harvard University, asserts that:


\(^{49}\) Jorge Dominguez, “US-Cuban Relations: From the Cold War to the Colder War,” 49-75.


\(^{51}\) Ibid, sec. 206.
all of these desiderata go well beyond any internationally recognized criteria for the determination of democratic or transitional democratizing governments under the charters of the United Nations or the Organization of American States. Mandating them in US legislation as defining characteristics of a democratic or transitional Cuban government makes a mockery of the pledge to respect Cuban sovereignty.\textsuperscript{52}

In many respects, Helms-Burton takes the United States-Cuban relationship back to the pre-Castro days when the United States openly violated Cuban sovereignty. The American perception that the United States has a right to interfere in Cuban domestic affairs has greatly influenced the course of policy toward Cuba. Castro’s challenge to these elements inherent in American identity is one of the reasons behind the American perception of Castro’s regime.

The United States does not approach its decisions regarding policy toward Cuba with a clean slate. American exceptionalism with its emphasis on democracy, freedom, and human rights has an influence on the policy. In addition, the belief that the United States is superior to Cuba and has special rights in the region contributes to the belief that the United States knows what is best for Cuba. These factors have influenced the direction of this foreign policy for many years despite considerable international pressure to normalize relations. The next section will demonstrate that the norms directing US Cuba policy have become institutionalized, thereby ensuring the longevity of the approach.

\textsuperscript{52} Jorge Dominguez, “US-Cuban Relations”.
The institutionalization of norms increases their power and longevity. Robert Keohane and Judith Goldstein explain:

Regardless of how a particular set of beliefs comes into influence politics, use of those ideas over time implies changes in existing rules and norms...Once ideas have influenced organizational design, their influence will be reflected in the incentives of those in the organization and those whose interests are served by it...In this sense ideas can have an impact even when no one generally believes in them...53

According to Jeffrey Checkel, norms have become institutionalized when they become embedded in organizations (bureaucratic measure) and when they become incorporated into judicial codes, laws or constitutions (legal measure).

Using both measures and Keohane and Goldstein’s description it is clear that the world-view shared by the foreign policy community and CANF has been institutionalized. The acceptance of these ideas for so many decades has constrained policy debate. American policy toward Cuba has remained relatively unchanged for forty years. One senior American official admitted that “there was a fair amount of inertia” involved in the continuation of the current policy.54

These ideas have become institutionalized in legislation. For example, the Cuban Democracy Act and the Cuban Liberty and Democracy and Solidarity Act (also known as the Helms- Burton Act) embody these ideas and norms about the U.S.-Cuban relationship and make it more difficult to change the American approach to Cuba. Helms-Burton itself

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furthers the longevity of this approach since the Act removes the President’s power to lift the embargo.

They have also become institutionalized through the acceptance of the Cuban American National Foundation as an expert in U.S. – Cuban relations. CANF, and consequently, their norms and ideas, have been able to gain and wield influence in some ways similar to how epistemic communities extend their influence. Peter Haas and Emanuel Alder explain that epistemic communities wield influence by “diffusing ideas and influencing the positions adopted by a wide range of actors, including domestic and international agencies, government bureaucrats and decision makers, legislative and corporate bodies, and the public.”55 While epistemic communities are normally thought of as international communities and as the above definition indicates influence international agencies, and although CANF is an American lobby group, they are able to sway policy formulation in a similar fashion.

This lobby group has become accepted as the expert on Cuban affairs in Washington. According to the CANF’s website:

For two decades CANF has worked tirelessly to forge a broad bipartisan consensus on U.S. policy toward Cuba and has built bridges of close communication with the executive and legislative branches. Our influence extends internationally, where we raise awareness of Cuba's plight with world leaders and in capitals around the globe. CANF's research, education, and information efforts are designed to enlighten the media, academia, policy makers, and public opinion - domestically and abroad - on Cuban issues. These efforts have led Hispanic Business magazine to call CANF "the leading clearinghouse for information devoted solely to Cuba."56


CANF's ideas have penetrated a number of key institutions involved in formulating Cuba policy. For example, CANF officials are frequently given the floor during congressional hearings where they are granted a chance to present their opinion and counter opposing testimony. For example, the then Vice Chairman of CANF, Jorge Mas Canosa testified before the House International Relations Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs on March 24, 1999. He countered the proposals to allow the sale of food and medicine to Cuba. He stated “Mr. Chairman, selling Castro food and medicine unconditionally, as some are suggesting, is not the answer... We simply cannot allow it.”57 Their version of events is often accepted without question.58

The perception of Castro’s Cuba as an enemy to the values of democracy and freedom and subsequently an enemy of the United States has become institutionalized. Their hard line approach, including their support for the embargo, has likewise become institutionalized thereby, making it more difficult to change policy.

**International Norms**

The strength of these domestic ideational factors enabled the U.S. to resist strong international norms that favor open relations with Cuba. Clearly, the United States has felt those pressures. Other states, have and continue to, voice their opposition to this American policy within international forums like the United Nations, the Organization of American States (OAS) and the World Trade Organization (WTO), amongst others. The United Nations has frequently condemned the U.S. approach toward Cuba. In 1992 the

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UN General Assembly adopted resolution 19/47 that called for the end of the embargo against Cuba. That year 59 states voted for the resolution, 3 against and 74 others abstained. Each year since, the UN has passed a similar resolution calling for an end to the American embargo. In 2000, 167 nations voted in favor of the resolution, 3 were against it and 4 states abstained. American friends and allies have voiced their opposition to the policy. In 2000, the EU representative to the General Assembly declared:

The European Union noted with concern the findings of United Nations agencies and programmes in situ, and deplored the adverse and often dramatic effects of the United States economic embargo on Cuba’s population, in particular, on women and children. Members of the Union would unanimously vote in favour of the draft resolution.  

Though Cuba policy is generally not a top priority of visiting heads of states, many senior officials have subtly, and sometimes not so subtly, raised their opposition to the embargo and especially to the Helms-Burton Act with American policymakers. For example, Lloyd Axworthy, the Canadian foreign minister, was especially critical of the U.S. embargo. He stated “the whole embargo and the Helms-Burton bill is totally counterproductive... It just doesn’t work.” The United States has not changed their approach toward Cuba despite considerable pressure to end the embargo from numerous allies and international organizations.

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Furthermore, the moral issues raised by Pope John Paul II during his visit to Cuba in 1998 and, since then, other religious leaders as well, have come to bear on the American ideational factors that influence the continuation of the embargo. Unlike the numerous UN resolutions, the pressure from religious leaders has had some impact on American policy toward Cuba. US foreign policy so closely tied to a notion of a “moral mission” could not completely ignore calls from the Pope. Consequently, there was some change in American policy, most specifically resulting in the series of measures enacted in March of 1998.  

However, in its essence, U.S. policy has remained unchanged despite these international pressures. Gordon Griffin, a US Ambassador to Canada, emphasized that the Pope’s visit did not result in any serious change to American policy toward the island. He stated: “The fact is we’ve seen no material change (within Cuba) since (the Pope) left.”  

American officials assert that the sanctions will continue until they see considerable change in Cuba’s political, social and economic systems. President George W. Bush announced in the summer of 2001, that his administration would apply more pressure on the Cuban regime. In 2002, the Chief of the US Mission in Havana stated that before any change is US policy is considered “there needs to be fundamental change

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62 These measures include the resumption of direct charter flights between the U.S. and Cuba, allowing Cuban-Americans to send up to $300 four times a year to their families in Cuba and the expedition of the sale of medicines to Cuba. See President Clinton’s “Statement on Cuba” Administration of William J. Clinton, 1998 (March 20, 1998), 475.


in Cuba,” including democratic elections and human rights improvements. In 2002, the Bush team ordered a review of Cuba policy but continued to maintain that improvement in relations between the US and Cuba “will only be possible when Cuba moves to a more democratic system and a market economy.” Thus, despite international norms and some domestic pressures to relax tensions with Cuba, the embargo remains the cornerstone of U.S. policy, a reflection of the degree to which the domestic norms and ideas have been ingrained.

**Alternative Explanations**

The literature on U.S. foreign policy to Cuba is extensive. However, explanations for this policy have generally fallen within one of two categories. During the Cold War the Realist national security paradigm was prominent and in many quarters remains the dominant interpretation of this approach. However, the most popular explanation since the end of the Cold War has been the role of the Cuban American community. This section addresses both these models, demonstrating that neither offers a complete account.

**The Domestic Interest Group Explanation**

Most of the current scholarship that examines the U.S.-Cuban relationship stresses the importance of the Cuban American community in the development and continuation of the embargo. Indeed, this large ethnic group has become one of the most electorally powerful groups in American politics, consistently voting as a bloc, managing

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to sway the outcomes of elections in Florida, which as the 2000 election proved, is a crucial swing state in national elections. Furthermore, they are represented by a well-connected interest group, that has access to many prominent Washington officials, including the President and Congress members. They have consistently out-maneuvered many other powerful groups that want to establish normal relations with Cuba, including many business and agricultural lobbies, and the Chamber of Commerce.

How has this group been able to wield this much power? I argue that constructivist concepts go a long way toward explaining how Cuban Americans managed to become so influential in Washington. The American perception of Cuba and ideas espoused by Cuban exiles help explain their disproportionate influence.

Following the revolution, Cuban exiles were given preferential treatment by the U.S. government because their ideas resonated with, and reinforced, the US approach toward the Castro regime. The American identity as the “beacon of democracy” and the image of Cuba as the enemy of those values have influenced the United States approach toward Cuba. These contrasting identities have influenced the American perception of Cuban immigrants and consequently have had a significant influence over policy.

The first wave that arrived in the United States just after Fidel Castro assumed control of the island were characterized as political refugees or exiles who fled Cuba because they were persecuted for their political opinions. They were engaged in a fight for freedom. Indeed, many of the Cubans who left after Castro took over were likely motivated by fear of political persecution. Yet, the American image of these "refugees from communism" or “freedom fighters” obscured their other reasons for leaving the
island. They were the wealthiest Cubans and lost the most financially when Castro set his socialist plan in motion.

The later arrivals have proven to be even less politically motivated. María de los Angeles Torres reports that the exiles that arrived during the 1980s, the Marielitos:

generally held a more balanced view of Castro’s programs, often praising its systems of healthcare and education, its sports programs, and its gutsy nationalism... they parted ways with Cuba’s leadership because of its inefficient governance and poor economic performance... They wanted more- more economic and educational opportunities, more consumer goods, more sexual freedom, more liberty to travel. 67

Furthermore, the search for a better economic future continues to motivate the most recent arrivals. The increase in the number of rafters during the “the special period” after Soviet subsidies dried up and the Cuban standard of living plummeted, indicates that in general, the more recent arrivals are not as much fleeing from fear of political persecution as they are running toward a better economic situation. However, for decades their economic motives for leaving were overshadowed by their political image which influenced and then reinforced the American response to the Castro regime.

The American perception of Cubans as political refugees was one of the main sources of their influence over U.S. foreign policy. It gave the community credibility and access to the highest levels of policymakers. Maria de los Angeles Torres in her analysis of Cuban exile politics in the United States asserted:

In the first instance the political incorporation of postrevolution Cuban émigrés into the United States resulted from their symbolic and political utility... the political development of Cuban exiles has not followed the typical path of other immigrant communities that first obtained political power at the local level in

order to gain access to resources such as jobs and service. ... Cuban exiles acquired political significance in the foreign policy realm first and in the domestic realm only later.  

Jorge Dominguez asserts that “the U.S. government promoted virtually unrestricted migration from Cuba, suspending parts of the U.S. immigration statutes because these were “refugees from communism.” Because Cubans shared with American policymakers a similar perception of Castro’s Cuba and were perceived as on the side of democracy and freedom they were admitted to the U.S. as political refugees, not immigrants, allowing them to bypass many of the normal restrictions placed on other immigrants. As a result, Cubans became permanent residents and then citizens faster than other immigrant groups, facilitating the rapid growth of the Cuban American population in Florida and their subsequent ability to wield major influence over election results. The American perception of Cuba as a communist enemy in the American backyard and the Cubans as exiles, freedom fighters, or political refugees led to the special status accorded to Cuban migrants and consequently, contributed to their domestic political power.

The U.S. government also facilitated the organization of the Cuban population into a focused and powerful group. When Castro assumed power, the Cuban exiles in Florida believed that he was a short-term dictator who lacked the support of the general populace. They were eager to push him out of Cuba. This view was also the accepted wisdom on Capitol Hill and within government agencies. The Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations, believing that Castro’s regime did not have the support of the Cuban

68 Torres, 182.

people, authorized the training and organization of Cuban exiles in Florida to take part in the Bay of Pigs invasion. This shared perception led directly to the invasion and gave the Cuban exiles access to the highest levels of government for the first time.

The influence of Cuban Americans increased significantly under President Ronald Reagan who encouraged the establishment of the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF).\(^70\) Reagan understood that the Cuban American perceptions and ideas complemented his own perception of Cuba. According to Patrick Haney and Walt Vanderbush “the Reagan administration’s approach to Latin America coincided almost perfectly with their [the CANF leadership] own worldview.”\(^71\) He wanted to give further credibility to his own ideas and also saw the group as an ally in his war against communism and Castro.

CANF still receives federal funding, through the National Endowment for Democracy and other programs. The government has allowed the Foundation to run both Radio and T.V. Marti and was given funding to help Cuban Americans resettle in Florida.\(^72\) Members are frequently called to Capitol Hill to provide testimony on Cuba issues. The Cuban American National Foundation was given money and influence by the policy makers because their ideas and perceptions of Cuba resonated with American leaders.

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\(^70\) Peter Schwab, *Cuba: Confronting the U.S. Embargo* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 137.


\(^72\) Ibid.
Even though CANF has a large base of support in the Miami area and is able to mobilize votes, there is a significant element within the Cuban community that oppose CANF. They are represented by other Cuban American groups such as the Cuban-American Committee, the Cuban-American Pro-Family Reunification Committee and the Cuban-American Coalition, which in contrast, advocate dialogue with Cuba. These groups have not garnered much influence despite having at times significant bases of support with the Cuban-American community. As Torres points out three thousand people attended a breakfast meeting during the 1988 presidential race held by the Pro-Family Reunification Committee. Torres argues that Clinton would have gained a greater percentage of the Cuban-American vote in Florida in the 1992 presidential election if he had altered his policy vis-à-vis Cuba and came down solidly for improved relations.  

Despite the potential number of votes available, presidential candidates have not attempted to tap into the pro-dialogue segments of the community nor have those Cuban Americans been given a voice in policy decisions. Given the potential votes from the pro-normalization segment of the community, CANF’s influence must derive from more than the group’s electoral base. Their influence has been institutionalized and will remain so as long as policy makers and CANF share the same perceptions of the U.S.-Cuban relationship. American policy makers continue to support CANF’s influence because of these shared perceptions.

Furthermore, even though CANF has a comparatively large influence over policy formation, many of the government officials I interviewed in Washington and in Havana said that the community’s influence is often exaggerated, that the power over this policy

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73 Torres, 147.
remains firmly in the hands of Washington policymakers. They said that elements within the government have used the Cuban American lobby to push for policies that they want to see enacted. When former Cubans attest to the atrocities in Cuba and push for certain policies they make it difficult for opponents of the policies. It is hard for someone born in the United States to argue facts or policy about Cuba with someone from the island. The Cubans automatically have more credibility and thus are valuable to pro-embargo policy makers. In short, Cuban Americans do have a voice but not because they have demanded that power. To a great degree they are influential because a significant number of policy makers want the Cuban American view to be heard.

Richard Allen told Patrick Haney that the lobby was created by Reagan’s people to be used “as an effective tool to promote the President’s aggressive Latin American policy.” 74 Haney and Vanderbush also point out that “[t]he Reagan team and some Cuban-Americans … were both faced with the need to shift public perceptions on related issues at a similar period of time. From the beginning, the role of Cuba was an integral part of the Reagan explanation of security threats in Central America and the Caribbean.” 75 Torres explains that the exiles “fulfilled the ideological functions of providing evidence that communism is a repressive system; they had shown that they preferred to flee to a free country.” 76

74 Haney and Vanderbush, “The Role of Ethnic Interest Groups.”

75 Ibid, 347.

76 Torres, 59.
One senior official put it this way: "the influence of the Cuban-American lobby is overblown. Their job is one of reminding the government of the reason for their policy toward Cuba." Another senior official explained that the government chooses when to consult with the community. This was especially true before CANF was created by the Reagan administration. An official who had worked in the Carter administration explained that although the Cuban Americans were regularly consulted by the administration before decisions were made, Carter's people did not consult with the community when they knew that the Cuban Americans would oppose their decision. For example, the administration did not confer with the community in advance of an important meeting with the Cuban government over maritime issues. Only after an agreement was reached between the two countries did the administration inform the Cuban American community. Carter knew the community would be opposed and wanted to present it to them as a fait accompli. The Clinton administration's return of Elian Gonzalez, the Cuban boy that was the center of an international incident for months, is a more recent and public example of the government going against the expressed wishes of the community.

Thus, although the Cuban American lobby is powerful and does hold some sway over policy toward Cuba their influence is a product of shared ideas and agreement on policy toward Cuba. The Cuban American community gained preferential treatment and access to the upper echelons of the government because they reinforced the perceptions,

77 Confidential interview with senior government official, 2000.

beliefs and ideas of a significant segment of the government. Their power was most dramatically increased under Reagan, the President whose view of Cuba most closely matched their own. The Reagan administration was instrumental in the creation and rise of the Cuban American National Foundation and successive administrations have frequently used the lobby as a tool to advance their policy goals.

Additionally, although the lobby is able to exert considerable influence on their own, independent of the preferential treatment given to them on Capitol Hill, they are not always successful. Certainly, many of their ideas and influence have been institutionalized as they are regarded as experts on Cuba matters and given access to top-level officials and committees. These ideas and perceptions are found widely in most Cuba bills that are eventually passed into law. Yet, the government does not always consult with the community and occasionally takes a stance contrary to their stated policy goals.

The root and continued power of the community is directly a result of the ideas that were held in common by influential Cuban Americans and the policy community. They would not have the power or the ability to sway policy if they did not share ideas and perceptions with the foreign policy establishment. Contrary to popular belief CANF has not held the U.S. government hostage. Thus, the scholarship that purports to explain policy toward Cuba solely on the basis of the effectiveness of the Cuban American lobby not only exaggerates their power but often neglects to explain why and how they are able to exert influence. A constructivist examination reveals the missing link.
The Security Explanation

Both classical Realism and Neorealism paint a picture of a perpetually anarchic and insecure world where power and security interests are paramount.\(^79\) Constructivists maintain that this "world" should not be taken as a given because it is socially constructed, a product of our culture, identities, norms, ideas and perceptions. It is, according to Nicholas Onuf, "a world of our making."\(^80\) Constructivists have made a habit out of challenging Realism. They have shown that Realism cannot explain a wide variety of state actions including, but far from limited to, the end of the Cold War, the continuation of NATO, and the existence of nuclear capable states that refuse to develop nuclear weapons.

The Cubans have never been able to understand the American perception that Cuba is a threat. According to a leading Cuban scholar "-that Cuba constitutes a threat to U.S. security or that it pretends to change the U.S. regime- is unbelievable for most Cubans...Why the United States is more hostile toward Cuba than toward any other nation-excepting only those countries against which it has waged wars, such as Korea or Viet Nam? Why is it more recalcitrant against Cuba than against the Soviet Union or China?"\(^81\) The focus of successive American administrations on the "Cuban threat" is not

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only unbelievable to Cubans but poses a problem for Realism, especially in a post Cold War world.

The Realist explanation for US-Cuban relations was given serious attention by scholars and the public alike during the height of the Cold War when Cuba was portrayed as a significant threat to the security of the Western Hemisphere. The Realist emphasis on security naturally resonated with scholars during this period of history. There is much to be said for the Realist explanation during that era. Indeed, this theory does help explain a great deal of US policy toward Cuba during the Cold War.

Though the Cuban military alone was not a significant threat, with Soviet support Soviet support and under Soviet protection, Cuba could marshal the capabilities to mount a serious challenge to American security during the Cold War. However, at that time most scholars and policy makers thought Cuba presented a greater a security threat to American allies or interests in other parts of Latin America. As Gregory Treverton argues though Cuba “did not pose a direct threat to the territory of the United States... in unusual circumstances [it could] pose such a threat to Mexican or Venezuelan oil fields of interest to the United States.” In the late 1980s he stated “the U.S. security concern is hypothetical but not out of the question.”

82 Though Cuba did represent a security concern, the magnitude of the threat, without massive Soviet support, was comparatively small. In 1985 Cuba had 297,000 people in the armed forces and spent $1,335 million on the military, which equaled 4.5% of their GNP. In 1985 the United States in comparison had 2,244,000 people in the armed forces and spent $2,58200 million on their military, which equaled 6.4% of their GNP. Thus, though Cuba did represent a security concern the magnitude of the threat was comparatively small to warrant the emphasis received in the US government. See Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, “World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers,” (http://dosfan.lib.uiuc.edu/acda/wmeat95/tab195.txt) August 19, 2001.

83 Ibid, 69.
As the Cold War began to wane in the late 1980s, there was a recognition that Cuba's threat was exaggerated. Howard J. Wiarda, a well-known expert in U.S.- Latin American affairs who often acts in an advisory capacity to the American government, demonstrated at the time: "the Cuban threat seemed very real indeed, and had to be resisted. In retrospect, it seems clear that the threat was vastly overstated. Cuba was-and is-a small, weak, dependent, underdeveloped country, incapable of destabilizing Latin America."

Since Realism emphasizes actual material capabilities and downplays perception it has some difficulty accounting for American policy during this period. A Realist's account of the relationship during the Cold War would benefit from acknowledging the role of perception. Since policy makers assumed that Cuba was a significant security threat they acted accordingly. Once perception is factored into the equation, Realism offers considerable insight into the events during this period. Yet, perceptions are crucial to the explanation of US policy toward Cuba in the period. Furthermore, the American identity (leader of the west and on the side of freedom) and images of Cuba (during the Cold War Cuba was seen as a Soviet puppet and as an exporter of revolution) reinforced the perception of threat.

Though Realism offers considerable insight into the Cold War US-Cuban relationship, as an explanation for this relationship after the fall of the Soviet Union, Realism loses most of its explanatory power. Cuba became, to an even greater extent, a small state with limited resources after it lost its Soviet support. It was quite clear that

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they were no longer able to support any external military effort in either Latin America or Africa. Most of the states in the Western Hemisphere by that time had democratized and were in very little danger of succumbing to a communist revolution, and given the Cuban economy, the regime was not capable of that type of support in any case. After the Cold War it became apparent to even the most ardent anti-Castroites that Cuba no longer presented much of a security threat in the traditional sense. This was confirmed by the Pentagon in 1998. According to a Defense Intelligence Agency report issued that year Cuba no longer manifests a serious threat to the United States.  

Realism, itself, with its focus on material capabilities and corresponding definitions of threat would no longer consider Cuba a threat. How can a Realist explain the continued policy? Some scholars would maintain that Cuba represents a threat in nontraditional ways—such as through a migration crisis or as a drug trafficker.

There has been some concern about Cuba’s role in the Caribbean narcotic trade but there is no solid evidence to indicate that Fidel Castro is involved or even complicit in the drug trade. The spokesman for the Federal Drug Administration in Miami, John Fernandez, explained after the 1989 drug smuggling scandal within the Cuban government that there was “no reason to believe that Fidel Castro or people (in) the presidential palace were in sympathy with the smugglers.”  


stated that the strong opposition of both Cuba and the United States to drug trafficking could be a possible basis for future US-Cuban cooperation. He stated “With regard to narcotics, the US and Cuban governments are firmly on record against the individual consumption of drugs; their laws and practices severely punish drug traffickers that are caught.”87 The threat posed to the U.S. by Cuba’s involvement in the narcotic trade appears to be relatively minor.

Clearly, Cuba could cause a problem in Florida if it encouraged or aided its citizens to take to the boats. The migration danger is more real and immediate but it would most likely arise from instability in Cuba, for example after the death of Fidel Castro.88 Yet, the magnitude of these potential threats remains small compared to other security threats and even smaller compared to the danger Cuba posed during the Cold War. Yet, the most hard-line Cuba policy to pass through Congress was approved well after the Cold War was considered history. In addition, as threats to security drugs and migration are of traditionally little concern to Realists and even less concern to Neorealists.

That said, one security issue is likely to become central to U.S.-Cuban relations. Since September 11, 2001, Cuba’s place on the American list of countries that sponsor terrorism is bound to dominate discussions of U.S. policy toward the island. Prior to the horrific events in New York and Washington, this status was essentially ignored because as Vicki Huddleston, the head of the United States’ Interest Section in Havana

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88 Confidential interview with former senior government official, 2000.
acknowledged “Cuba is on the terrorist list for acts committed some 20 years ago, and it continues to be on that list because it still harbors some terrorists...But the issue is principally what happened in the past, and not the present.”89 Yet, until Cuba is removed from this list, it is bound to affect U.S.-Cuban relations as the United States and the rest of the West tries to grapple with the devastating events of September 11, 2001. Even though terrorism has become the most serious threat to American security it does not explain American policy toward Cuba in the past or in the present.

The Constructivist argument is also open to criticism since not only has the actual threat declined, the perception of threat has diminished, and yet the United States maintains its ardently anti-Castro policy. However, even though the Cold War ended and the perception of Cuba as a military threat did decline, the other constructivist elements at work that portrayed Cuba as an undemocratic enemy, as a human rights violator, as an insult to the American way of life only ninety miles from the coast of Florida, among others have not changed and continue to have a major influence over the way Americans make sense of their relationship with Cuba.

Thus, the Realist explanation of this particular foreign policy has a number of important failings. While we shouldn’t entirely dismiss Realism’s contributions to our understanding of the relationship, it is only through identity, images, norms and ideas can we pave the way toward a richer and more complete explanation of U.S. policy toward the island of Cuba.

Conclusions

In conclusion, although Realism and the domestic interest group explanation do offer insight into the formation of Cuba policy they either ignore or take for granted elements that are problematized by constructivism and, as such, cannot explain key events and issues in U.S. Cuba policy.

The United States approaches Cuba policy with a number of ingrained perceptions, norms, and images. These are not simply byproducts of the relationship but are fundamental to the development of the relationship itself. Furthermore, how the United States understands its own role in the world is just as important to the relationship. Just as our identity molds everything we do and influences how we see the world, the identity of states, do the same. These factors can explain why the United States has not fundamentally changed their policy toward Cuba despite the end of the Cold War and the recognition that Cuba is no longer a threat. Not only do these variables explain the anomalies not accounted for by Realism and other similar gaps in the “Cuba story” but Constructivist variables also illuminate the whole narrative. For example, they offer a coherent account of how the Cuban American National Foundation became to be regarded as one of the most powerful interest groups in the country. Thus, to understand the U.S. approach to Cuba from the time of the Monroe Doctrine to the Elian saga we need to turn to the power of perceptions, images, ideas, norms and identities.
CHAPTER 6

CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITIES: DRIVEN BY IDENTITY

Introduction

The Canadian identity has preoccupied Canadians for generations. Caught somewhere in between the Americans and the British, Canadians have often felt rather insignificant, yet in some ways, superior. In fact, for years, Canadians felt their country lacked an identity. In 1967, Lester Pearson said: “We moved from British influence to American influence without much feeling of purely national identity in between.” In 1974, John Holmes, the well known Canadian diplomat and political scientist, wrote: “It is still Canada’s problem to convince foreigners-- and to some extent its own people—that it is for real.”¹

However, Pearson and Holmes’ successors would argue that since their predecessors uttered those words, the Canadian identity has matured. This chapter will demonstrate that Canadians do have a unique identity that reflects a particular set of values. This chapter looks at the Canadian identity and its influence on foreign policy.

Canadian Values and Identities

Canadians traditionally place a heavy emphasis on the values of peace, order, moderation, compromise, and social justice. The importance of these values to Canadians has been well documented by scholars who trace the Canadian identity to Canada’s

¹ Both quotes are from David Olive, Canada Inside Out: How we see ourselves and how others see us (Toronto: Doubleday Canada Ltd, 1996).
historical experience.\textsuperscript{2} Canadian political culture has been understood to be primarily influenced by a combination of Lockean liberalism and tory conservatism. Scholars such as Gad Horowitz, who, building on the work of Louis Hartz, argued that the root of toryism can be traced to the United Empire Loyalists. These scholars maintain that when the Loyalists rejected the American revolution and fled north, they brought an emphasis on the common good with them to Canada, which today manifests itself in a greater acceptance of socialist ideas and values such as peace, order and stability.\textsuperscript{3}

Much of the scholarship on Canadian identity has developed in a comparative manner, contrasting Canadian and American history and values. For example, S.M. Lipset compared the two societies in \textit{Continental Divide: The Values and Institutions of the United States and Canada}. Lipset concludes: “Canada and the United States continue to differ considerably. America reflects the influence of its classically liberal Whig, individualistic, antistatist, populist, ideological origins. Canada, at least from a comparative North American perspective, can still be seen as Tory-mercantilist, group-oriented, statist, deferential to authority…”\textsuperscript{4} The \textit{Economist} agrees. A March 2003 article explains: “Canada is thus the land of the Tories, the counter-revolutionaries who jibbed at the American Whigs’ revolt. While the American Declaration of Independence celebrates


\textsuperscript{4} Seymour Martin Lipset, \textit{Continental Divide: The Values and Institutions of the United States and Canada} (New York: Routledge, 1990), 212.
‘life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness’, Canada’s founding document promises ‘peace, order and good government.’ Lipset maintains that these differences produced “disparate Weltanschauung (world view) ideology…. Americans more than other western peoples, tend to view international politics in nonnegotiable moralistic and ideological terms. Canadians, like Europeans, are more disposed to perceive international conflicts as reflections of interest differences and, therefore, subject to negotiation and compromise.”

Regardless of whether one agrees with Horowitz, Lipset, or other scholars of Canadian value orientations, surveys reveal that Canadians do place a greater emphasis on compromise, social justice, and international law than most other nationalities. The World Values Survey compared materialist and post-materialist values in many countries. Materialist values are those that emphasize economic and physical security including such things as strong military and economic growth. Post-materialist values are those that give a “heavier emphasis on belonging, self-expression, and the quality of life.” The World Values Survey reveals that Canadians have exceptionally strong post-materialist values, outranking all of the more than forty countries in the survey, except Finland and the Netherlands. “These quality of life issues include a greater concern for the

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6 Lipset, 220.


environment and issues like human rights when weighed against more materialist values such as economic growth or a strong defense.

Values and Canadian Foreign Policy

Scholars have tied these values to Canadian international actions. Neil Nevitte’s analysis of the Canadian responses to the World Values Survey links postmaterialism and cosmopolitanism. Those individuals with a strong cosmopolitan attitude identify less strongly with their local communities and see themselves as belonging to a wider, even global, community. Nevitte argues that “postmaterialists are about three times more likely than materialists to have these cosmopolitan identifications and are much less likely to have subnational identifications.”

An interesting study done by Erin Carrière, Marc O’Reilly and Richard Vengroff tie the Canadian postmaterialist and cosmopolitan outlook to Canadian internationalism and commitment to peacekeeping. Canadians are interested in the wider world and support an active role for Canada in the international arena. A poll taken in 1998 reported that:

The public’s democratic moralism is so powerful that Canadians are quite prepared to forego trade opportunities as a cost of advancing democratic values. Part of the reason for Canadians' willingness to make sacrifices on the

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11 For example, see Giles Gherson, “Canadians are activists at heart, new poll finds,” Ottawa Citizen, April 1998.
altar of democracy and human rights is simply that they believe this would be the right thing to do.  

More recently, scholars have termed this activism in Canadian foreign policy, ‘mission diplomacy.’ According to Kim Richard Nossal, a well-respected expert on Canadian foreign policy, mission diplomacy is “very much in keeping with a long-standing tradition in Canadian statecraft- a tradition that puts a value on seizing the day, taking the initiative, and getting involved to solve a problem that confronts the international community.” He asks:

[C]an we conclude that mission diplomacy constitutes a Canadian vocation? I would argue that everything certainly points in this direction: the pride that political leaders and policy makers take in these initiatives; the persistent willingness to engage in worthwhile initiatives year after year; the fact that even those who come to power knowing little about foreign policy (like Mulroney), or who are not inclined toward activism (like Chrétien) or who are actively opposed to foreign-policy initiatives (like Trudeau) all end up pursuing initiatives in their foreign policy.

Canadians are not just interested in world politics; they have specific ideas about the role they want their government to play on the global stage.

Surveys confirm that Canadians expect their government’s foreign policy to reflect a certain set of values and identities. When asked about foreign policy priorities, most respondents (ninety-five percent) asserted that pursuing world peace and protecting

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14 Ibid, 4.
the global environment should be Canada’s top concern. Over eighty percent of those asked also emphasized the importance of discouraging human rights abuses and participating in the United Nations.\textsuperscript{15} When asked about their international objectives over 60 percent of Canadians answered that they wanted “a lot more emphasis” on protecting the environment and almost half wanted “a lot more emphasis” on promoting democracy and human rights. Only 42 percent wanted “a lot more emphasis” on increasing exports.\textsuperscript{16} The bar graph that follows reflects this poll about Canadian foreign policy objectives.

**Figure 2: Canadian Foreign Policy Priorities**

![Bar graph showing Canadian Foreign Policy Priorities](image)

Source: Southam News/CNC-ISS Poll on Foreign Policy (April 24, 1998)

This survey also revealed that Canadians want the twin goals of “getting other countries to respect rules of war and peace,” and “spreading democracy around the world”

\textsuperscript{15} Canada Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Department of National Defence and the Canadian International Development Agency, *Canadian Opinion on Canadian Foreign Policy, Defence Policy and International Development Assistance (1995)* conducted by Insight Canada Research.

emphasized over other foreign policy goals, such as increasing Canada’s influence over world affairs.\textsuperscript{17}

Similarly, another survey taken in 2001, reports two-thirds of Canadians said that their government should promote human rights in other countries, even if doing so would hurt Canadian trade.\textsuperscript{18} Likewise, Canadians chose these values over geopolitical concerns. A 1998 poll showed that Canadians think that development aid should be given first and foremost to countries that “have relatively honest and effective governments.” This survey reported that “the other considerations carry less weight with the public,” including if the country is “friendly to Canada” or “vote[s] with western countries at the UN.”\textsuperscript{19} These surveys confirm that Canadians want to see their foreign policy reflect these values above, and beyond, other economic or more pragmatic considerations. Thus, Canadian foreign policy has consistently been characterized by Canadian scholars, policy makers, and the public as actively promoting the values of peace, order, mediation and social justice.

This set of values and their relationship to Canadian foreign policy has been especially noticeable since the mid-1950s. Many scholars point out that the role Canada played in solving the 1956 Suez crisis and Mike Pearson’s subsequent award of the Nobel

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{18} Centre for Research and Information on Canada, “Trade, Globalization and Canadian Values,” Montreal: Centre for Research and Information on Canada, 2001), 18.

Peace Prize influenced the Canadian self-identity. Canadians were, and still are; very proud of the role their government played in solving this international crisis. Out of this experience grew “an inchoate sense that it is right and good and just that Canadian governments try to embroil themselves in international matters.”

The foreign policy establishment acknowledges this connection between values and foreign policy. Louis St. Laurent, Canada’s prime minister from 1948-1957, but at the time secretary of state for external affairs, told an audience in 1947 that, “[n]o foreign policy is consistent or coherent over a period of years unless it is based upon some conception of human values.... If Canada’s liberal humanitarian values are not reflected in Canada’s foreign policy, then popular attachment to them domestically will likely itself decline.” Similarly, the Liberal government’s 1994-1995 foreign policy review stated:

Foreign policy matters to Canadians. They have deep-rooted values that they carry over into the role they want Canada to play – nurturing dialogue and compromise; promoting democracy, human rights, economic and social justice;

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20 Scholars have explained this tendency in Canada’s foreign policy behavior in a variety of ways. Some describe Ottawa’s foreign policy actions in terms of middlepowermanship. Initially the term middle power was limited to describing Canada’s place in the international hierarchy. In 1944 Lionel Gelber explained that Canada was not a great power, and yet with Canada’s “natural wealth and human capacity she is not a minor power like Mexico or Sweden. She stands in between as a Britannic Power of medium rank. Henceforth in world politics, Canada must figure as a Middle Power.” See Lionel Gelber, “A Greater Canada Among the Nations,” *Behind the Headlines* (1944), quoted in Kim Richard Nossal, *The Politics of Canadian Foreign Policy* 2nd ed. (Scarborough, ON: Prentice Hall, 1989), 48. However, during the post WWII years Canada became increasingly involved in international mediation, the highlight being Ottawa’s mediation of the Suez crisis in the mid-1950s. As a result, Canadians began to associate an emphasis on international peace and order with ‘middlepowermanship.” See John W. Holmes, *The Shaping of Peace: Canada and the Search for World Order* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979) for an excellent introduction to middlepowermanship.


caring for the environment; safeguarding peace; and easing poverty. And they can offer corresponding skills—mediating disputes; counseling good governance in a diverse society; helping the less fortunate; and peacekeeping.23

In 1995 André Ouellet, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, echoed St. Laurent, stating that although the government was undertaking a comprehensive review of the country’s foreign affairs, he assured Canadians that they would not attempt “to overturn all the values that have guided us in conducting our foreign policy until now.”24 Kim Richard Nossal argues “expectations now play an important role in shaping mission diplomacy. One of the consequences of Suez was that it created an expectation, particularly among the attentive public in Canada, that a good foreign minister is an initiative minded foreign minister.”25

The Canadian emphasis on these values can be understood as part of two highly connected identities. Both identities promote an active role for Canadians on the world stage. Firstly, Canadians see themselves as good international citizens. Canadians value dialogue and believe that they have excellent communication skills that can be used to solve international problems. Canadians traditionally have a high respect for international law, non-intervention, and multilateral organizations. These qualities are understood to be essential elements of good citizenship.

23 Canada, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Canada’s Foreign Policy: Principles and Priorities for the Future Report of the Special Joint Committee Reviewing Canadian Foreign Policy (November 1994), 1.


Secondly, Canadians identify themselves as peacekeepers. Though often included under the good citizen umbrella, this identity is so influential that it deserves its own category. Peacekeeping is a source of pride for Canadians and guides much of their international action and policy. As this chapter will demonstrate, Canadians believe that they are excellent mediators and often attempt to solve, for good or ill, international disputes.

**Canada as a “Good International Citizen”**

In world affairs, Canadians see themselves as the international equivalent of the good neighbor, block parent, the family that brings the rest of the community together and helps out whenever asked. According to David Black “Canadians have generally wished to think of themselves as naturally ‘good international citizens,’ particularly on issues of peace and justice. Instances of high profile activism on ethical issues (e.g., peacekeeping, nuclear diplomacy, North-South mediation, landmines, and the International Criminal Court) are constructed as representative of Canada’s ‘natural’ vocation in world affairs."26 Canadians embrace this identity and they expect their government to conduct its foreign policy based on its components.

Components include a high respect for international law, the principle of non-intervention and sovereignty. According to the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT): “Canadians recognise that their interests are best served by a stable, rules-based international system.”27 Ottawa has consistently promoted

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international legal organizations. For example, Canada launched a campaign to promote the creation of an International Criminal Court.\textsuperscript{28} The government asserts that “Canadians can be proud of Canada's role at the forefront of the effort to establish the International Criminal Court.”\textsuperscript{29}

Canadians also have a strong preference for recognizing the government of the day and Ottawa recognizes new governments expeditiously. There have been a number of important exceptions but most of these are a result of external pressures, mainly from the United States. Ottawa’s decision not to recognize the People’s Republic of China was a direct result of the importance of China to the Americans. Ottawa determined that going against the Americans on this issue would have been too costly for Canada. However, as Kim Richard Nossal points out “Washington’s attempt to keep Beijing isolated in international affairs was seen in Ottawa as both mistaken and exceedingly short-sighted.”\textsuperscript{30} By the 1960s surveys reveal that a majority of Canadians felt that China should be recognized by Ottawa and admitted to the United Nations.\textsuperscript{31} Pressure for Ottawa to alter its policy was strong. In 1966 the Canadian delegation advocated that both the PRC and Taiwan be seated in the General Assembly and that the PRC should take the seat on the Security Council.\textsuperscript{32} Recognition of China was one of Pierre Trudeau’s campaign


\textsuperscript{30} Nossal, Kim Richard, ed. The Politics of Canadian Foreign Policy 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (Scarborough,ON: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., 1989), 32.

\textsuperscript{31} J.L. Granatstein and Robert Bothwell, Pirouette: Pierre Trudeau and Canadian Foreign Policy (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 179.
promises in 1968. Thus, under Trudeau, Ottawa officially recognized the PRC and Trudeau made an official visit to the country in 1973.

Robert Jackson, a Canadian political scientist specializing in sovereignty issues asserts that Canada has been especially supportive of the doctrine of non-intervention. He explains:

Canada’s traditional role has been to uphold the universal framework of international society against its detractors, and to remind those who are apt to forget…. that it remains the only conceivable normative foundation of world politics. Of course it is maintained at the expense of those who live in chaotic or police states; they pay a heavy price for the universal doctrine of non-intervention.  

Foreign Affairs officials often find their desire to take initiatives, at odds with their support for the principles of non-intervention and sovereignty. Prime Minister Jean Chrétien spoke out about this issue during the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000. At that meeting he proposed the creation of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) to address this dilemma. In response to the discussions begun by the prime minister, the Canadian government sponsored a Commission to: “produce a comprehensive report that would assist the international community in reconciling respect for the sovereignty of states with the need to act in the face of humanitarian crises.” This report, issued in 2001, reflects the Canadian concern

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32 Ibid, 180.


for sovereignty. It cautions that: “exceptions to the principle of non-intervention should be limited. Military intervention for human protection purposes must be regarded as an exceptional and extraordinary measure, and for it to be warranted, there must be serious and irreparable harm occurring to human beings, or imminently likely to occur.”\(^{35}\)

Canadians have also been very reluctant to use economic sanctions. Ottawa has imposed sanctions but not as a routine tool of statecraft, and in those cases, almost always multilaterally. For example, Canada did not follow the American lead in the 1950s and impose economic sanctions against the People’s Republic of China. Kim Richard Nossal argues that “Canada’s historical reluctance to invoke economic sanctions cannot... be attributed merely to greed.” He points out that the Canadians engaged China long before Canadian wheat sales to the communist country became profitable.\(^{36}\)

Similarly, Canadians believe that a “good international citizen” uses dialogue, not force. The report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty reflects this preference. It states that coercion should be used as a last resort, after all other methods have been exhausted.\(^{37}\)

Policy makers believe that Canadians are especially skilled at dialogue. A recent DFAIT document maintains: “We have been called on by other countries to share our experience with dialogue and the peaceful resolution of differences; many opportunities


\(^{36}\) Nossal, The Politics, 66.

exist for us to serve a mediating role." The Dialogue on Foreign Policy paper published by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade asserts: "Amid current international tensions, Canadians may be able to play an important global role in fostering dialogue among different cultural communities. By reaching out to partners at home and abroad, we can work to show all nations that diverse religions are compatible with shared core values of democracy, human rights, diversity and civility."

The emphasis on communication and dialogue is evident in a variety of Canadian global initiatives. For example, at the Santiago Summit in 1998, Canada promoted a Foreign Ministers' Dialogue Group on Drugs to address the problems associated with the international narcotics trade in the Western Hemisphere. During the subsequent meetings, Secretary of State, David Kilgour stated: "We believe that dialogue among the countries of the Americas can be an effective mechanism to deal concretely with the problem of illicit drugs, which affects human security within the entire hemisphere." He also stressed that: "Canada's approach to the illicit drug problem is to see it as a human security issue, rather than one of only enforcement," Dialogue means engagement. The


39 Ibid.


Canadian government favors engagement and almost always restricts their use of sanctions to multilateral actions.\(^{42}\)

The emphasis on dialogue, engagement, and the rule of law is evident in how Canada approaches democracy and human rights issues abroad. Canadians value democracy and human rights, yet, Canadians traditionally have not aggressively promoted these values in their foreign policy. Furthermore, when Ottawa has attempted to advance these values, it is through dialogue, not coercion. According to Tom Keating, an accepted authority on democracy in Canadian foreign policy, “Taking up the “White man’s burden” has never been particularly appealing to Canadian foreign policy makers, at least until recently.... Promoting democracy abroad has been an established tradition of American foreign policy for a good part of the past century.... Canadians, on the other hand, have been more reticent about, if not deeply suspicious of, such adventures.”\(^{43}\)

Robert Jackson similarly argues: “Canada still has the problem of living beside a superpower which periodically understands its historical role as that of a country which is destined to be the vanguard of democracy in the modern world. The special awkwardness for the making of Canadian foreign policy is Canada’s sharing and avowing the same democratic values while balking at the Hegelianism of America’s historic self-conception.”\(^{44}\)


\(^{44}\) Jackson, 58.
However, since the early 1990s, Canadian foreign policy has more actively championed democracy and human rights. The change has been expressed in Ottawa’s “good governance” policy initiative. The term was adopted by the government of Prime Minister Brian Mulroney in 1990 and refers to the combination of three values: “respect for human rights, democratic government, and sound public administration.”

Human rights, for example, traditionally had a place in Canada’s foreign policy but had generally been “non-aggressive and often understated.” With the advent of good governance in the early 1990s the twin values of human rights and democracy became an integral part of Canadian foreign policy. Some say this development represents one of the most fundamental changes in Canadian foreign policy in recent time. However, scholars and policy makers alike, both emphasize that ‘good governance’ is consistent with, and is a natural evolution of, the traditional Canadian identity. Some scholars refer to this enlarged foreign policy agenda that combines traditional values and good governance as internationalism. Heather A. Smith states that “there remains a broad commitment to the ideal of internationalism, which includes an emphasis on dialogue, compromise, and mediation as well as the promotion of democracy, peace, prosperity, and good governance.”

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Canada as a Peacekeeper

Closely tied to Canada's identity as a "good international citizen" is the Canadian identity as a "peacekeeper." The first sentence of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT)'s introduction to peacekeeping reads "For Canada, peacekeeping is an important aspect of our national heritage, and a reflection of our fundamental beliefs." 48 Though Canadians have nothing to match the scale of the Statue of Liberty, the monument to Canadian peacekeepers near the Parliament Buildings certainly represents vital Canadian values. As a paper presented to the International Studies Association so aptly stated:

Engraved are the words, "In the Service of Peace," This monument, which so eloquently characterizes Canadians' view of their most important role in world politics, highlights a self-image that has become an integral part of the Canadian political culture. It permeates the thinking of both elites and the general citizenry, the printed and electronic media, school social studies texts, the foreign and defense policy statement of most political parties and even traverses the broad cultural divide between English and French Canada. 49

According to Canadian political scientists, Manon Tessier and Michel Fortmann:

Peacekeeping is so firmly rooted in the collective Canadian 'psyche' that it is almost impossible to imagine an elected government openly opposing or fundamentally questioning the importance of peacekeeping in the country's foreign policy. This unconditional support is fuelled by more than just a feeling of pride, a vocation, or accumulated expertise. It is sort of founding myth that the collective Canadian imagination feeds on and that refers to the societal values of tolerance, respect, and mediation. Within this logic, peacekeeping is custom-made


for Canadians, and opposition to it is tantamount to a rejection of ‘Canadian values.’

Peacekeeping and the values it represents are fundamental elements of the Canadian identity.

Canada has a long history of mediating international conflict. Canada was involved in the most number of peacekeeping missions of any country between 1948 and 1990. In the decade after the Suez crisis, Ottawa sent peacekeepers around the globe to places such as Yemen, Cyprus and Lebanon. Over the next few decades, Canadians attempted to mediate the Korean and Vietnam conflicts, among many others too numerous to list. The Chrétien government has continued this mediating tendency in Canadian foreign policy by becoming immersed in disputes all over the world. For example, in 1997 the Canadian government organized a meeting between Peru’s President Alberto Fujimori and Japan’s Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto in Toronto to discuss the hostage crisis at the Japanese embassy in Lima, Peru, in 1997. From the


53 Though the crisis was ended by the Peruvians when they stormed the embassy, the discussions in Toronto appeared to be fruitful at the time. See transcript of interview with Fujimori on James Lehrer’s Online Newshour on PBS (http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/latin_america/february97/fujimori_2-3.html) (April 2, 2003).
war in the Great Lakes region in Africa to Yugoslavia, the Chrétien government has attempted to reduce international tension.

Canada’s peacekeeping identity has weathered a number of blows. The most well known recent example was the Somalia incident. The image of Canadian soldiers torturing and killing a Somali teenager in 1993 raised doubts about Canada’s traditional international role, as did the failure of peacekeepers to stop the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. Despite these and other, less well-known, failures, Canadians remain wedded to this identity and continue to support Canadian peace operations around the globe.

Furthermore, just as American exceptionalism is often not viewed as positively by other countries as it is domestically, Canada’s emphasis on these values is sometimes viewed as self-righteous behavior by others. Canadian perceptions of their global role do not always match international opinion. Canadians often have an inflated sense of their ability to solve the world’s problems and overestimate the degree to which others will accept Canadian moral leadership. Fen Osler Hampson and Dean F. Oliver claim: “The idea that Canada is particularly suited to lead coalitions of the willing in pursuit of a better world is another oft-repeated assessment that would leave many of our closest allies at best perplexed and at worst infuriated.”54 Kim Richard Nossal notes: “mission diplomacy demands the initiative taker take maximum credit. But this is a strategy guaranteed to annoy other actors whose involvement might have been crucial to the successful outcomes.”55 Nossal cites the Canadian spin on the landmine treaty as an


example of “how to annoy one’s friends.”\textsuperscript{56} Dean Acheson’s chapter in Livingston Merchant’s book \textit{Neighbors Taken For Granted}, entitled “Canada: ‘Stern Daughter of the Voice of God,’” advises Canadians that these efforts can be seen as self-righteousness.\textsuperscript{57} Nossal also reminds us that “sticking one’s nose into someone else’s thorny and intractable problem can produce outcomes that one had not anticipated.”\textsuperscript{58} He gives Canada’s efforts to stop the American bombing of North Vietnam in 1965 and attempt to combat the Algerian civil war in 1997 as examples where Canada’s involvement worsened an already terrible situation.

Whether seen as good citizenship or self-righteous behavior, the values of peace, order, mediation, democracy and human rights have guided Canadian actions on the world stage. They have played a constitutive role in foreign policy. However, this is not to say that Ottawa always acts accordingly, nor does so simply because those actions would reflect the Canadian identity or values. Clearly, there is a significant element of pragmatism involved. As many have pointed out, Canada’s actions do not always reflect these principles, and foreign affairs officials often use the peacekeeping or good citizen roles to gain advantage; economic or otherwise on the world stage. The Canadian economy, so reliant on international trade clearly benefits from a predictable and peaceful environment that facilitates trade.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{58} Ibid, 10.
However, Realists and others are mistaken to ignore the influential role played by this element of the Canadian identity. The Cuba case examined in this study demonstrates the problems related to relying solely on the economic explanation of Canadian actions. Chapter Seven will demonstrate that economic motivations cannot adequately explain Canada’s policy toward the island.

**Being “Not American” and Canadian Foreign Policy**

Another element of the Canadian identity, which often has a significant influence on Canadian foreign policy, is an intense desire to be distinct from the United States. When asked for a description of what it means to be Canadian most Canadians will emphasize how Canada differs from the United States. Being “not American” has become an inherent element of the Canadian identity.

Canadians have always been somewhat anxious about their much larger and more powerful neighbor. Two hundred years ago and occasionally since, Canadians worried about outright territorial annexation. Today, they worry more about their cultural and economic independence vis-à-vis the United States. During the Free Trade debates of the early 1980s these concerns were voiced daily in Canadian newspapers, news programs and in anti-free trade commercials that dominated Canadian television. More recently, anti-Americanism was given expression in a series of very popular Molson beer commercials in which “Joe Canada” proclaimed Canadian uniqueness and superiority vis-à-vis the U.S. These commercials, referred to as “I am Canadian,” started a wave of national pride and demonstrate that Canadians continue to identify themselves in relation to the United States. There is no sign that this attitude is changing. In fact, 2003 polls indicate that anti-American feelings are on the rise in Canada. A February 2003 poll
reports that 40 percent of Canadians want their country to become less like the United States. Only 8 percent said they wanted Canada to become more like the United States, the lowest percentage expounding this view since 1996/1997.59

This need to emphasize their independence from the United States has an important influence on Canadian foreign policy. A 1989 poll asked Canadians and Americans if they supported Canada and the United States "adopting common and identical policy related to all matters related to defense and foreign affairs?" Nearly eighty percent of Americans thought this was a good idea whereas under half of Canadians responded positively.60 In a 2002 poll, 65 percent of Canadians agreed with the statement that: "The U.S. has no business telling Canadians to increase defense spending or to support U.S. foreign policy as these are sovereign issues for Canada."61

As would be expected, this attitude influences the bilateral relationship. Over the years there have been countless disputes between the two countries that can be traced to Canadian insecurity about their sovereignty in the face of their much more powerful neighbor. For example, Canada has always considered the arctic waters of the Northwest Passage part of its territory. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s this was an issue in


60 Macleans 102, no. 27 (July 31, 1989). Polls done in the last ten years continue to report similar opinions. See for example, Canada Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Department of National Defence and the Canadian International Development Agency, Canadian Opinion on Canadian Foreign Policy, Defence Policy and International Development Assistance (1995) conducted by Insight Canada Research.

Canadian-American relations as the United States argued that the passage was international waters. Ottawa’s response to this challenge reflected the common perception that the United States has designs on Canada. J.L. Granastein and Robert Bothwell describe the Canadian position: “Canadian nationalist nerves were tetchy. Canadians felt their resources were on the verge of another American ‘steal’ and the government must step in.”62 In another example, Canadian sovereignty (in cultural and economic independence terms) was the crucial issue for Canadians during the debates over the Free Trade Agreement. During the election debate in October 1988, John Turner, the leader of the Liberal Party, declared that the Free Trade Agreement would remove “the political ability of this country to [resist] the influence of the United States, to remain as an independent nation - that has gone forever, and that is the issue of the election….” He told Prime Minister Mulroney “With one signature of a pen, you’ve… thrown us into the north-south influence of the United States, and will reduce us, will reduce us I am sure, to a colony of the United States, because when the economic levers go, the political independence is sure to follow.”63 J.L. Granastein and Norman Hillmer argue that in that debate “John Turner’s impassioned declarations expressed the doubts and fears of countless Canadians.”64 The Canadian concern over its independence has profoundly influenced the course of Canadian-American relations.

62 Granatstein and Bothwell, 80.

63 Quoted in J.L. Granatstein and Norman Hillmer, For Better or For Worse: Canada and the United States to the 1990s (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1991), 288.

64 Ibid, 289.
The influence of this identity on Canadian foreign policy goes beyond the bilateral relationship, as Canadians want to demonstrate to themselves, and to the rest of the world, that Canada is a distinct country with an independent set of policies. For example, the Canadian government’s recent embrace of the human security agenda was clearly influenced by a wide range of factors, both internal and external to Canada. Yet, the need to be different from the United States was acknowledged even by senior statesmen. In Lloyd Axworthy’s introduction to Human Security and The New Diplomacy, he writes:

The best Canadian foreign policy remains an independent policy based on our competences and capacity to deliver....This independence is a credit to Canadians and their desire to have a distinctive international voice. This is especially significant given that we live next door to the world’s political, military, and economic superpower. Canadians want their country to be more than a junior partner to the United States. They expect their government to have a voice that reflects their priorities and concerns....to promote an agenda of international peace, security, and development.

This change in the Canadian foreign policy paradigm, one that embraces and promotes this new definition of security, is the result of many factors, but like most foreign policy decisions made in Ottawa, is influenced by the Canadian perception of their relationship with the United States. This aspect of the Canadian identity, the need to be a distinct actor on the world stage, has had a major influence over a wide range of Canadian foreign policies.

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65 Human security focuses on protecting individuals and includes initiatives like the campaign to ban landmines.

Conclusion

In 1974, Canadian historian, G.L. Granatstein described the Canadian self-image. He wrote: “All too often Canadians had found themselves regarded as Americans when they traveled abroad....” This did not sit well with Canadians. Granatstein continued:

The Americans, after all, with their wild west, shoot first image, their huge military forces and their world-wide net of bases, advisors, and arm sales had a very different style from peaceful Canadians. Canadians were middlemen, honest brokers, helpful fixers in a world where these qualities were rare.67

This image of Canada on the world stage continues. Canadians see themselves as fulfilling a very particular and important role in world affairs. Everyone from the Canadian teenager behind the counter at the local Tim Hortons doughnut shop to senior policy makers will tell you a similar story of Canada’s international role and how that differs from the American role in the world. As this chapter has shown these identities and associated values and ideas are found in speeches and statements, government documents, and in policies that direct Canadian global action. The next chapter will demonstrate that these identities and values are integral to Ottawa’s approach toward Cuba.

CHAPTER 7

CANADA’S CUBA POLICY

Introduction

In the four and a half decades since 1959, when Fidel Castro’s band of rebels emerged from the Sierra Maestra mountains to overthrow the regime of Fulgencio Batista, Canada’s approach to Castro has at times been warm and inviting and at other times been termed “coldly correct.” Yet, Ottawa has always maintained diplomatic ties and when possible, economic, educational and cultural connections with the Castro regime. Officially, the Canadian foreign policy establishment contends that these ties between the two countries is the best method of encouraging greater respect for civil and political rights and democratization on the island. This policy is most often referred to as one of ‘constructive engagement.’ Likewise, the Canadian public continues to be sympathetic to Fidel Castro and supports the maintenance of a close relationship between the two countries.

Canada has maintained this policy toward the island even though the pressure to take a very different approach has come from many quarters, most seriously from Canada’s primary trading partner, closest neighbor and friend, the United States. This chapter explores the reasons why Canada’s policy has developed in this way.

Ottawa’s approach toward the island is most often understood as a reflection of Canadian economic self-interest. However, this reasoning ignores a number of other factors that play a crucial role, such as Canadian values, identity, and perception of the Cuban situation.
These variables have been most recently studied by constructivists. Though most scholars of Canadian foreign policy are relatively new to constructivist analysis it has great potential to shed light on the Canadian global experience. As one scholar of Canadian foreign policy wrote: “One potentially promising way of rescuing the concept [of middle powers] is to go down a constructivist route—to see middle powers not as a category defined by some set of objective attributes or by objective geopolitical or geoeconomic circumstances; but rather as a self-created identity or ideology. This is, for example, a potentially promising way of making sense of Canadian ‘middle-powermanship’ with its emphasis on responsibility, morality, and multilateralism.”

Adopting a constructivist approach, I will demonstrate that the Canadian self-created identity and corresponding values influence the way Canadian policy makers make sense of the Cuban situation and consequently, have an enormous impact on policy. I will show that there is much more than a rational calculation of interests involved in determining policy toward Cuba. Policy makers rely on: 1) their own self-identities, and 2) their ideas and culture (which includes values) and 3) their perceptions and images of other actors and situations, in order to determine the appropriateness of different actions and/or policies.

The first part of this chapter reviews the case of Cuba, highlighting important

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2 The ‘logic of appropriateness’ is borrowed from the organization/bureaucratic literature. For additional information, see James G. March and Johan P. Olson, *Rediscovering Institutions: The Organizational Basis of Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 23.
milestones in the Canadian-Cuban relationship, then demonstrating that Canadian identity
and values, as well as the Canadian understanding of the Cuban situation (i.e. perceptions
and images of Cuba), influences the development of a specific set of norms. This study
then outlines how the Canadian approach toward Cuba evolved from those norms.
Evidence from interviews, the secondary literature, and archival research confirm that the
Canadian identity, values and resulting norms have influenced the development and
continuation of this policy.

To fully understand Ottawa’s approach to Cuba it also necessary to problematize
the existing narrative. Thus, the second part of this chapter addresses the traditional
economic explanation for Canada’s policy toward Cuba. The economic argument is not
without merit and contributes to a full understanding of the policy. However, I will
demonstrate that it offers an incomplete account because it ignores the impact of values,
identity, perceptions, and norms on the formation of this policy.

A Brief Overview

Canada’s relationship with Cuba has enjoyed a rather quiet, yet long, history.
Trade considerations dominated the relationship in the nineteenth and early twentieth
centuries. Cuban rum and sugar were traded for Canadian lumber and other natural
resources. Canadian financial institutions were also active in Cuba prior to the

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3 Trade increased fairly steadily into the first quarter of the twentieth century. In 1902 Canada
exported US$265,000 worth of goods to Cuba and imported US$396,000 in Cuban goods. By 1910 these
figures were US$1,871,000 and US$1,259,000, and by 1925 they had reached US$8,619,000 and US
$6,455,000 respectively. See Harold Boyer, “Canada and Cuba: A Study in International Relations,” Ph.D.
dissertation, (Simon Fraser University, 1972) and James Rochlin, Discovering the Americas: The Evolution
of Canadian Foreign Policy Towards Latin America (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994).
revolution.\textsuperscript{4}

Canada established diplomatic relations with Cuba in 1945 and exchanged ambassadors in 1950. When Fidel Castro’s rebel movement overthrew the government of Fulgencio Batista in 1959, Ottawa officially recognized his revolution as legitimate and consequently, maintained normal relations with the new regime.\textsuperscript{5} This policy has continued throughout Castro’s reign. Though generally warm, relations between Canada and Cuba have not always been friendly as a number of issues including Havana’s involvement in African conflicts, have come between the two countries. However, formal diplomatic relations have never been severed.

Canadian investment in Cuba dramatically increased as the Cold War faded. As Table 3 in Chapter 3 shows Canada was the largest foreign investor in Cuba during the 1990s. In 2002, Canada was Cuba’s third largest trading partner, after Venezuela and Spain.\textsuperscript{6} Official Canadian development assistance was re-established in 1994, and since, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has disbursed $35 million in Cuban development projects.\textsuperscript{7}

Ottawa believes that trade, investment, and aid are not only good for the Canadian and Cuban economies, but that these contacts will encourage a movement toward

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{4} John Kirk, \textit{Back in Business: Canada - Cuba relations after 50 years} (Ottawa: FOCAL, Canadian Foundation for the Americas, 1995), 7.
\item \textsuperscript{5} Canada and Mexico were the only states in the hemisphere that maintained normal relations with Havana during this period.
\item \textsuperscript{7} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
democratization and improved civil and political rights in Cuba. According to DFAIT, the policy, frequently termed constructive engagement, "means a determined attempt to work with the Cuban government and Cuban society in order to encourage institutional change and political and economic opening." This includes raising human rights issues with the Castro government and in multilateral forums like the United Nations. In 1997, Ottawa and Havana signed a fourteen point Joint Declaration, which established cooperation between the two governments in a number of areas, including human rights and good governance issues. For example, this declaration established cooperation between Canadians and Cubans on legal and judicial matters, counter-narcotics, and enhanced communication between the Cuban and Canadian parliaments, ministries of health and NGOs.

The Canadian embassy in Havana keeps in contact with human rights activists and non-governmental organizations active in Cuba. People to people contact is an important element of the Canadian approach. Various Canadian organizations such as universities and cultural groups maintain links with Cuban counterparts.

Recently, relations between Ottawa and Havana have cooled somewhat. The initial fallout arose from a 1998 visit by Prime Minister Chrétien to Cuba. Chrétien’s

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8 Ibid.

9Canada Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, "Canada’s Relations with Cuba," (http://www.dfait.maei.gc.ca/latin/cuba/81600-e.htm).

10Canada Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, "Canada-Cuba Joint Declaration Implementation Checklist," Provided to the author by David Kilgour, Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa), Ottawa (October 1999).

11 Ibid.
personal plea on behalf of four dissidents that were scheduled to be tried in Cuba was ignored. Relations worsened during the subsequent 1999 Pan-American games held in Winnipeg. Fidel Castro charged that Canada allowed sports scouts to promote the defection of Cuban athletes, withdrew metals from Cuban winners under false charges, and tried to disadvantage Cuban teams. In addition, a number of Cuban students attending Canadian universities defected while in Canada, creating tension between the two countries. Furthermore, the CIDA program to modernize the Cuban taxation system backfired as the Cuban government used it to hinder the establishment of private enterprise. At the same time, Canadian businesses were becoming more disillusioned with Cuba. John Manley, the Minister of Foreign Affairs who replaced Lloyd Axworthy in 2000, took a much harder line with Cuba. Cuba was not invited to the Summit of the Americas meeting in Quebec City. As a result of these problems, the Chrétien government cooled relations with Cuba. Official high level visits to Cuba were suspended and a number of joint projects were reconsidered.

Despite these problems there is virtually no discussion of ending Canada’s policy of constructive engagement. The author was told by a senior official in the Canadian embassy in Havana in 2000 that even after these problems, on the ground relations

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14 Archibald Ritter, Speech delivered to the City University of New York’s Queens College and Graduate School, Cuba Project, 2001.

between the two countries remained essentially unchanged.\textsuperscript{16} It is remarkable that the bilateral relationship has weathered often-intense disputes between the two countries so well. Despite its ups and downs, Ottawa’s policy toward Cuba remains one of engagement.

Thus, engagement best describes the Canadian policy toward Cuba for the past fifty years, despite, at times, considerable international pressure to follow the American lead of breaking relations, isolating Cuba and putting immense pressure on the Cuban regime, and despite bilateral divisiveness that could have potentially caused very serious schisms in the Canadian-Cuban relationship. The Canadian policy has withstood these pressures because it is a fundamental reflection of deeply held Canadian values and self-perceptions. The following section highlights the influence of these variables on this particular Canadian foreign policy.

\textbf{Canada’s Cuba Policy: The Influence of Ideational Factors}

This section will demonstrate that Ottawa’s policy toward Cuba is dictated by a certain logic of appropriateness.\textsuperscript{17} A country that places a premium on stability, peace, order, social justice, dialogue, democracy, human rights, and mediation; and one that sees itself as an international “good citizen,” peacekeeper, and as “distinct from the United States,” contributes to a certain perception of the Cuban situation and the rise of a set of corresponding norms. These norms play a constitutive role in policy formation and lead

\textsuperscript{16} Confidential interview with senior Canadian government official, Havana, 2000.

to a policy dominated by engagement and dialogue. This chapter explains how the Canadian identity as a good citizen, peacekeeper and “not-American” influence perceptions and norms about Cuba and, hence, construct policy.

The ‘good citizen’ and Cuba

Canada’s approach toward Cuba is influenced by their self-image as a “good international citizen.” This identity reflects, and is informed by, a particular set of values that include, among others, peace, stability, international law, social justice and dialogue. This section reveals the connection between these values and identity and policy toward Cuba.

The Canadian focus on communication and dialogue contributes to their policy of engagement. The federal government has consistently advocated dialogue with the Castro regime. The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade explains that, “Canada’s hope for Cuba is a peaceful evolution to a society with full respect for human rights, genuinely representative institutions and an open economy. Canada has sought to do this through engagement and dialogue, rather than isolation.”\(^\text{18}\) During Prime Minister Chrétien’s visit to Cuba in 1998, he told a Cuban television audience that their two countries, “have always chosen dialogue over confrontation, engagement over isolation, exchange over estrangement” and emphasized that “now this approach is more important than ever.”\(^\text{19}\)

This emphasis on communication has influenced many policy decisions. For


example, though it has not been a consistent goal of Canadian policy. Ottawa has been one of the most vocal proponents of Cuba’s re-entry into hemispheric bodies including possible re-admittance into the OAS. In 1998 Lloyd Axworthy told the OAS “surely the time has come for all OAS members to consider when the suspended 35th member of the organization, Cuba, could once again be seated at the table.” However, under the Santiago Plan of Action the OAS members further reiterated the importance of democracy, effectively solidifying Cuba’s suspension.

Communication is a key feature of the bilateral relationship. Direct discussions between Fidel Castro and senior Canadian officials including Prime Minister Trudeau, Lloyd Axworthy, and Prime Minister Chrétien are examples of the influence of these values. Though they have frequently been frustrated with the lack of results, each has spoken to Fidel Castro directly about human rights issues. The 1997 Joint Declaration reflected this identity. The Declaration states:

Both Ministers reaffirmed the high value of the longstanding and uninterrupted bilateral relationship between Canada and Cuba since its establishment in 1945. They underscored the fact that Canada-Cuba relations have always emphasized the importance of maintaining a frank and open dialogue in a spirit of mutual respect, not only on issues in which both sides agree, but as well on issues on which they differ.

The Declaration also states:


The Ministers emphasized their mutual commitment and their right to conduct international relations on the basis of the defense of International Law. They reiterated the commitment to peace of their respective peoples and their common endeavours to promote social justice in an atmosphere of stability and unity, based upon the consensus of their respective citizens. \(^{22}\)

Canadian policy toward Cuba has been significantly shaped by the emphasis on international law, communication and dialogue inherent in the Canadian psyche. These elements within the “good citizen” identity influence norms about Canadian policy toward Cuba. To Canadians, dialogue is key to being a good international citizen. This creates a preference for engagement over isolation and contributes to the development of policies such as the 1997 Joint Declaration. Lloyd Axworthy said that this major piece of Canadian Cuba policy: “was primarily to open up a dialogue to see if we can support and produce changes that would open the system up.”\(^{23}\)

Canada has a tradition of recognizing the government of the day, supporting non-intervention, and deferring to the principle of sovereignty. Canada’s own preoccupation with its sovereignty vis-à-vis the United States, and the knowledge that one of its own provinces might attempt to leave the federation have influenced this cautious approach to the issue of sovereignty. However, the Canadian identity as a ‘good international citizen’ that values international law, also embodies a deference to the principle of sovereignty. However concerned Canadians might be about Fidel Castro’s regime, they believe he is a legitimate leader of a sovereign state and thus, maintain that Cuba’s sovereignty should

\(^{22}\) Canada Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, “Joint Declaration of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Canada and Cuba,” (January 22, 1997).

be respected. Charles Ritchie, the Canadian ambassador to Washington during the Diefenbaker era wrote: “Do we consider what has happened in Cuba as a popular social revolution and not a Russian-inspired Communist take-over?... It is unthinkable that anything similar to the developments in Cuba should occur in Canada, but if it did, should we not regard this as our own business and resent intervention?”  

Ottawa has maintained this approach to Cuban sovereignty. For example, decades later during the Elián Gonzalez saga, officials at the Canadian embassy in Havana told the author that they thought the boy should be returned to his father in Cuba. They believed so because that decision would be in accord with international law, implying not only that international law is a key concern for Canadians, but also the belief that Cuba should be treated like any other sovereign state.  

The Canada as a Peacekeeper / Helpful Fixer

The importance given to mediation and peacekeeping within Canada is evident in their approach toward Castro’s regime. Ottawa has, at various times, attempted to mediate between the United States and Cuba. For example, Joe Clark, as Secretary of State for External Affairs (1989-1991), attempted to bring the two sides closer together. He asserted in 1990 that: “Canada can’t solve the contest between Cuba and the United States, but we may well be able to create some conditions...to create some room where the principle actors might move.”  

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26 Cited in Kirk and McKenna, Canada-Cuba Relations, 134.
with the governments of Cuba and the United States. Canada tries to maintain its credibility with each side, usually by offering sympathy and support to both while encouraging policy change. For example, when speaking to Americans they emphasize that Ottawa and Washington have the same goals, while highlighting the benefits of engagement over isolation. When asked about the different approaches to the regime during a joint press briefing with Madeleine Albright, Lloyd Axworthy said “we share the end objective, which is to see a transition in Cuba into a democratic society. We have chosen different methods. We don’t think an embargo works…. [O]ur approach to Cuba has been through a form of engagement. We made some progress over the past year. We think it’s worth continuing that kind of engagement…” Thus, subtly, and not so subtly, Canada tries to act as a mediator between its closest neighbor and Cuba.

The Canadian people also want their government to act as a mediator between the United States and Cuba. In 2001 the Anglican Church of Canada “urge[d] the Canadian Government, through the Department of External Affairs to offer to mediate between Cuba and the United States with a view to a normalisation of relations between the two countries and the reintegration of Cuba into the Organisation of American States.”

Policy toward Cuba is clearly influenced by the importance placed on mediation by both the government and citizens of Canada. The Canadian peacekeeping identity embodies an emphasis on mediation and contributes to the norm that Canada should mediate international disputes. Thus, a key undercurrent of Canadian policy toward Cuba is an attempt to mediate between the United States and Cuba.

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27 This approach has its risks. At times it has angered both the Cubans and the Americans.


The values and identity associated with Canada’s “helpful fixer” and “good citizen” roles in world affairs has played an important role in the design and development of policy toward Castro’s regime. This emphasis on mediation and dialogue produces a norm that extols the virtues of engagement and thus contributes to the Canadian decision not to isolate the Castro regime. However, other aspects of the Canadian identity also factor into the policy. The next subsection will highlight how the tendency toward anti-Americanism has influenced Canadian behavior toward Cuba.

Canada as “Not American” and Cuba Policy

Canada’s policy of ‘constructive engagement’ toward Cuba has been held up as an example of independence vis-à-vis the U.S. since 1959. While this policy is a clear reflection of Canadian values and represents other elements of the Canadian identity, the emphasis on being non-American has played an important role in this policy since its beginning. In many respects Cuba represents a relatively “safe” issue for the Canadians. They can take an independent stance on this issue without fear of significant reprisal since Cuba is not one of the principal concerns of American foreign policy makers.30

Cuba became a symbol of Canada’s independence during the Diefenbaker administration. The personalities of Prime Minister John Diefenbaker (1957-1963) and President John F. Kennedy (1961-1963) shaped the two countries’ policies toward Castro’s Cuba. The emphasis Diefenbaker placed on Canadian independence was one of the most significant factors that would influence the development of Ottawa’s policy toward Cuba. The Prime Minister was known for his nationalism and tended to react

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30 However, occasionally the Canadian government opposes American foreign policy on more significant issues. The Canadian decision to oppose the 2003 US war with Iraq is a recent example.
strongly against any real or perceived American pressure. This perception was greatly reinforced by what has become widely known among Canadians as the Rostow memo. His relationship with President Kennedy, and his belief that the Kennedy administration was attempting to ‘bully’ him, worsened after the Prime Minister found an American memo accidentally left by the President’s staff following a meeting between the two men. The memo stated that Kennedy should “push” Diefenbaker on a number of issues.\(^{31}\)

Forgoing polite diplomacy, Diefenbaker did not return the memo but instead went public with it, which infuriated the President. This animosity intensified Diefenbaker’s desire to forge an independent Canadian foreign policy, particularly over Cuba, since Kennedy seemed focused on moving Canada on this issue. Furthermore, tending to see Kennedy as a bully, he sympathized with Castro’s determination to chart a course independent of American influence.\(^{32}\)

Tension between Canada and the United States over Cuba came to a head during the Cuban missile crisis, when Diefenbaker refused to put Canadian forces on full alert and implied that the American version of events was possibly unreliable. Kennedy once again voiced his anger, and Diefenbaker in turn became more determined to take an independent path on this issue. The stage was thus set. Canada would not follow the American lead over Cuba. At this time, Canada and Mexico were the only countries in the Americas that did not acquiesce to U.S. demands to sever relations with Cuba in

\(^{31}\) Though Cuba was not mentioned in this memo it convinced Diefenbaker to not follow the American lead on many issues. Cuba soon became a sore point in the bilateral relationship and eventually developed into a symbol of Canadian independence.

accord with the hemispheric vote at Punte del Este in 1962. Cuba became a symbol of Canadian independence in foreign affairs.

Every prime minister since has been concerned about appearing too pro-American. Policy toward Cuba has been highlighted by each administration as an example of their determination to chart an independent foreign policy for Canada. However, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau (1968-1979; 1980-1984) was especially concerned about Canadian dependence on the United States. Of the United States, Trudeau said, “Canada has increasingly found it important to diversify channels of communication because of the overpowering presence of the United States of America and that is reflected in a growing consciousness amongst Canadians of the danger to our national identity from a cultural, economic, and perhaps even military point of view.”33 This was reflected in the Trudeau government’s promotion of the “Third Option,” a policy that attempted to reduce Canada’s vulnerability to the U.S. by diversifying Canadian trade. A feature of this policy was to increase Canada’s ties to Cuba. Cuba was an important Third Option country. First, it served simply as an additional trading partner. Second, it represented another way for the Trudeau government to distinguish Canada from the United States. Trudeau was the first leader of an American ally to officially visit Castro’s Cuba.34

Even Prime Minister Brian Mulroney (1984-1993), widely recognized as being the most pro-American Canadian prime minister, did not commit Canada’s support to the


embrace. In fact, he sent Louise Frechette, the then Assistant Deputy Minister for Latin American and the Caribbean, to Cuba in the spring of 1990 where she stressed the importance of Canadian - Cuban cooperation. A senior official at the Canadian embassy in Havana during the Mulroney years told the author that the opportunity for Prime Minister Mulroney to demonstrate to Canadians that he was not an American "lapdog" was an important reason behind the continuation of Canada's policy toward Cuba in those years.\footnote{Author interview with former embassy official, Ottawa, October 1999.}

Prime Minister Jean Chrétien (1993-) has been even more adamant that Canada's Cuba policy remains distinct from American policy toward the island. André Ouellet, Chrétien's first Minister of Foreign Affairs asserted, "I also indicated to Mr. Christopher that this government was determined to set its own independent course in foreign policy. By being independent I do not mean that we are opposed to the American policy but that we want to see action being taken with a Canadian point of view in mind. Our hope to see the end of the American commercial embargo against Cuba is a clear affirmation of our wish."\footnote{Andre Ouellet, "Canadian Foreign Policy," Commons Debates 133, no.37, 1st session, 35th parliament, March 15, 1994, 2259.} A senior official with the Canadian government during this period told the author that the need to be distinct from the United States was just as important as any other reason for Canada's policy of engagement.\footnote{Confidential interview with senior Canadian government official, Ottawa, October 1999.}

The enactment of the Helms-Burton Act of 1996 has incensed Canadians and led to even more of a desire to oppose the American policy. The federal government's
“Cuba: Trade and Economic Overview” has a section devoted to the Canadian response to Helms-Burton. It states “Canada does not tolerate the extra-territorial application of foreign laws contrary to our laws and policy and accordingly expects Canadian companies to carry out business under the laws and regulations of Canada, not those of a foreign country.”

A 1996 poll revealed that only five percent of Canadians felt that the Canadian government should ban trade with Cuba and almost half wanted to institute retaliatory trade sanctions against the United States.

A majority of senior Canadian officials interviewed told the author that Ottawa’s reaction to Helms-Burton was first and foremost an issue of Canadian sovereignty vis-à-vis the United States, and much less so about Canada’s relationship with Cuba.

Canadian policy toward Cuba was heavily promoted and defended by Ouellets’ successor, Lloyd Axworthy. Axworthy’s policies were reminiscent of Trudeau’s Third Option approach. He actively sought to strengthen Canada’s ties to other countries in an effort to refocus policy away from the United States. This policy was outlined by Axworthy and Roy MacLaren, the then Liberal critic for international trade, in the “Part of the Americas: A Liberal Policy for Canada in the Western Hemisphere.” This document stressed that Canada needed to diversify its ties to the rest of the hemisphere.

Axworthy’s policy on Cuba was clearly influenced by his position on Canadian-American relations. More so than past foreign ministers, Axworthy was known for his outspoken opposition to the U.S. embargo of Cuba. In 1998 Axworthy and Senator Jesse


39 Gallup Poll, April 4, 1996.
Helms exchanged heated words over Cuba. Axworthy declared “The whole embargo and the Helms-Burton bill is totally counterproductive. It just doesn’t work... Cuba is facing a form of economic victimization through the embargo.”  

A senior Canadian diplomat with the United Nations in the early 1990s told the author that Cuba was a “cheap way for them [the Liberal Party] to distinguish Canada from the U.S.”

Canada’s unique relationship with the United States has infiltrated most areas of Canadian foreign policy, and policy toward Cuba stands out as a particularly relevant example of this dynamic. Since Diefenbaker angrily said of Kennedy during the Cuban missile crisis that, “That young man has got to learn that he is not running the Canadian government,” Canadian prime ministers, the foreign policy establishment, and the public have all held Cuba up as an example of Canadian independence. For Canada to reverse policy over Cuba would involve much more than a recalculation of Canadian-Cuban relations -- it would require a fundamental adjustment in Canadian thinking about their relationship with their largest neighbor, or a very creative spin on the trilateral story that would allow Canada to keep its pride and maintain every appearance of not “bowing to the Americans.” Thus, the Canadian identity as “not American” creates norms that argue that Canadian foreign policy ought to be independent from American foreign policy.

Clearly, much of Canadian foreign policy is similar to American foreign policy. They are alike for two main reasons. One, because Canadian and American interests

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40 Koring, “Axworthy, Helms”.

41 Interview with a former senior Canadian official with the United Nations, New York, September 1999.

42 Quote from Nash, Kennedy and Diefenbaker, 190.
often coincide and, two, because Ottawa often feels pressured to adopt similar policies. Cuba has stood out for a number of reasons. Cuba issues began to attract both American and international attention at the same time as the relationship between President Kennedy and Prime Minister Diefenbaker was deteriorating. Given the good citizen and helpful fixer identities in Canada and the exceptionalist identity in the United States the two leaders disagreed on what was happening in Cuba and how to best respond. Cuba became a symbol of the animosity between Kennedy and Diefenbaker and of the Canadian leader’s desire to keep Canadian foreign policy distinct. Thus, Cuba grew to be a symbol of Canada’s independence in foreign policy, influencing the direction of policy toward the island ever since.

In summary, the identities and values reflected by the good citizen, helpful fixer and anti-American roles have had a significant impact on Canadian policy to Cuba because they not only create boundaries on possible actions, but actually work to construct certain policies. The norm that “engagement is the best approach toward Cuba” is a direct outcome of Canada’s emphasis on values such as mediation, dialogue and the desire for international stability and order. Canadians believe isolation is not compatible with either mediation or dialogue. They also argue engagement is not an antagonistic policy and, is thus, less likely to lead to instability. This section has also shown that the Canadian identity as “not-American” contributes to their policy of engagement, as it is essentially the opposite of the American goal to isolate the regime. Thus, Canada’s policy toward Cuba runs deep. It is a reflection of strongly held Canadian values and identity.
Canadian Perceptions of Cuba

Another important pathway from identity to norms and policy outcomes travels the way of perceptions. Our identity and the ideas and values within that identity, influence the way we perceive situations and perceptions limit the possibilities of actions. This subsection reveals how Canadian values and identity lead to certain perceptions of the Cuban situation, and thus, constructs policy.

The Canadian emphasis on social justice and the Canadian identity as “not American” have influenced the way they see Fidel Castro. The perception of Castro in Canada is overall positive. Many Canadians admired Castro when he overthrew Batista. The young Jean Chrétien was one of those who held him in great esteem. Chrétien told a reporter that Castro “was a very popular person, a young man taking on the Batista regime... He had been in jail, he had risked his life, he wanted to change society... he was a star for a lot of us.”43 Prime Minister Diefenbaker identified with Castro because he saw him as the leader of another state that must contend with the overwhelming presence of the United States. Largely, all prime ministers since have shared this sentiment with Diefenbaker. Canadians still perceive Fidel Castro as somewhat of a lone ranger, struggling against a much larger force in order to establish a better society.

In the same way, many Canadians feel a natural connection to Cuba and tend to emphasize the similarities between the two countries and differentiate Cuba from other communist countries. Trudeau’s foreign policy advisor, Ivan Head, said that Cuba

represented "a departure from classical Communism. There is an opportunity to work with these guys in the multilateral field." In 1998 the House Speaker, Gilbert Parent defended the Castro regime by comparing it to Premier Frank McKenna’s one party government of New Brunswick, where in 1987, the Liberal Party won all 58 seats in that provincial election. Parent said “You know, we do have some of our provinces where they only elected one party—I’m thinking of New Brunswick.... I’ve never heard anyone say that they weren’t carrying out the wishes of their people down there. Besides, I don’t think it’s for us to dictate or tell other people how to run their countries.” Parent also referred to Cubans as “fellow parliamentarians” and discussed their “so-called political prisoners.” Though Parent’s remarks did encounter considerable criticism from other members of the House of Commons, they do represent a tendency toward a more favorable perception of Castro’s regime in Canada. This perception is rooted in both a desire to be independent from the United States- notice Parent’s remarks regarding dictating to other countries’- and the emphasis on social justice in the Canadian identity.

These more positive perceptions of Castro and his government lead to policies such as the Joint Declaration. Canada’s policy of engagement assumes that it is possible to change the current Cuban government. The Joint Declaration, that was chiefly

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44 Quoted Granatstein and Bothwell, 274.


47 This perception was also evident during interviews with senior Canadian officials.
concerned with increasing the dialogue between Canada and Cuba, was based on this assumption. Just after the Joint Declaration was signed, Axworthy said that he believed: “that there are some changes taking place. I can’t predict where they’ll go, but at least it’s worth making an effort to promote them… I think as long as we can maintain a healthy respect for our differences on this approach we may be able to see some real changes with Cuba.”

The way Canadians perceive human rights in Cuba is directly related to Canadian identity and values. Canadians pride themselves on their social welfare programs. This emphasis inherent in Canadian political culture leads Canadians to conceptualize the human rights situation in Cuba differently than their American counterparts. Canadians perceive human rights as including economic and social rights, and thus, look more kindly on Castro’s rights record. They also believe improvements in civil and political rights in Cuba are very possible, and thus, are more easily encouraged by signs of potential change in these areas.

In the early 1990s Ottawa was confident that the state of human rights in Cuba was improving. In 1996 the Secretary of State, Christine Stewart told an audience in Ottawa “This constant dialogue that Cuba has had with Canada and other countries has helped lead to reform. Cuba is moving ahead with changes to economic policy. There are changes too, in human rights areas.” In 1998 Prime Minister Chrétien told a reporter


that “I think he [Castro] is changing. The fact that my speech was on the air is a large change; the fact that I met the Cardinal in public…” Similarly, Lloyd Axworthy told reporters in 1998 “We made some progress over the past year. We think it’s worth continuing that kind of engagement. We have for example, just recently, as a follow-up to the Pope’s visit, agreed to accept a number of political prisoners, who will be coming directly to Canada.” In 1999, Axworthy described these changes in Cuba as “major changes.”

Although Canadian officials have become more disillusioned with Cuba’s potential for human rights improvement than they were in the 1990s, they continue to see at least some reason to be hopeful. A 2001 government document states that though Canada remains concerned about the “continued lack of respect in Cuba for civil and political rights,” they stress that:

On the other hand, systematic violations of the integrity of the person (torture, forced disappearances, summary executions) have not occurred since the early 1960s. Despite a deterioration in services due to the state of the economy, Cubans continue to enjoy widely accessible systems of health, education and social security. …[T]he Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister continue to raise human rights concerns directly with the Cuban government, and provide leadership to other Western counterparts who are only now beginning to engage with Cuba. Canada is also working hard to support the creation of practical space for non-governmental actors in Cuban society, including improved practices with


regard to tolerance of dissent. Canada provides moral support to human rights and political activists, has assisted with penal code reform, and encourages the unconditional release of political prisoners.53

Despite the recent disappointments, Canadians remain hopeful that Castro’s Cuba will move toward a greater respect for human rights. They still believe their policy of engagement will encourage more changes than a policy based on isolation.

Canadian government documents concerned with Cuba are careful to demarcate civil and political rights from economic and social goals of the Cuban revolution. Foreign policy officials stress that economic and social rights are respected.54 As in the quote above, Canadians stress, “Cubans continue to enjoy widely accessible systems of health, education, and social security.”55 Canadians may not agree with communism but they are sympathetic to what they understand to be Castro’s goals. Prime Minister Chrétien has said Castro, “still wants to use communism; I don’t believe in it… I’m a practical politician- that doesn’t mean I don’t have goals, that I don’t want to have social justice. I’m just not doctrinaire on the means. My view is we have to have growth in the world so there will be more money for governments to give to people who are suffering in society. I’m not in politics to make the rich richer. Castro wants the same thing. He has a different technique.”56 The values that contribute to a greater emphasis on economic and


54 Confidential interviews with Canadian officials in Ottawa and Havana, 1999 and 2000.

55 Canada Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, "Canada’s Relations with Cuba" (http://www.dfait.maeci.gc.ca/latin/cuba/81600-e.htm).

social rights within Canada (at least when compared to the United States) give Canadians
more sympathy for the economic and social goals of the Cuban revolution. As such,
Canadians also identify with the current regime in Cuba. Consequently, because
Canadians perceive the revolution and its goals in this way they are more likely to be less
critical of the regime and more likely to favor less drastic measures to encourage change.
Engagement thus becomes the preferred policy.

None of these identities, values, and perceptions are enough, alone, to explain
why Canada has maintained a policy of engagement toward the Castro regime for over
four decades. Yet, taken together these variables reinforce each other and direct policy in
one direction. Interviews, government documents, policy statements and press releases all
reveal the crucial undercurrent played by these identities and perceptions. Though other
countries have had similar relationships with Cuba, Canada has stood out as one of
Cuba’s closest friends in the West, despite the fact that as a close friend and neighbor of
the United States, Ottawa has been under the greatest pressure to “get in line” with US
policy. As such, the Canadian-Cuban relationship has been the focus of many scholarly
endeavors. The next section reviews the most popular explanation put forth by these
scholars for this policy and points out the problems with this account of the relationship
between the two countries.

Other Explanations

National economic interest arguments are frequently put forth to justify Canada’s
role in world affairs. In 1999, Axworthy told an audience in Princeton, New Jersey that
Canada’s involvement in Kosovo was tied to Canada’s national interest because: “in an
increasingly interconnected world, where we are travelers, exporters and importers,
investors and donors, we cannot afford to ignore the problems of others – even if we wanted to." Yet, as scholars of Canadian foreign policy have pointed out, in the Kosovo case, "[f]ew Canadians travel there, export to or from there, or invest money there. The same can be said of virtually all the other places where the Canadian Forces recently have been deployed on peacekeeping or peace enforcement missions." Thus, the national interest is not always, or some would argue, is rarely, enough to explain Canadian foreign policy.

Yet, a variant on this argument is most often put forward as the explanation for Canada’s Cuba policy. Current Canadian scholarship emphasizes the role of trade in Ottawa’s approach toward Cuba. Trade does have a significant impact on this policy but its influence has often been exaggerated. For example, the popular impression that the Diefenbaker government welcomed the American embargo as a potential windfall for Canadian business is not correct. Many cite the visit of the Cuban Trade Mission to Canada that occurred very shortly after the U.S. embargo was initiated as evidence that Canada attempted to profit from the tension in U.S.-Cuban relations. According to the Canadian-American Committee, this is false. The Canadian government did not invite the mission and was embarrassed by the visit. Prime Minister Diefenbaker asserted that it is


58 Ibid, 2.

59 Canadian-American Committee, Canada’s Trade with Cuba and Canadian-American Relations (February 6, 1961), 6. The Canadian-American Committee was a joint committee of the Private Planning Association of Canada and the National Planning Association, USA, which included leaders of big business in both countries.
“not our purpose to exploit the situation arising from the United States embargo, and we have no intention of encouraging what in effect would amount to the bootlegging of goods of United States origin.”

In addition, while Canadian exports to Cuba did increase after the introduction of American embargo, so did Canadian exports to other Latin American countries. Exports to Cuba rose from $17.5 million in 1955 to $52.6 million in 1965, a three-fold increase. However, exports to Argentina went from $6.8 million to $32.7 million in the same ten years, an almost five-fold increase; and exports to Venezuela increased from $30.8 million to $73 million during that same period. Even though this bilateral trade continues to be substantial, it comprises a relatively small percentage of Canada’s overall trade, a mere five percent of total Canadian exports to Latin America.

Additionally, many Canadian companies are hesitant about investing in Cuba because of the special difficulties related to Cuba’s economic system. The Canadian government counsels caution. The government publication *Cuba: A Guide for Canadian Business* warns potential investors that, “Cuba is not for the timid or the unprepared. The risks are substantial.” Thus, though trade is important to Canada, Cuba represents a relatively minor and risky market for Canadian businesses.

Furthermore, according to a senior trade specialist in the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Cuba: A Guide for Canadian Business (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, July 1997), 5.

60 Ibid, 7


Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), Canadians did not become incensed about the Cuban Democracy Act and the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act because they might interfere with Canadian trade with Cuba. They were angry because they think that the bills are further evidence that the U.S. is attempting to dictate Canadian policy. The extraterritoriality provisions were disturbing because they offer further evidence to Canadians that the United States does not fully respect Canadian sovereignty.  

Additionally, various aspects of Helms-Burton, such as Title III that allows American citizens to sue foreign companies in American courts, are not in accord with international law. Given Canada's strong tradition of support for international law and concern over American encroachment, it is not surprising that these considerations predominate over concerns for Canadian - Cuban trade, demonstrating that trade with Cuba is not the only reason behind the current policy of engagement.

If trade considerations were Canada's main priority vis-à-vis Cuba, given American attempts to discourage Canadian - Cuban trade and the importance of American trade to the Canadian economy, then it would follow that Canada would likely bow to American pressure. Canada's relationship with the United States is much more important than any benefits accrued from trade with Cuba. Trade with the United States represents eighty-four percent of Canadian exports and accounts for twenty-eight percent of Canadian GDP. The Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs asserts: "We are each other's largest trading partner, with US$1.2 billion in trade now crossing the Canada-US border."

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63 Confidential interview with senior Canadian government official, Ottawa, October 1999.

64 Canada Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Canada - U.S. Relations, 1999.
border every single day.” In 2002, Canada’s total exports to Cuba were Cnd. $259 million. In comparison, in 2002, Canada’s total exports to the United States were Cnd. $346 billion. Import figures are similar- Canada’s total imports from Cuba amounted to Cnd. $325 million and from the United States a total of Cnd. $218 billion.

David Malone, a former Canadian Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations and a specialist in Canadian - Caribbean relations, emphasized to the author that even small aspects of Canadian trade with the U.S. outweigh the importance of all Canadian trade with Cuba. He asserted that the “Cubans have an erroneous view of the importance of Canada’s trade with them. It is not nearly as crucial to Canada as they assume.” He also stressed that Canada’s relationship with Cuba is “more so about Canada’s place in the world, the importance of the rule of law and the feelings in Canada about American interventions in Latin America and only recently have economic issues been important in the Canada-Cuba relationship.” Thus, there are more than trade considerations at work. The importance placed on Canadian sovereignty vis-à-vis the U.S. is a factor, as are the other ideas prevalent in the Canadian psyche.

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67 Interview with Dr. David Malone, New York City, September 1, 1999.

68 Ibid.
Conclusion

Canadian foreign policy is a complex reflection of many variables. Without a doubt, Canadian leaders have manipulated the Canadian public and have used these variables to hide other more self-interest based policy objectives such as furthering trade. However, values, identity, and perceptions play a leading role in most Canadian actions on the world stage. The motto “peace, order and good governance” which includes values such as mediation, dialogue, respect for international law and social justice, among others, is taken seriously by both the foreign policy establishment and the Canadian public. The Canadian identity as a “good international citizen,” “peacekeeper,” and as “distinct from the United States” are also deeply interwoven into foreign policy decisions. Everything from the Canadian perception of Fidel Castro to the decision to negotiate the historic Joint Declaration in the late 1990s are influenced by these variables. And while the traditional economic explanation for Canada’s Cuba policy is not without weight, we cannot afford to ignore that this policy is driven by more fundamental variables. Cuba is clearly an example of the degree to which Canadian foreign policy can be value and identity driven.
CHAPTER 8

CUBA POLICY IN TANDEM: PERCEPTIONS, VALUES AND IDENTITIES

Introduction

Americans and Canadians not only share the world’s longest undefended border but are the closest of friends. Over 200 million people cross the border each year.¹ People from both countries often work, live or have friends or relatives in the other country. Most people on both sides of the 49th parallel view their neighbor as we might view our nearest relative or friend. Consequently, these two peoples share many world-views and values.

Yet, despite these similarities, important differences exist. This is particularly true of foreign policy. The United States and Canada have very different views about their respective roles on the world stage. Clearly, the fact that the United States is a superpower and Canada is a relatively minor (or middle) power is an important factor in the daily foreign policy calculations made in Ottawa or Washington. By examining each country’s policy toward Cuba in tandem, this chapter will demonstrate that there is far more than these strategic, realist calculations involved in the formulation of foreign policy. Differences exist because the two countries are different in other ways- they have their own identities, values and perceptions that contribute to the formation of very distinct approaches toward this island regime.

As Chapter Five demonstrated, the American identity as an exceptional nation had

a major influence on their approach toward Cuba. And as Chapter Seven showed, Canada’s identity as an international good citizen, peacekeeper and as “not American” had a similarly important influence on their approach toward this same state. This section will further illustrate, through direct comparison, that these identities and their corresponding values contribute to the disparate policies of isolation and engagement.

We must remember that, especially in the post-Cold war era, policy makers in Ottawa and Washington claim to have the same ends in mind- the transition of Cuba into a more democratic and human rights respecting state. Yet, the two have chosen opposite routes to that same goal, and despite movements in both countries to adopt policies that resemble their neighbor’s approach— in Canada many feel the foreign policy establishment has been naïve and want a harsher line taken with Castro; in the United States there is a strong movement to get their government to try engagement -- the powers that be continue to be relatively confident that their policy remains the “best way to deal with Castro.” By examining the American and Canadian reactions to two high-profile post-Cold War issues that captured the attention of the public and officials in both countries this chapter illustrates how the different identities and their associated ideas and values translate into unique perceptions, distinct norms and thus, policies. First, we examine the Brothers to the Rescue shoot-down in 1996, and second, the renewed speculation that Castro’s regime in involved in terrorism in 2002-2003,
On February 24, 1996, the Cuban government shot down two planes flown by the Cuban-American group, Brothers to the Rescue. This group, founded in 1991, was initially formed to assist Cubans who ventured out in often-unseaworthy vessels, across the Florida Straits, headed for American shores. The Brothers to the Rescue planes would spot these rafts and alert the U.S. Coastguard. The Coastguard ships would then pick up the rafters and bring them to the United States to be processed by Immigration. However, by the mid-1990s this group was using these flights for an additional purpose. They would fly over the Cuban mainland, dropping leaflets critical of the Cuban government from their planes. On January 9 and 13, 1996 the planes distributed thousands of these flyers in flights over Havana, obviously embarrassing and angering the government. As a result, the Cuban Air Force received instructions not to tolerate further incursions into Cuban airspace. Thus, when the Brothers to the Rescue planes approached Cuba on February 24 the Air Force went after them and downed two.

The international community largely condemned this action by a government against unarmed civilian aircraft. However, the interpretation of the events and the degree of condemnation varied considerably among nations. In particular, countries disagreed about whether the airplanes were over international or Cuban waters when they were shot down and the degree to which the Brothers to the Rescue provoked the Cuban response. The American motion to condemn the attack in the United Nations was passed only after it had been watered down, reflecting the different interpretations of the circumstances.\(^2\)

Reactions in Canada and the United States differed significantly and illustrate the distinct approaches toward Cuba and the importance of the underlying constructivist variables.

The American Response

Condemnation was strong and swift in the United States. The American government maintained that the planes were in international airspace at the time and that there was no possible justification for the shoot down. On February 26, 1996, President Clinton began his speech that announced new sanctions against Cuba with: “Two days ago, in broad daylight and without justification, Cuban military aircraft shot down two civilian planes in international airspace... The planes were unarmed and clearly so... They posed no credible threat to Cuba’s security...” Members of Congress who were vocal opponents of the embargo did not challenge the administration’s interpretation of events. Democratic Senator, Christopher Dodd stated: “It is inexcusable for a heavily armed plane to attack unarmed commercial private planes under any circumstances.”

In response, the Clinton administration, which until then, had been opposing a bill sponsored by lawmakers Jesse Helms and Dan Burton that would tighten the embargo, acted quickly to sign it into law. This bill reflected an official American perception of the events. It stated that: “Brothers to the Rescue is a Miami-based humanitarian organization engaged in searching for and aiding Cuban refugees in the Straits of Florida, and was

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engaged in such a mission on Saturday, February 24, 1996."\(^5\) The U.S. also campaigned for a UN motion to condemn Cuba. In addition, though eventually rejected, military action against Cuba was seriously considered in the White House.\(^6\)

Most American policy makers on both sides of the embargo debate adopted similar interpretations of the incident. Not everyone was supportive of Helms-Burton but most felt the government had to take significant action against Cuba. While there were important political reasons (such as the political clout of the Cuban-American community) for the American response, this incident involved deeply held U.S. values and identities.

Americans have always believed that America is a special nation, above all others, and as such, is obliged to assist less fortunate nations to follow the U.S. example. This American exceptionalism, with its embodying American-centric world-view and ideas of the American moral mission, helped to construct the U.S. response to the shoot down. Stuart Eizenstat, Clinton’s spokesperson on Cuba, explained to an international audience that the American reaction to the downing could be traced to the fact that there is “a moral core to our foreign policies.”\(^7\) The Helms-Burton Act itself states that “The United States has shown a deep commitment, and considers it a moral obligation, to


\(^{7}\) Quoted in Heather N. Nicol, “The Geopolitical Discourse of Helms-Burton,” in *Canada, the US and Cuba Helms Burton and Its Aftermath* Heather N. Nicol, ed. (Kingston, ON: Centre for International Relations, 1999), 96.
promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms..."8

The passage of the Helms-Burton Act showed that the United States still saw itself as the "city on the hill" whose responsibility it was to demonstrate to the rest of the world how to correctly and morally respond to the incident. Helms-Burton declares: "The Cuban people deserve to be assisted in a decisive manner to end the tyranny that has oppressed them for 36 years, and the continued failure to do so constitutes ethically improper conduct by the international community."9 As such, Helms –Burton builds upon the 1992 Cuban Democracy Act which "calls upon the President to encourage the governments of countries that conduct trade with Cuba to restrict their trade and credit relations with Cuba in an manner consistent with the purposes of that Act."10 Title III of Helms-Burton allows for citizens of other countries to be punished in American courts for "trafficking" in property previously owned by U.S. nationals and confiscated by the Castro regime. Title IV bars those people from entering the United States. In accordance with Title IV the State Department has informed executives of Canadian and Mexican companies engaged in such activity in Cuba, that they will be prevented from gaining entry into the United States. These titles are designed to pressure other countries into adopting similar policies toward the island regime. These extraterritorial elements demonstrate that the United States, still acting as the "city on the hill," believes it needs to guide other wayward states into doing the right thing.

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10 Ibid.
Underpinning the Helms-Burton Act is the belief that Cuba is the most wayward state in the hemisphere and is, thus, most in need of American guidance. This Act is an evolution of a century-long perception of Cuba as a less than capable country that needs American guidance. This perception emanates from the American view of the Western Hemisphere as part of the U.S. sphere of influence. Since Cuba is located “only ninety miles from the United States” it is understood to be naturally within the American sphere of influence and hence, not fully sovereign. The Helms-Burton Act was influenced by this perception. Helms-Burton, in part, justifies its embargo tightening measures by arguing that the United States led an embargo against Haiti and since Haiti is “a neighbor of Cuba not as close to the United States as Cuba” it follows that the United States should have a tighter embargo against Cuba.

Cuba’s “special status” in relation to the United States is described in many ways. Often Cuba is referred to as part of the “American family.” For example, Michael Ranneberger, the Coordinator for Cuban Affairs at the State Department explained their policy this way: “We do not react to repression and hardship in Cuba as we would to the plight of a stranger, but rather as we would to a crisis that befalls a close family.

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11 The idea of spheres of influence is completely accepted by the United States’ foreign policy establishment. The academic and foreign policy communities in other countries do not as readily accept theories that place the United States at the center of international relations. For example, see Robert M.A. Crawford and Darryl S. L. Jarvis eds. *International Relations- Still an American Social Science?* (Albany: University if New York Press, 2001).

As such, American policy makers assume the United States is within its rights to ‘bend’ Cuban sovereignty. Helms-Burton is a product of this line of reasoning as it illustrates the degree to which the United States believes it has a natural right to intervene in Cuban affairs. Helms-Burton assumes that the US has a responsibility to oversee, if not direct, any transition to democracy in Cuba. This piece of legislation lists numerous criteria for a democratic Cuba that clearly demonstrate this perception of Cuban sovereignty. It stipulates that Fidel or Raul Castro could not be part of a legitimate Cuban government. If Fidel Castro was elected (even in a free and fair election), Helms-Burton forces the U.S. to automatically treat the election as invalid. Helms-Burton also requires that the Cuban government release all political prisoners, make all political activity legal, and establish free and fair elections.\(^\text{14}\) The new government must also permit the American broadcast of Radio and TV Marti or risk being declared not legitimate by Washington. Furthermore, this Act dictates that Cuba give up its socialist system.\(^\text{15}\) Jorge Domínguez argues that these requirements well surpass any accepted OAS or UN requirements for the determination of democratizing governments. He believes: “mandating them in US legislation as defining characteristics of a democratic or transitional Cuban government makes a mockery of the pledge to respect Cuban


\(^{15}\) Ibid, sec. 206.
sovereignty.”

This perception that the United States is naturally entitled to intervene in this way because Cuba is, more than any other country, within their sphere of influence, has greatly influenced the course of American-Cuban relations.

In addition, the metaphors and symbolic references used in the discourse about the shoot down reflect and reinforce the good vs. evil comparison and moral reasoning characteristic of discussions of U.S.–Cuban relations. For example, in the opening statement at the hearing about the shoot down before the House of Representatives the Chairman declared: “We are here because we, as Americans, are a Nation of freedom and independence, because we believe in liberty, and we certainly believe in human rights and human dignity.”

In contrast, Cuba and Cuban actions are demonized: “On that fateful afternoon, the ruthless nature of the Castro regime was clearly revealed. Like vultures awaiting their prey, Cuban MiGs circled and hovered until they locked on to the frail Cessna planes...” These representations reinforce the intense emotions about U.S.–Cuban relations and influence how those listening think about the incident and consequently, greatly affect their response.

Thus, the American response to the February 24 downing was a product of deeply entrenched identities, values and perceptions. Though not disputing the importance of other factors (such as the political power of the Cuban-American community nor the fact

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16 Domínguez, “U.S.-Cuban Relations,” 58.


18 Ibid.
that US citizens were killed) this section revealed the significance of other variables. Factors such as American exceptionalism and the long-standing perception of the legitimacy of Cuba’s sovereignty vis-à-vis the American sphere of influence cannot be discounted in calculations of the U.S. response to the shoot down of the Brothers to the Rescue planes.

The next subsection will examine the Canadian response to this same international incident, revealing the influence of a different set of perceptions, identities, and values.

The Canadian Response

The Canadian response to the incident was a reflection of Canadian values, identity and perceptions. Reaction in Canada, though critical of the Cuban action, was more mixed and muted than the American response. The Cuban justification for the shoot down was given greater consideration in Ottawa. Canadians, always sympathetic to Cuban claims of American interference in their sovereignty tended to emphasize the previous incursions by the Brothers’ planes. For example, Keith Martin, a Canadian Member of Parliament and the Opposition Critic for Foreign Affairs, wrote the following about the incident:

However, as is often the case, all is not what it seems to be. Although the shooting down of these two planes was quite rightly condemned by the international community, the dead pilots were not exactly on a quixotic mission. They ... were committed to overthrowing the regime of Fidel Castro by whatever means necessary. This organization was flying up to thirty-two missions per week, ostensibly to look for Cubans fleeing their homeland so they could guide them safely to U.S. shores. However, their activities have often taken on a much more invasive role... dropping leaflets over Cuba encouraging the people to insurrect and depose Mr. Castro ... These activities can hardly be looked upon favourably by Mr. Castro. In fact, the Brotherhood has been repeatedly warned to stay away
from Cuba airspace but has refused.  

He goes on to state that “[m]any of its members are CIA trained and some even took part in the failed 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba.” While Dr. Martin’s interpretation was not accepted by all Members of Parliament, most of these points were not disputed by a majority of Canadians. In fact, high-level Canadian officials told the author in interviews that the Brothers to the Rescue planes were inside Cuban airspace on a mission to drop leaflets and that the Cuban military warned the planes to leave before they were shot down. This understanding of the events of February 24, 1996, differs considerably from the perception reflected in Helms-Burton that the planes were engaged in a solely humanitarian mission to rescue rafters and were shot down without warning.

The shadow of Canadian sovereignty and perceptions of American encroachment loom large over a great deal of Ottawa’s foreign policy calculations. As such, the Canadian reaction to the shoot down became principally focused on the American decision to pass Helms-Burton, which Canadians saw as a direct challenge to their sovereignty. The following was heard on the floor of the Senate and typifies the reaction in Ottawa:

Canada, of course, strongly condemned the shooting down of two civilian aircraft by the Cuban air force on February 24, the incident which helped the passage of the Helms-Burton Act, and we were active in the consideration of the incident by the International Civil Aviation Organization, ICAO. However, we do not think

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20 Ibid.

21 Confidential interview with senior Canadian government official, Ottawa, Canada, October 1999.
Helms-Burton is the way to deal with the Cuban problem.\(^{22}\) [my emphasis]

Similarly, Darrel Stinson (Reform MP) explained Ottawa’s reaction: “I do not appreciate another country’s telling Canada how to run our foreign policies. I may not agree with Canadian foreign policy but that is for us, this House and the other place representing the Canadian people to decide. Canadian foreign policy toward Cuba or any other nation must not be dictated by another country.”\(^{23}\) James Blanchard, the US ambassador to Canada during this period recalled that in Canada, “Helms-Burton was a headline story in all the newspapers and TV reports, because it looked as though Canadian companies and their executives were being told what to do by the American government. It became a sovereignty issue.”\(^{24}\)

Another Member of Parliament, Bill Blaikie (New Democratic MP), illustrates how the issue of sovereignty vis-à-vis the United States draws Canada and Cuba together and influences the Canadian response to related international events. During a discussion about the Brothers to the Rescue downing and Helms-Burton, he stated, “…Cuba, like Canada, is in the so-called American sphere of influence and is supposed to behave like a good little neighbour. However, when it comes to Cuba, Canada has shown a streak of independence that we do not always show on other issues…” He went on to urge the


Minister of Foreign Affairs to continue to resist “this latest manifestation of the bully in the American psyche.” Canadians are quick to identify themselves with Cubans, especially when it comes to Canadian and Cuban bilateral relations with the United States. This perception clearly had an influence on their response to the downing as Canadians empathized with the Cuban position.

The discourse about Helms-Burton reflects not only the emphasis Canadians place on protecting their sovereignty from the United States and their corresponding identification with the Cuban predicament, but also reflects other Canadian values. The Canadian mantra of “peace, order and good government” that is so evident in domestic affairs is also manifested in foreign policy. Policy toward Cuba after the Brothers to the Rescue tragedy reveals the influence of this triad and the corresponding identities as a good international citizen and as a peacekeeper on Canadian foreign policy. For example, Ottawa attempted to reduce the conflict between the Americans and Cubans over this issue. Officially and unofficially, Canadian diplomats raised the issue with their Cuban and American counterparts. During a 1996 visit by a group of parliamentarians from Cuba, Senator Grafstein asked of the Cuban delegation:

Please do not take this as being undiplomatic, but it was a question that we, as Canadians, could not answer in our private conversations with senators and congressmen. It is the theory of the Americans -- which we do not accept, but I pass it on -- that Cuba provoked the Americans by overreacting to the planes that were flying over Cuba. The suggestion is that there were other means, other forceful means, available to Cuba to remove those planes from the airspace over Cuba if, indeed, those airplanes had invaded Cuban airspace. During the Cold War in Canada we were used to this. The Russians invaded our space, the Americans invaded our space, and we tried to kick them out as gently as we could not accept, but I pass it on -- that Cuba provoked the Americans by overreacting to the planes that were flying over Cuba. The suggestion is that there were other means, other forceful means, available to Cuba to remove those planes from the airspace over Cuba if, indeed, those airplanes had invaded Cuban airspace. During the Cold War in Canada we were used to this. The Russians invaded our space, the Americans invaded our space, and we tried to kick them out as gently as we

could. That is a rather long prologue to a very short question. We hope that conflicts can be kept to a minimum between now and next year, when we hope that we can reduce the impact of this terrible [Helms-Burton] bill. What is your opinion of this?\(^{26}\)

Another Canadian senator told the Cubans in this same meeting:

We have a dispute between two countries, Cuba and the United States. It has always been my experience that, in a dispute, nobody is 100 percent right and nobody is 100 percent wrong. Each side has responsibility to try and resolve the dispute. I am not blaming either side here, but I want to know what efforts, if any, Cuba is taking to resolve this dispute. There are other ways to resolve disputes than speaking directly to the person with whom you are having the dispute. There are what are known as – and you will know this – diplomatic initiative. You can go through third parties; you can ask other people to try to broker a deal.\(^{27}\)

As Senator Grafstein alluded above, Canadians held similar conversations with American politicians. Interviews confirmed that officials at a number of levels discussed the shoot down with their American counterparts.\(^{28}\) As Chapter Seven demonstrated the belief in mediation is a deeply entrenched Canadian value and an intimate part of the Canadian identity. The attempt to mediate this dispute was a natural reaction for Canadian policymakers, reflecting deeply held values and identities.

Because Canadians give great weight to peaceful and orderly resolutions of international incidents and international law, they pushed for the dispute to be deliberated by the International Court. Warren Allmand, a Liberal Member of Parliament, argued:

“The shooting down of the two U.S. planes was indeed a deplorable incident. Both sides


\(^{27}\) Ibid.

\(^{28}\) Interviews with senior Canadian government officials, Ottawa, Canada, October, 1999.
claim to be right. Consequently, that is a matter for the International Court and not one for unilateral action." Similarly, one objection to Helms-Burton was that the bill was contrary to international law and 'proper' behavior. Mr. Charlie Penson, a Canadian Alliance MP voiced this opinion: "I make the point that the United States has every right to challenge Cuba and to put trade sanctions of a binational nature in place. However, it is simply not within the international parameters of good citizenship or international trade to take that outside its borders and apply it to countries such as Canada." Arthur Eggleton, the Minister for International Trade, told parliament: "Helms-Burton is unacceptable because it flouts long established international legal practices for settling disputes between nations regarding claims by foreign investors who have had their property expropriated.... By choosing to ignore them now, Helms-Burton sets a dangerous precedent." Likewise, Canada sought recourse against the United States in international law. Charlie Penson (Canadian Alliance MP) declared: "Nowadays when a bully bullies us we do not have to put our tail between our legs and run. We do not have to get bloodied in the fight either. We can take that bully to international court. Let us

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take the Americans to court to see if we can get the Helms-Burton bill overturned."32 The fact that Canadians think of themselves as peacekeeping, law abiding, good international citizens had a significant influence on their response to the events of February 24, 1996 and reaction to Helms-Burton.

"Non-Americanism" and the values of "peace, order, and good government" that are inherent in the Canadian identity largely determined the Canadian response to the shoot down and the ensuing Helms-Burton legislation enacted by the American government. Speaking about Helms-Burton, Roger Simmons, a Liberal MP, rather bluntly summarized the influences on the Canadian perception. He said: "Apart from the fact that it flies in the face of everything we understand about the rule of law, about the territorial integrity of sovereign nations, it also says volumes about the arrogance of the people who would advance that kind of legislation."33 Always fiercely protective of any American encroachment on Canadian sovereignty, and perceiving that Cuba is, to a certain degree, also on constant guard against American infringement, it was natural for Ottawa to first, give the Cuban "story" of the events more credence and second, to react very strongly against the American decision to pass Helms-Burton. However, invariably focused on international law, peace, and order it was also natural for Canada to attempt to resolve the dispute and call on the involvement of the International Court.

Thus, the Canadian and American interpretations of, and reactions to, that fateful


downing on February 24, 1996 illustrate the crucial role played by values, perceptions and identities in foreign policy. The American response was a natural evolution of values and identities rooted in American exceptionalism and long established perceptions of Cuba’s place within the U.S. sphere of influence. The Canadian reaction had a great deal to do with their non-American identity and the values and identities associated with their role as an international good citizen and peacekeeper.

The Power of Perception

The popular phrase ‘perception is everything” is a bit of an exaggeration but perception certainly carries a great deal of weight over outcomes and is indeed an important factor in foreign policy. Perception plays a significant role in the development and continuation of Canadian and American policies toward Cuba.

From the earliest point in Ottawa and Washington’s relationship with Castro’s regime the two sets of policy makers perceived the situation very differently. At a 1960 meeting between the Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs, Howard Green, and the U.S. Under Secretary of State, Norman Robertson, the differences in perceptions of Cuba were clearly evident. Robinson reported, “the Canadians spoke with such force and candor that the Americans present were shocked at the extent of the division between the Canadian analysis and their own.”34 This difference caused some tension between the normally friendly neighbors. Americans protested in front of the Canadian embassy in Washington and were discouraged from vacationing north of the border, and Canadian tourists in Florida noticed a colder reception.35

34 Quoted in Kirk and McKenna, Canada-Cuba Relations, 49.

Over forty years later, Canadian and American perceptions of Cuba remain antithetical. Both the State Department and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) provide fact sheets on all countries. The two descriptions of Cuba are telling. The DFAIT sheet on Cuba states the following under type of government: “Republic. 14 provinces and 1 special municipality (Isle of Youth). Unicameral National Assembly of the People’s Power. Assembly sits twice a year; representatives of the Assembly serve 5 year terms.”36 In contrast, the State Department’s Background sheet on Cuba states the following under government type: “Communist state; current government assumed power by force January 1, 1959. Independence: May 20, 1902. Political party: Cuban Communist Party (CCP); only one party allowed. Administrative subdivisions: 14 provinces, including the city of Havana, and one special municipality (Isle of Youth).”37 Both descriptions are presented as fact and neither description is factually wrong. Each reflects a different perception of the Cuban government.

To most American policy makers Cuba’s totally undemocratic status is taken for granted. Cuba represents the antithesis of democracy. Indeed, most countries do not consider Cuba to be a model of democratic governance. Yet, there is considerable disagreement among the countries of the world about Cuba’s democratic status. The United States and Canada are both democracies that believe that democracy is the best form of government. Yet, the United States believes more deeply than Canada that there


is one form of democracy and that it is their duty to spread democracy. Consequently, the Americans emphasize the undemocratic nature of the Cuban regime to a greater degree than Canada. This became especially clear during my interviews in Havana. In my interview with a senior officer at the Canadian embassy in Havana I was told quite sternly that they did not presume that the Cuban form of government was undemocratic, that there were "many forms of democracy." Although this does not represent the official Canadian policy, Canadians generally are more receptive to non-western conceptions of democracy. While most Canadian officials believe that Cuba does not have fair and free national elections and that there are considerable restrictions on press freedoms they perceive that Cubans have considerable impact on local affairs and have other democratic-like features. They are also more sympathetic to Castro’s argument about the failings of western democracies. In contrast, the officials at the American interest section in Havana stressed that the current Cuban regime was extremely undemocratic.

Both Canadians and Americans reduce the revolution, Castro, and the Cuban people to caricatures that serve to perpetuate the two approaches to the island. For example, in most American discourse Castro is portrayed an evil tyrant and the Cuban people are poverty-stricken victims of his tyranny who require American rescue. Whereas, in much of Canadian discourse Castro is described as a freedom fighter turned leader who has considerable support among the Cuban populace and who has had to contend with the overwhelming presence of the United States. For decades, Canadians

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38. This does not represent the official Canadian position vis-a-vis Cuba but demonstrates a much greater diversity of acceptable views on the subject within the Canadian foreign policy establishment.
have maintained that while freedoms are restricted in Cuba, in comparison to many other regimes, Castro's crimes are less serious. They claim that crimes like disappearances prevalent in other regimes do not occur in Cuba. The next section examines American and Canadian perceptions of Cuba's ties to terrorism.

Two Perceptions: Cuba as a Terrorist -Sponsoring State?

Recently, American discourse about Cuba has speculated about Fidel Castro’s terrorist connections and activities. Americans are concerned that Castro not only harbors terrorists, but is actively trying to disrupt the U.S. ability to combat terrorism and is also engaged in biological weapons research and development. In contrast, Canadians do not seem at all worried about those charges. The Canadian discourse about terrorism does not single out Cuba.

The American Perception

Especially after September 11, 2001, terrorism is considered the most important threat to the American way of life. To associate Castro with terrorism has potentially serious consequences for American policy toward the island. The State Department lists Cuba as one of the seven state sponsors of terrorism. The other countries on the list are Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Sudan, and Syria. In April of 1999, Michael Sheehan, the Acting Coordinator for the Office for Counterterrorism stated, "Cuba, quite bluntly, continues to provide safe haven for terrorists, period. They will remain on the list while they continue to provide safe haven for a number of terrorist organizations."39 After the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, speculation about Castro’s role in

international terrorism took center stage in many Washington discussions about the island nation. In the spring of 2002, the Undersecretary of State, John R. Bolton, suggested that Cuba was developing biological weapons.  

He said, "Cuba has at least a limited, offensive biological warfare research-and-development effort." In September of that year the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs accused the Castro regime of supplying false information to the United States' investigation into terrorism, effectively sending American officials on "wild goose chases" and thus, "impeding our efforts to defeat the threat of terrorism."  

These accusations and Cuba's inclusion on the list of sponsors of terrorism are challenged by many, calling into question the security rationale for these charges. According to most estimates Cuba does not pose a terrorist threat and, when pressed for specifics, even American government sources that issued the various accusations are hard pressed to come up with significant or recent evidence of such a danger. Many government documents that address terrorism omit any mention of the Cuban threat even though its place on the list suggests it is one of the most serious offenders. For example, though the State Department document entitled Patterns of Global Terrorism lists Cuba in its state-sponsored terrorism section, it does not discuss any threat posed by Cuba in  


the section which details the specific terrorist threats in Latin America. This section devotes significant space to discussing the threats posed by Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela, none of which are on the list of seven states highlighted by the State Department as the most serious threats. Paul Pillar, the former deputy chief of the CIA Counterterrorist Center wrote the following about Cuba’s inclusion on the list:

Cuba’s remaining links with terrorism consist of providing a home for a handful of members of the Basque Fatherland and Liberty group (ETA) and other fugitives, and providing some accommodations to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia and National Liberation Army... The Castro regime’s post-cold war retrenchment has been so extensive that it is doing nothing either in terrorism or other military or external activities that would appear to qualify it for its pariah status.43

When pressed, Michael Sheehan also admitted that Cuba’s inclusion on the list was questionable. He stated, “It is true, in fact, that Cuba and several other states on that list could take what we would consider not difficult steps to move them off the list of state-sponsorship.”44 Thus, the inclusion of Cuba on the list has little to do with the seriousness of the terrorist threat emanating from the island.

What then explains the inclusion of Cuba on this list of the state sponsors and the frequent speculation about Castro’s terrorist activities? Clearly, the political clout of the Cuban-American community is partially responsible for this designation. Yet, as Chapter Five pointed out, the Cuban American community is not all-powerful. Recently, CANF has failed to stop the growing movement within Congress that favors easing restrictions

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on trade and travel with Cuba. Thus, despite their influence over the year 2000 presidential elections, this lobby appears to be losing, not gaining, strength. So, even though they do their best to publicize a link between the Cuban regime and terrorism, there are additional factors that explain the frequent characterization of the island as a terrorist haven. The prevalence of a certain way of thinking about Cuba and the values and identities that underlie that thinking have influenced the popular and often official depiction of Castro as a terrorist.

After September 11, 2001 the United States (and arguably the rest of the western world) had a new all-important enemy—terrorism. The horrific attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were immediately understood by Americans as a deliberate attack on American values; in particular, democracy and freedom. It was believed that the terrorists attacked the United States because the U.S. represents these values.

Castro, seen as a long-term enemy of these values, was naturally perceived to be on the side of the terrorists. American officials often compare Fidel Castro to Saddam Hussein and other pariahs. For example, Dana Rohrabacher (Rep- Calif) told Congress that Castro is “demonstrably stronger than (Iraqi President) Saddam Hussein in his


ability to hurt the U.S."

Dennis Hays, the former head of the State Department Cuba Affairs and now the Executive Vice-President of CANF argued “Enlisting Castro in the fight against terrorism is like deputizing John Gotti in the fight against organized crime.”

To assume that his regime would be engaged in the production of chemical or biological weapons, regardless of international norms or agreements against their production, is a natural evolution of that line of thought. Thus, the logic is that since Castro is without morals, if he has the means to produce biological weapons, then it is most likely that he is doing so. Hence, all that needs to be said is that Cuba has the capacity to make these weapons for many Americans to assume that Cuba is indeed engaged in biological weapons production.

Since they do not have proof that Fidel Castro is developing biological weapons, most statements made about Cuba as a biological weapons threat almost always stress that Cuba has the “capability or capacity” to produce these weapons. Though most official reports do not unequivocally state that Cuba has these weapons they do intimate that because Castro has the means to do so it is more than likely that they are being produced on the island. For example, Secretary of State, Colin Powell, said the United States was concerned about Cuba’s “capacity and capability to conduct such [biological] research.” However, a few members of the administration have taken this narrative to


the next step. Undersecretary of State, John Bolton asserted:

For four decades, Cuba has maintained a well-developed and sophisticated biomedical industry, supported until 1990 by the Soviet Union. This industry is one of the most advanced in Latin America and leads in the production of pharmaceuticals and vaccines that are sold worldwide. Analysts and Cuban defectors have long cast suspicion on the activities conducted in these biomedical facilities. ... The United States believes that Cuba has at least a limited offensive biological warfare research and development effort. Cuba has provided dual-use biotechnology to other rogue states.\(^50\)

Shortly after Bolton made this speech to the Heritage Foundation, both Colin Powell and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld were careful to distance themselves from Bolton’s remarks, stressing that the U.S. can only say that Cuba has the capacity to produce these weapons.\(^51\) Yet, most states with pharmaceutical research capabilities have the same wherewithal to produce these weapons as Cuba. The crucial difference is the perception of Cuba in the United States.\(^52\)

Furthermore, Cuba’s location within the American sphere of influence heightens both the strategic and value-based rationales for these concerns. The island’s location “only ninety miles from U.S. shores” is stressed in discussions about the regime’s terrorist activities. For example, Dennis Hays stated, “[w]e need to know if a nation 90


\(^{51}\) Marquis Schmitt, “Bush Faces Pressure.”

\(^{52}\) Other countries do not believe that Cuba is on the side of terrorism. Interpol (the international police organization) investigated Cuba’s ties to terrorism and was satisfied that Cuba was committed to the fight against terrorism. See: Cuban American National Foundation, “CANF Deplores Interpol Chief’s Acceptance of Cuba Terrorism Ties,” Latnn.com (January 22, 2002) (http://www.latnn.com) (September 20, 2002).
miles from our shores is experimenting with deadly biological agents.”\(^{53}\) John Bolton asserted, “In addition to Libya and Syria, there is a threat coming from another BWC signatory, and one that lies just 90 miles from the U.S. mainland--namely, Cuba.”\(^{54}\) This fact is emphasized both for strategic and normative reasons. If Cuba does have biological weapons the proximity to the United States would make delivery somewhat easier. However, the location is stressed for another implicit reason – because Cuba is so intimately a part of the American sphere of influence its interests cannot be separated from those of the United States’, thus justifying American involvement in Cuban affairs.

Lincoln Diaz-Balart (Rep-Florida) repeatedly stressed the connection between the Western Hemisphere and policy toward Cuba in an attempt to convince other members of Congress to vote down an 2002 amendment that would make public financing available for sales to the Cuban government. He said, “Cuba is in this hemisphere. It is the only country oppressed by tyranny in this hemisphere…. Cuba remains in this hemisphere, despite what some would like on the other side of this debate. It remains in this hemisphere, and the Cuban people deserve our continued solidarity, and not financing for the terrorist regime…”\(^{55}\) Diaz-Balart clearly believes that Cuba’s location within the hemisphere is an important consideration in the determination of American policy toward the island. It is also obvious that he thinks this fact is important to the other members


\(^{54}\) Bolton “Beyond the Axis of Evil.”

because he uses it in an attempt to convince them to oppose the amendment. The idea of the American sphere of influence and Cuba's special place within that sphere has influenced the official debate about American policy toward the island, including the discourse about Castro's ties to terrorism.

The image of the Castro regime as a pariah and the location of Cuba within the American sphere of influence have contributed to the American designation of Cuba as a terrorist sponsoring state and influenced the more recent accusations about the regime's involvement in biological weapons production.

The View From North of the Border

In contrast, these perceptions are not prevalent in Canadian discussions about the island even though terrorism is considered one of the top threats to Canadian security. A 1999 report put out by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) entitled "Trends in Terrorism" lists forty-two categories of terrorist threats including threats from Latin America. It lists Colombia and Peru as potential sources of danger but does not mention any threat from Cuba.\(^{56}\)

Though Castro is no longer considered the honorable freedom fighter he once was, he is not considered a pariah either, and Canadians remain highly skeptical that his regime is engaged in terrorist-friendly activities. Just as Americans are inclined to believe the worst about Castro, Canadians are predisposed to downplay reports that he is involved in terrorist activities.

A *Globe and Mail* article about U.S.-Cuban relations captures the Canadian

response to the charge that Cuba has biological weapons: “John Bolton, publicly widened the Bush “axis of evil” to include Cuba, which Mr. Bolton claimed is developing biological weapons. Conceivably -- just -- that might be true. As with Iraq there is no way to tell. But more likely it is not.” Canadians remain highly skeptical of the American characterization of Castro as a terrorist or that he is engaged in bioweapons production. The issue is almost a nonstarter in Canadian government circles. In fact, the Canadian International Development agency (CIDA) supports a number of programs that either directly or indirectly aid Cuba’s biotechnology sector. For example, CIDA funds a project between the Universidad Central de Las Villas "Marta Abreu" (UCLV), Santa Clara, Cuba and the Institute of Biomedical Engineering at the University of New Brunswick. The stated objective of the project is “to establish a Biomedical Engineering Education Infrastructure in Cuba.”

The Canadian tendency to disregard or minimize the possibility that Castro supports terrorism is causally tied to Canadian identities and values. Canadians have a great deal invested in their policy toward Cuba as it represents independence from American policy. Since the accusations are coming from the United States and they want to be independent from the American position on Cuba, Canadians are even more skeptical of the reports. During a CBC interview about the September 11 attacks, Prime Minister Chrétien mentioned Cuba, but only in the context of defending Canadian policy toward the island and to suggest how American foreign policy could be improved to deter


58 University of New Brunswick, The Institute of Biomedical Engineering, “Developing a Biomedical Engineering Program in Cuba,” (http://www.unb.ca/biomed/cida.htm) (September 13, 2002).
terrorism. He said that the United States and the western world needed to shoulder some of the blame for the attacks because the West is “looked upon as being arrogant, self-satisfied, greedy and with no limits.”\textsuperscript{59} He used Cuba as an example of how the Americans, because they are so powerful, should be “nicer.”\textsuperscript{60}

Canadians also have a history of identifying with Cuba. Though they have often drawn tenuous comparisons (such as the one party state comparison discussed in chapter seven) Canadians remain empathetic to the Cuban situation and thus would be prone to question the American accusations of Cuban as a terrorist state. Furthermore, “Cuba as a terrorist” runs counter to the deeply held perception of Castro as essentially a well-meaning, though misguided, leader. To acknowledge a terrorist connection, Canadians would have to seriously question their whole picture of the Cuban regime and their relationship with Cuba. It is much easier to chalk it up to another example of the “American bully” in action.

Discussions of terrorism in Canadian government circles emphasize the values that have come to dominate Ottawa’s foreign policy. Bill Graham, Canada’s Minister for Foreign Affairs told an audience in March of 2002 that:

our challenge in responding to terrorism is to not lose sight of the values and norms we cherish. Respect for the rule of law underpins Canadian society and is fundamental to Canadian values and identity. Canadians believe in the rule of law and in legal institutions to remedy injustice. Throughout our history, the rule of law has been our strength and the foundation upon which we have built this country. It is a fundamental part of our democratic tradition and is a principle that


\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.
Canada promotes internationally.\textsuperscript{61}

The fact that terrorism is against international law dominates most Canadian discourse on terrorism.

Thus, the United States and Canada, in many ways, so much alike, believe very different things about Castro’s Cuba. Americans place the Cuban regime on their list of sponsors of terrorism, insinuate he is developing biological weapons and misleading the global effort to combat terrorism and the Canadians are skeptical of all of these charges. The values, identities and past perceptions at work in both countries have influenced these different characterizations of Fidel Castro and his connections to terrorism. Since it would be difficult to underestimate the affect of the designation of a state as terrorist-friendly in a post-September 11 world, this perception is exceedingly relevant to policy formulation.

Conclusion

Canada and the United States have long had distinct policies toward Castro’s Cuba. Clearly, we cannot discount the effect of the Cuban-American community nor the death of American citizens on the response from the United States to the downing of the planes and the absence of those factors on the Canadian response. Likewise, the Cuban-American community has a role in the identification of Castro as a terrorist in the United States and the absence of such a clearly anti-Castro group in Canada has likely had an impact on the Canadian perspective on this issue. Yet, as the examples in this chapter

\textsuperscript{61} Canada Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, “Notes for an Address by the Honourable Bill Graham Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Terrorism, Law and Democracy Conference Organized by the Canadian Institute for the Administration of Justice,” (Montreal, Quebec March 26, 2002) (http://webapps.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/minipub/Publication.asp?FileSpec=+/Min_Pub/105049.htm) (April 5, 2002).
have demonstrated, neither policy can be reduced to a simple political or economic variable since they also reflect a complex interplay of values, identities and perceptions.

By comparing the Canadian and American responses to the same issues this chapter further demonstrated the relevance of constructivist variables. Both the shoot down of the Brothers to the Rescue planes and the perspective on Castro’s association with terrorism were understood differently in Canada and the United States largely because of the unique combination of values, identities and perceptions at work in both countries.

In the U.S. the shoot down was seen as an act of evil that demanded an immediate response. This interpretation reflected the long-standing perception of Castro and Cuba’s place within the American “family.” Helms-Burton more than any other document of the post-Cold War era explicitly reveals the degree to which the Americans place Cuba within their “sphere of influence” and the latitude they believe that gives them to determine the future of the island country. In contrast, the Canadians, generally sympathetic to sovereignty issues vis-à-vis the United States, saw the downing more so as an unfortunate overreaction to repeated incursions on Cuban sovereignty. In typical Canadian fashion they tried to defuse the tension between the U.S. and Cuba by talking to both sides. However, the Canadians were most concerned with the enactment of the Helms-Burton bill because they saw it as another attempt by the Americans to dictate Canadian policy.

Similarly, both countries reacted very differently to suggestions that Castro has ties to terrorism. Based on long-standing views of Castro, Americans are inclined to believe the worst about the dictator and as such are receptive to charges that Castro is trying to scuttle the American efforts to combat terrorism and is involved in the
production of biological weapons. Canadians, inclined to generally have a fairly positive view of Castro (and tend to question the American version of events when Cuba is involved) are highly skeptical of the American charges.

However, as the next and final chapter will reveal, both Canadian and American policies toward Cuba are changing. Each approach reflects new perceptions of the island nation that began to emerge in the late 1990s and are slowly gaining strength. Ironically, the two strategies are becoming more similar as both sets of perceptions about the island and Castro evolve. A number of incidents have spurred these new images. In the United States – the Pope’s visit and the Elián Gonzalez incident and; in Canada - the failure of Prime Minister Chrétien to secure the release of the dissidents during his visit to the island, the Pan American games fiasco and the rhetoric surrounding the Quebec Summit of the Americas – countered the popular narratives operating in both countries.
CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSIONS

I have painted a picture of two complex, but very dissimilar policies that are based on two different identities, rooted in particular and ingrained values, ideas, and cultures. Does this mean that these policies are doomed to remain as they are today? Will the United States continue its policy of isolation until Castro dies or the regime becomes a model of liberal democracy? Will Canada continue to engage the regime even if Castro jails even more dissidents?

The two policies are dynamic, like the underlying identities, values, ideas, cultures, and perceptions, they are constantly ebbing and flowing. They are socially constructed and thus open to change. Indeed, in the last five years the two policies have shown a potential for considerable change. The next two subsections will describe the recent alterations in both approaches, highlighting how these changes are connected to ideational factors.

Recent Developments in US Cuban Policy

The norms, identities, and images that underlie the construction of U.S. policy toward Cuba are not easily altered. They have, to different degrees, become internalized or institutionalized. However, relatively recent international and domestic events have caused some re-examination of a few of these variables.

Having won the Cold War, Americans are less likely to fear communism and the Castro regime. Surveys indicate that most Americans still perceive that Cuba is an enemy
but that the numbers believing this have declined since the Cold War ended.¹ Though still unpopular, Castro and his communist regime are no longer seen as threatening. Over half of the Americans polled in 2000 thought that Cuba did not represent a serious threat to the United States. Only 15 percent thought the island was a "very serious threat."² The changing perception of threat, while remaining important, is only one of the variables that have caused some Americans to re-examine their policy toward Cuba.

The visit of Pope John Paul II to Cuba also influenced American perceptions of the island. Most Americans, believing in their country’s exceptional character and perceiving that the United States is taking the most morally correct position, were surprised by the Pope’s message in Cuba. Since the Vatican and the Catholic Church have considerable moral authority, the Pope’s opinion of the embargo as "deplorable" made many people question whether their government was pursuing the best policy.³ Though his visit did not cause a major policy change, his remarks about the U.S. embargo and the plight of the Cuban people did influence many Americans. A senior U.S. official said the Pope swayed the American public, the Clinton administration, and even some hard line Cuban Americans.⁴ Democratic Representative Lee Hamilton said that the Pope’s visit “Got an awful lot of people thinking. The Pope’s approach is the exact


opposite of the American Government's. The Pope is trying to engage the Cuban people. The U.S. policy is to isolate the Cuban people. The contrast is apparent.⁵ After visiting Cuba for the Pope's visit, the Archbishop of Boston, Bernard Cardinal Law, argued for a change to the US approach toward the island. He stated that he was accompanied by "heads of social service agencies and representatives of foundations, there were lawyers and judges, congressmen, presidents of colleges, a law school dean and an university professor, and the editor of a national magazine. We were a wondrously diverse group, but we found unity in our conviction that the time is now for a change."⁶ President Bill Clinton stated after he introduced a number of changes to Cuba policy that "The measures I have announced today are designed to build on [the Pope's] visit..."⁷

The Pope's visit was still having an impact on US policy years later. The House of Representatives' Cuba Working Group referred to the Pope's message in Cuba in 2002. They stated: "we heartily embrace the message of Pope John Paul II, who began his visit to Cuba, in 1998."⁸ The Pope's remarks prompted a reexamination of the assumption that the United States' policy toward the regime was the morally correct policy. It interrupted the logical pathway between the America identity as an exceptional country (a moral leader) and the norm that the US should be isolating the regime.


Furthermore, the media frenzy surrounding the custody battle over Elián Gonzalez also caused many people to reconsider their perceptions. This six-year old Cuban boy who was part of a group that fled the island in November of 1999, lost his mother when their boat sank off the coast of Florida. After he was rescued, the Immigration and Naturalization Service turned him over to his relatives in Miami. The custody battle that ensued between those relatives and Elián’s father in Cuba made headlines for months.

The publicity altered many people’s perceptions of Cuba, Cubans, and Cuban Americans. First, it served to humanize Cubans. Americans identified with Elián’s father, Juan Miguel Gonzalez and his family in Cuba. People remarked that they “seemed like just like us,” and reported that they felt empathy for Juan Miguel. Additionally, many people questioned their perception of life in Cuba after Elián’s father refused an offer to remain in the United States. Lastly, during the custody fight, the Cuban American community often appeared overly emotional and sometimes irrational. It encouraged a growing skepticism of the community and their capacity for objectivity. A former senior government official who remains very influential in policy toward Cuba told the author that a New Republic article correctly analyzed the impact of this most recent crisis on the community. This article claimed that the community’s reputation was tarnished during the custody battle. Their insistence that Elián’s survival was an actual miracle, and their claims that he was saved by angels in the form of dolphins, as well as by their passionate outbursts on national television and the appearance that they seemed to think the community is above the law, hurt their credibility.  

Opinion polls taken at the time confirm these perceptions. Americans were asked if they approved or disapproved of the way people handled the Elian Gonzalez case. "The boy's father" achieved the highest approval rating - 67 percent said they approved of his actions. In contrast, only 34 percent of those polled approved of the way "the boy's relatives in Miami" handled the case. The publicity also influenced the public's view of the wider Cuban American community. Only 27 percent of those polled approved of the way the community handled the case.\textsuperscript{10} A NBC/Wall Street Journal poll reported that even fewer respondents thought that the Cuban American relatives (23 percent) and the wider community (20 percent) acted responsibly. In contrast, 71 percent of those polled said they believed that Elian's father acted responsibly.\textsuperscript{11} These events have caused a re-examination of some of the most prevalent images, norms and ideas of Cuba and the US Cuban American community. The custody battle called into question some long held perceptions - that the Cuban American community's view of Cuba is correct; that Cubans are "different" from Americans; and that life in Cuba is as bad as Cuban Americans report.

Former President Jimmy Carter's visit to Cuba in 2002 also had an impact on people's perceptions of Cuba and of the US policy. This was the first visit by an American of this stature since Castro assumed power. Carter is one of the most popular former presidents. He is more popular now than he was during his presidency.\textsuperscript{12} His work


in human rights and other humanitarian issues is well respected. Thus, many Americans listened when Carter visited Cuba and spoke out in favor of engagement.

Perceptions within the Cuban American community are also changing. Surveys conducted in the 1970 and 1980s indicated that a large majority of Cuban Americans favored isolation or removing Castro from power by force. Dialogue was opposed by as many as 80 percent of the community. In those days, Cuban Americans who advocated dialogue were harassed by others in the community. One Cuban American was killed for promoting those views in 1975.

Over the last few years, the community has become much less united behind a single solution. There are growing divisions within the community. A majority of Cubans in the Miami area are recent immigrants. These “economic refugees” that arrived from the 1980s on, are known to favor dialogue much more than their predecessors. Surveys taken in 2003 indicate that more than half of all Cuban immigrants believe that the US approach toward Cuba has failed to improve the lives of people in Cuba. A majority also believes that exiles should be talking to the Cuban government and approved of a meeting between the two groups held in April of 2003. The Miami Herald reports that polls taken of Cuban Americans in Florida during 2003 show “a major shift towards

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14 Ibid.


moderation by Cuban exiles."\textsuperscript{17} The New York Times reports that: "the change in attitudes reflects an ideological split between the original Cuban exiles and their children and grandchildren, a recent influx of immigrants who fled for economic rather than political reasons, and a concerted effort by some exile groups to improve the image of Cuban Americans after a nationally televised struggle over the young shipwreck survivor Elian Gonzalez."\textsuperscript{18}

To a certain degree, the Cuban American National Foundation has also changed its views, rhetoric, and policies. The organization is now willing to meet with members of the current Cuban government to discuss democracy issues. This would have been virtually unheard of in the 1990s. It is telling that CANF did not come out in opposition to Carter’s visit. They only asked that Carter raise the issue of human rights while he was in Cuba.\textsuperscript{19} These new views are not accepted by everyone. The change in the main Cuban American lobby group has caused divisions within its former members. Those members who have been upset with the changes in the organization’s hard line views have banded together in the new Cuban Liberation Council.\textsuperscript{20} However, given the evolving views of the community, this group is unlikely to achieve the monolithic status achieved by CANF in the 1980s.

\textsuperscript{17} Elliot and De Valle.

\textsuperscript{18} Canedy.


\textsuperscript{20} Canedy.
The Pope’s visit to the island, the effect of Elian Gonzalez, the declining perception of threat, and divisions with the community have changed perceptions and influenced the norms directing this policy. Significant elements of the American public are now questioning isolation. For example, even though it is still illegal, more Americans are visiting Cuba. Approximately 50,000 Americans illegally visited Cuba in 2001. Business leaders and lawmakers are also travelling to the island in record numbers. Over 700 American business people, representing almost 300 companies participated in the 2002 Havana Trade Show.

There has also been a movement in Congress to end the embargo. Both the House of Representatives and the Senate have formed Cuba working groups for the explicit purpose of critically examining American policy toward Cuba. The Senate group formed in March of 2003, announced in its first letter that they would look at the right of Americans to travel and the capacity of Cuba to serve as a market for American products. In July 2002 an amendment in the House to remove funding for the enforcement of the travel ban passed by 262-187. Similarly, a measure to remove restrictions on the amount of money Americans send to Cuba won by 251-177. Other similar measures also passed. Though an amendment to end funding for the enforcement of the whole embargo did not

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win a majority, it did garner 204 votes. Thus, there has been an unmistakable movement in many quarters to normalize US relations with Cuba.

Policy is beginning to reflect these changing perceptions and norms. Americans were given permission to sell agriculture products to Cuba in 2000. In 2002, Cuba purchased over $138 million in U.S. agricultural products, making the island one of the top fifty markets for American agricultural sales. These policies reflect changing perceptions and norms about the island, its people, the Cuban American community, and the US approach. These perceptions have the potential to have a longer-term influence over the direction of this policy.

However, there has also been an increase in countervailing pressures in support of isolation. Florida's pivotal role in the 2000 election and the perception in Washington that the Cuban American community was a crucial player in the outcome has influenced the Bush administration. Bush has filled openings in his administration with representatives of the hard-line elements of the community. Furthermore, September 11 and the subsequent war on terrorism created tension between the United States and Cuba since the regime remains on the State Department's list of states that support terrorism. As chapter eight showed, the inclusion of Cuba on this list and charges that Cuba supports bioterrorism are serious barriers to normalization.

Furthermore, President Bush has taken a harder line with Cuba than did his predecessor. In 2001, he said that his administration "will oppose any attempt to weaken

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sanctions against Cuba's government."25 Bush has increased support for human rights activists in Cuba. He has definitely adopted a more confrontational approach, and according to some, has actively goaded the Cuban government.26

Much of the new tension in the relationship has taken place between the American diplomats in Havana and the Cuban government. According to the Associated Press, the Principal Officer in Havana during Bush's first two years in office, Vicki Huddleston, "has walked a rocky road that turned sharply to the right when President Bush took office in 2001." They report in contrast, "[d]uring the Clinton administration, Huddleston kept a relatively low profile, meeting quietly with dissidents and traveling to provincial areas to ensure unsuccessful migrants weren't harassed after being returned home by the U.S. Coast Guard."27 Under Bush, Huddleston, distributed short-wave radios programmed to receive Radio Marti and books to activists in Cuba. Huddleston also increased her criticisms of Cuban government and her support of dissidents.28

Huddleston's replacement, James Cason, has further increased the tension between the US Interest Section and the Cuban regime by intensifying the contact between the dissidents and US diplomats. Dissidents were frequently invited to Cason's home and also to the US mission. Cason has also spoken at opposition meetings.29


reacted by severely limiting the movement of U.S. personnel in Cuba. The hostility
between Havana and Washington has been intensifying.

The regime also claims that the renewed effort to harass and jail dissidents that
began in the spring of 2003 is a reaction to the “American offensive”. A representative
of the Cuban government in Washington, Juan Hernandez Acen claimed, “These people
have not been arrested for what they think… They were arrested because they are directly
linked to the active conspiracy and subversion being done by James Cason.”
Though firmly stating that Castro alone is responsible for the 2003 crackdown, Washington
insiders admit that Cason’s activities have given Castro the excuse he needed to engage
in this most recent crackdown. In any case, this series of arrests and trials has been
described as the most serious crackdown in years. Some dissidents were given jail
sentences as long as 27 years. As a result of this repression, the tension between Havana
and much of the rest of the world is palpable.

Lastly, the seemingly easy victory of the Americans in the 2003 war versus
Saddam Hussein’s Iraq has made many Cubans nervous. The American government’s
new preemptive approach to rogue regimes has spurred speculation that Washington
might take unilateral action against the Cuban regime. This conjecture has been fueled
by the growing jingoism of the Bush administration. On April 10, 2003, the US

2003.

31 Knox, “Why did Washington Goad Cuba?”
Ambassador to the Dominican Republic warned that Iraq was a “very good example for Cuba.”32

The American self-identification as an exceptional country, and as such, as a moral and political leader and as a defender of democracy and human rights, are deeply internalized. Castro’s Cuba does and will, for the foreseeable future, continue to represent the antithesis of the U.S. identity. Likewise, a number of the norms that provide the foundation for this approach toward Cuba are also stubbornly ingrained. The norm that Cuba is within the U.S. sphere of influence is unlikely to change. However, norms that are related to certain images about Cuba, Cubans, and Cuban Americans are more easily changed. Those perceptions and norms have been evolving and have resulted in a movement toward normalization that has influenced policy in that direction.

However, whether the movement in Congress and among the American public to end the embargo will continue will have a great deal to do with what happens in Cuba. If Castro continues to increase the repression on the island, few members of congress will feel confident arguing for a relaxation. As the Cuba Policy Foundation put it: “[i]f the move to end the embargo was like a political campaign, we had a great candidate.... This dissident roundup is the candidate being caught with the intern. The fear is people will be less inclined to listen to a positive message. Because of the fear, distrust and justifiable outrage, the message of engaging Cuba will be lost.”33 If this repression eases, the pressure to change this policy is likely to continue and it is very possible that specific


elements within the wider policy will be altered (further restrictions on travel, food and medical sales etc. will be lifted). If they continue, these piecemeal changes will eventually nullify "isolation." However, if the trend toward repression continues these piecemeal changes will stop. Furthermore, until there is significant change in Cuba the ingrained ideational factors will continue to work against the full normalization of US-Cuban relations.

Recent Developments in Canada’s Cuba Policy

Canada’s policy toward Cuba is equally influenced by ideational variables. These variables push Canadian policy toward engagement with the island. However, recent events have challenged the Canadian identity in relation to Cuba policy, undermining this approach.

During the mid-1990s, Canadian-Cuban relations seemed to be at an all-time high. In 1997, Ottawa and Havana signed a Joint Declaration, which established cooperation between the two governments in a number of areas including on human rights and good governance issues.  

However, by the end of the 1990s, this warming trend between the two governments had cooled. The initial fallout arose from the 1998 visit by Prime Minister Chrétien to Cuba. This was the first visit at this level since the 1970s and was played up in the Canadian press. During that visit, Fidel Castro publicly referred to the American embargo as genocide, which put the Canadian Prime Minister in an awkward position.

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34 See Canada, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, "Canada’s Relations with Cuba" (http://www.dfait.maeic.gc.ca/latin/cuba/81600-e.htm). In recent years the success of the Joint Declaration has been called into question as there appears to be little progress on these issues in Cuba. Canadian government officials respond that they did not expect rapid change in Cuba and maintain that constructive engagement is a long-term policy. Based on confidential interviews with senior Canadian government officials, Ottawa and Havana, 1999 and 2000.
Canadians wish to be seen as distinct from the U.S. but do not respond well when others publicly criticize this friend and ally.

To make matters much worse, Chrétien made a point of raising with Castro the case of four dissidents that were scheduled to be tried in Cuba. He pressed for an open trial and felt fairly confident that Castro would follow through. However, the four were summarily tried and convicted in a closed trial. This greatly embarrassed the Prime Minister and contributed to the Canadian sense of disillusionment with their efforts on the island. This was a direct challenge to the Canadian identity since Canada was not able to achieve the desired release even though the dialogue occurred at the very highest levels. Canada immediately cooled relations. Ministerial visits were suspended.

Relations worsened during the subsequent 1999 PanAmerican games held in Winnipeg. Fidel Castro was very angry about a number of issues surrounding the games. He said “never before had we seen such abusive and trickery actions in a Pan American sport competition. The whole purpose was to harass Cuba, to displace Cuba from the second position in order to benefit the host country and to discredit our sport.” He charged that Canada allowed sports scouts to promote the defection of Cuban athletes, withdrew medals from Cuban winners under false charges, and tried to disadvantage Cuban teams. Castro concluded his speech with, “it is in that spirit that our athletes have been competing in the face of hostility, seduction and traps, on a field that has been turned into enemy ground. So, be it. The same has happened in other places where

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authorities from the North have been present. But, there are two in that North now; the one that was already there and another one further North." Lumping Canada and the United States together was not only the most serious insult that Fidel Castro could muster but it was also a challenge to the Canadian identity. Relations had reached a new low.

At the same time, Canadian development programs were encountering difficulty in Cuba. A number of Cuban students attending Canadian universities defected while in Canada, creating tension between the two countries. Furthermore, the CIDA program to modernize the Cuban taxation system backfired as the Cuban government used it to hinder the establishment of private enterprise. In 2000, Fidel Castro visited Ottawa for Pierre Trudeau's funeral but he did not meet with the Prime Minister.

Canadian investors also began to shy away from Cuba. The Wall Street Journal reported as early as 1999 that, "[f]or many Canadian companies as well as for the government, it's the morning after their love affair with the island nation." Archibald Ritter, a well-known expert on Canadian-Cuban relations from Carelton University, confirmed the Journal report in 2001 when he told an audience at the City University of New York that Canadian businesses were becoming more disillusioned with Cuba. In particular Ritter pointed out that Sherritt International, the largest Canadian investor in Cuba, had only invested half of what they expected to invest in ventures on the island.

37 Ibid.

38 Archibald Ritter, Speech delivered to the City University of New York's Queens College and Graduate School, Cuba Project, 2001.


40 Ritter.
Cuba’s exclusion from the 2001 Summit of the Americas meeting in Quebec City caused even more tension in the bilateral relationship. John Manley, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, told the author at a meeting of the Canadian Society in New York in April of 2001, that Cuba would not be invited to the Summit of the Americas because it was not a democracy. Manley’s remarks at that meeting were published in Canadian newspapers. Castro was infuriated. He responded by encouraging the protesters at the Summit as well as criticizing Canada’s treatment of the protesters. He stated: “We have just seen the images of the brutal way in which Canadian authorities repressed the peaceful demonstrations... They cannot sustain this unjust order imposed on humanity. We send you our total solidarity. Cuba supports you.”

However, when Castro released the last member of the “Group of Four” in August of 2002, relations warmed. These four dissidents were the same four that Prime Minister Chrétien spoke to Castro about on his visit to the island. Most believe the worsening of relations that followed that trip were caused by Chrétien’s embarrassment. DFAIT explains: “In March 1999, Canada had suspended ministerial visits as a signal of our dissatisfaction with Cuba’s response to our demarches on various human rights issues (including the sentencing of four prominent political dissidents, the "July Four"). In May 2002, the last of the four dissidents, Vladimiro Roca, was released.” Thus, the release of the four was an important step in the relationship.


The first evidence of a friendlier attitude came in September 2002 during a CBC interview with the Prime Minister. During that interview, Chrétien emphasized that Canada had a “normal” relationship with Cuba and criticized the American approach toward the island.  

High-level visits were resumed. In November 2002, Denis Paradis, Secretary of State for Latin America, Africa and La Francophonie, went to Cuba to attend the Havana International Trade Fair. During that visit the secretary also inaugurated an exhibit honoring Pierre Trudeau. The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade asserts: “Denis Paradis visited Cuba in November 2002, the first ministerial visit in almost four years. Secretary of State Paradis’ visit signals Canada’s willingness to reinvigorate political dialogue with Cuban officials and to support Canadian interests in Cuba.” In Cuba, Paradis asserted: "We should be encouraging as wide a dialogue as possible, comparing perspectives and values. The large numbers of Canadians that visit Cuba every year are testament to the affection between our two peoples and the importance of understanding each other better…”


In addition, in March 2003, the Canadian Embassy in Cuba held a photographic exposition called "Canada-Cuba: A View over One Hundred Years". DFAIT explained: "The images will cover the wide diversity of contacts between the two countries including political visits, commercial projects, development programs, cultural, scientific and educational exchanges and sporting activities." Canada was once again celebrating its friendship with Cuba.

The American war with Iraq seems to have also prompted closer Canadian-Cuban relations. Kirk and McKenna point out it is “plausible that re-energizing the Canadian-Cuba relationship is somehow linked to Canada’s increasingly muddled position on Iraq. In other words, a political overture to Cuba- an arch enemy of Washington- may be designed to convince Canadians that our foreign policy is distinctive of that of the Americans.”

Nevertheless, this warming trend came to a halt in the spring of 2003 when Castro stepped up repression. According to the *Globe and Mail*:

Foreign Affairs Minister Bill Graham summoned Cuba’s ambassador to Canada to his office last night to express "extreme concern" over a dramatic crackdown on peaceful dissent by Fidel Castro’s regime. The highly unusual move came after the sentencing of dozens of dissidents to prison terms of 12 to 27 years. Their trials had been brief and closed, some on charges of co-operating with the United States to oppose the Communist government.

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47Canada Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, “Canada-Cuban Relations.”


Canada’s push toward warmer relations would have continued as long as the regime continued to show an even slight willingness to improve human rights. It is Canada’s natural inclination to engage Cuba because so many elements of the Canadian identity construct norms promoting friendship with the island. However, the Canadian identity as an international good citizen could not let such a severe and public crackdown go unnoticed. Unless, Castro seems to be responding to the international calls to end this round of repression it is unlikely that the Canadian-Cuban relationship will continue to improve in the near future.

Foreign Policy Impotence and Cuba

Cuba remains an island in many senses of the word. For four decades, the Cuban regime has kept a tight rein over events on the island regardless of international events. Castro survived being the only Warsaw Pact country in the Western Hemisphere; he survived the end of the Cold War and the death of the Soviet Union; he survived Helms-Burton; and he survived chaotic relations with various friends and enemies, including Canada and the United States.

It seems as though Castro’s regime is relatively unaffected by international events and other countries’ foreign policies. Just as Canadian-Cuban relations were warming; just as the embargo was under the most serious congressional attack in its history; just as Cuban Americans seem to be moderating; and just as the Miami Mafia seemed to be a relic of the past; Castro initiates the most serious crackdown on activists and journalists in years. Castro blames the 2003 crackdown on the Bush team in Havana and Washington but his argument ignores the serious warming trend that was underway in Miami and on Capitol Hill.
The crackdown elicited the expected reactions. Countries all over the globe have expressed their opposition to this latest repression. Most countries predict that their relations with Havana will cool as a result. It is clear that Castro is much less concerned with other countries’ policies toward Cuba than everyone else thinks. Castro came to power denouncing foreign intervention and he has apparently succeeded in making Cuba one of the most independent states on the globe. Neither the Canadian nor the American policy has been successful in altering the political landscape in Cuba. Thus, isolation, engagement or somewhere in between- this study predicts none of these approaches will fundamentally change things in Cuba. Even the improbable use of force, a la the US invasion of Iraq, is unlikely to produce the desired transition to stable democracy. If democracy is in Cuba’s future it will have to come from within. However, this is unlikely to happen while Fidel Castro continues to rule. Thus, Cuba’s future will look much like its past until nature forces an end to the Castro regime.

**Summary and Theoretical Implications**

This study began with the question why Canada and the United States have adopted such dramatically different approaches toward Fidel Castro’s Cuba. This difference is especially apparent in the post-Cold War environment as both countries claim to have the same end in mind- greater respect for democracy and human rights on the island yet continue to employ drastically different means. American policy contends that the best way to ensure change in Cuba is to isolate the current regime. The Canadians take the opposite approach; that engagement is the most effective means to promote democracy and human rights.
The most widely accepted explanations for both policies ignore ideational variables. The Cuban American community’s influence over elections is presumed to fully, and simply, explain the US approach. This explanation assumes the community favors a hard-line, isolationist policy toward their homeland. It then contends that because the Cuban American population is concentrated in Miami-Dade county in Florida (and to a lesser extent also in Jersey City, New Jersey) they have a disproportionate influence over elections, thus ensuring that their policy preferences are followed in Washington. The Canadian policy of engagement is attributed to Canadian economic interests. This argument maintains that because American businesses are prevented from investing in or selling to the Cuban people, Canadian companies have an advantage and are keen to trade with Cuba. Thus, the Canadian government, wanting to support Canadian-Cuban trade follows a policy of engagement.

This study adopted a constructivist approach to this question. It problematized both these explanations and examined the role of ideational factors such as identity, values, norms, and perceptions in the two policies. This study has demonstrated that the widely accepted reasons for the two policies are inadequate explanations. Though each of the traditional explanations offers some insight into the respective bilateral relationships, they are incomplete. For example, the Cuban American electoral thesis cannot explain how the community first began to wield power when, at that time, they represented a very small, unorganized electoral base. The constructivist analysis can show that the community was given this power by Washington because their perceptions and policy preferences were directly in line with the views prevalent in Washington during that period. Furthermore, the fact that the Bush administration’s policy toward Cuba is more
hard-line than the previous two administrations while the Cuban American community itself is growing more divided also reveals the incongruity between Cuba policy and the wishes of the community. As this chapter has shown, a pro-embargo platform is attracting less and less support among members of the Cuban American community. Thus, contrary to popular opinion, policy toward Cuba is not directed from Miami or the offices of the Cuban American National Foundation.

Likewise, the Canadian policy toward Cuba is not a sole reflection of economic interests and has far more to do with values, identity, and perception than most scholars maintain. Canadian trade with the United States is far, far more important than any trade with Cuba. Canadians trade more in one day with the U.S. than they do in a whole year with Cuba. If trade was the main reason for Canada’s policy toward Cuba, Ottawa would have adopted an isolationist policy decades ago.

This study has not just pointed out the weaknesses of the accepted explanations but has shown that ideational factors have significant independent explanatory power. The American identity as an exceptional nation that includes an emphasis on the values of democracy and freedom; a belief in the natural superiority of the United States and, consequently greater rights as well as a commitment to corresponding duties; encourages a missionary outlook, especially in the Western Hemisphere. These factors have a major influence on the way American policy makers conceptualize Cuba and the U.S.- Cuban relationship. This study argues that Americans, believing in their natural superiority in political and economic matters, and stressing the value of democracy and freedom, are affronted by what they perceive to be the total absence of democracy and freedom in Cuba. The United States believes it must take action in Cuba because it has a duty to
promote democracy and freedom globally, and especially in the Western Hemisphere. Furthermore, Cuba has always been seen as ‘special’ to most Americans because of its geographical and historical ties to the United States. U.S. policy suggests that, like an inferior or slow little brother, the Cubans need American guidance even if they do not realize it. Thus, like a big brother, the United States feels a responsibility to ensure that democracy and freedom are in Cuba’s future. In addition, since Fidel Castro is understood to be the root of Cuban problems, American policy reflects a determination to remove him from power. The very idea of working with such an evil regime is abhorrent to many people in Washington. In many ways the policy reflects this visceral reaction. Isolation, thus, becomes the preferred policy.

Likewise, the Canadian approach toward Cuba is rooted in Canadian values, identities, and perceptions. This study argues that the Canadian identity as a good international citizen, as a peacekeeper and as distinct from the United States contribute to the Canadian policy of engagement. The Canadian identity as a good international citizen includes an emphasis on international law, a strong preference for sovereignty and non-interventionism and places a high value on communication, dialogue, and social justice. The identity as a peacekeeper is closely related to the good citizen role but also emphasizes mediation. The importance of being distinct from the United States is another crucial element of the Canadian identity.

All these elements of the Canadian identity coalesce to produce the Canadian policy toward Cuba. The emphasis on communication and mediation influence norms of engagement. The importance given international law and sovereignty contributes to the Canadian opposition to Helms-Burton. The emphasis on sovereignty and social justice
encourages empathy with Cuba, and the desire to be distinct from the United States predisposes Ottawa to choose engagement over isolation. Lastly, Canadians see isolation as an inherently hostile policy, more likely to lead to instability and international disorder. They believe that engagement in the Cuba case is compatible with peace and order.

In sum, the examination of identity and its related values, perceptions, and norms offers an alternative way of making sense of US-Cuban and Canadian-Cuban relations. These two case studies reveal how these variables influence foreign policy and enable us to better understand international relations.

Further Applications

Policy toward Cuba is only one example of the influence of ideational variables on foreign policy. These findings have implications for many more foreign policies. The American exceptionalist identity, with its belief in the natural superiority of the United States and perceptions of the political and economic inferiority of others, influences the belief that the United States has rights and duties above and beyond those of other states. This produces missionary norms that the United States must assist other states, particularly where democracy and freedom are concerned. Consequently, this identity has wide implications for foreign policy. For example, the ideas, values, perceptions, and norms associated with the exceptionalist identity that portrayed Cuba as the absolute opposite of the United States; demonized Castro; and predisposed empathy with the hard-line Cuban American narrative of life in Cuba, are probably influencing how the American foreign policy establishment characterizes other leaders and regimes. Constructivist case studies of U.S. policy toward other 'rogue' states would prove
illuminating. For example, why did the United States believe that Saddam Hussein’s Iraq was still producing biological and chemical weapons when many other members of the international community believed that Iraq was disarming? It is possible that the United States had access to additional information that it could not share with the international community, but initial observations also point to the role of ideational factors. In any case, a comparison of American and, for example, French identities and values would help make sense of this international enigma. Similarly, a constructivist analysis of the Canadian preoccupation with establishing an international prohibition on anti-personnel landmines would be fruitful. Why did Canada take the lead on this issue? Initial research indicates that ideational variables can offer considerable insight into these policies.

Further, this approach to foreign policy is not limited to the Canadian and American contexts but would offer insight into any country’s foreign policies. For example, a cursory examination indicates that identity, ideas and values have something to do with South Africa’s commitment to establishing diplomatic relations with all countries regardless of their political, economic or social systems and often in the face of pressure to restrict this commitment to the principle of ‘universality.’ Likewise, Michael Barnett makes a strong case for the influence of identity on foreign policies of Middle Eastern states, including Israel and the Arab states. Thus, the addition of the


study of domestic values, identity, perceptions, and norms will improve our understanding of a plethora of foreign policies.

A more self-consciously constructivist approach to the study of foreign policy and comparative politics would also benefit these subfields. Though there has been a resurgence in the study of ideational variables in Comparative Politics, the dependent variables continue to be domestic politics or economic variables, most often political culture. This study has shown that the Comparative Politics' study of political culture is a rich literature. However, accusations that haunted the national characteristic studies in the 1940s and 1950s are often still leveled at today's cultural studies- that some of the research still resorts to stereotypes (i.e. South Koreans are thrifty). By seeing ideational factors as not static, constructivism works against these types of characterizations.

Though they are accustomed to addressing domestic level variables, including ideational factors, most foreign policy studies that address these topics, reflect their dialogue with comparative politics, and thus, focus primarily on political culture and public opinion. Adding constructivist analyses would not only broaden their research but would also open up the study of foreign policy to the influence of international ideational factors. Foreign policy studies have tended to ignore the influence of international norms, values, and perceptions. Foreign policy studies would benefit, for example, by research on epistemic communities or studies of international norms such as those against chemical weapons.

Lastly, opening up constructivist theorizing to the methods, concepts, and questions prevalent in comparative politics and foreign policy studies will help answer some constructivist critics. For example, Jeffrey Checkel criticizes constructivism for not
considering cases “when ‘the dog doesn’t bark,’ that is, where state identity/interests, in
the presence of a norm, do not change.”\textsuperscript{52} Comparative politics studies that examine
domestic level attributes and foreign policy analyses that take these variables and apply
them to foreign policy can help constructivists point out why the “dog doesn’t always
bark.” Also, a focus on domestic level ideational variables addresses another, related,
common criticism of constructivism- why “social construction... varies cross
nationally.”\textsuperscript{53} Domestic factors are most likely at the heart of much cross-national
variation. Further, it is important to understand how international norms initially develop
and that often requires an examination of domestic variables.

This study has only touched the surface of what borrowing from Comparative
Politics, International Relations, and Foreign Policy can offer to our understanding of
international interactions. Furthermore, many other disciplines such as psychology,
anthropology, sociology and economics are treasure-troves of information regarding
ideational variables. Research that borrows from these fields will further our
comprehension of the role of ideational factors in foreign policy.

\textsuperscript{52} Jeffrey T. Checkel, “The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory,” \textit{World Politics}

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
APPENDIX

INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED IN THE UNITED STATES, CANADA, AND CUBA

My research for this study included numerous trips to Washington DC, New York City, one trip to Ottawa and one trip to Havana over 1999 and 2000. During my trips I interviewed government and non-government officials knowledgeable about Canadian or American policy toward Cuba. All the interviews listed in the table below were confidential. In an effort to provide the reader with some sense of the types of people I interviewed I have categorized them by level. Senior level government officials include current or former ambassadors, high-ranking State Department officials including Deputy Secretaries or Assistant Secretaries in the United States or Ministers or Secretaries of State in Canada and similar level officials in Cuba. Mid-senior officials include current or former Program managers or similar high level consular officers at Canadian embassies or Desk Officers at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. In the United States, mid-senior level officials include Senior Advisors at the State Department and high-level embassy officers. Mid-level officials include everyone from senior support staff to those people working just below the mid-senior level people.

Senior non-government officials include directors or senior people in foundations or similar organizations who specialize in Cuba issues and well-known academics or researchers in all three countries.
I also conducted numerous informal interviews in all three countries, usually with less senior, but knowledgeable people. These unofficial interviews include speaking with people at conferences, luncheon meetings, short conversations before or after formal interviews held with others in the organization, and email correspondence. Most of these I kept confidential. However, the non-confidential informal meetings include speaking with the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, John Manley, at a lunch hosted by the Canadian Consulate in New York City; a few words with Principle Officer Vicki Huddleston in Havana; a lunch with a Canadian official at the UN in New York; as well discussions with officers from the Canadian consulate in New York. I participated in at least 18 of these informal interviews. There were others, that were, somewhat, informative, but did not influence my research.
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