

CUBA STUDY GROUP 

**Restoring Executive Authority  
Over U.S. Policy Toward Cuba**

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## Restoring Executive Authority Over U.S. Policy Toward Cuba

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*“Supporting the bill was good election-year politics in Florida, but it undermined whatever chance I might have if I won a second term to lift the embargo in return for positive changes within Cuba. It almost appeared that Castro was trying to force us to maintain the embargo as an excuse for the economic failures of his regime.”* —PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON

*“To make matters worse, the economic fence has helped to fuel the idea of a place besieged, where dissent comes to be equated with an act of treason. The exterior blockade has strengthened the interior blockade.”* —YOANI SANCHEZ

### Opening Statement

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The U.S. embargo toward Cuba is a collection of prohibitions, restrictions and sanctions derived from several laws that has been in effect for more than 50 years. Taken together and compounded with the designation of Cuba as a “state sponsor of terrorism,” they result in the most severe set of sanctions and restrictions applied against any current adversary of the United States. This collection of sanctions was first codified into law by the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 (“Torricelli”), severely tightened by the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act of 1996 (“Helms-Burton”), and modified by the Trade Sanctions and Reform Act of 2000 (“TSRA”), thus transferring almost absolute authority over U.S. policy toward Cuba from the Executive Branch to the U.S. Congress.

The codification of the U.S. embargo against Cuba has failed to accomplish its objectives, as stated in Helms-Burton, of causing regime change and restoring democracy in Cuba. Continuing to ignore this obvious truth is not only counterproductive to the interests of the United States, but also increasingly damaging to Cuban civil society, including the more than 400,000 Cubans now working as licensed private entrepreneurs, because it places the burden of sanctions squarely on their shoulders to bear.

At a time when Cuba seems headed toward a path of change and reforms, albeit slower than desired, and a real debate seems to be emerging within Cuba’s elite regarding its future, the inflexibility of U.S. policy has the ironic effect of hurting and delaying the very changes it seeks to produce by severely limiting Cuba’s ability to implement major economic reforms and strengthening the hand of the reactionaries, rather than the reformers, within the Cuban government.

Moreover, Helms-Burton and related statutory provisions in Torricelli and TSRA deny the United States the flexibility to address dynamic conditions in Cuba in a strategic and proactive way. They effectively tie the President’s hands in responding to developments on the Island, placing the impetus for taking advantage of the processes of change in Cuba in hands of hard-liners among Cuba’s ruling elites, whose interests are best served by the perpetuation of the embargo.

The Cuba Study Group is publishing this whitepaper to acknowledge that a Cuba policy fundamentally based on blanket unilateral sanctions and isolation has been grossly ineffective for more than half a century; it disproportionately hurts the Cuban people and is counterproductive to the creation of an enabling transitional environment in Cuba where civil society can prosper and bring about the desired social, political and economic changes for which we long.

Thus, we call for the repeal of the Helms-Burton Act, its related statutory provisions in Torricelli and TSRA, and for the restoration of authority over U.S.-Cuba policy to the Executive Branch. It is our belief that we can no longer afford to ignore the failure of this legislation.

## Executive Summary

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Seventeen years after its enactment, the Helms-Burton Act—which further codified the sanctions framework commonly referred to as the U.S. embargo against Cuba and conditions its suspension on the existence of a transition or democratic government in Cuba—has proven to be a counterproductive policy that has failed to achieve its stated purposes in an increasingly interconnected world.

Helms-Burton has failed to advance the cause of freedom and prosperity for the Cuban people, to encourage free and democratic elections in Cuba, to secure international sanctions against the Cuban government, or to advance the national security interests of the United States.<sup>1</sup> It provides a policy framework for U.S. support to the Cuban people in response to the formation of a transition government in Cuba; yet, the all-or-nothing nature of its conditions for suspension undermine that very framework by effectively placing control over changes to embargo sanctions in the hands of the current Cuban leadership. Simply stated, it is an archaic policy that hinders the ability of the United States to respond swiftly, intelligently and in a nuanced way to developments on the island.

Worst of all, the failures of Helms-Burton have more recently produced a tragic paradox: Policies once designed to promote democratization through isolation are now stifling civil society, including an emerging class of private entrepreneurs and democracy advocates whose rise represents the best hope for a free and open society in Cuba in more than 50 years.

The Cuba Study Group believes that the most effective way to break the deadlock of “all-or-nothing” conditionality and remedy the ineffectiveness of current U.S.-Cuba policy is to de-codify the embargo through the repeal of Helms-Burton and related statutory provisions in Torricelli and TSRA that limit the Executive Branch’s authority over U.S. foreign policy toward the Island (hereinafter collectively referred to as “Helms-Burton and related statutory provisions”). De-codifying the embargo would allow the Executive Branch the flexibility to respond strategically to developments in the Island as they take place; using the entire range of foreign policy tools at its disposal—including diplomatic, economic, legal, political and cultural—to advance the cause of human rights and incentivize changes in Cuba.

The primary consequences of Helms-Burton and related statutory provisions have been to isolate the United States from Cuba and to serve as a political scapegoat for the Cuban government’s many failures. It has become a “Great Crutch” to all sides of the Cuba debate. First, for ordinary Cubans, their struggle has fallen hostage to an international dispute between their government and the United States, which they see themselves as powerless to affect. For the Cuban leadership, it has become easier to blame the embargo than to adopt the difficult reforms needed to fix their economy. Lastly, for defenders of the status-quo within the Cuban-American community, it has become easier to wait for the United States to solve our national problem rather than engage in the difficult and necessary processes of reconciliation and reunification.

Helms-Burton indiscriminately impacts all sectors of Cuban society, including democracy advocates and private entrepreneurs, causing disproportionate economic damage to the most vulnerable segments of the population. Conditioning our policy of resource denial on sweeping political reforms has only served to strengthen the Cuban government. The scarce resources available in an authoritarian Cuba have been and continue to be allocated primarily based on political priorities, thereby increasing the state’s relative power and its ability to control its citizens.

The majority of American voters, Cuban-Americans and Cuban democracy advocates in the Island have rejected isolation as an element of U.S. policy toward Cuba and have called on the U.S. government to implement a policy of greater contact and exchange with Cuban society.<sup>ii</sup> As Cuba undergoes a slow and uncertain process of reforms, the continued existence of blanket U.S. sanctions only hinders the types of political reforms that Helms-Burton demands.

Instead of maintaining a rigid policy that ties our hands and obsesses over hurting the Cuban leadership, U.S. policy-makers should adopt a results-oriented policy that focuses primarily on empowering the Cuban people while simultaneously pressing the Cuban government to cease its repressive practices and respect fundamental human

rights. Repealing Helms-Burton would also free civil society development and assistance programs to be implemented outside of a contentious sanctions framework.

Furthermore, the Cuba Study Group believes that any forthcoming congressional review of current legislation relating to Cuba, such as a review of the Cuban Adjustment Act, must require a review of the totality of the legislative framework codified in Helms-Burton and related statutory provisions so that the United States may finally develop a coherent policy toward the Island.

While we wait on the U.S. Congress to act, the Executive Branch should continue to take proactive steps through its limited licensing authority to safeguard and expand the free flow of contacts and resources to the Island, encourage independent economic and political activity in Cuba, and increase the relative power of Cuban private actors.

The U.S. should pursue these courses of action independent of actions taken by the Cuban government so as not to place the reigns of U.S. policy in the hands of Cuban proponents of the status quo.

## 1. Introduction

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For more than 50 years, the United States has maintained a comprehensive trade embargo against Cuba aimed at isolating the Cuban government economically and diplomatically. Today, the embargo—as codified under Helms-Burton, Torricelli and TSRA—represents the most severe of all U.S. sanctions programs and is even broader than the sanctions against such countries as Iran and North Korea.<sup>iii</sup>

When imposed in the early 1960s, U.S. sanctions were originally intended as a punitive measure against the Castro government for the expropriation of U.S. properties. However, the justification for these sanctions has changed over time. During the Cold War, the justification for U.S. sanctions was restated to include the need to curtail Cuba’s military adventurism.

Although U.S. sanctions had an early devastating impact on the then-chaotic Cuban economy, the political benefits they have since provided to the Cuban political leadership have far outweighed their economic costs. For the nearly 30 years that Cuba survived as a closed economy that was mostly dependent on the Soviet bloc, economic sanctions were largely innocuous. The resulting U.S. hostility facilitated the consolidation of the revolutionary process by providing the Cuban state with a convenient scapegoat for the failures of its economic policies, the hardships endured by the Cuban people and the repressive practices employed. It bestowed the Cuban state with the added legitimacy derived from being a “state under siege.”

In 1992—at a time when communism was unraveling throughout the world and Cuba was reeling from the catastrophic impact of Soviet subsidies loss and market integration—the Cuban Democracy Act (or Torricelli Act, named after its original sponsor, U.S. Representative Robert Torricelli) was passed with the expressed intent to paralyze the Cuban economy by forbidding American companies, including subsidiaries abroad, from engaging in any trade with Cuba; ironically, this was the very opposite of the policies employed throughout Eastern Europe, which served to erode communist rule in the region. The justification for enacting the Torricelli Act was not national security interests but Cuba’s form of government and human rights abuses. That change of focus was reflected in the language of the Act, the first finding of which was Castro’s “consistent disregard for internationally accepted standards of human rights and for democratic values.” Torricelli codified existing trade restrictions between the United States and Cuba and conditioned their waiver on democratic reforms in the Island. However, the final determination on the existence of such reforms remained under the authority of the U.S. President.<sup>iv</sup>

Then in 1996, while Cuba reluctantly experimented with limited market liberalization and the Clinton administration eased sanctions on Cuba by permitting greater U.S. travel to the Island, the Cuban Air Force shot down two Brothers to the Rescue planes, resulting in the deaths of four Cuban-Americans.

In response, the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act of 1996 (or Helms-Burton, named after its original sponsors, U.S. Senator Jesse Helms and Representative Dan Burton) was passed in the U.S. Congress with strong bipartisan support. Helms-Burton codified the sanctions framework that made up the Cuban embargo and conditioned their suspension on congressional recognition of a transition government in Cuba, placing a clear focus on *regime change* as a central element of U.S. policy.<sup>v</sup> Under Helms-Burton, a “transition government” in Cuba is one that, among other things, legalizes all political activity, releases all political prisoners, makes public commitments to organizing free and fair multi-party elections, makes demonstrable progress in establishing an independent judiciary, respects internationally recognized human rights, allows the establishment of independent trade unions and other free associations, and does not include Fidel or Raul Castro.<sup>vi</sup> The “all-or-nothing” nature of these preconditions effectively made a sustained democratic transition in Cuba a prerequisite to engagement instead of a proactive policy goal.

While the Cuban leadership knew that the passage of Helms-Burton would be virtually assured by the shoot down of the Brothers to the Rescue planes, several among them recognized the political value of a hostile and isolationist U.S. policy and used the passage of Helms-Burton to justify bringing economic reforms to a halt.

Helms-Burton also transferred the authority to suspend the Cuban embargo to the U.S. Congress, thereby severely hindering the President’s ability to exercise his constitutional power to conduct foreign policy.<sup>vii</sup> Instead, the Act allows the Executive Branch limited licensing authority to implement its foreign policy, which U.S. Presidents have since used to either expand or limit private engagement with the Island.

In 2000, the U.S. Congress and President Clinton modified Helms-Burton by passing the Trade Sanction Reform and Export Enhancement Act (TSRA), which permitted the direct sale of certain agricultural commodities, medicine and medical devices to Cuba, and travel associated with such transactions. TSRA strictly regulated trade in these categories, prohibiting all credit or debit transactions or financing by American banks, which forced all sales to be paid in cash in advance or financed by third country financial institutions. TSRA did not relax prohibitions on Cuban imports. Worst of all, TSRA prohibited transactions relating tourist activities, effectively codifying the American tourist travel ban to Cuba.

Under the George W. Bush Administration, the justification for U.S. sanctions was further refined to deny resources to the Cuban government to foment regime change, despite the concomitant collateral damage to the Cuban people. The Bush Administration used its limited licensing authority to suspend most “purposeful” or “people-to-people” travel and severely restrict family travel and remittances in 2004, in supposed response to the Cuban government’s arrest of 75 peaceful democracy advocates in 2003.

In 2009, the Obama Administration announced a shift in the focus of U.S. policy away from the Cuban government and toward empowering civil society and supporting independent economic activity; it has since exercised its limited licensing authority to expand family and “people-to-people” travel, remittances and the provision of telecommunications services.

The Obama Administration has yet to call on Congress to repeal Helms-Burton (or its related statutory provisions), which remains the bedrock of U.S. policy, and the largest domestic obstacle to responding intelligently to modern-day developments in Cuba. As long as Helms-Burton remains the law of the land, its singular focus of hurting the Cuban government will continue to undermine any effort to empower Cubans inside the Island.

## **2. Helms-Burton is a failed, outdated and counterproductive policy.**

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Seventeen years after its enactment, Helms-Burton has proven to be a counterproductive policy that has failed to achieve its stated purposes in an increasingly interconnected world. Most recently, the failures of Helms-Burton have produced a tragic paradox: Policies once designed to promote democratization through isolation and deprivation are now stifling an emerging class of private entrepreneurs, self-employed workers and democracy advocates whose rise

represents the best hope for a free and open society in Cuba since the embargo was enacted. Denying these private individuals an economic relationship with the United States only serves to further delay the kind of changes that Helms-Burton was meant to accelerate.

Today a majority of U.S. voters, Cuban-Americans, and an emerging class of private economic actors and democracy advocates in Cuba have all rejected isolation as an element of U.S. policy toward Cuba and called on the U.S. government to implement a policy of greater contact and engagement with Cuban civil society.<sup>viii</sup> As Cuba undergoes a slow and uncertain process of reforms, the continued existence of blanket U.S. sanctions only hinders the types of reforms in Cuba that Helms-Burton demands.

### ***a. Ethical considerations of Helms-Burton's blanket sanctions***

Helms-Burton has failed to advance the cause of freedom and prosperity for the Cuban people. This is not surprising, since never in modern history has there been a democratic transition in a country under a unilateral sanctions framework as broad and severe as the one codified in Helms-Burton. Its blanket sanctions lack ethical or moral consideration since they indiscriminately impact all levels of Cuban society, from senior Cuban officials to democracy advocates and private entrepreneurs. While it is no secret that Cuban government policies are primarily to blame for the Island's economic crisis, their impact has only been exacerbated and made disproportionately greater among the most vulnerable segments of the population by the blanket sanctions codified under Helms-Burton. In addition, these sanctions deny Cuba access to the international financial institutions it would need to implement the type of macroeconomic reforms that U.S. policy has sought for more than 50 years.

Helms-Burton preconditions the lifting of its blanket sanctions on sweeping political change in Cuba. In practice, this "waiting game" has strengthened the relative power of the Cuban government *vis-à-vis* the Cuban people while simultaneously giving the former a convenient scapegoat for its oppressive practices and economic blunders.

Cuban blogger and democracy advocate Yoani Sanchez best illustrated the impact of the "waiting game" enabled by Helms-Burton when she wrote: "The five decade prolongation of the 'blockade' [as the embargo is referred to in Cuba] has allowed every setback we've suffered to be explained as stemming from it, justified by its effects...To make matters worse, the economic fence has helped to fuel the idea of a place besieged, where dissent comes to be equated with an act of treason. The exterior blockade has strengthened the interior blockade."<sup>ix</sup>

Former political prisoner and independent economist Oscar Espinosa Chepe agrees, writing that Helms-Burton's blanket sanctions have only served "...to give the Cuban government an alibi to declare Cuba a fortress under siege, to justify repression and to (pass) the blame for the economic disaster in Cuba."<sup>x</sup>

Conditioning our policy of resource denial on sweeping political reforms strengthens the Cuban state because the scarce resources available in an authoritarian Cuba have been and will continue to be allocated primarily based on political priorities, thereby increasing the state's relative power and its ability to control its citizens. History has shown that the negative effects of such isolation can be long lasting and counterproductive to change. During the Cold War, U.S. policy toward Eastern Europe was not based on isolation or resource denial. Indeed, an analysis of these transitions reveals an extraordinary correlation between the degree of openness toward former communist countries and the success of their transitions to democracies and market economies.<sup>xi</sup>

In recent years, ongoing political and economic reforms in Burma suggest that U.S. policy toward this Asian country could offer a viable model for the United States to follow in its policy approach toward Cuba. Since their enactment in 1990, Burma sanctions have allowed for unrestricted travel by U.S. citizens and travel-related financial services.<sup>xii</sup> Burma sanctions have also allowed for the export of most U.S. goods and services and offer broad discretion to the President on which Burmese products it allows to be imported into the United States. The broad political reforms

taking place in Burma today offer a sharp contrast to the narrow reforms that have taken place in Cuba during the same period and underscore the ineffectiveness of blanket unilateral sanctions.

***b. Helms-Burton has failed to secure international sanctions against the Cuban government.***

The opening sentence in Helms-Burton describes the legislation as “an Act to seek international sanctions against the Castro government in Cuba.”<sup>xiii</sup> However, in the 17 years since its enactment, Helms-Burton has utterly failed to garner support from the international community. No other country besides the U.S. currently imposes sanctions, economic or otherwise, against Cuba. On the contrary, there is greater trade between Cuba and the rest of the world today than any time since the Revolution took over in 1959. The absence of international cooperation undermines the central goal of an embargo, which is the economic isolation of the targeted country. Clearly, economic sanctions that do not enjoy multilateral support cannot by definition isolate the Cuban government. By contrast, when the U.S. Congress enacted the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act (“CAAA”) in 1986 to “bring about the establishment of a nonracial democracy in South Africa,” it served as part of multilateral arms and trade embargo imposed by the United Nations.<sup>xiv</sup> More recently, the absence of extraterritorial provisions aimed at third countries in U.S. policy toward Burma has also helped the United States secure multilateral support for sanctions against human rights violators in the Burmese government.<sup>xv</sup>

Helms-Burton is widely regarded as a blatant infringement on the sovereignty of Cuba and of other nations affected by its extraterritoriality. Many attribute much of the international opposition to the U.S. embargo as codified under Helms-Burton to a rejection of its extraterritorial application of U.S. law. Its most egregious provisions include the Torricelli Act’s prohibition of subsidiary trade and restricted shipping with Cuba. Helms-Burton’s Title III imposes visa restrictions on executives of foreign companies “trafficking” in Cuban property, giving U.S. persons the right to sue such companies in American courts. Title III has been suspended by every U.S. President since 1996, and given the dominant role of the United States in the global economy, the odds of this provision being enforced against America’s trade partners are exceedingly slim. Now more than ever, the implementation of Title III would likely do more to antagonize and provoke trade disputes with U.S. trading partners than to curtail international trade with Cuba. Thus, while Title III has proven to be little more than a symbolic measure, its mere existence represents a continued source of friction between the United States and its allies.

U.N. member nations have cast near unanimous votes condemning the embargo every year since the enactment of Helms-Burton, save for a symbolic show of solidarity from Israel— a country that itself has normalized trade relations with Cuba. Furthermore, the isolationist policies of Helms-Burton have been condemned by international human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch, Human Rights Foundation and Amnesty International.

Ironically, while the initial justification for the embargo was the expropriation of U.S. properties in Cuba, the unilateral nature of U.S. sanctions forces U.S. businesses to be relegated to mere bystanders as Cuba begins to open its economy to global markets and restricts the ability of U.S. nationals, who had their properties confiscated by the Cuban government, to seek compensation from foreign users of their confiscated properties or to sell their claims in international markets.

Instead of isolating Cuba, the result of Helms-Burton has been to isolate the United States in its policy approach and undermine its ability to lead international policy toward Cuba now and potentially in the future. As a result of the global notoriety of Helms-Burton, it is highly unlikely that there would be any consensus for a U.S.-led multilateral approach toward Cuba within the United Nations Security Council or the European Union. It is equally unlikely that there would be support for sanctions against Cuba in Latin America in light of recent initiatives by the Organization of American States to readmit Cuba. In the meantime, Cuba has been pivoting away from its economic dependence on one country (Venezuela) and expanding its trade and development ties with nations throughout Europe, Asia, Africa and the Western Hemisphere. Indeed, the prospects of garnering international support for a multilateral approach while Helms-Burton remains the law of the land are tenuous at best. On the other hand,



repealing Helms-Burton would uniquely position the United States to persuade allies to focus their engagement with the Island on helping the Cuban people, and pressing for the respect of human rights.

***c. Helms-Burton hinders the U.S. government from strategically responding to developments in Cuba.***

Beyond failing to advance its stated objectives, the most counterproductive aspect of Helms-Burton is that it codifies U.S. embargo sanctions toward Cuba, and conditions the suspension of any and all such sanctions on congressional recognition of a transition government in Cuba. This is counterproductive in two ways. First, it hinders the United States' ability to respond rapidly and strategically to developments on the Island as they occur. For example, if the Executive Branch wishes to increase assistance to the 400,000 private entrepreneurs currently operating small businesses in Cuba, it can only do so in a limited way through its licensing authority. Second, it creates a dynamic of "all-or-nothing" conditionality that effectively places U.S. policy in the hands of the Cuban government, making it easier for Cuban officials to resist political reform and dictate the degree of American influence on the Island.

Defenders of the status quo inside the Cuban government have shown that they view greater engagement with the United States as a threat to their hold on power. As Elizardo Sanchez, the head of the Cuban Commission for Human Rights, has recognized: "The more American citizens in the streets of Cuban cities, the better for the cause of a more open society."

The Cuban government has become increasingly adept at manipulating U.S. policy choices. This is why any sign of a thaw from the United States has repeatedly been followed by confrontation or repression, which in turn has been followed by U.S. domestic pressure to tighten economic sanctions. This pattern has become somewhat predictable, as recently exemplified by Cuba's imprisonment of U.S. contractor Alan Gross after President Obama relaxed family travel and remittance restrictions in 2009 and U.S. policymakers' refusal to pursue improved bilateral relations in response.<sup>xvi</sup> It can be reasonably concluded that elements of the Cuban government do not, in fact, seek any substantial liberalization from U.S. sanctions. Indeed, Helms-Burton provides them with an alibi for their own failures and may well be essential to their political survival.

Senator Jesse Helms famously said that Helms-Burton "tightened the noose around the neck of the last dictator in the Western Hemisphere, Fidel Castro."<sup>xvii</sup> In practice, however, Helms-Burton may have served as an incredibly convenient life raft, giving a struggling and failing system the legitimacy that comes from the appearance of being a "state under siege."

### **3. Repealing Helms-Burton and related statutory provisions that limit the Executive Branch's authority over Cuba policy.**

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Over time, U.S. policies toward Communist countries with poor human rights records and histories of adversarial relations—such as China and Vietnam—have evolved toward diplomatic normalization and economic engagement. Policymakers in both parties have rightly judged that engagement, rather than isolation, better serves U.S. national interests and lends greater credibility to calls for political and economic reform.

The Cuba Study Group believes the most effective way to break the deadlock of "all-or-nothing" conditionality and remedy the ineffectiveness of current U.S. policy is by de-codifying the embargo against Cuba through the repeal of Helms-Burton and related statutory provisions that limit the Executive Branch's authority over Cuban policy.<sup>xviii</sup> Repealing Helms-Burton and related statutory provisions would shift the primary focus of U.S. Cuba policy away from the regime and toward empowering Cuban people. It would also enhance the leverage of the United States to promote a multilateral approach toward Cuba, as well as embolden reformers, democracy advocates and private entrepreneurs inside the island to press their government for greater change.



De-codifying the embargo would allow the Executive Branch the flexibility to use the entire range of foreign policy tools at its disposal—diplomatic, economic, political, legal and cultural—to incentivize change in Cuba. The President would be free to adopt more efficient, targeted policies necessary for pressuring the Cuban leadership to respect human rights and implement political reforms, while simultaneously empowering all other sectors of society to pursue their economic wellbeing and become the authors of their own futures.<sup>xix</sup> Repealing Helms-Burton would also free civil society development and assistance programs to be implemented outside of a contentious sanctions framework.

Repealing the extraterritorial provisions of Helms-Burton would allow the United States greater leverage in persuading the international community, especially key regional partners, to adopt a multilateral and targeted approach toward focusing on the advancement of human rights in Cuba. This would fundamentally transform the international dynamic that has long helped the Cuban government stifle dissent, since its efforts to isolate critics at home would increasingly lead to its own isolation from the international community.

While it is difficult to prove a direct causal connection between economic reforms and an open society, modern history has taught us that it is increasingly difficult for dictatorial governments to maintain political control the more prosperity their people enjoy.<sup>xx</sup> Repealing Helms-Burton and related statutory provisions would allow the U.S. the ability to efficiently promote and provide direct support to Cuba’s private sector. Such support would empower a greater plurality within Cuban society, including government reformers, democracy advocates, Cuban entrepreneurs and society as a whole by increasing their access to the resources and expertise of the world’s most prosperous private sector (and largest Cuban diaspora), located a mere 90 miles from Cuba’s shores. In turn, this would enhance the relative power of Cuban society to that of the state, while stripping the latter of its preferred scapegoat for its oppressive practices and economic blunders. U.S. policy should also seek to incentivize the Cuban government to end state monopolies on economic activities and allow greater private participation in the economy.

The Cuba Study Group believes that any forthcoming congressional review of current legislation relating to Cuba, such as a review of the Cuban Adjustment Act, must require a review of the totality of the legislative framework codified in Helms-Burton and related statutory provisions so that the United States may finally develop a coherent policy toward the Island.

The U.S. should pursue this course of action independent of actions taken by the Cuban government so as not to place the reigns of U.S. policy in the hands of Cuban proponents of the status quo.

#### **4. Additional Steps the U.S. President Can Take to Promote Change in Cuba**

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While we wait for Congress to act, the Executive Branch should exercise its licensing authority to further safeguard the flow of contacts and resources into the Island, encourage independent economic and political activity, and further empower the Cuban people. To that end, the Cuba Study Group proposes that the President pursue the following measures:<sup>xxi</sup>

- i) Modify Remittance and Export Limitations:** Increase the \$3,000 limit on remittances that can be carried to Cuba by authorized travelers and expand the types of goods that travelers may legally take to Cuba to support micro entrepreneurs. Fewer limitations in these areas will make it easier for U.S. travelers to provide seed capital and in-kind contributions for start-ups.
- ii) Authorize Travel by General License for NGOs and Allow Them to Open Cuban Bank Accounts:** Regulations enacted on January 28, 2011 allow U.S. full- and part-time university staff to travel to Cuba by general license. These regulations also allow U.S.-based academic institutions to open accounts in Cuban banks with funds to support their educational programs in Cuba. A similar license for foundations and NGOs whose mission involves support for micro and small businesses would also help support this growing segment of civil society.
- iii) Establish New Licenses for the Provision of Services to Cuban Private Entrepreneurs:** The President could build on existing authorizations that allow U.S. persons and institutions to pay individual Cuban scholars,

musicians and artists for their work. New licenses could extend to additional groups, such as artisans or farmers, and authorize a greater scope of activities such as recording, publication, distribution, etc.

- iv) **Authorize Imports of Certain Goods and Services to Businesses and Individuals Engaged in Certifiably Independent Economic Activity in Cuba:** The President could authorize the importation of limited types of Cuban-origin goods and services under general or specific licenses, particularly when such authorizations could be justified as providing support for the Cuban people or democratic change in Cuba. For example, the President could authorize imports from private producers or allow U.S. persons to directly engage and hire Cuban professionals.
- v) **Authorize Export and Sale of Goods and Services to Businesses and Individuals Engaged in Certifiably Independent Economic Activity in Cuba:** Amend existing licensing policy to establish a presumption of approval for specific items deemed to support the U.S.-stated policy goal of promoting independent economic activity on the Island. Since 2000, legislation has allowed the export of a broad range of agricultural products and a limited range of medicines and medical devices. This should be expanded to include other inputs in demand by independent businesses, including—but not limited to—good such as art supplies, food preparation equipment, bookkeeping materials, and basic electronic equipment and software required for retail sales and business administration.
- vi) **Authorize the Sale of Telecommunications Hardware in Cuba:** Current U.S. regulations, as amended by the Obama administration in 2009, allow for donations of some telecommunications equipment, thereby recognizing that these goods by themselves do not violate the embargo. The next step should be to allow for the sales of those same goods inside the Island. Along with those provisions, changes should also allow for the provision of general travel licenses for research, marketing and sale of those goods.
- vii) **Authorize the Reestablishment of Ferry Services to Cuba:** Current U.S. regulations allow both “aircraft and vessels” to serve Cuba as an exception to the U.S. embargo against the Island.<sup>xxii</sup> The use of chartered aircrafts to transport Cuban-Americans and other licensed U.S. travelers to and from Cuba has long been authorized by the U.S. Department of Treasury. The next step should be to reestablish safe and secure chartered ferry services to transport the same categories of passengers to and from Cuba. Ferry service offers an affordable alternative to airline travel to Cuba and would allow an increase in the amount of goods that Cuban-Americans and other licensed travelers may legally take to Cuba to support their families and micro entrepreneurs.
- viii) **Simplify the Provision of Controlled Commodities, such as Computers and Laptops<sup>xxiii</sup>:** Direct the Department of Commerce to provide more detailed guidance for individuals to determine whether or not controlled commodities, such as laptops and printers, qualify under the general export waiver.
- ix) **Allow Licensed U.S. Travelers Access to U.S.-Issued Debit, Credit, and Pre-Paid Cards and Other Financial Services While on Authorized Travel in Cuba:** Currently, U.S. travelers to Cuba have no access to U.S. bank accounts, credit cards, debit cards or other basic financial services. With few exceptions, U.S. travelers are forced to carry cash with them to Cuba. Allowing U.S. travelers access to electronic payment systems would help ensure their safety and security while being on the Island. Moreover, authorizing new electronic payment systems would facilitate the Administration’s goal of promoting people-to-people contacts and facilitating private economic activity by safeguarding the transfer of money from U.S. residents to relatives and independent entrepreneurs on the island.
- x) **Review Cuba’s Designation as a State Sponsor of Terrorism:** Cuba’s status on the State Department’s list of state sponsors of terrorism has been subject to debate for more than a decade. The President should order a comprehensive, apolitical review to determine whether this designation reflects the reality of Cuba today.

- xi) **Develop an expanded bilateral agenda with a range of specific topics of mutual interest:** Agenda should include topics such as the resolution of property claims to help foster an environment of dialogue, problem-solving and trust building— thereby helping to set the stage for an eventual normalization of relations.

## Conclusion

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Despite 50 years of failure, the complex web of legal statutes and federal regulations codified under Helms-Burton and related statutory provisions endures. A now decades-old morass of congressional actions, presidential directives and executive orders has resulted in an entrenched and inflexible foreign policy that is as incoherent as it is ineffective.

The past four years have seen remarkable shifts in attitudes on both sides of the Florida Straits away from isolation and toward direct engagement and empowerment of the Cuban people. In Cuba, an emerging class of entrepreneurs and self-employed workers represents the best hope for a free and open society since the embargo was enacted. In the United States, Cuban-Americans have become increasingly supportive of engagement with their counterparts in Cuba and are traveling in record numbers to support their families and reconnect with their communities. The Cuban Diaspora represents an important asset in both experience and resources to the millions of Cubans who are, for the first time, taking control over their economic destinies.

Socio-economic reforms in Cuba, from property and private business ownership to migratory reforms, have been slower and less comprehensive than preferred; however, they represent a sea of change for those living in Cuba, and the opportunities they present should be seized. Now more than ever, it is imperative that we remove external barriers to the growth that is currently taking place in the Cuban private sector and remove obstacles that will facilitate and support its progress. Helms-Burton and related statutory provisions deny us the flexibility to address any of these developments in a proactive and fundamental way. The time has come for this senseless policy to end.

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### Endnotes

- i. The Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (Libertad) Act of 1996 (Helms–Burton Act, Pub. L. 104-114, 110 Stat. 785, 22 U.S.C. §§ 6021–6091). SEC. 3. PURPOSES. The purposes of this Act are (1) to assist the Cuban people in regaining their freedom and prosperity and join the community of democratic countries that are flourishing in the Western Hemisphere; (2) to strengthen international sanctions against the Castro government; (3) to provide for the continued national security of the United States in the face of continuing threats from the Castro government of terrorism, theft of property from United States nationals by the Castro government, and the political manipulation by the Castro government of the desire of Cubans to escape that results in mass migration to the United States; (4) to encourage the holding of free and fair democratic elections in Cuba that are conducted under the supervision of internationally recognized observers; (5) to provide a policy framework for United States support to the Cuban people in response to the formation of a transition government or a democratically elected government in Cuba; and (6) to protect United States nationals against confiscatory takings and the wrongful trafficking in property confiscated by the Castro regime.
- ii. American voters: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/117829/Americans-Steady-Backing-Friendlier-Cuba-Relations.aspx>; Cuban-Americans: <http://cri.fiu.edu/research/cuba-poll/2011-cuba-poll.pdf>; Cuba democracy advocates: <http://letterby74.org>;
- iii. See Congressional Research Service, *Iran Sanctions*, Kenneth Katzman, December 7, 2012. See also Congressional Research Service, *North Korea: Legislative Basis for U.S. Economic Sanctions*, Diane E. Rennack, April 25, 2011.
- iv. See Cuban Democracy Act of 1992, Pub. L. No. 102-484, § 1706, 106 Stat. 2578. (1992)
- v. The Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (Libertad) Act of 1996 (Helms–Burton Act, Pub.L. 104-114, 110 Stat. 785, 22 U.S.C. §§ 6021–6091). SEC. 4. DEFINITIONS. As used in this Act, the following terms have the following meanings: (7) Economic embargo of Cuba. The term “economic embargo of Cuba” refers to (A) the economic embargo (including all restrictions on trade or transactions with, and travel to or from, Cuba, and all restrictions on transactions in property in which Cuba or nationals of Cuba have an interest) that was imposed against Cuba pursuant to section 620(a) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2370(a)), section 5(b) of the Trading with the Enemy Act (50 U.S.C. App. 5(b)), the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 (22 U.S.C. 6001 and following), or any other provision of law; and (B) the restrictions imposed by section 902(c) of the Food Security Act of 1985.

vi. The Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (Libertad) Act of 1996 (Helms–Burton Act, Pub.L. 104-114, 110 Stat. 785, 22 U.S.C. §§ 6021–6091). SEC. 205. REQUIREMENTS AND FACTORS FOR DETERMINING A TRANSITION GOVERNMENT. (a) Requirements.--For the purposes of this Act, a transition government in Cuba is a government that has legalized all political activity; has released all political prisoners and allowed for investigations of Cuban prisons by appropriate international human rights organizations; has dissolved the present Department of State Security in the Cuban Ministry of the Interior, including the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution and the Rapid Response Brigades; and has made public commitments to organizing free and fair elections for a new government to be held in a timely manner within a period not to exceed 18 months after the transition government assumes power; with the participation of multiple independent political parties that have full access to the media on an equal basis, including (in the case of radio, television or other telecommunications media) in terms of time allotments for such access and the times of day such allotments are given; and to be conducted under the supervision of internationally recognized observers, such as the Organization of American States, the United Nations and other election monitors; has ceased any interference with Radio Marti or Television Marti broadcasts; makes public commitments to and is making demonstrable progress in establishing an independent judiciary; respecting internationally recognized human rights and basic freedoms as set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to which Cuba is a signatory nation; allowing the establishment of independent trade unions as set forth in conventions 87 and 98 of the International Labor Organization, and allowing the establishment of independent social, economic, and political associations; does not include Fidel Castro or Raul Castro; and has given adequate assurances that it will allow the speedy and efficient distribution of assistance to the Cuban people.

vii. Art. II, § 1, cl. 1, U.S. Const.; Art. II, § 1, cl. 2, U.S. Const.; See also *First Nat. City Bank v. Banco Nacional de Cuba*, 406 U.S. 759, 767 (1972) (“this Court has recognized the primacy of the Executive in the conduct of foreign relations quite as emphatically as it has recognized the act of state doctrine. The Court in *Sabbatino* throughout its opinion emphasized the lead role of the Executive in foreign policy”); See also *United States v. Curtiss-Wright Exp. Corp.*, 299 U.S. 304, 319-21 (1936) (“[t]he President is the sole organ of the nation in its external relations, and its sole representative with foreign nations.”).

viii. American voters: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/117829/Americans-Steady-Backing-Friendlier-Cuba-Relations.aspx>; Cuban-Americans: <http://cri.fiu.edu/research/cuba-poll/2011-cuba-poll.pdf>; Cuba democracy advocates: <http://letterby74.org>;

ix. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/yoani-sanchez/cuba-embargo\\_b\\_1029826.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/yoani-sanchez/cuba-embargo_b_1029826.html)

x. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/02/08/us-cuba-usa-embargo-idUSTRE81700M20120208>

xi. See *The J. Curve*, Ian Bremmer, Simon & Schuster (2007).

xii. See *U.S. Sanctions on Cuba*, Congressional Research Service, October 19, 2012. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41336.pdf>

xiii. See The Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (Libertad) Act of 1996 (Helms–Burton Act, Pub.L. 104-114, 110 Stat. 785, 22 U.S.C. §§ 6021–6091).

xiv. <http://actrav.itcilo.org/actrav-english/telearn/global/ilo/guide/antia.htm>

xv. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41336.pdf>

xvi. [http://www.docstoc.com/docs/document-preview.aspx?doc\\_id=130897155](http://www.docstoc.com/docs/document-preview.aspx?doc_id=130897155)

xvii. <http://www.netnomad.com/helms3.html>

xviii. See “Presidential Authority to Modify Economic Sanctions Against Cuba”, Stephen F. Propst, Hogan Lovells US LLP, February 2011, pp. 5 – 8.

xix. See “What Makes Democracies Endure?”, Jose Antonio Cheibub, [Adam Przeworski](#), Fernando Papaterra Limongi Neto, Michael M. Alvarez; *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 7, Number 1, January 1996, pp. 39-55; [http://muse.jhu.edu/login?auth=0&type=summary&url=/journals/journal\\_of\\_democracy/v007/7.1przeworski.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/login?auth=0&type=summary&url=/journals/journal_of_democracy/v007/7.1przeworski.html)

xx. See *The J. Curve*, Ian Bremmer, Simon & Schuster (2007).

xxi. Recommendations i, ii, iii, iv and viii were originally proposed in our whitepaper *Supporting Small Business in Cuba: Recommendations for Private and Public Sector Leaders*, published in April 2011. Recommendation vi was originally proposed in our whitepaper *Empowering the Cuban People through Technology: Recommendations for Private and Public Sector Leaders*, published in July 2010.

xxii. <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/cuba.txt>

xxiii. See 15 CFR 740.19

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## Our mission, beliefs and approach

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### Our Mission

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Our mission is to help facilitate a peaceful transition in Cuba leading to a free and open society, respect for human rights and the rule of law, a productive, market-based economy and the reunification of the Cuban nation.

### Who We Are

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Our group is made up of business and professional individuals with a deeply rooted love for Cuba and the Cuban people. We aim to put our collective experience in leadership skills, problem solving, and wealth creation at the service of the Cuban people. We aim to facilitate change, help empower individuals and promote civil society development.

The Cuba Study Group is a non-partisan, not-for-profit organization. We seek not, nor receive, any personal gain or profit from any of our activities or projects.

We do not receive, nor accept, funding from any U.S. government source, or government-funded subcontractor.

### Our Core Beliefs

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#### *Cuba's sovereignty*

We believe that Cuba's sovereignty is inviolable and must be respected, but we also believe that sovereignty rests on free people freely choosing their own destiny.

#### *One Cuban nation*

We believe in one Cuban nation, diverse, but not divided, where all Cubans share equal rights and responsibilities regardless of their place of residence or political views. We promote a process of reunification for the Cuban nation and its diaspora.

#### *Respect for human rights*

We believe that human rights are intrinsic to humanity, and the fundamental role of the state is to guarantee these rights. We believe that human rights include economic rights and accept the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the fundamental basis upon which Cuba's future should be built. Cuba has become a signatory of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and we urge the Cuban government to ratify these commitments.

#### *Civil society*

We encourage the development of a strong, independent and diverse civil society. A strong civil society is the best guarantor of democratic values. Widespread citizen participation in national affairs through its civil society strengthens the nation and its institutions.

Cuba's civil society includes democracy advocates. We unequivocally support their right to participate in national affairs and we respect and value their diverse perspectives. We welcome policies and programs that encourage and promote civil society formation and strengthening, but reject policies and practices that do not respect its autonomy and independence.

#### *Religious institutions*

We believe in a fundamental separation of church and state, but appreciate the rich contribution of faith to our society's values and richness. All churches are fundamental pillars of a vibrant and strong civil society.

However, because of its history, depth and institutional capacity, we believe that the Cuban Catholic Church has played a crucial role in Cuba's delicate transitional process. The Catholic Church's unique position in Cuba's society, its ethics, doctrine and values, can help shape the dialogue about Cuba's future, as well as facilitating the spaces and processes whereby such dialogue can occur.

While we value our cooperation with the Cuban Catholic Church, we are not affiliated with any religious institution or denomination.

#### *A nation divided needs reconciliation*

Cuba's entire history since independence has been marred by political violence. Violence begets violence, and such vicious circles have characterized our political life. The Cuban revolution, while a response to then-prevailing injustices, itself engendered violence, deepened the political divide, and resulted in the nation's largest exodus.

Such deep divisions, historical rancor and polarized political convictions need to be accepted and recognized as our national reality, and call for a process of national healing and reconciliation. While Cuban families have already begun in earnest the process of reconciliation, there is much more that needs to happen in order to build an inclusive, just, free, and prosperous future for Cuba.

We view national reconciliation as both a process and a goal. We recognize its difficulties, but are convinced of its necessity.

Our process of reconciliation must be focused on Cuba's future, not its past. It must be based on generosity and fraternal love. It must recognize our collective pain and be cognizant that substantial differences may and do exist, but give way to building common ground around a future vision as its most important goal.

Reconciliation does not imply condoning acts of wrongdoing, but it is not motivated by vengeance. It seeks the search for truth and justice and does not require forgetting past wrongdoings. As building a different and better future based on the greatest common good becomes the foremost priority, the focus shifts from seeking retribution to issues of restorative justice.

We have watched how reconciliation has shaped multiple transitions around the world. We are encouraged that the examples provided by other nations can help guide the Cuban people towards processes of change that are non-violent and where national reconciliation can lead to a brighter and better future for our nation.

### ***Principled dialogue to solve problems***

Change will come to Cuba when all sides in the conflict cease viewing it as a conflict to be won, and instead begin to view it as a problem to be solved.

Reconciliation is the process that can take us to a different and better future, but there can be no reconciliation without a process of dialogue.

This is why we at the Cuba Study Group encourage and promote dialogue as the process needed to reunify the Cuban nation and to focus on building the future. We recognize that dialogue requires mutual respect and the absence of preconditions. Engaging in dialogue does not imply a relinquishment of principles and beliefs. On the contrary, it is an opportunity to share those principles and beliefs with those with whom we may differ.

In all opportunities for engagement we will not shy away from being critical of human rights abuses or the need for political or more substantive economic reforms. We believe in a principled dialogue in which our desire for genuine reconciliation is guided by our moral convictions and desire for a better life for all Cubans.

We do not believe that there is only one process of dialogue, or that such processes can or should be sequenced, but that they occur on parallel tracks at multiple levels, at different times, eventually becoming more expansive and inclusive. Thus we encourage and support such processes whenever they may happen.

### ***Transition and transformation***

We believe that there exists a large consensus that Cuba needs to change, and do so urgently. Cuba faces enormous problems and difficulties and our people have endured many hardships and sacrifices. Such processes of change harbor significant risks, not the least consists of intrusion by criminal elements from abroad. Additionally, such changes can be disproportionately burdensome to the poorest and weakest in a society.

In order to change, Cuba needs to transform into a different political and economic order. We recognize that such processes are micro-processes whereby numerous changes occur at multiple levels at varying times. Thus, transformations become the cumulative sum of numerous changes and reforms enacted over time in the three fundamental spheres of economic, political, and social changes. All changes and reforms that form part of the necessary ultimate transformation should be welcomed and encouraged.

There is no sequence to the numerous democratic transitions that have taken place. Such processes have occurred in incredibly diverse manners and sequences. Attempting to micromanage such transitional processes, or to impose the rigidity of a sequence, is at best a useless and illusory exercise. At worse, such attempts could actually delay or damage the process.

The only common elements that seem to correlate positively with a transition's effectiveness appear to be the following:

1. The absence of violence;
2. Improved economic conditions and higher incomes;
3. The degree of engagement (or absence of isolation) from open societies.

Thus, the mission of our group is to facilitate the processes of change that Cuba sorely needs as peacefulness does not just happen by accident, it must be sought and procured.

Our aim is not to make an already-difficult process more difficult or complicated. On the contrary, the easier we make the transitional processes, the faster the necessary transformation will take place and at the lowest societal cost.

### ***Economic engagement***

A nation with a weak and inefficient economy can hardly be considered sovereign. Similarly, a society where individuals lack the ability to create wealth cannot be considered a free one. Economic rights are a fundamental component of human rights.

Economic resources are also a necessary prerequisite to the development of a civil society, as there cannot exist a civil society without economic resources. Thus we believe that reforms in Cuba's system that result in greater economic well-being and increased economic independence for Cubans are fundamental elements of their inherent freedoms, and should be encouraged and supported.

We believe in the constructive power of markets to effectively allocate resources, create jobs and reduce poverty. Markets



flourish when individuals can unleash their creative potential in a society. However, while we believe that for those societal problems that have a market solution, markets provide the best solutions, we also recognize that markets do not provide solutions for every problem or challenge that a society faces. We also believe that markets should not function in a manner devoid of societal values, such as ethics, compassion and solidarity.

Naturally, we regret the slow and tortuous pace of Cuba's economic reforms, and believe that their impact on improving Cuba's economy will be severely curtailed by their slow pace and timid nature. While history has largely discredited shock-therapy economic reforms, it has likewise proven the ineffectiveness of trickle-down timid and inadequate reforms. Increasing the pace, breadth and depth of economic reforms is necessary to avert the worsening of an already-ailing economy.

Thus, we believe that in order to truly implement the warranted changes in Cuba's economy, more forceful, decisive and substantive changes need to be made by Cuba's government. However, we also believe that needed macroeconomic changes require external conditions, such as access to international monetary institutions, which are not currently permitted by U.S. sanctions, even though they impose stringent requirements and reforms on borrowers. Ironically, such sanctions, originally intended to cause Cuba to change, are now becoming its major impediment to change.

Accordingly, we have no objections with those who engage in lawful trade or investment in Cuba. On the contrary, that activity, if ethically conducted, is helpful for the Cuban people. However, that is not the mission or objective of the Group and its members, since we do not seek financial gain in this process. Rather, our focus is on facilitating change in Cuba, by supporting civil society and providing Cubans with the tools and resources to succeed as entrepreneurs.

### ***The diaspora***

The Cuban diaspora is a legitimate and intrinsic part of the Cuban nation, and is thus called to be part of the solution, not part of the problem. For much too long we have confused the nation with its rulers, and its system with the nation and its people. As stated earlier, we believe in one Cuban nation.

As part of our national conflict, many in the diaspora have focused heavily on hurting the Cuban government while inflicting collateral damage on the people. Ethics and historical effectiveness call to shift our focus to help and empower

the Cuban people even if it provides a collateral benefit to the Cuban government. In a nutshell, it is all about the people.

The Cuban diaspora, heavily concentrated in the South Florida exile community, should take advantage of its environment to truly promote a "free marketplace" of ideas about Cuba's future. The Cuba Study Group is deeply committed to respecting different points of view, and we believe that such diversity enriches us.

However, we regret those among us who constantly divide, project our own divisions to Cuba's democracy advocates, insult and offend those who differ from their points of view. We believe in tolerance and respect, because no one has a monopoly on truth.

Additionally, we believe that the Cuban diaspora represents an important asset in both experience and resources that could help empower Cubans on the island to start and expand their private businesses.

### ***U.S. policy***

For all the reasons stated above, we believe that U.S. policy towards Cuba is counterproductive and warrants change. Policies of isolation and sanctions have rarely brought about transitional changes, and disproportionately hurt the Cuban people over the government it intends to compel to change.

U.S. policy is widely seen around the world as violating Cuba's sovereignty, thus providing the Cuban government with an unwarranted source of legitimacy, preventing a more multilateral approach to dealing with Cuba's challenges and providing an easy scapegoat for Cuba's failed economic system.

Economic sanctions by the U.S. could actually have the unintended effect of delaying changes in a Cuba undergoing important reforms by denying access to the world's financial institutions, and their advice and resources necessary to support major macroeconomic reforms.

Policies of isolation, such as travel restrictions, imposed by both the Cuban and the U.S. governments, hurt families and ordinary Cubans, and deter the necessary processes of reconciliation and family reunification that must take place on an individual and family basis. People are the best carriers of ideas, values, and information that help to better inform and share ideas across borders and oceans. Isolation is not just unethical but counterproductive to effective change.

We at the Cuba Study Group reject policies that limit and restrict travel to and from Cuba.

## **Our Approach**

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We carry out our mission by pursuing the following:

- » Promoting reconciliation and national reunification.
- » Facilitating and promoting the development of Cuba's civil society at all levels.
- » Advocating for constructive policies that focus on helping the Cuban people be the protagonists of their own future,

remove obstacles to change, promote engagement over isolation, facilitate peaceful change, and promote processes of reconciliation among all Cubans.

- » Facilitate the debate of ideas about Cuba's present and future.
- » Aim at facilitating change by bridge-building and reaching out to those with whom we differ, seeking a better understanding and mutual respect.