



Changing Course: Using American Soft Power to Affect U.S.-Cuban Relations

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Changing Course: Using American Soft Power to Affect U.S.-Cuban Relations

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Abstract

The anomaly of U.S.-Cuban relations continues to perplex many citizens, lawmakers, and political scientists who are curious as to the means by which the two nations can develop a more constructive and productive relationship appropriate for the current state of global affairs.

This investigation is intended to determine how American soft power can be harnessed to improve the bilateral relationship and advance the United States' foreign policy objectives in Cuba and Latin America. Soft power is the critical factor in the study for two reasons. First, legitimate questions have been raised about the efficacy of the current strategy for achieving U.S. foreign policy objectives in Cuba, which relies primarily on tough economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation, both of which are widely understood as key components of the United States' hard power arsenal. The current strategy has been in place for 50 years and has not brought about the economic, political, and social reforms in Cuba that U.S. policymakers have sought. And second, historical evidence suggests that the use of cultural, economic, and social assets (i.e., soft power) has assisted U.S. efforts in developing mutually beneficial diplomatic relations with multiple nations, including several former adversaries, many of whom are now considered allies of the United States in significant respects. So the analysis seeks to determine whether and how the use of soft power can bring about similar changes in the U.S.-Cuban dynamic – both under current conditions and under conditions resulting from various shifts in U.S. foreign policy strategy.

This study offers a more refined definition of soft power, a definition that incorporates certain economic elements that can and do serve as sources of persuasion for the United States, and further delineates specific components of soft power that can affect foreign relations in the 21st century.

In applying the refined definition of soft power to contemporary U.S.-Cuban relations, several key conclusions are reached, including: 1) American soft power in Cuba is minimal under current conditions; 2) U.S. soft power in Cuba can be enhanced by some relatively low-cost, low-risk adjustments to American foreign policies; 3) bilateral relations can be improved by the enhancement of American soft power in Cuba; and 4) enhanced U.S. soft power in Cuba can serve to advance the United States' foreign policy objectives on the island and in Latin America.

By determining the specific ways in which American soft power can influence stakeholders and thereby impact U.S.-Cuban relations, the findings provide U.S. policymakers with a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which they can leverage soft power assets in Cuba and elsewhere – both now and in the future – in order to build alliances and further U.S. interests abroad.

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Chapter I

Introduction

American foreign policy has historically been a pliable instrument, constantly in flux, adjusting in response to changing global conditions and U.S. priorities. During the past half century, for example, the United States has significantly altered its foreign policy framework, from one based around containing a single threat – Communism – to one based around combating several threats – from hegemony to terrorism. At the same time, American foreign policy strategy has also been utilized to advance a number of key U.S. objectives – from human rights to global commerce – as means of fostering economic, political, and social development and international security in nations and regions around the world. As a result, America’s foreign policy framework in the 21st century is dominated more by pragmatic interests than ideological dogma. The one glaring exception appears to be the United States’ Cuban policy.

Since the early 1960s the United States has remained steadfast in its approach to what President Kennedy famously declared “the Cuban problem.” For the United States, the Communist government in Havana represented a Soviet satellite state just 90 miles offshore of Miami, thereby posing a significant security threat. And for the past 50 years, America’s Cuban policy portfolio has consisted primarily if not exclusively of all sticks and few if any carrots, exemplified by its ongoing economic embargo and a lack of diplomatic dialogue. But 50 years hence, with the Cuban Communist government sustaining its hold on power more than 20 years after the fall of the Soviet Union and cessation of its economic support, many questions are being raised about the efficacy of

the United States' Cuban policy. Indeed, a solid argument can be made that the policy has failed completely as a strategy by which to further the primary U.S. objectives of economic, political, and social reforms on the island, and therefore must be revised.

Diagnosing why the policy has failed is complicated. There are certainly many factors that must be taken into account including Cuba's unique geographical characteristics and myriad international concerns that have diverted U.S. policymakers' efforts and attention elsewhere. But questions must be asked as to whether the United States' Cuban policy toolbox has been too constricted to achieve the objectives that America seeks; whether U.S. hard power alone is insufficient; and whether expanding the variety of instruments in the toolbox would allow for greater capacity to affect those very changes on the island that have long eluded the United States.

During the same 50-year period that U.S.-Cuban relations have remained stagnant, soft power has emerged as an effective foreign policy instrument in many of America's other bilateral relationships, ingratiating foreign citizens and governments to Western political and social ideals without coercion or threats, thereby serving as a potent means of influence for the United States. We have witnessed this phenomenon with respect to improved U.S. relations with China, India, Poland, Russia, Vietnam, and other countries in recent years. And because of its success in these contexts, American policymakers should consider the potential of soft power to advance U.S. relations with Cuba.

The advantages of soft power in the international relations arena are its relative low cost and low risk as a foreign policy instrument. Many soft power components – like athletic competitions, literature, and music – operate largely independently of governments, minimizing their overhead costs to the state. There are others – including

economic and diplomatic strategy – in which governments are primarily responsible for their formation and execution, elevating both their relative costs and risks to the state. Yet by their very composition the costs and risks of soft power instruments are hardly ever comparable to those inherent to hard power instruments (i.e., military might), increasing their potential value to the United States in advancing its interests.

Considering the loss of opportunities borne by the United States over the past half century resulting from its inability to spur reforms in Cuba in combination with recent changes in top government positions in both countries, this is a propitious time for America policymakers to reexamine their Cuban policy and determine a new course for the future. The hypothesis for this study posits that the current dynamics of the U.S.-Cuban relationship allow for a potentially fruitful opportunity for the strategic use of soft power so as to promote new dialogue, engagement, and understanding between the people, institutions, and governments of both nations. And by enhancing bilateral relations, it is posited that the United States would be in a more effective position from which to exert influence over the direction of Cuba's future.

This thesis analyzes how American soft power can be harnessed and leveraged to effect the desired changes in Cuba that American hard power has failed to achieve. It is designed to determine if and how the influences exerted by U.S. culture, diplomacy, via economic engagement and through its ideas and values can serve as a means by which to effect substantive change in Cuba, improve bilateral relations, and further U.S. objectives in Cuba and Latin America.

The analysis is structured to incorporate the impact and influence exerted by four primary stakeholders in the development and execution of American foreign policy: 1) lawmakers; 2) citizens; 3) U.S. and multi-national corporate interests; and 4) the Cuban

Diaspora. In most respects, U.S. foreign policy falls under the purview of the White House, but the president’s decisions are affected by public opinion, the Congress, lobbying groups, and the private sector, all of which must be taken into account.

Integral to this analysis is an understanding of how even slight alterations to specific U.S. policies can impact the potency of U.S. soft power abroad in general and in Cuba specifically. I seek to identify those cases in which low-risk policy changes initiated by the United States government can enhance American soft power in Cuba vis-à-vis the Cuban government, citizens, and networks, and prove beneficial to bilateral relations and to U.S. foreign policy objectives in the region. (See Diagram 1.)

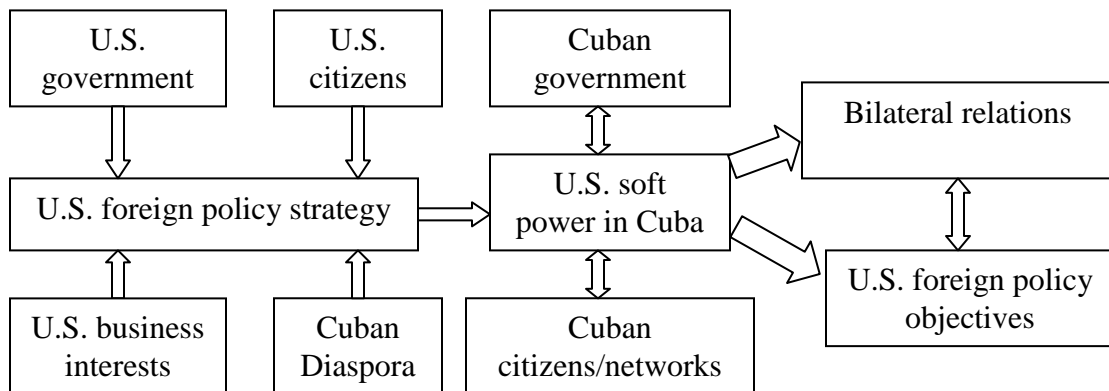


Diagram 1. Analytical framework.

This study is divided into five parts. Chapter I provides an overview of the research question and examines the relevance of U.S.-Cuban relations in the current geopolitical context. Chapter II explores the most critical elements and pertinent critiques of soft power and provides for a refined definition of the concept for the purposes of this paper. Chapter III analyzes the use of soft power diplomacy by the United States in three analogous foreign policy cases – U.S.-China, U.S.-Russia, and U.S.-Vietnam relations –

during the same period of analysis, the past 50 years, during which time bilateral relations in each case changed significantly while U.S.-Cuban relations remained relatively static. In Chapter IV, the revised definition of soft power is applied to the current case of U.S.-Cuban relations. The analysis focuses on how specific American soft power assets would likely affect and impact specific stakeholders, their interests, and U.S. foreign policy objectives – under current conditions and under those conditions created by slight changes in American foreign policy. And finally, in Chapter V the most salient findings from the analysis are articulated in order to formulate conclusions. This final chapter includes a discussion regarding the implications of the research results on international relations theory and on U.S. foreign policy strategies moving forward.

The results of this investigation – whether confirming or disconfirming the hypothesis – will bring fresh evidence to bear on the U.S.-Cuban relationship, enhancing the existing scholarship on the issue, and thereby informing and accelerating the contemporary foreign policy debate over the direction of U.S.-Cuba policy.

Research Parameters

This test of U.S. soft power is admittedly complex because of Cuba's unique character as a politically closed society anchored within a geographically isolated island, in many ways cut off from ideas and influence from the United States and the West. But despite this isolation it cannot be denied that Cubans, like citizens of other nations, are curious about the world and sincere in their hopes for a better future. And they are not, despite their government's best efforts, completely impervious to external influences nor to the inclination to seek more extensive ties with the outside world via the Internet, social networking, and face-to-face exchange.

Yet even if Cuban citizens can be influenced by American soft power, it must be asked whether the capacity of soft power to effect bilateral relations in any substantive fashion is dependent upon the support or at least the acquiescence of the Cuban government. The Cuban government does, after all, determine the direction of its foreign policy. And there are many reasons why leaders in Havana may fear rapprochement with Washington, the most plausible of which is the concern that improved relations would foment a series of changes within Cuban society that could spiral out of the control of the government apparatus, jeopardizing its hold on power.

By definition, soft power does not constitute an explicit threat; its appeal as a foreign policy tool lies in its subtle, often subliminal ability to effect the impressions of foreign citizens. So even if the Cuban government were to perceive U.S. soft power as a threat, it would be unable to completely forestall its effect upon greater Cuban society. It is via this effect cascading through the various layers of Cuban society over time that bilateral relations would be impacted. As a result, succeeding generations of Cuban leaders would grow less fearful of the United States and would therefore be more inclined to be receptive and responsive to olive branches coming from the U.S. So even if the current Cuban government maintains a firm stand against improved relations with Washington over the short term, the influence of U.S. soft power within Cuba remains a potentially useful means by which to effect long-term change in the bilateral dynamic.

It should also be understood that the use of soft power does not constitute a zero sum game in international relations. One nation does not necessarily lose if another gains. So in theory Cuba need not fear U.S. soft power, although convincing Cuban leaders of that point may be fruitless. This construct should be a consideration when constructing U.S. foreign policy strategy vis-à-vis Cuba.

Any thorough and thoughtful discussion of the potential future direction of U.S.-Cuban relations must also include careful consideration of its complex historical dimensions. This has been a unique relationship, overwhelmingly patriarchal in nature for many decades, and now characterized by a complete diplomatic disconnect. Yet the contemporary power dynamic between the two nations, seemingly asymmetric on the surface, is actually more nuanced and complex than it might appear. Defining the contours of this dynamic are of critical importance to the understanding of current U.S. policies and can help elucidate the many challenges that may continue to constrain the development of mutually beneficial diplomatic connections between the two countries.

An Historical Review

The roots of modern-day U.S.-Cuban relations can be traced back to the Monroe Doctrine, outlined by President James Monroe during a speech to Congress in 1823 in which he laid out a new vision for U.S. foreign policy. Monroe spoke of prohibiting European powers from exercising their military might and colonial powers in the Americas, in effect declaring the U.S. as the protectorate of the hemisphere:

We owe it, therefore, to candor and to the amicable relations existing between the United States and those powers to declare that we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety. With the existing colonies or dependencies of any European power we have not interfered and shall not interfere. But with the Governments who have declared their independence and maintain it, and whose independence we have, on great consideration and on just principles, acknowledged, we could not view any interposition for the purpose of oppressing them, or controlling in any other manner their destiny, by any European power in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States.¹

¹ James Monroe, Seventh Annual Message to Congress, In *Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897*, vol. II, ed. J.D. Richardson (Washington D.C.: Government Printing

Monroe's declaration was significant because it represented an aggressive foreign policy stance in the Caribbean, and it signaled a major philosophical departure from the sentiment expressed by President George Washington who, during his farewell address, warned his successors against the dangers of foreign entanglements. While Monroe's words were intended for European ears – to ward off European interference in the United States' backyard – it seems very likely that they were also heard loud and clear by governments and citizens in Latin and South America – as an indication of their inclusion in the growing U.S. sphere of influence. And while the message may have been comforting to those who feared European interference, it must have seemed threatening to others who feared for their own sovereignty.

Following the 1898 signing of the Treaty of Paris, which ended the Spanish-American war, a U.S. military government ruled Havana. It is during this period, argues Latin American scholar Mark Falcoff, that American commercial interests gained a foothold on the island, helping Cuba recover from the devastating impacts of the war while also forging an uneasy economic alliance: “The economy was almost instantly revitalized by the massive entry of American capital, which invested not only in sugar, but railways, utilities, tobacco, minerals, and other resources. No doubt many of these investors were encouraged to risk their money in the expectation that the island would remain a permanent U.S. dependency – and this in spite of repeated assurances to the contrary by the occupation authorities.”²

Although Cuba gained its formal independence in 1902, the controversial Platt Amendment, approved by the U.S. Congress in 1901 and later inserted into the Cuban

Office, 1907), 218, <http://books.google.com/books?vid=HARVARD32044014593339&printsec=titlepage#v=onepage&q&f=false> (accessed May 19, 2010).

² Mark Falcoff, *Cuba the Morning After* (Washington, DC: AEI Press, 2003), 17.

Constitution, asserted U.S. authority to intervene in island affairs. Article I prohibited the Cuban government from entering “into any treaty or other compact with any foreign power or powers which will impair or tend to impair the independence of Cuba, nor in any manner authorize or permit any foreign power or powers to obtain by colonization or for military or naval purposes or otherwise, lodgement in or control over any portion of said island” while Article III asserts that “the government of Cuba consents that the United States may exercise the right to intervene for the preservation of Cuban independence, the maintenance of a government adequate for the protection of life, property, and individual liberty.”³ On its face the amendment appeared to grant the U.S. liberal rights in safeguarding its interests on the island, even if potentially not aligned with Cuban interests. Falcoff argues that the effect of the amendment was to “truncate the country’s sovereignty as an independent republic,”⁴ a consequence that played out until the U.S. repealed the amendment in 1934.

Although the United States maintained extensive commercial interests on the island, its level of influence waned once the Platt Amendment was repealed and America’s attention turned to matters in Europe. As Falcoff writes, “if Washington seemed remarkably unconcerned about the corruption, jobbery, and violence that afflicted Cuban politics, it also displayed a marked indifference to the course of economic and social policy.”⁵ A series of leaders ruled Cuba from the 1930s through the 1950s, and its

³ Platt Amendment, *Treaties and Other International Agreements of the United States of America, 1776-1949*, vol. 6, ed. C.I. Bevans (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 1116-17.

⁴ Falcoff, 18.

⁵ Falcoff, 22.

internal struggles mirrored those taking place in many other Latin American countries. The revolution, of course, changed just about everything.

In early 1959 Fidel Castro led a band of rebels that overthrew the government of Fulgencio Batista and assumed the reins of power in Havana. The subsequent response from Washington wavered from hopeful optimism in the days immediately following the coup to downright disdain shortly thereafter, as reflected in President Eisenhower's sentiments expressed to British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan in a note dated July 11, 1960, in which Eisenhower stated that, "the Cuba problem so profoundly affects not only the security of the United States but is also related to the security of the Free World as a whole." In the same note, Eisenhower outlines a hard-line strategy aimed at undermining the Castro regime: "our primary objective is to establish conditions which will bring home to the Cuban people the cost of Castro's policies and of his Soviet orientation and also to establish a climate in which those who recognize the necessity of eventually beneficial relations between Cuba and the United States can assert themselves."⁶

From his earliest days in the White House, Eisenhower's successor John F. Kennedy struck a hard line on the Cuban issue. President Kennedy and his advisors felt matters were deteriorating in Cuba as its government was nationalizing industries and forming an alliance with the Soviet Union. In an April 1961 address before the American Society of Newspaper Editors, Kennedy referred to Cuba as "that unhappy island," sending a signal to both Havana and Moscow that the U.S. was preparing for some type of response, while leaving it unclear as to what the response would be: "it is clear that this Nation, in concert with all the free nations of this hemisphere, must take an ever

⁶ Dwight D. Eisenhower, Cable to Harold Macmillan, 11 July 1960, in *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower*, ed. L. Galambos and D. van Ee, doc. 1582 (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), <http://www.eisenhowermemorial.org/presidential-papers/second-term/documents/1582.cfm> (accessed December 11, 2009).

closer and more realistic look at the menace of external Communist intervention and domination in Cuba. The American people are not complacent about Iron Curtain tanks and planes less than 90 miles from their shore.”⁷ Kennedy was deeply concerned that Communist governments in the hemisphere would pose significant security and economic threats for the United States.

By the time Kennedy took office in January 1961 the U.S. had already imposed a partial trade embargo and had broken off diplomatic relations with Havana. Just days after his inauguration Kennedy authorized the execution of a secret C.I.A. plan to assist a group of 1200 exiles in an invasion at the Bay of Pigs. Its planners had hoped that the invasion would prompt a popular internal revolt against the Castro government. As the president’s deputy assistant secretary for international security affairs William P. Bundy later testified:

The gut question was whether there would be an accompanying sort of thrill of revolt and substantial anti-Castro actions within Cuba... But, as they repeatedly pointed out, the defectors you got were quite often from the classes and groups that would be expected to be against Castro. These weren’t real readings of the underlying broad public opinions in Cuba and particularly whether that public opinion, whatever it might be feeling about its privations under Castro, was ready to act effectively against him in the sense that the operation would have required, in order to be really successful.⁸

The operation was in fact a failure and the damage done to U.S.-Cuban relations was colossal. Kennedy and his advisors were left unsure as to the degree of popular dissatisfaction with Castro within Cuba, while Castro and his cadre were left convinced

⁷ John F. Kennedy, “Address Before the American Society of Newspaper Editors,” April 20, 1961, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=8076&st=&st1=> (accessed July 10, 2010).

⁸ William P. Bundy, “Oral History Interview,” November 12, 1964, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, http://www.jfklibrary.org/NR/rdonlyres/6EDB80FB-1B9E-4F29-8D70-610FB34A88B7/45906/BundyWilliamP1_oralhistory.pdf (accessed December 12, 2009).

that the United States would stop at nothing less than overthrowing the Communist government in Havana. Many historians have argued that this impression drove Castro closer to Moscow and eventually led to his decision to allow Soviet missiles in Cuba. That decision, of course, culminated in the intense international Cuban missile crisis in October 1962 in which a U.S. blockade of the island caused many to fear a potential nuclear attack on the United States.

From that time until the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the U.S.-Cuban relationship was seen almost solely through the lens of the Cold War. Both Presidents Kennedy and Johnson felt that the Cuban threat had been sufficiently neutralized and focused their energies on Vietnam and other proxy wars that characterized that era. The Nixon Administration was also preoccupied by Vietnam but took the initiative to seek détente with China and to a limited extent with the Soviet Union. But few if any olive branches were extended to Cuba, and the economic embargo was strictly enforced.

Brief episodes of official and unofficial contact between the two countries during the Ford and Carter Administrations provided some encouragement for those advocating a thawing of relations, but no serious breakthroughs occurred. And by the time Bill Clinton took office in 1992, bilateral relations were again negligible. The shooting down over Cuba in early 1996 of two small airplanes operated by Brothers to the Rescue, a Miami-based anti-Castro organization, plunged the countries back into a diplomatic crisis. The Helms-Burton Act, signed into law by President Clinton the following month, ratcheted the knot even tighter by strengthening the terms of the U.S. economic embargo and sending a signal to Havana that the cost of reengagement with the United States would be high.⁹

⁹ U.S. Congress, House, “Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, HR 927,” 104th Congress, 2nd sess., Library of Congress, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c104:H.R.927.ENR>: (accessed December 17, 2009).

Although Helms-Burton and the general direction of U.S. policy vis-à-vis Cuba drew international condemnation in the late 1990s, President Clinton remained in support of economic sanctions in hopes of pushing the Castro regime to improve its human rights record. As he stated during a presidential press conference in May 1998, “our real concern is for the people of Cuba: can we move the society toward freedom and human rights and a democratic system. These things don't have to be done overnight, but then again, they have to be done. There has to be some clear signal... I do not accept, nor can I ever accept, some of the anti-democratic and, frankly, clearly anti-human rights policies of the government.”¹⁰

While it can be concluded that Clinton’s basis for continuing economic sanctions was primarily an idealistic one, hinged for the most part on the human rights issue, a case can be made that Cuban policy during the George W. Bush Administration was more pragmatic in its logic. Most certainly it can be argued that the administration’s attention was drawn to more urgent national security matters following the events of September 11, 2001, but several scholars have also pontificated that in regards to its Cuban policy the Bush administration was motivated at least in part by the desire to court the small but politically powerful Cuban-American voting block in Florida, knowing how important the state was to its political fortunes. Cuban scholar Soraya Castro Marino writes that as recently as 2004, “electoral pressures, and the profound neoconservative sentiment of the

¹⁰ William J. Clinton, “Press Conference of the President and Prime Minister Prodi of Italy,” May 6, 1998, William J. Clinton Presidential Library, <http://clinton5.nara.gov/WH/New/html/19980506-7561.html> (accessed May 19, 2010).

Bush administration, positioned the U.S. policy toward Cuba as a domestic and electoral variable instead of as a projection of U.S. foreign policy.”¹¹

In Havana, meantime, Fidel Castro’s failing health hastened a temporary transfer of power to his younger brother Raúl in July 2006, raising hopes abroad that political changes would be forthcoming. Raúl, who had served as his brother’s longtime military leader and confidant, assumed more permanent control of the Cuban government apparatus when he was elected president in February 2008, and shortly thereafter his administration took preliminary steps to liberalize the state’s agricultural economy.¹² To date, there have been few visible signs of significant human rights advancements on the island since Raúl’s ascension and scholars disagree on the question of whether any will be forthcoming anytime soon. In the least, however, Fidel’s illness and his decision to step down represented a symbol of hope to U.S. policymakers that the dawn of a new era in U.S.-Cuban relations was approaching.

With his inauguration as U.S. president in January 2009, Barack Obama promised to promote a more internationalist foreign policy strategy than his predecessor did, one based more on engagement and dialogue than on confrontation and unilateral dictate. Delivering his first message to a joint session of Congress in February 2009, the new president articulated his policy framework:

In words and deeds, we are showing the world that a new era of engagement has begun. For we know that America cannot meet the threats of this century alone, but the world cannot meet them without America. We cannot shun the negotiating table, nor ignore the foes or forces that could do us harm...To meet the challenges of the 21st century

¹¹ Soraya Castro Marino, “The Cuba-United States Conflict: Notes for Reflection in the Context of the War on Terrorism,” in *Foreign Policy toward Cuba: Isolation or Engagement?* ed. Michele Zebich-Knos and Heather N. Nicol (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), 210.

¹² See “Raúl Castro Delivers on Reform Promises,” *Forbes Magazine*, April 3, 2008, http://www.forbes.com/2008/04/02/cuba-peso-tech-cx_0403oxford.html (accessed December 17, 2009).

– from terrorism to nuclear proliferation; from pandemic disease to cyber threats to crushing poverty – we will strengthen old alliances, forge new ones, and use all elements of our national power.¹³

Just weeks later, in April 2009, Obama directed the Secretaries of Commerce and the Treasury to loosen travel and remittance restrictions on Cuban-Americans with relatives on the island. The presidential memorandum, which also allowed for the expansion of some forms of humanitarian assistance to Cuba, stated that “measures that decrease dependency of the Cuban people on the Castro regime and that promote contacts between Cuban-Americans and their relatives in Cuba are means to encourage positive change in Cuba.”¹⁴

Although the directive issued by the president does not substantially alter the U.S.-Cuban dynamic, it is reasonable to conclude that the action was interpreted by the American people, policymakers, and political scientists as symbolically important, representing the Obama Administration’s intent to move bilateral relations past the rancor and intransigence of the past to a more constructive future. There are also indications that the Cuban government may also be receptive to these new signals coming from Washington, as evidenced by the words of Raúl Castro who was quoted by CNN just days following Obama’s announcement as telling a summit of Latin American leaders that his government was prepared “to discuss everything – human rights, freedom of the press, political prisoners – everything, everything, everything that they want to

¹³ Barack Obama, “Address to Joint Session of Congress,” White House Press Office, February 24, 2009, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-of-President-Barack-Obama-Address-to-Joint-Session-of-Congress (accessed November 21, 2009).

¹⁴ White House, “Memorandum: Promoting Democracy and Human Rights in Cuba,” April 13, 2009, http://www.whitehouse.gov/assets/documents/2009cuba_memorandum.pdf (accessed December 17, 2009).

discuss,”¹⁵ representing a fairly significant change in tone from other recent proclamations from the Cuban leadership.

Primary Stakeholders in U.S.-Cuban Relations and Their Interests

Before turning to the issue of redefining soft power in the current context, it is important to identify the primary interests of the most significant stakeholders in the matter of U.S.-Cuban relations. The primary stakeholders in this case are identified as the: 1) the U.S. government; 2) the Cuban government; 3) the citizens of Cuba; 4) the citizens of the United States; 5) the Cuban Diaspora in the United States; and 6) U.S. and multi-national corporate entities. An analysis of each stakeholder and its interests follows. (See Table 1.)

Defining U.S. government interests can be complex. Although Washington has historically pressed for political and economic reforms in relatively broad based and general terms,¹⁶ it is interesting to note the subtle changes in language used by the Obama Administration in outlining U.S. policy objectives. In a press briefing on November 19, 2009, State Department spokesman Ian Kelly told reporters that human rights had again become the primary focus of U.S. policy vis-à-vis Cuba:

We are interested in promoting human rights for all Cubans. We have begun an engagement with Cuba of – in areas of national interest and mutual concern. We’ve also launched some initiatives creating opportunities for Cuban civil society to more easily receive information and interact with their family and also with Cubans who live in the United States. This is the increasing the mail service and increasing telephone

¹⁵ “Raúl Castro: Cuba ready 'to discuss everything' with U.S.,” CNN, April 17, 2009, <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/POLITICS/04/17/us.cuba/index.html> (accessed April 23, 2010).

¹⁶ The State Department summarizes U.S. policy towards Cuba as “focused on encouraging democratic and economic reforms and increased respect for human rights on the part of the Cuban Government.” See U.S. Department of State, “Background Note: Cuba,” <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2886.htm> (accessed April 14, 2010).

service. So this is a real priority for the United States, and it will continue to be so.¹⁷

Stakeholders	Primary bilateral interests	Regional foreign policy objectives
U.S. government	Enhanced human rights protections and information access in Cuba; economic and political reforms on the island	Regional peace and stability; reduced flows of illegal immigrants; enhanced drug interdiction efforts
Cuban government	Ending the U.S. economic embargo; maintaining political sovereignty	Enhance position of influence in Latin America; foster new sources of foreign investment and energy development; enhance status as regional tourist destination
Cuban citizens	Improved economic conditions; relaxed travel restrictions; dialogue between governments	Increased regional cooperation to incite Havana to embrace economic, human rights, and travel policy reforms
U.S. citizens	End of economic embargo; dialogue with Cuban government	Regional peace and stability; enhanced opportunities for economic, social, and cultural engagement
Cuban Diaspora in United States	Political and economic reforms in Cuba; some seek an end to the economic embargo and immediate engagement with Cuban government while others demand reforms as a condition for bilateral dialogue and for ending the embargo	Undermining support for Castro allies in Latin America; Increasing regional pressure for economic, human rights and political reforms in Cuba
U.S. and multi-national corporate interests	Development of free markets in Cuba; repayment of seized assets	Continued development of free trade zones throughout the Americas; improved economic conditions

Table 1. Key stakeholders and their interests.

¹⁷ Ian Kelly, “Daily Press Briefing,” November 19, 2009, U.S. Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2009/nov/132169.htm> (accessed December 17, 2009).

It is difficult to determine with any great certainty now whether this shift in semantics represents genuine and substantive change. Only time will tell for certain whether the Obama Administration is sincere in its verbal cues, but the tone of the message is certainly less harsh than the more antagonistic sounding language aimed at Havana during previous administrations and may be indicative of a desire for a more two-sided diplomatic relationship than has been the case over the past 50 years.

That said, even if the administration were inclined to pursue closer relations with Havana, it is clear that many members of Congress will have a say in the matter and could impact the outcome. Although it is difficult to predict the result of a Congressional vote on the easing of economic sanctions, it is quite evident that Cuban policy remains a very potent topic on Capitol Hill and the influence exerted by members of Congress must be taken into account in this analysis.

Florida Congressman Lincoln Diaz-Balart, one of five Cuban-Americans serving in Congress, is representative of the block of lawmakers who strongly support continued economic sanctions against Havana.¹⁸ Diaz-Balart articulated his arguments during a speech on the House floor in June 2009:

The U.S. Congress must continue to condition access by the Cuban regime to the billions of dollars in U.S. tourism and massive U.S. investment and trade financing... to the liberation of all political prisoners without exceptions; the legalization of all political parties without exceptions, labor unions and the press; and the scheduling of multiparty elections. That is critical leverage for a democratic transition to take place in Cuba when Fidel Castro dies, for he is the ultimate source of absolute personal

¹⁸ Diaz-Balart announced in February 2010 his decision not to run for re-election. See Lesley Clark and Beth Reinhard, "Rep. Lincoln Diaz-Balart won't seek reelection," *Miami Herald*, February 12, 2010, <http://www.miamiherald.com/2010/02/11/1474485/lincoln-diaz-balart-expected-to.html> (accessed July 10, 2010).

totalitarian power in that enslaved island, like a modern day Caligula or Nero.¹⁹

An increasing number of U.S. lawmakers, however, are now arguing that economic sanctions have failed to accomplish their objectives and that engagement with the Cuban government is critical in order to effect positive political, economic, and human rights reforms on the island. A staff report prepared for the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee in early 2009 outlined many of their arguments.

The report highlights a number of key U.S. strategic priorities – economic, drug interdiction, and migration among others – in which bilateral cooperation might lend progress.²⁰ In the report preface, Sen. Richard Lugar, the ranking Republican leader on the committee, articulated the reasons for re-evaluating U.S. policy vis-à-vis Cuba:

After 47 years...the unilateral embargo on Cuba has failed to achieve its stated purpose of “bringing democracy to the Cuban people,” while it may have been used as a foil by the regime to demand further sacrifices from Cuba’s impoverished population. The current U.S. policy has many passionate defenders, and their criticism of the Castro regime is justified. Nevertheless, we must recognize the ineffectiveness of our current policy and deal with the Cuban regime in a way that enhances U.S. interests.²¹

Deciphering the motives of the Cuban government from American shores is a complex task for a number of reasons. Because the two governments maintain only a modicum of formal diplomatic relations there is little first-hand information being exchanged between high-level officials. Without such high-level face-to-face exchange, a significant and credible source of reliable information is stymied. And the Cuban

¹⁹ U.S. Congress, House, “Providing for consideration of HR 1886,” June 10, 2009, Library of Congress, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/F?r111:960:./temp/~r111Qtn18m:e8236>: (accessed November 26, 2009).

²⁰ See U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, “Changing Cuba Policy – in the United States National Interest,” 111th Cong., 1st sess., <http://lugar.senate.gov/sfrc/pdf/Cuba.pdf> (accessed March 14, 2009).

²¹ Changing Cuba Policy, v.

government has historically operated with a minimum of transparency, constructing policy instead behind closed doors with little or no input from or exposure to outside sources. This makes it extremely difficult to determine the hows and whys behind Cuban policy development.

We are left to interpret the motives of the Cuban government by analyzing the actions and often cryptic words of its leadership. Such analysis reveals a shifting foreign policy strategy since the beginning of the Cuban revolution, specifically in regards to Havana's relations with the United States.

In the early years following the revolution, Castro's government flexed its muscles to display its independence and to demonstrate its emergence as a force on the world stage. From the mid-1960s through the end of the 1980s, Cuban foreign policy was very much influenced by the dynamics of the Cold War as the Castro regime aligned itself with the U.S.S.R. Today, Cuba's motives are again in flux as the nation seeks to regain its status as a Latin American power while also suffering from the ills of the global recession. And it seems clear that the regime's primary interest vis-à-vis the United States is to effect an end to the economic embargo.

Cuban President Raúl Castro has ratcheted up his anti-U.S. rhetoric recently after a brief respite that followed Barack Obama's victory in the 2008 U.S. presidential election. In a December 2008 speech to the National Assembly, Raúl lauded the U.N. General assembly and other "multilateral forums" for rejecting the "economic war against Cuba." Further he argued that "the current U.S. administration ignores the demands of the international community and increasingly mainstream sectors of his [Obama's] country increasingly advocating a change in U.S. policy toward Cuba."²²

²² Raúl Castro, "Speech by Army General Raúl Castro Ruz, President of the Councils of State and Ministers, at the closing session of the National Assembly of Peoples' Power," December 20, 2009, Cuban

It must be noted, however, that in his December 2008 message to the National Assembly, Raúl included language that could be interpreted as offering an opportunity for dialogue with the United States:

I take this another chance, because we have already raised several times, to confirm the genuine commitment to Cuba to settle definitively the dispute with the United States, from a respectful dialogue between equals, on any subject, without prejudice to our independence, sovereignty and self determination. If Americans really want to advance relations with Cuba, I recommend you leave behind the constraints of seeking to impose internal order and that only Cubans decide to compete.²³

One could construe this message as indicating that Castro and Cuba might welcome diplomatic overtures from the United States so long as the U.S. respects its sovereignty.

While it is difficult to determine with any precision the common interests of the Cuban people in regard to U.S.-Cuban relations, we can draw some probable conclusions based on public opinion data. A poll conducted by the International Republican Institute in July and August 2009 reveals that 40 percent of Cubans believe that the “biggest problem in Cuba” is “low salaries/cost of living” while only 15 percent believe that the current government is capable of solving the problem “in the next few years.” Fifty-six percent of those surveyed told pollsters that they favored reforms that would allow citizens to travel abroad without an exit visa, and more than 91 percent wanted the government to allow citizens to be able to sell their homes if they wished.²⁴ These findings seem to imply that there is a certain degree of dissatisfaction with current conditions on the island, and citizens are interested in seeing some economic and political

Ministry of Foreign Relations, <http://america.cubaminrex.cu/DiscursosIntervenciones/Articulos/Raul/2009/2009-12-20.html> (accessed January 10, 2010) para. 56.

²³ Raúl Castro, para. 63.

²⁴ International Republican Institute, “Cuba Public Opinion Survey,” July 4-August 7, 2009, <http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2009-November-17-Survey-of-Cuban-Public-Opinion-July-4-August-7-2009.pdf> (accessed March 30, 2010), 16-19.

reforms in order to improve their standard of living. Pollsters did not ask Cuban citizens about their feelings toward the United States, but we can infer from the data that they might well support rapprochement as a step toward improving their own economic conditions on the island.

American citizens have varied interests in regard to U.S.-Cuban relations. While a vocal minority of Cuban Diaspora in the United States remain adamantly opposed to renewing relations with the Cuban government, at least not before major structural changes occur (see further analysis below), most Americans are quite supportive of the idea. A 2009 public opinion survey found that a clear majority of the American people, 59 percent, believe that it is “time to try a new approach to Cuba, because Cuba may be ready for a change.” Seventy-five percent favored dialogue between top government officials and 69 percent of those surveyed told pollsters that they favored re-establishing diplomatic relations between the two countries.²⁵ These data provide rather unambiguous evidence of American public support for changing the United States’ current Cuba policy and seem to clearly indicate that the American people would back U.S. government efforts to push forward with reengagement with Havana.

When discussing the motivations and interests of the most influential Cuban Diaspora groups in the United States, it is fair to conclude that they all wish to impact the direction of U.S. policy vis-à-vis Cuba. They are seemingly unanimous in their desire to see the ouster of the Castro regime in Havana and the promotion of political, economic, and human rights reforms on the island. Where they seem to differ most substantively is in the strategies by which these goals can be accomplished.

²⁵ WorldPublicOpinion.org, “Cuba Policy and U.S. Public Opinion,” April 15, 2009, http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/apr09/Cuba_Apr09_packet.pdf (accessed April 24, 2010).

Historically most influential Cuban-American political organizations have strongly favored the embargo and continue to lobby against engaging the Castro government. The Center for a Free Cuba, based in Arlington, Virginia, in many ways reflects the powerful anti-Castro sentiment that characterizes many of these groups. Writing in the *Miami Herald* in December 2009, the organization's executive director Frank Calzón argued that, "failing to condition the United States' Cuba policy on reforms and yielding to Havana's braggadocio strengthens the hard-line gerontocracy that misrules the island and inspires the world's like-minded despots to parrot Fidel Castro's anti-American rant."²⁶

Engaging the Castro regime in any fashion remains anathema for a significant percentage of the Cuban Diaspora in the United States, but at least one powerful Cuban-American organization has recently changed course and is now expressing support for a shift in tactics so as to effect change from the bottom up. In April 2009 the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF), established in 1981 with the mission of seeking "to end more than forty years of totalitarian rule that has silenced, impoverished and brutalized the Cuban people," published a policy paper urging a "new course" for U.S.-Cuba policy:

the Castro government will not unilaterally and freely initiate a path toward democratic rule....External and, more importantly, internal factors are critical in creating that demand for change. The Cuban people, supported by U.S. policy, must be empowered to speak out, organize, and peacefully enact democratic change. The Cuban American National Foundation believes that the President has the authority and prerogative to initiate the necessary changes in U.S.-Cuba policy within the parameters provided by current statutes.²⁷

²⁶ Frank Calzón, "Why strengthen Havana's hard line gerontocracy?," December 10, 2009, *Miami Herald*, <http://www.miamiherald.com/opinion/inbox/story/1375847.html> (accessed December 17, 2009).

²⁷ Cuban American National Foundation, "A new course for U.S.-Cuba policy: Advancing people-driven change," April 2009, <http://fd04admin.securesites.net/canf/issues/a-new-course-for-u.s.-cuba>

U.S. and multi-national corporate entities represent another major stakeholder in this analysis. The evidence indicates that a preponderance of American and multinational corporations and business organizations favor lifting economic sanctions. Their motivations are driven primarily by the potentially lucrative export opportunities available should the two nations resume normal commercial trading activities.

The United States Chamber of Commerce, representing three million business owners, has expressed its support for efforts to ease trade restrictions and to “broaden economic engagement with the island.”²⁸ The Chamber, along with 11 other business organizations, including the American Farm Bureau Federation, Grocery Manufacturers Association and National Retail Federation, signed onto a letter sent to President-elect Obama in December 2008 urging him to end the embargo and reevaluate the United States’ Cuban policy: “it is clear that the embargo is not having – and will not have – the type of economic impact that might influence the behavior of the Cuban government. It is time to consider new approaches that would benefit U.S. national security and economic interests, as well as the Cuban people.”²⁹ The letter cites a 2001 study by the U.S. International Trade Commission which estimated \$1.2 billion in annual lost sales for American exporters due to the embargo.³⁰

/policy (accessed November 27, 2009).

²⁸ U.S. Chamber of Commerce, “Cuba and Unilateral Sanctions,” <http://www.uschamber.com/international/policy/cuba.htm> (accessed December 18, 2009).

²⁹ U.S. Chamber of Commerce, “Letter to President-elect Barack Obama,” December 4, 2008, <http://www.uschamber.com/NR/rdonlyres/epmdludtv7fzrrltr2zfh5ncr6zgkc76zqipol247s5bo5dsc5ugsnxghazfcfupodnmoirzyx47iwd7v64e4jn5rc/ReexaminingU.S.CubaPolicyLetter.pdf> (accessed December 18, 2009).

³⁰ See U.S. International Trade Commission, “The Economic Impact of U.S. Sanctions with Respect to Cuba,” publication 3398, February 2001, <http://www.usitc.gov/publications/332/PUB3398.PDF> (accessed December 18, 2009).

Although the chamber and other business organizations seek enhanced trade and economic opportunities with Cuba, there remain a handful of powerful American and multi-national corporations whose Cuban-based assets were seized by the Castro government after the revolution that continue to support the embargo and oppose efforts to improve diplomatic relations. According to the U.S. Foreign Claims Settlement Commission, there are more than 5900 outstanding compensable corporate claims against the Cuban government totaling \$1.8 billion.³¹ Corporations with outstanding claims include Borden, General Motors, Goodyear, Hilton, Procter and Gamble, and United Brands. The Joint Committee on Cuban Claims, a voluntary non profit organization that represents the aggrieved companies, is unequivocal in its view: “The uncompensated taking of the property of United States citizens must be resolved before normal, productive trade and tourist relations between the two nations can be restarted.”³² It can be expected that the committee and the corporations it represents will continue to vehemently oppose diplomatic efforts to bridge the divide between the U.S. and Cuba until its conditions are met.

Risks and Opportunities

The analysis thus far provides important insight into the recent history of U.S.-Cuban relations and the motivations of the primary stakeholders. We have seen how the stakeholders’ interests often vary, sometimes within the group, but occasionally align, allowing for potential opportunities for improved bilateral relations but not without risks.

³¹ U.S. Department of Justice, Foreign Claims Settlement Commission, “2007 Annual Report,” www.usdoj.gov/fcsc/annrep07.htm (accessed January 10, 2010).

³² Joint Corporate Committee on Cuban Claims, “Future Relations with Cuba,” http://www.certifiedcubanclaims.org/future_relations.htm (accessed January 10, 2010).

These dynamics are explored further in Chapter III, but the following chapter focuses on soft power theory, and will include an analysis of its primary components and a consideration of relevant critiques, all of which will inform the construction of a refined 21st-century definition of soft power suitable for the purposes of this investigation.

Chapter II

Analysis of Soft Power

The sources of American power are plentiful, and have historically proven extremely effective on the global stage. But there are isolated cases in which American might has not achieved what it has sought. It can be argued that the nearly half-century old U.S. imposed economic embargo of Cuba is one of those cases. Despite a long-term overarching effort to impose its hard power to effect political change on the Cuban island, the United States has failed to achieve its stated aims.

It has been argued by some political scientists that the U.S. has failed to achieve its goals in Cuba because it has neglected to fully leverage its vast arsenal of hard power resources. Yet as was demonstrated in Chapter I, the U.S. imposed economic embargo has been thorough and exacting. Short of a military invasion of the island, which would have been politically unpalatable due to the tremendous international risks at any point following the 1962 missile crisis, the U.S. has seemingly maximized all realistic hard power options to bring about political change in Cuba. And although there is evidence that the embargo has exacerbated the island's economic hardships, there is little or no evidence to substantiate any claim that it has succeeded in isolating the Cuban regime and fomenting revolt amongst the Cuban people against the government. And there is scant evidence that after 50 years the embargo has prompted any significant political reforms on the island in line with U.S. objectives. With the apparent failure of American hard power, this investigation will analyze how the strategic use of soft power can play out in the arena of U.S.-Cuban relations and whether it can bring about some of the desired

outcomes – democratic reforms, economic liberalization, and adherence to international human rights norms – which the embargo has not.

This chapter will focus on the concept of soft power, its core components and their dynamics, and its application in current international relations theory. In the course of this discussion I will develop a contemporary definition of soft power as a diplomatic tool and will explore its operational capacities. Then I will develop a unique theory as to how those components might be configured so as to affect a change in U.S.-Cuban relations that would further U.S. objectives on the island without undermining other important U.S. foreign policy interests.

Defining Soft Power

The term *soft power* was coined by Harvard Kennedy School Professor Joseph P. Nye in the late 1980s to describe a nation's capacities to attract and persuade others through non-threatening means. As Nye writes, "it is the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises through the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies."³³ It is through the effective use of soft power, either alone or in combination with its hard power resources like military power and economic might, Nye argues, that nations can help further their international objectives while minimizing risk. "When you can get others to admire your ideas and to want what you want, you do not have to spend as much on sticks and carrots to move them in your direction."³⁴

³³ Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004) x.

³⁴ Nye, *Soft Power*, x.

Nye's seminal book on the subject, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, is an essential source for this study. Published in 2004, the book provides a thorough analysis of the sources of soft power, the methods for wielding soft power, and the use of soft power in the formulation and implementation of American foreign policy. And it serves as a logical starting point for this process of defining soft power in the current geopolitical context.

Nye identifies three sources of American soft power: 1) culture; 2) domestic values and policies; and 3) foreign policy substance and style. Culture includes works of art, literature, motion pictures, music, sports and other forms of entertainment, all of which Nye argues can prove particularly seductive to peoples in countries where cultural and social freedoms are repressed. Nye's theory stipulates that the images and messages contained in American books, films, music, poems and web sites often have profound (and sometimes unintended) impacts upon foreign audiences, affecting and influencing their perspectives about the United States and toward the West.

Corporate American brands and what they represent abroad can also be considered cultural assets, Nye asserts. As difficult as it may be for some cynical Americans to imagine, the subconscious messages imparted by a McDonald's hamburger or a bottle of Coca-Cola go far beyond their culinary characteristics. Brands like Apple Computers, Nike, and Starbucks can be powerfully seductive when introduced into new markets. Beyond the value of the specific consumer products are the endemic values of American ingenuity and innovation that the brands signify.

American values and government policies also serve as a means of soft power, according to Nye's theory. Political freedom, free and fair elections, the rule of law, individual liberty, free and open markets, religious freedom and freedom of the press are

all examples of those ideals upon which our nation was built and continue to stand as political values admired by citizens in many parts of the world. Nye is careful to note that not all of these ideals are valued equally by those in other societies, but each of them can prove especially enticing to citizens abroad whose own ideas of freedom and liberty may be severely restricted by their nation's political system.

America's foreign policies can also serve as sources of soft power, Nye explains, by their very substance and style. As he writes:

All countries pursue their national interest in foreign policy, but there are choices to be made about how broadly or narrowly we define our national interest, as well as the means by which we pursue it. After all, soft power is about mobilizing cooperation from others without threats or payments. Since it depends on the currency of attraction rather than force or payoffs, soft power depends in part on how we frame our own objectives.³⁵

To illustrate this point, Nye cites the U.S. government's historic leadership role in supporting international human rights, which has won it significant praise and influence amongst peoples on the farthest corners of the globe.³⁶ One could also argue that the international acclaim the U.S. has received in recent years for its role to mediate disputes in Israel/Palestine, Northern Ireland, and elsewhere has helped our country gain favor among foreign audiences, further solidifying America's standing as a superpower willing and able to serve as a nonpartisan peace broker.

Nye is careful to distinguish between sources of soft power that either may or may not be influenced by government action, and that distinction will help guide the direction

³⁵ Nye, *Soft Power*, 60.

³⁶ International public opinion polling has historically reflected positive feelings about the U.S. role in promoting human rights, although recent polls indicate a shift in opinion due to the continued holding of terror suspects at the U.S. detention center in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. See WorldPublicOpinion.org, "American and International Opinion on the Rights of Terrorism Suspects," July 17, 2006, http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/jul06/TerrSuspect_Jul06_rpt.pdf (accessed May 19, 2010).

of this study. The ideals and messages expressed in American books, motion pictures, music, and technology may, for example, impact the opinions of foreign audiences toward the U.S., but they are outside the direct control of the United States government. (Although one could make the argument that U.S. domestic policies most certainly affect the structure of the marketplace which develops, markets, and distributes those consumer products.)

On the other hand, as Nye explains, government has a clearly recognized role to play in determining and carrying out public policies that may either gain favor or disdain amongst populations (and governments) abroad. Liberal immigration policies, for instance, may cause others to view America as a welcoming place for foreigners seeking a better life, while the decision to invade Iraq in 2003 with little international support may cause foreign audiences to see the U.S. as unilateralist and imperialistic. Along with losing the battle for foreign “hearts and minds,” it may be argued, Washington also lost the “hard power” support of many of its allies in the Iraq campaign as exemplified by the Turkish government’s decision to deny the Pentagon use of a geographically important Turkish air base during the early days of the war, an example of how hard and soft power can interrelate.³⁷

Although Nye’s book is considered the preeminent academic work on soft power, several other leading international relations theorists have contributed important ideas to the scholarly discussions on the topic in recent years, many of which will help shape and inform the definition of soft power necessary for this investigation of contemporary U.S.-Cuban relations. While several political scientists have argued that soft power can be a

³⁷Thom Shaker and Eric Schmitt, “A Nation at War: Strategic Shift; Pentagon Expects Long-Term Access to Key Iraq Bases,” *New York Times*, April 20, 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/04/20/world/nation-war-strategic-shift-pentagon-expects-long-term-access-key-iraq-bases.html>.

significant and often overlooked asset in a nation's diplomatic toolbox, others have questioned the degree to which it can be strategically harnessed and deployed by governments in international relations. Some question the degree to which soft power relative to that of hard power can actually modify national behavior, and seek to evaluate the conditions under which soft power is both a necessary and sufficient ingredient in the foreign relations arsenal. Understanding and deconstructing these arguments is critical to developing a robust theory of soft power relevant to the current global geopolitical dynamic.

Soft Power Critiques

A fresh analysis of public diplomacy offered by diplomat and foreign policy scholar Shaun Riordan is of value to this study of soft power. In a book chapter titled "Dialogue-based Public Diplomacy: A New Foreign Policy Paradigm," Riordan questions the extent to which governments and diplomats can impact and effect outcomes in other countries.

Riordan argues that: "Engaging with foreign civil societies is often best done by the non governmental agents of our own civil societies. The role of government and diplomats in relation to these non governmental agents will be more as catalysts, coordinating their activities within a broader strategy, encouraging those not already engaged in such activities, and, on occasion, providing discreet technical and financial support."³⁸ This perspective underscores the complex and subtle nature of soft power while also raising the question of how government can and should engage with other

³⁸ Shaun Riordan, "Dialogue-based Public Diplomacy: a New Foreign Policy Paradigm?" in *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, ed. Jan Melissen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 191.

actors – in the private, non-profit and quasi-governmental sectors – to maximize the impact of U.S. soft power in the global context.

Political scientist Alan Chong examines the critical role of soft power in a globalized world in which national interests are more transparent and often coalesce in multi-national organizational settings.³⁹ Chong identifies two formulations of soft power which, he argues, can both further a nation's foreign policy goals – one through emulation by others and the second via “the structural circulation of one's ideas through regime norms and political discourses aligned to one's allies and friendly international organizations.”⁴⁰ Chong's analysis provides insight into different formations and applications of soft power in what he calls the 21st-century “global information space.”

A thoughtful and relevant critique of Nye's theory is provided by New York University sociology professor Steven Lukes who has questioned the usefulness of soft power as an attractive force impacting citizens living in a totalitarian society:

“The ability to shape the preferences of others” is a troubling obscure phrase which fails to discriminate between those casual processes which limit and sometimes undermine individuals' capacities to judge and decide for themselves and those which require, facilitate and expand such capacities. To the extent to which the latter are present, though the very practice of liberalism, pluralism and autonomy, for instance, through educational pluralism, realistic opportunities of social mobility and a favorable political context ... then the prospects for democracy are, we may say, favored. To that extent, those benefiting from them are empowered and enabled to resist and choose between different power relations. To label both the former and latter casual processes, “soft power” is to fail to make this necessary discrimination.⁴¹

³⁹ See Alan Chong, *Foreign Policy in Global Information Space: Actualizing Soft Power* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

⁴⁰ Alan Chong, “The Foreign Policy Potential of ‘Small State Soft Power’ Information Strategies,” (online paper, Standing Group on International Relations Pan European Conference, Turin, Italy, August 2007) <http://archive.sgir.eu/uploads/uploads/uploads/Chong-ALANCHONG2007TheForeignPolicyPotentialofSmallStateSoftPower.pdf> (accessed April 24, 2010), 7.

⁴¹ Steven Lukes, “Power and the Battle for Hearts and Minds: On the Bluntness of Soft Power,” in *Power in World Politics*, ed. Felix Berenskoetter and M.J. Williams (New York: Routledge, 2007), 95.

This analysis would certainly seem relevant to the citizens of nations like Cuba where political conditions necessarily limit the flow of information and inhibit certain social interaction, although it fails to completely preclude the possibility that American soft power, if deployed in strategic and targeted ways, can exercise a subtle means of influence upon subsets of foreign populations, even those living under authoritative rule. As Nye argues, history has demonstrated that soft power in a diplomatic context can operate in oblique ways and while its impact may not result in overt policy changes by governments, it can contribute to subtle, even subconscious changes amongst citizens and public officials in their understandings and perspectives.

Also essential to this discussion of contemporary soft power is an understanding of the capacities of elements of civil society – like neighborhood organizations and community networks – to respond to and even initiate social change due to the influences of soft power. This conceptual understanding will provide a filter through which to determine if and how the strategic deployment of certain soft power assets can influence targeted audiences and whether that influence can filter upward into and through a national political structure.

University of Sussex professor John Gaventa, whose theoretical “power cube” incorporates several different components of power in a multidimensional model, argues that actors seeking change in the status quo of a power dynamic face “enormous barriers,” and must work within, between and across many layers of the power cube simultaneously in order to succeed:

A sustained and effective change strategy must concern itself with how to work across the scale, from the subnational to the supranational, the closed to the claimed or the visible to the invisible. While linking the elements within any one of these dimensions can be critical and indeed empowering for those involved, the most transformative, fundamental change happens, I suggest, in those rare moments when social movements or social actors

are able to work effectively both within and across each of the dimensions simultaneously.⁴²

Gaventa's argument – that the potential for substantive and lasting change is maximized when the agents pushing for change do so in an orchestrated fashion, across a multitude of civil, political, and social dimensions simultaneously and often over extended periods – enhances our understanding of soft power and will help inform a refined definition of the concept that is applicable to current-day U.S.-Cuban relations.

Taking into account each of these various scholarly perspectives on the applicability and impact of soft power in a diplomatic context, it becomes evident that Nye's definition alone is not sufficient for the purposes of this examination. It becomes necessary to build a more expanded and refined definition of the concept in order to accurately measure its currency in contemporary international relations.

Nye's original theory, developed in the late 20th-century at a time when America was basking in the glow of its victory in the Cold War, seems almost quaint today at a time when the U.S. is enmeshed in a global "war on terror," is fielding tens of thousands of troops on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan, is challenged by multiple rogue states led by radical leaders intent on developing nuclear weapons, and is facing new economic threats from burgeoning powers like China and India. The contours of American soft power have been altered by these and other events, and therefore the theory itself requires a critical assessment and revision to be applicable to the contemporary geopolitical environment.

⁴² John Gaventa, "Levels, Spaces and Forms of Power: Analysing Opportunities for Change," in *Power in World Politics*, ed. Felix Berenskoetter and M. J. Williams (New York: Routledge, 2007), 218.

The Relationship between Hard and Soft Power

In constructing a more refined and robust conception of soft power to apply to contemporary international relations, it is important to first properly distinguish its characteristics relative to those of hard power and also to identify those many gray areas where the two intersect.

Nye defines hard power as something a nation uses to coerce others, based primarily on “inducements (‘carrots’) or threats (‘sticks’).”⁴³ In the context of international relations he identifies military and economic might as the two primary sources of a nation’s hard power, and he argues that authoritarian regimes most often rely on this method to pursue its objectives on the global stage, while democracies, like the United States, more often rely on a combination of attraction and coercion, depending on the circumstances.

Some 60 years after developing the atomic bomb, the United States continues to sustain the highest national military budget (accounting for approximately 48 percent of the aggregate global military spending⁴⁴), and continues to maintain, despite the recession and the ascension of China, the largest economy in the world.⁴⁵ And it has used both components of its hard power arsenal in seeking and achieving its myriad foreign policy objectives. U.S. military might proved to be a vitally important asset for the West during the Cold War and some argue that the arms race helped break the back of the Soviet

⁴³ Nye, *Soft Power*, 5.

⁴⁴ Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, “The FY2009 Pentagon Spending Request – Global Military Spending,” February 22, 2008, http://www.armscontrolcenter.org/policy/securityspending/articles/fy09_dod_request_global/ (accessed April 24, 2010).

⁴⁵ World Bank, “Gross Domestic Product 2008,” <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DATASTATISTICS/Resources/GDP.pdf> (accessed April 24, 2010).

Union. U.S. economic might has often been used to reward friends (as with the Marshall Plan) and punish enemies (as with sanctions in the case of Cuba).

History has demonstrated that America's hard power at times complements and at times undercuts its soft power. Gulf War I is one example in which American military might used for a targeted purpose with international support served the world and the nation well. The U.S. role in the war in Vietnam, in contrast, serves as a vivid reminder of how an ill-executed foreign policy can profoundly undercut American goodwill across the world. Many political scientists have argued that the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the subsequent military occupation is another example in which American hubris seriously impacted our soft power abroad (at least in the short term). The same may also be true of the ongoing U.S. military efforts in Afghanistan, reflected by public opinion polls in Middle Eastern countries showing high percentages of citizens adamantly opposed to American intervention in the region.⁴⁶

Nye and other prominent international relations scholars have argued that there has been a correlation in recent years between the use of American hard power and the decreasing strength of its soft power abroad, with the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 serving as the primary case study. And they argue that this dynamic places the U.S. at a significant disadvantage when attempting to woo adversaries and develop new alliances, something that is strategically imperative for the United States during this era of complex inter-state threats that necessitate multi-national solutions.

Regardless of whether the correlation between hard and soft power is a tangible phenomenon, we can conclude that it should be a consideration in the development of foreign policy, especially in the post-9/11 era in which the incentives for building and

⁴⁶ See WorldPublicOpinion.org, "Muslim Publics Oppose Al Qaeda's Terrorism, but Agree with its Goal of Driving US Forces Out," February 25, 2009, http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/feb09/STARTII_Feb09_rpt.pdf (accessed February 1, 2010).

enhancing relationships with governments and international institutions across the world are increasing and the risks posed by failing to do so are higher than ever. Nye argues that: “as the world wends its way deeper into a struggle with terrorism, it becomes increasingly apparent that many factors lie outside American control. The United States cannot alone hunt down every suspected Al Qaeda leader hiding in remote regions of the globe. Nor can it launch a war whenever it wishes without alienating other countries and losing the cooperation it needs for winning the peace.”⁴⁷ This sober assessment is a vivid reminder of how critically important it is for the United States during these challenging times to deploy a holistic foreign policy approach in which the calculus behind power deployment is multi-faceted, encompassing both hard and soft power options, factoring their effects upon each other over both the long and short term.

Indeed, there are multiple examples throughout recent history – from the United States’ role in the internationally sanctioned military intervention in Bosnia in the early 1990s to the deployment of American troops to restore President Aristide to power in Haiti in 2004 – in which the calculated and strictly defined use of U.S. military power both achieved its strategic objectives and enhanced its soft power more broadly.

As seen through this light American military power is not just coercive, but can also be seductive. It can represent hope and aid for victims of war, repression, or natural disasters across the world, serving to further U.S. soft power. This conclusion buttresses the contention that the two forms of domestic power are intertwined and are almost impossible to de-link in their strategic deployment.

⁴⁷ Nye, *Soft Power*, xi.

Economic Soft Power

In his definition of soft power, Nye tends to minimize the seductive appeal of a state's economic assets. He tends instead to lump economic resources into the hard power category, likening them to the force of military might. I would argue that this aspect of his theory should be recalibrated due to the profound and transformative effects of globalized commerce over the past two decades. Tremendous advancements in communication and transportation have served to transcend national borders like never before, allowing for many new and enhanced opportunities for nations and peoples to interact economically – without the need for threats or coercion – often to the benefit of all parties involved.

These opportunities can prove extremely seductive for those in developing countries seeking to move into the ranks of the developed world – China, India, and Vietnam being prime examples. Of course many economic resources in the diplomatic toolbox are coercive in their intent and effect – sanctions and tariffs being prime examples. But many others – including free trade and integrated markets, certain forms of monetary control and exchange, remittances, foreign aid, student aid, and other targeted government sanctioned loan and grant programs – can also prove attractive and indeed seductive to peoples and governments abroad, and can serve as a valuable source of soft power for the United States. In fact they may be considered the most substantive and directly influential of all soft power resources. For those reasons they are included in a revised definition of soft power to be utilized in this study of U.S.-Cuban relations.

Additional Considerations

A revised theory of soft power must also recognize the increasingly critical roles that important non-state actors play in international relations. Nye alludes to this phenomenon in his theory, but he does not accord it an appropriate place of prominence that is dictated under current circumstances. Non-state actors include non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that perform issue advocacy and deliver goods and services on-the-ground throughout the world (often supplementing or substituting for the work of international institutions). Modern-day terrorist organizations, which often operate on the grassroots level, must also be considered among the more active and influential current non-state actors that can affect international relations and alter both the hard and soft power dynamics at critical junctures throughout time and space.

With these new realities, it has become increasingly more difficult if not impossible for a nation to sustain an isolationist existence. And a nation's soft power becomes even more critically important as it spreads across a multitude of platforms in order to impact and affect the trajectory and outcome of policy decisions across the world stage. We must consider, therefore, the multi-dimensional impacts of soft power's attraction and diffusion as we define its place in current-day international relations.

This brings us to additional conclusions derived from John Gaventa's "power cube" framework described earlier in this chapter. Gaventa theorizes that transformative change happens when change agents are able to mobilize effectively across many levels – from the sub-national to the supra-national – at the same time. Our understanding of soft power is enhanced by this principle. The most seductive and appealing elements of a nation's soft power can affect and influence a multitude of actors – from individual citizens to private organizations to governments – simultaneously. This is perhaps the

most potent attribute of soft power – its ability to alter the dynamic between peoples and nations without the need for more expensive and risky forms of hard power. And this, therefore, becomes a critically important element of a refined definition of soft power as applied to current-day international relations.

Developing an Expanded Theory of Soft Power

A refined definition of soft power is necessary for this investigation in order to accurately assess its applicability as a factor in current-day international relations. As discussed earlier, the forces unleashed by globalization and the tremendous advancements in technology in recent decades have triggered significant changes in the ways in which citizens and governments communicate and interact, exert influence, and form policy. Citizens empowered by information are now more enabled than ever before to help shape political outcomes. Indeed, even those living under authoritarian regimes are able through social networking and other tools to connect and network in ways not possible even 20 years ago. These networks and networking tools have become potentially proficient channels through which soft power can be transmitted from citizen to citizen, and from country to country. A revised definition of soft power must reflect these realities.

For the purpose of this study, therefore, Nye's original definition of soft power will be expanded and refined to include five major components: 1) culture; 2) diplomacy; 3) ideas; 4) markets; and 5) values. (See Table 2.)

Primary components of U.S. soft power	Primary sub-components
Culture	Athletic competition Intellectual materials (art, films, music, etc.) Travel
Diplomacy	International standing Migration/immigration policy Regional security
Ideas	Educational exchange Intellectual Technological
Markets	Development aid Remittances Trade policy
Values	Democracy Freedom of expression Freedom of the press Justice/rule of law

Table 2. Primary and secondary components of American soft power.

1) Nye captures the power of *popular culture* to affect the thoughts and perspectives of foreigners. Popular culture is encompassed by those products of civic and social life – from art to films to music and sports – each of which convey more to their audiences than just their material form alone. The analysis seeks to determine if and how each sub-component of cultural soft power can exert subtle influences upon the Cuban people in a way that will enhance U.S.-Cuban relations.

2) *Diplomacy* is considered an element of soft power as communicated through a nation’s external-facing policies, specifically through its interactions with the international community as a whole and with individual nations – both allies and enemies. Much about a nation’s ideals is expressed in the ways in which it pursues its foreign relations priorities and strategies. The study in the coming chapters seeks to determine how the United States diplomatic agenda can influence audiences in Cuba.

3) American ingenuity and innovation (i.e., *ideas*) have served as a source of attraction and inspiration to generations of young people throughout the world. This form of soft power is manifest in the millions of immigrants drawn to the United States out of intellectual curiosity and to seek an outlet for their own ideas. And it is illustrated by budding engineers and scientists in foreign countries who build upon ideas conceived in the West in order to serve the needs of those in their societies. This study will analyze the soft power of American ideas, characterized by individual initiative and enterprise, separate from that of American ideals and values, which connote a common or nationalistic perspective, to determine how they can serve as a source of soft power for the United States within Cuba.

4) In the context of this research, the term *markets* refers to the United States' immense repository of economic resources – both public and private – and their capacity to assist and help others, to improve lives and alter lifestyles, and thereby influence the thoughts and perspectives of people in foreign countries toward the U.S. As discussed earlier, there are myriad economic resources at America's disposal and they can be leveraged so as to win the affection of people and policymakers on distant shores. My study will analyze how they can serve as sources of soft power in Cuba and can thereby enhance bilateral relations.

5) The *values* considered endemic in the American model of civil, political, and social life are those most likely to serve as sources of soft power for the United States. These can include everything from individual liberty to freedom of the press to the rule of law. Each of these says something about who we are as a society, how we relate to each other as citizens, and how citizens relate to their government and vice versa. As a system of values, they express a great deal to foreigners about the U.S., and this investigation

will determine how they can influence Cuban audiences and thereby serve as a source of soft power for the United States.

Applying the Revised Soft Power Theory

The components and sub-components contained within the revised soft power theory articulated above serve as key elements in this study. How they are each affected by specific changes in U.S. foreign policy and their impact upon bilateral relations will be the focus of analysis in Chapter IV. But before turning to U.S.-Cuban relations, Chapter III will examine three contemporary international relations case studies – U.S.-China, U.S.-Russia, and U.S.-Vietnam – to determine the ways in which American soft power has influenced their evolution over the past 50 years.

Chapter III

Case Studies of U.S. Soft Power

The capacity of American soft power to affect international relations has been the subject of much debate among scholars and policymakers over the past 30 years.

Harvard Professor Joseph Nye's soft power theory posits that a nation's cultural assets, political, and ideological values, and foreign policies can be used to seduce and attract citizens, thought leaders, and government officials on foreign shores, and can thereby favorably impact international relations vis-à-vis the United States. Whether or not this theory has been borne out by history is the focus of this chapter.

The analysis in this chapter will focus on U.S. relations with three nations: 1) China; 2) Russia; and 2) Vietnam, during the same time period – the past 50 years – during which time U.S.-Cuban relations have remained virtually unchanged. Specifically this analysis will focus on whether or not, and if so how, the use of American soft power as redefined in Chapter II influenced the evolution of each of these three bilateral relationships. Conclusions drawn from these case studies will inform the discussions in Chapter IV on the applicability of soft power to contemporary U.S.-Cuban relations.

China, Russia, and Vietnam are selected as the subjects of this analysis because each of them, like Cuba, was considered an adversary of the United States a half century ago and the prospects for relations with each country over the near term looked similarly dim at that time from the American perspective. Yet today the United States maintains robust diplomatic, economic, and cultural relations with each of the three nations while the U.S and Cuba remain as diplomatically disconnected as they were 50 years ago.

In the half century since the United States imposed an economic embargo against the Republic of Cuba, there have been many seismic shifts in the geopolitical stratosphere, resulting in a realignment of the global power and security structure. The end of the Cold War was a particularly significant event that ushered in a new era in world politics, one in which many former adversaries have become friends, trading partners and strategic allies. In response to these global changes, the United States altered its foreign policy strategies accordingly in order to adapt to the changing landscape, greatly affecting its relations with many nations across the world. Not so, however, with regard to Cuba.

In many ways this new landscape is reflective of an evolution in international relations, one in which soft power is playing a more pronounced role as a complement to, and in some cases in place of hard power. Even the United States, the world's strongest military power, has scaled back its military presence in many parts of the world (even in spite of the current engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan) while it expands its economic and cultural ties through free trade treaties, reduced travel restrictions, increased athletic, educational, scientific, and other exchange programs and the like. U.S. relations with China, Russia, and Vietnam are reflective of this new calculus, and the analysis in this chapter is intended to determine the specific ways in which American soft power has contributed to bilateral cooperation and understanding, and has furthered U.S. foreign policy objectives in these cases.

U.S.-China Relations

U.S. relations with Communist China can best be described as strained through the 1960s. Peking University Professor Li Danhui writes that “until April 1969, relations

between China and the United States were basically hostile, characterized by misunderstanding and lack of mutual confidence.”⁴⁸ Relations were strained by several factors – most significantly by the U.S. containment strategy toward Communism, the proxy war in Vietnam, and by disagreements over the status of Taiwan. In fact, the U.S. maintained formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan during this period, but not with Beijing. And even while the Kennedy administration considered easing trade restrictions with the Soviet Union in the early 1960s, it did not do so in the case of China.⁴⁹

Yet, by the mid-1960s the U.S. had relaxed restrictions on American scholars traveling to China, an example of small-scale soft power diplomacy in an era in which hard power calculus dominated the landscape. Later in the decade, eyeing an opportunity for rapprochement with Beijing, the Nixon administration began to take steps to ease travel restrictions as well.⁵⁰

Most certainly the two nations and their governments had tremendous political differences – many of which played out in disputes regarding the status of Taiwan – that retarded the development of productive diplomatic bilateral relations. But early in the Nixon administration, Washington began reassessing the potential value of enhanced economic exchange with Beijing. A September 1970 memorandum written by then national security advisor Henry Kissinger to the president emphasized the economic incentives then underlying a U.S. policy change toward China:

Our Consulate General at Hong Kong reports some new mobility in

⁴⁸ Li Danhui, “Vietnam and Chinese Policy Toward the United States,” in *Normalization of U.S.-China Relations: An International History*, ed. William C. Kirby, Robert S. Ross, and Gong Li (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005), 180.

⁴⁹ Tan Qingshan, *The Making of U.S. China Policy: From Normalization to the Post-Cold War Era* (Boulder, CO.: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 1992), 60.

⁵⁰Qingshan, 60.

Peking's conduct of foreign relations which might present opportunities for improving relations. Signs of this include payment to the International Committee of The Red Cross (Geneva), of back dues, and an approach to a U.S. businessman regarding possible business travel to China....It is possible some Chinese officials are thinking in terms of eventual trade with U.S. firms. Osborne observes that if this is so, a further liberalization of U.S. travel restrictions might serve to encourage Sino-U.S. contacts at commercial levels.⁵¹

The following year began a period of rapprochement known as “ping-pong diplomacy,” during which the specter of friendly sporting competition was used to allow space for more fruitful bilateral contacts. A contingent of 15 U.S. ping-pong players and three journalists arrived in Beijing on April 14, 1971, the first group of Americans to travel to China in more than two decades. They were greeted by Chinese premier Zhou Enlai who was quoted telling them: “We have opened a new page in the relations of the Chinese and American people.”⁵² The same day President Nixon took action to lift the trade embargo against China.⁵³ This can be considered an amazing coincidence or more likely a tangible demonstration of soft power's capacities to foment substantive change in the diplomatic sphere.

Commercial interaction between the two nations exploded in subsequent years, increasing from less than \$5 million in 1971 to \$933 million in 1974. By the end of the decade, total trade between the Americans and Chinese topped \$2 billion annually.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Henry A. Kissinger, “Memorandum for the President,” September 12, 1970, National Archives, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB66/ch-01.pdf> (accessed February 20, 2010).

⁵² “The Ping Heard Round the World,” *Time Magazine*, April 26, 1971, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,902878-1,00.html> (accessed March 3, 2010).

⁵³ Richard M. Nixon, “Statement Announcing Changes in Trade and Travel Restrictions with the People's Republic of China,” April 14, 1971, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=2976> (accessed March 3, 2010).

⁵⁴ Qingshan, 61.

How this accelerating trend of bilateral trade served to further American soft power vis-à-vis China during this time is a legitimate issue of inquiry. Most certainly Chinese government leaders were interested in the economic opportunities provided by the U.S. market. Beyond that, however, China was clearly ready to reengage within the international system where it would serve its interests – primarily in maintaining domestic order and regional security,⁵⁵ and was willing to both engage in and be responsive to soft power in that pursuit. It can certainly be argued that the expansion of economic relations between the two countries resulted in soft power benefits for both, not just by opening U.S. markets to Chinese goods and vice versa, but by opening up new channels of interaction and dialogue between individuals, corporations, government agencies, and the like.

The Chinese hosted official state visits by President Nixon in February 1972 and President Ford in December 1975. In between the presidential visits, in September 1973, the Chinese invited and hosted the Philadelphia Orchestra for an unprecedented series of performances, exposing Chinese audiences to classical Western music for the first time under Communist rule. The *New York Times* reported that: “The players of the Philadelphia Orchestra are aware of the cultural and diplomatic importance of the trip. On the plane the musicians spent their time reading books about China... There was even a lesson in Chinese being given by Douglas Murray of the National Committee on United States-China relations.”⁵⁶ Although the orchestra spent only 10 days in China, the visit

⁵⁵ Li Jie, “China’s Domestic Policies and the Normalization of Sino-U.S. Relations, 1969-1979,” in Kirby, 59.

⁵⁶ Harold C. Schonberg, “Peking Opens Door to Philadelphians,” *New York Times*, September 13, 1973, 62, <http://select.nytimes.com/mem/archive/pdf?res=F60E13FD3B54137A93C1A81782D85F478785F9> (accessed April 29, 2010).

proved fruitful for American soft power over the long term. As reported in a 1979 article in the *China Quarterly*:

[Chinese leaders] Chiang Ch'ing and Yao Wen-yuan...had specifically requested the Philadelphia Orchestra to perform the Sixth, and then four months later had turned round to declare that such music was "incompatible with today's socialist society under the dictatorship of the proletariat." By 1977 this incompatibility was being strenuously denied. The revival of Beethoven represented a new urge to recreate the common ground between Chinese and western musical culture.⁵⁷

A new spirit of amicable bilateral relations attributable to soft power influence during the 1970s resulted in substantive progress in the diplomatic arena. In January 1979, President Carter, despite ongoing disputes about the nature of U.S. support for Taiwan, acted to normalize relations between Beijing and Washington, calling it a "new era" in relations between the two countries.⁵⁸ Moreover, through his public pronouncements, Carter provided a boost to China's international legitimacy when he remarked that "we have not entered this new relationship [with China] for any short-term gains. We have a long-term commitment to a world community of diverse and independent nations. We believe that a strong and secure China will play a cooperative role in developing that type of world community."⁵⁹

Chinese Premier Deng Xiaoping's visit to the United States in January 1979 underscored Beijing's receptivity to cultural and economic interchange with the United States. "Except for a cultural agreement and an agreement on consular relations, the

⁵⁷ Tim Brook, "The Revival of China's Musical Culture," *China Quarterly*, no. 77 (March 1979), 116, <http://www.jstor.org/pss/653092>.

⁵⁸ Jimmy Carter, "State of the Union Address," January 25, 1979, James Earl Carter Presidential Library, <http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/speeches/su79jec.phtml> (accessed April 29, 2010).

⁵⁹ Jimmy Carter, "Visit of Vice Premier Deng of China Toasts at the State Dinner," January 29, 1979, The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=31357&st=&st1=> (accessed July 10, 2010).

remaining agreements called for cooperation in agriculture, energy, space, health, environment, earth science, and engineering, and for broad educational scientific exchanges of students, scholars, and information.”⁶⁰ This agenda – with agreements on a wide range of cultural, educational, and social activities, despite and without regard to the significant political differences separating the two nations – illustrates the strength of American soft power to build bridges with a former adversary at an important nascent moment in bilateral relations. And although there is little evidence to demonstrate soft power’s capacity to affect significant political change within China during this period, former President Carter now speaks to its role in advancing the critically important U.S. objective of demonstrating united international resolve against the Soviet Union.⁶¹

During the 1980s the Chinese government accelerated efforts to enhance its technological infrastructure and the two nations signed several scientific accords, demonstrating the allure of American innovations. In 1985 the U.S. Congress approved President Reagan’s plan to allow for the transfer of nuclear technology to the Chinese. Although many American policymakers remained skeptical about the plan, concerned about the potential military applications of the technology, others argued that the transfer would enhance relations between the two countries.⁶²

During Chinese President Li Xiannian’s July 1985 visit to the United States, President Reagan praised the nuclear agreement and the value of cooperation in building the U.S.-Chinese relationship, telling reporters that the nations would continue down a

⁶⁰ Qingshan, 85.

⁶¹ See Carter Center, “President Carter Speaks on U.S. China Relations at Emory University,” February 9, 2010, <http://chinaelectionsblog.net/?p=934> (accessed April 29, 2010).

⁶² See Bernard Gwertzman, “Cranston Assails U.S.-China Accords,” *New York Times*, October 22, 1985, <http://www.nytimes.com/1985/10/22/world/cranston-assails-us-china-accord.html> (accessed February 26, 2010).

path of “mutual respect, mutual benefit,” and that “we will continue to put any differences in perspective.” Li remarked, “I hope that a dozen years hence, when we look back, we shall be able to feel gratified, as we do today, that as we proceed difficulties are increasingly reduced and our steps grow more vigorous.”⁶³

Bilateral relations were set back by the April 1989 Chinese government crackdown on protesters in Tiananmen Square. President Bush responded by calling for the suspension of weapons sales and on visits between U.S. and Chinese military officials, but he stopped short of curtailing economic interchange between the two countries, telling reporters that: “I don’t want to hurt the Chinese people. I happen to believe that commercial contacts have led, in essence, to this quest for more freedom. I think as people have commercial incentive, whether it’s in China or in other totalitarian systems, the move to democracy becomes more inexorable.”⁶⁴

It is difficult to determine precisely the impact that Bush’s restrained response to the events at Tiananmen Square had upon the Chinese government, but his strategy proved to be an effective use of soft power during a very tense international moment, showing Beijing and the international community that American restraint could be a source of envy and strength. Deng and the other Chinese leaders treated the incident as a strictly internal security matter and within months were sending signals to Washington

⁶³ Bernard Weinraub, “Reagan Welcomes Peking President: Atom Pact Signed,” *New York Times*, July 24, 1985, <http://www.nytimes.com/1985/07/24/us/reagan-welcomes-peking-president-atom-pact-signed.html> (accessed February 21, 2010).

⁶⁴ “Crackdown in Beijing: Excerpts from Bush’s News Session,” *New York Times*, June 6, 1989, <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/06/06/world/crackdown-in-beijing-excerpts-from-bush-s-news-session.html> (accessed February 21, 2010).

and the rest of the world that they remained intent on continuing China's economic development via enhanced commercial interchange with other nations.⁶⁵

President Clinton pressed the Chinese on human rights issues early in his administration but later backed away, extending China Most Favored Nation (MFN) trade status as a carrot with the hope of influencing Beijing's internal policies through enhanced international engagement. As Clinton wrote in his memoirs:

Because our engagement had produced some positive results, I decided...to extend MFN and, for the future, to delink our human rights efforts from trade. The United States had a big stake in bringing China into the global community. Greater trade and involvement would bring more prosperity to Chinese citizens; more contacts with the outside world; more cooperation on problems like North Korea, where we need it; greater adherence to the rules of international law; and, we hoped, the advance of personal freedom and human rights.⁶⁶

In subsequent years, throughout the Clinton and Bush administrations, bilateral economic and cultural ties grew significantly to the point where China is now the top importer to the United States,⁶⁷ and even though the U.S. has been unable to incite major political change in China, formal diplomatic bilateral relations remain solid and the two countries work together on myriad international challenges including energy policy and regional security on the Korean Peninsula.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ See James Sterngold, "Calls for Economic Changes Rise Among Chinese Officials," *New York Times*, July 30, 1990, <http://www.nytimes.com/1990/07/30/business/calls-for-economic-changes-rise-among-chinese-officials.html> (accessed May 19, 2010).

⁶⁶ William Jefferson Clinton, *My Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 598.

⁶⁷ U.S. Commerce Department, "Top U.S. Trade Partners, 2009," http://ita.doc.gov/td/industry/otea/ttp/Top_Trade_Partners.pdf (accessed February 21, 2010).

⁶⁸ See Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President at the US/China Strategic and Economic Dialogue," July 27, 2009, Office of the White House Press Secretary, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-uschina-strategic-and-economic-dialogue> (accessed April 29, 2010).

Nye, in assessing the impact of soft power in the current bilateral dynamic writes that both sides are benefiting: “In reality Chinese are borrowing many skills and practices that construct America’s soft power. A great number of Chinese government officials, military officers, judges, and lawyers, among other professionals, have been trained in the United States, and they have made contributions to America’s knowledge as well.”⁶⁹

U.S.-Russia Relations

The roots of the current U.S.-Russian relationship lie in the collapse of the former Soviet Union in the late 1980s. It was a time of glasnost and perestroika, Mikhail Gorbachev, and Boris Yeltsin. As the old empire was swept away in the euphoria of the moment, the new Russia was coming to terms with a vast array of serious economic, political, and technological challenges – from the security of its nuclear arsenal to the formation of democratic institutions. In that context, the United States became an instant ally with both the resources and motivation to collaborate with its former adversary on several fronts – economic, political, and security most certainly – a demonstration of American soft power being leveraged for seemingly mutually beneficial ends.

On January 1, 1990, just months after the end of the Cold War, a televised message taped by U.S. President George H.W. Bush was broadcast in the Soviet Union. In the message, Bush spoke of the two nations’ shared interests in reducing threats from nuclear weapons, the need to work together to help resolve regional conflicts, and the hope of building a “free and democratic future.”⁷⁰ It was the first time in decades that an

⁶⁹ Joseph S. Nye and Wang Jisi, “The Rise of China’s Soft Power and its Implications for the United States,” in *Power and Restraint: A Shared Vision for the U.S.-China Relationship*, ed. Richard Rosencrance and Gu Guoliang (New York: PublicAffairs, 2009), 32-33.

⁷⁰ George H.W. Bush, “New Year’s Message to the People of the Soviet Union,” January 1, 1990, George Bush Presidential Library and Museum, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=1386&year=1990&month=01 (accessed February 26, 2010).

American president spoke directly to citizens in the Soviet Union. A month later, U.S. Secretary of State James Baker visited Moscow to meet with Soviet government leaders to discuss a wide range of issues – from arms control to emigration policy.⁷¹ A new era of bilateral engagement had begun.

In his 1990 State of the Union address to Congress, Bush referenced both hard and soft power resources as he outlined a vague framework for a new relationship with the new Soviet Union.⁷² The president announced a plan to slash the number of U.S. and Soviet troops in Central and Eastern Europe to 195,000 for each side, representing a significant step back in military might. Bush also alluded to the influential role that American ideals and values could play in a changing world: “As this new world takes shape, America stands at the center of a widening circle of freedom, today, tomorrow and into the next century. Our nation is the enduring dream of every immigrant who ever set foot on these shores, and the millions still struggling to be free. This nation, this idea called America was and always will be a new world, our new world.”⁷³ Although these words were delivered before an American audience, they were intended to be heard by and to inspire those who had lived behind the “Iron Curtain” for decades.

The United States and Russia soon began increasing person-to-person educational, cultural, and military contacts. A primary example is a program established through Harvard University in 1990 bringing Russian generals to the U.S. to engage in

⁷¹ Thomas L. Friedman, “Upheaval in the East: Diplomacy; Baker Meets in Moscow on Arms and Afghans,” *New York Times*, February 9, 1990, <http://www.nytimes.com/1990/02/09/world/upheaval-in-the-east-diplomacy-baker-meets-in-moscow-on-arms-and-afghans.html> (accessed February 26, 2010).

⁷² The Soviet Union had yet to formally disband. That would happen the following year.

⁷³ George H.W. Bush, “Address before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union,” January 31, 1990, George Bush Presidential Library and Museum, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=1492&year=1990&month=01 (accessed February 26, 2010).

discussions and workshops with their American counterparts. Its administrators tout the fact that the U.S.-Russia Security Program has hosted approximately 240 American and 400 Russian participants since its inception,⁷⁴ an example of the ascendancy of soft power bilateral diplomacy at a time when the hard power calculus was changing rapidly.

While the breakup of the Soviet Union offered new opportunities for economic and political interchange, it also uncovered new threats relating to the stability of nuclear stockpiles in Russia and its former satellite countries. In an effort to address that threat, the U.S. Congress in 1992 passed the Former Soviet Union Demilitarization Act as part of the National Defense Authorization Act to provide administrative, monetary, and technical support to safeguard and dismantle the region's massive nuclear arsenal. The Act also provided the authority for the Secretary of Defense to "participate actively in joint research and development programs with the independent states of the former Soviet Union through [a] nongovernmental foundation."⁷⁵ The United States remains actively engaged with the former Soviet states in funding non-proliferation programs. A 2009 report commissioned by the Nuclear Threat Initiative estimated that \$5.9 billion has been allocated for this effort, including \$1.3 billion on programs specifically designed "to 'secure' the human capital associated with the former Soviet weapons of mass destruction complexes – the weapons design expertise of scientists and engineers, and the workers with access to sensitive materials and facilities."⁷⁶ It is obvious that these cooperative

⁷⁴ See U.S.-Russia Security Program, "About US-Russia Security Program," John J. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, <http://www.harvard-rgp.org/rgp/about> (accessed February 26, 2010).

⁷⁵ U.S. Congress, House, "The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1993," H.R. 5006, October 1992, Library of Congress, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d102:HR05006:@@L&summ2=m&> (accessed February 27, 2010).

⁷⁶ Andrew Newman and Matthew Bunn, *Funding for U.S. Efforts to Improve Controls Over Nuclear Weapons, Materials, and Expertise Overseas: A 2009 Update* (Project on Managing the Atom, Harvard University, and Nuclear Threat Initiative: Cambridge MA, and Washington DC, June 2009), 15.

programs aimed at eliminating or at least stabilizing nuclear weapons in the former Soviet Union provide important hard power benefits to Russia, its neighbors, and the United States. But it can also be logically concluded that the American military and technological resources dedicated toward this effort result in soft power gains for the United States, building trust and establishing respect and rapport on many levels between former Cold War adversaries, thereby enhancing the bilateral relationship.

The Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission, established in 1993, laid the groundwork for bilateral cooperative venues in the areas of energy, high technology, and space exploration and was later expanded to include cooperative efforts in the areas of agribusiness, the environment, public health, and others.⁷⁷ Thomas R. Pickering, former U.S. Ambassador to Russia, has expressed his belief that the commission served to “establish a framework in which we could, working with the Russians, to take them ministry-to-ministry, set up a group of projects.... In many cases they were quite successful, in many cases, they fell flat on their face, and we learned from each occasion,”⁷⁸ a testament to the soft power of American diplomacy, ideas, and values.

Space was one arena in which Russia and the United States have a history of cooperative ventures and those continued and expanded following the Cold War. The Apollo-Soyuz Test Project, performed in July 1975, represented the first manned space mission managed jointly by two nations – the U.S. and Soviet Union.⁷⁹ From 1994-98

⁷⁷ U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, “U.S.-Russian Joint Commission on Economic and Technological Cooperation (Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission),” July 12, 1996, http://www.state.gov/www/regions/nis/gore_chernomyrdin.html (accessed February 28, 2010).

⁷⁸ U.S. Department of State, “Developing Relations with Russia; Thomas R. Pickering, former U.S. Ambassador, videotaped remarks,” October 18, 2007, <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/ci/rs/200years/122772.htm> (accessed February 28, 2010).

⁷⁹ NASA, “Apollo-Soyuz Test Project,” <http://history.nasa.gov/astp/> (accessed February 27, 2010).

the two nations partnered on the Space Shuttle-Mir Joint Program, which resulted in 11 space shuttle flights to the Mir space station.⁸⁰ And in subsequent years the two nations have been among those involved in building and maintaining the International Space Station, which NASA calls “the largest, most complex international cooperative science and engineering program ever attempted.”⁸¹

On the economic front, the United States and Russia have steadily increased their commercial interactions since the end of the Cold War. In 2008, Russia was the United States 23rd largest trading partner with more than \$36 billion in combined exports and imports. U.S. exports to Russia have increased 262 percent while imports from Russia have grown 725 percent since 1994.⁸² Although the import/export ratio is grossly imbalanced, it tilts strongly in Russia’s favor and demonstrates the lucrative value of the American market to Russian business interests.

The opening of the Russian market to American and multinational corporations allows Moscovites to watch American-made films, wear Nike shoes, play American-made video games and eat McDonald’s hamburgers. The soft power payoff from this everyday exposure to American brands is difficult to determine, but the 2009 Nation Brands Index shows that Russians rank U.S. products third highest among 50 countries, compared to a 20th ranking for the U.S. government.⁸³

⁸⁰ NASA, “Shuttle-Mir,” http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/shuttle-mir/index.html (accessed February 27, 2010).

⁸¹ NASA, “International Space Station,” http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/station/structure/elements/partners_agreement.html (accessed February 27, 2010).

⁸² Office of the United States Trade Representative, “Russia profile page,” <http://www.ustr.gov/countries-regions/europe-middle-east/russia-and-eurasia/russia> (accessed February 27, 2010).

⁸³ Simon Anholt, “Nation Brands Index,” 2009, <http://www.simonanholt.com/Research/research-introduction.aspx> (accessed February 27, 2010).

This incongruity in Russian public opinion is also reflected in a Levada Center survey conducted in January 2008 (prior to the so-called “reset” in bilateral relations declared by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in March 2009) in which Russian citizens ranked the United States among the five most “unfriendly and hostile to Russia,” but also one of the top three nations with which Moscow should “cooperate most of all in its foreign policy.”⁸⁴ This may be perceived as both a repudiation and vindication of the potency of American hard power and its impact upon the Russian people but also illustrative of the relationship between hard and soft power, in this case underscoring what Joseph Nye has termed “the paradox of American power” – its tremendous capacity to both exert control over and undermine support for American interests abroad.⁸⁵

Due of valid concerns over the credibility of Russian public opinion data in the years immediately following the end of the Soviet era, it is difficult to measure changes in public opinion over time in order to gauge the influence of American ideas and values.⁸⁶ But a 2005 survey provides evidence that U.S. political ideals have not been co-opted by the Russian people as their own. While 23 percent identified the United States as having the most successful political and social system in the world (second to Germany), only seven percent said that the U.S. is similar to the Russian culture and way of life.⁸⁷ This is reflective most certainly of the significant cultural and linguistic

⁸⁴ Levada Center, “International Security: Russia’s Place in the World,” January 18-21, 2008, http://www.russiavotes.org/security/security_russia_place.php#601 (accessed April 30, 2010).

⁸⁵ See Joseph S. Nye, *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World’s Only Superpower Can’t Go It Alone* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁸⁶ Tolstikova-Mast Yulia and Keyton Joann, “Communicating about Communication: Fostering Development of the Communication Discipline in Russia,” *Bulletin of Russian Communication Association*, Issue 1, 2002, 116-134, http://www.russcomm.ru/eng/rca_biblio/t/tolstikova-mast01_eng.shtml (accessed April 30, 2010).

⁸⁷ Russia Public Opinion Research Center, “Russia – Between East and West,” December 2005, <http://wciom.ru/arkhiv/tematicheskii-arkhiv/item/single/2129.html> (accessed April 30, 2010).

differences between the two nations and the different ways in which citizens affirm and define those attributes most important to them.

The role that American soft power plays in impacting current U.S.-Russian relations is a matter of conjecture, but this historical overview strongly suggests that the allure of American ideals, institutions, and products has in many ways influenced the cultural, economic, and political paths taken by Russia since the end of the Cold War, and has provided its leaders and citizens with important insights into Western thinking and philosophies, all of which was strictly taboo during the Soviet period. The two nations now maintain full diplomatic relations and although the two governments often disagree on some contentious international issues, the United States relies on Russian support and leverage in confronting an array of foreign policy challenges, including ongoing nuclear proliferation threats within Russia and surrounding states, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and rogue regimes in Iran and North Korea.

U.S.-Vietnam Relations

When the United States pulled its last remaining troops out of Vietnam in 1975, it left behind a damaged and embittered nation. Vietnam had suffered extraordinary losses in the war, both in terms of lives and infrastructure. North and South Vietnam were reunified a year after Communist troops captured Saigon and the process of internal healing and rebuilding began.

But the new Vietnam would be rebuilt without U.S. assistance as the two nations ceased all diplomatic and economic relations for the next 15 years. The United States government did not resume foreign aid to Vietnam until 1991.⁸⁸ By that time the Soviet

⁸⁸ Congressional Research Service, "U.S. Assistance to Vietnam," February 11, 2005, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/43984.pdf> (accessed February 28, 2010), 2.

Union had collapsed along with its foreign aid assistance capacity and Vietnam had signed onto the 1991 Paris Peace Agreements stipulating a cease fire in Cambodia, “free and fair elections” in that country, and the complete “withdrawal of foreign forces,” including its own.⁸⁹

The United States provided approximately \$1 million in foreign assistance to Vietnam in 1991 with increases in subsequent years. By 2007, Vietnam was receiving more than \$70 million dollars annually in foreign aid assistance from the U.S. – including monies earmarked for HIV/AIDS prevention and other public health programs, food assistance, counternarcotics, and economic growth programs.⁹⁰ Although many or most of these programs were and continue to be administered by Vietnamese agencies and/or non-governmental organizations operating in the country, a strong case can be made that the soft power value to the United States of these sorts of financial and humanitarian support efforts is considerable.

Longstanding American efforts to resolve the status of thousands of soldiers missing in action (MIA) finally moved forward in 1991 when the Vietnamese government agreed to allow the opening of an MIA office in Hanoi. The two nations began cooperating in joint operations to locate the remains of fallen American servicemen and return them to the U.S., leading to the development of a formal Joint Task Force, which would remain active for more than 10 years in Vietnam and surrounding countries.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Khmer Institute, “Paris Peace Agreement,” October 23, 1991, <http://www.khmerinstitute.org/docs/PPA1991.htm> (accessed February 28, 2010).

⁹⁰ Congressional Research Service, “U.S. Foreign Aid to East and South Asia: Selected Recipients,” <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL31362.pdf> (accessed February 28, 2010), 30.

⁹¹ U.S. Department of Defense, “Vietnam War Accounting History,” http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/vietnamwar/vietnam_history.htm (accessed March 2, 2010).

Since 1991 the two nations have continued to develop and expand a number of cultural and educational exchange programs aimed at enhancing connections between citizens, institutions, organizations, and public and private sector officials. These include the Fulbright Scholars program, international visitors programs, an academic specialists program, and a U.S. speakers program.⁹² Travel between the two countries is now fairly unimpeded with few if any restrictions beyond those imposed on travelers heading to most other countries,⁹³ further serving to increase face-to-face personal connections and enhancing the soft power influences of each country upon the other.

The influence of U.S. and Western ideals of individual freedom and justice are reflected in the Vietnamese Constitution, adopted by the National Assembly in 1992. While the document maintained the Communist Party political structure, it enshrined to all citizens the right to travel, work, and vote, freedom of religion and speech, freedom of the press, and equal protection of the law.⁹⁴

President Clinton announced the full normalization of diplomatic relations with Vietnam in July 1995 and in the following month the two nations took action to upgrade their liaison offices to full embassy status.⁹⁵ In November 2000, Clinton was the first American president to visit the country since the war. During a state dinner in Hanoi he referred to a “new history” in bilateral relations, one served by closer contacts and

⁹² U.S. Embassy, Vietnam, “Educational Exchange,” http://vietnam.usembassy.gov/educational_exchange.html (accessed February 28, 2010).

⁹³ See U.S. Department of State, “Vietnam: Country Specific Information,” http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1060.html (accessed March 2, 2010).

⁹⁴ Socialist Republic of Vietnam, “1992 Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (as amended 25 December 2001),” [http://www.vietnamlaws.com/freelaws/Constitution92\(aa01\).pdf](http://www.vietnamlaws.com/freelaws/Constitution92(aa01).pdf) (accessed April 30, 2010).

⁹⁵ U.S. Department of State, “Background Note: Vietnam,” October 2009, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/4130.htm> (accessed February 28, 2010).

connections. “When we open our doors, we not only let new ideas in, we let the talent and creativity and potential of our people out. That, too, will come to Vietnam,” he said.⁹⁶

Economic relations between the two nations have intensified rapidly over the past two decades. The 2001 Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) is credited with having propelled Vietnam into the top tier of U.S. trade partners, something consumers in both countries witness almost every day. “Bilateral trade between the United States and Vietnam has expanded dramatically, rising from \$2.91 billion in 2002 to \$15.7 billion in 2008.”⁹⁷ The U.S. Department of State calls the BTA “a significant milestone for Vietnam’s economy and for normalization of U.S.-Vietnam relations.”⁹⁸

Bilateral economic relations were further strengthened by the U.S. government’s decision to grant Vietnam unconditional normal trade relations (NTR) status in 2006 and by the U.S.-Vietnam Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA), signed by the presidents of both countries during Vietnamese President H.E Nguyen Minh Triet’s visit to the United States in June 2007. In a newspaper op-ed published days after the signing, Triet lauded the improving U.S.-Vietnamese relationship, alluding to the soft power components affecting the bilateral dynamic: “Goodwill and close cooperation in solving the war legacies have an important role to play in promoting cooperation in other fields. Even on issues where there are differences due to historical background, traditions, culture, customs, and development levels, the two sides have established dialogue and

⁹⁶ William J. Clinton, “Remarks of the President in Toast Remarks at State Dinner,” November 17, 2000, White House Office of Press Secretary, <http://clinton6.nara.gov/2000/11/2000-11-17-remarks-by-the-president-in-toast-remarks-at-state-dinner.html> (accessed March 2, 2010).

⁹⁷ “Background Note: Vietnam.”

⁹⁸ “Background Note: Vietnam.”

cooperation mechanisms to narrow the differences.” Triet called the United States a “key partner” and claimed that “Vietnam’s commitment to multifaceted cooperation with the United States is sincere and steadfast.”⁹⁹ Such unequivocal pronouncements, delivered by a former wartime adversary and Communist Party leader, demonstrated the extent to which the two nations had progressed in rebuilding productive and constructive relations.

Normal diplomatic relations between countries in and of itself is not necessarily considered proof of either nation’s soft power influence upon the other, but there is a growing body of evidence showing that citizens in Vietnam are mindful of and have positive opinions about U.S. soft power. For example, in the Asia Soft Power Survey, conducted in 2008 for the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, Vietnamese respondents ranked American soft power as more influential than either Chinese or South Korean soft power. Of the five Asian nations surveyed, the citizens of Vietnam ranked American soft power highest. In the survey breakdowns, Vietnamese respondents ranked U.S. diplomatic and economic soft power as the second most influential in their country, behind only Japan. Seventy-six percent of Vietnamese respondents told pollsters that “the United States is having a ‘somewhat’ or ‘very positive’ influence in Asia.”¹⁰⁰

How these public opinions relate to and affect current bilateral relations is difficult to measure, but some conclusions about the United States’ influence in shaping Vietnam’s policies can be drawn from the tone and language used by the Vietnamese government and its officials in their communications. For example, the Vietnamese U.S.

⁹⁹ H.E Nguyen Minh Triet, “Vietnam and America: Common Interests and Values,” *Washington Times*, June 25, 2007, A17.

¹⁰⁰ Chicago Council on Global Affairs, “Soft Power in Asia: Results of a 2008 Multinational Survey of Public Opinion,” 2009 edition, http://www.thechicagocouncil.org/UserFiles/File/POS_Topline%20Reports/Asia%20Soft%20Power%202008/Soft%20Power%202008_full%20report.pdf (accessed May 19, 2010).

Embassy website proclaims that “Vietnam attaches great importance to the development of friendship and cooperation with the United States. Past records show clearly that any improvement in US-Vietnam relations has served the interests of both nations and contributed to peace and cooperation in Asia.”¹⁰¹

America has a myriad of interests in Asian political and economic affairs, not least of which is their continued stability and viability, and is therefore inclined to utilize its soft power influence in Vietnam and throughout the region to help achieve them. And the signals being sent from Hanoi indicate that those influences are having an impact in advancing the interests shared by the two countries.

Conclusions

The analysis in this chapter has provided an overview of the recent evolution of U.S. relations with three nations – China, Russia, and Vietnam – that, like Cuba, had minimal cultural, diplomatic, or economic connections with the United States a half century ago. The historical evidence illustrates how American soft power, particularly its cultural and market-based components, has exercised a strong influence over U.S.-Chinese relations over the past 40 years, while diplomatic-based soft power was most effective in influencing both U.S.-Russian and U.S.-Vietnamese relations, particularly over the past 20 years. Different presidents and administrations leveraged soft power in different ways in each of the three cases, producing different outcomes. And not all components of soft power are visible in each case, but this analysis demonstrates that all are not necessary in order to advance bilateral relations. (See Table 3.)

¹⁰¹ Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in the United States, “Vietnam-US Relations,” http://www.vietnamembassy-usa.org/us_vn_relations/ (accessed March 2, 2010).

	U.S.-China	U.S.-Russia	U.S.-Vietnam
Culture Athletic competition Cultural materials Travel	“Ping-pong” diplomacy; Philadelphia Orchestra visit; Other cultural exchange	Liberalized travel rules	Cultural and educational exchange; open travel
Rating	5	2	3
Diplomacy International standing Migration/immigration policy Security policy	Visits by top leaders; cooperation vis-à- vis Soviet Union; energy policy; Korea	Military leadership cooperation; reduction of nuclear weapons arsenal; military reductions	Bilateral MIA recovery efforts; Asia security
Rating	4	5	5
Ideas Educational exchange Intellectual Technological	Scientific accords; technological exchange	Space exploration; educational exchange; technology exchange	
Rating	4	3	
Markets Development aid Remittances Trade policy	Free trade and open markets	Increased trade; American brand proliferation	Foreign aid; BTA; NTR; TIFA
Rating	5	3	4
Values Democracy Freedom of expression Freedom of the press Justice/rule of law		Gore Commission; low public opinion ratings for U.S. politics	Freedom of speech; right to vote; equal protection under law
Rating		3	4

Table 3. Impact of American soft power on U.S. foreign relations (Case studies, 1960-2010).*

*Findings rated on scale of 1-to-5 in which 1 represents low degree of effectiveness and 5 high degree of effectiveness as a foreign policy instrument in advancing bilateral relations in the specific case. Blank cells represent soft power applications in which no significant findings were identified in the analysis.

In general however, the three cases share several significant characteristics. All three are illustrative of a renewed bilateral relationship between two governments guided by distinctly different philosophies and political structures. The governments of China and Vietnam are inspired by Socialist ideals, while the Russian government, in principle an emerging democracy, remains an oligarchy in many respects. Yet in all three cases governments of both countries have been able to overcome their deep differences to initiate and sustain constructive dialogue and interchange on a range of mutual interests.

In all three cases America's soft power appeal appears to have incentivized the other nations to respond favorably to non-political contacts and exchanges. There was "ping-pong diplomacy" with China, concurrent nuclear weapons reduction programs with Russia, and joint POW/MIA activities in Vietnam – all of which rated highly in this analysis, as reflected in Table 3. And in all three cases the soft power exerted by America's economic resources and its commercial appeal afforded the opportunity for intensified political engagement between the two nations, enhancing the prospects for continued and/or future cooperation on matters of interest to the United States. The capacity for markets to effect bilateral relations in a constructive fashion is most evident in the case of U.S.-China, but is also evident in the other two cases as well.

Certainly there are perceptible differences in the levels and scope of engagement with each country and the impact that American soft power played in each of them, but the historical evidence in all three of these cases reveals a pattern in which American soft power in general helped pave the way for commercial and cultural if not political engagement. That engagement helped build trust and respect between nations and often contributed to mutually beneficial gains. This in turn enhanced American appeal (i.e., soft power) abroad, further serving American foreign policy interests.

The lessons learned from these cases will help inform the discussion of U.S.-
Cuban relations in Chapter IV.

Chapter IV

The Prospects for Soft Power in U.S.-Cuba Relations

American soft power has been leveraged effectively over the past 50 years to advance U.S. relations with many nations including former adversaries China, Russia, and Vietnam, as documented in the case study analyses in Chapter III. Yet occasional attempts to utilize soft power to influence U.S.-Cuban relations over the same period have been short lived and ineffective. As a result, the bilateral relationship remains frosty, with little or no diplomatic exchange and seemingly few if any perceptible indications of thawing on the horizon.

The hypothesis underlying this investigation posits that the strategic use of American soft power by itself and in combination with hard power can, in the current geopolitical context, effect U.S.-Cuban relations in a constructive way, furthering U.S. foreign policy objectives in Cuba and elsewhere in Latin America. The analysis in this chapter is structured to determine whether the evidence supports or contradicts the soft power theory in this case.

Testing the hypothesis will necessitate a multi-dimensional analysis examining the probable impacts of the five primary soft power components outlined in Chapter II: 1) culture; 2) diplomacy; 3) ideas; 4) markets; and 5) values, within and upon the relevant stakeholders identified in Chapter I – both under current conditions and under those conditions provoked by the strategic manipulation of specified policies by the United States – to determine the most likely effects upon bilateral relations and U.S. foreign policy goals in Cuba and the region. Identifying a positive correlation between U.S. soft

power in Cuba and enhanced diplomatic relations between the two countries aligned with U.S. foreign policy objectives serves as affirmation of the hypothesis.

Soft Power of American Culture

As outlined in earlier chapters, the United States has a vast repertoire of cultural soft power assets – from arts and literature to music and sports. With little direct U.S. government control or intervention, these assets have historically served as sources of attraction for the U.S., engendering the good will of citizens in foreign countries. But due to the economic embargo imposed by the United States following the Castro-led revolution, citizens in the U.S. and Cuba have had only minimal exposure to the other's cultural components over the past 50 years. Only in recent years have residents in the two countries been allowed to travel to the other on educational and cultural visas, and only in limited numbers under very specific circumstances. Cuban web sites and photographs from the island reveal little if any indication of U.S. cultural penetration. We see no posters of U.S. pop music stars or celebrities, no Harvard-branded tee-shirts and few if any visible signs of American or multi-national corporate brands like Apple, Levis, McDonalds, or Starbucks.

In many ways then, Cuba resembles a cocoon immune to the cultural influences of the United States. While located just 90 miles off U.S. shores, the island retains its own unique cultural traditions and identity, separate from those of the United States, akin to the conditions of a far-off country in the south Pacific.

These conditions present a dilemma for the United States as we examine the ways in which American culture can be useful in enhancing U.S. soft power in Cuba and impacting bilateral relations. As University of Havana social scientist Marta Nuñez has

observed, “We have been influenced by the U.S. culture for centuries and Cuba has also stamped parts of the American culture, but Cubans have also a long history – mainly in the political field – of not admitting U.S. elites to impose their models of society on us, by soft or hard powers.”¹⁰² This sentiment, decrying the deliberate impositions of “models of society” on Cuba, reflects the challenges facing the United States as it considers how best to strategically leverage its soft power in contemporary bilateral relations.

That said, however, there may be evidence indicating that American culture can exert some subtle forms of influence upon individual citizens in Cuban society and may impact social networks in the country, thereby affecting thought leaders and those serving in the central government. Promoting travel from Cuba and increasing athletic competition are two of the policy options that require further analysis in this section.

Travel between the United States and Cuba is highly constrained by restrictions imposed and enforced by the governments of both countries. With Cuba listed by the State Department among a handful of countries considered international sponsors of terrorism, its citizens face heightened scrutiny in obtaining travel visas to the United States.¹⁰³ Cuba’s policy is equally, if not more rigid in this regard. Its government forbids citizens from traveling to the United States without “official authorization” and exit permits are regularly denied.¹⁰⁴ Despite these current circumstances, however, there

¹⁰² Marta Nuñez, e-mail to the author, March 22, 2010.

¹⁰³ See U.S. State Department, “The Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act of 2002,” Section 306, http://travel.state.gov/visa/laws/telegrams/telegrams_1403.html (accessed June 15, 2010).

¹⁰⁴ See Human Rights Watch, “Families Torn Apart: The High Cost of U.S. and Cuban Travel Restrictions,” October 2005, Vol. 17, No. 5 (B), <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/cuba1005.pdf> (accessed May 7, 2010), 2-3.

are strategies by which the U.S. may be able to incite a more robust exchange of travelers, an outcome that would hold great promise for enhancing American soft power in Cuba. Cuban visitors to the U.S. would return home with a unique personal perspective, one that might run counter to that which they have been taught in school, and which they would be expected to share with relatives, peers, and social networks. There is no guarantee of course that all Cuban travelers would be enchanted by all American cultural and social mores (in fact, they might be offended by some) but at least they would have the opportunity to experience some of them first hand and to meet and perhaps converse with Americans, possibly for the first time in their lives, and thereby form their own opinions about the U.S. This alone would seem likely to undermine the impressions of America that most Cuban are prone to form if exposed only to official government information sources, and could over time help reformulate those impressions in a way more sympathetic to the United States, thereby enhancing U.S. soft power on the island.

The challenge for U.S. policymakers, therefore, is to entice the Cuban government to reassess its policies on travel abroad. A vast majority of Cuban citizens favor lifting the current restrictions,¹⁰⁵ but public sentiment has thus far not prodded Havana to act. One observer argues that “there are no laws or clearly written regulations [in Cuba] covering these [travel abroad] processes,”¹⁰⁶ which only complicates the challenge for the United States. Yet there are tremendous economic incentives for the Cubans to open travel channels with the U.S. and it would therefore seem to be in their

¹⁰⁵ “Cuba Public Opinion Survey,” 27.

¹⁰⁶ Haroldo Dilla Alfonso, “The (Non) Right of Cubans to Travel,” *Havana Times*, February 1, 2010, <http://www.havanatimes.org/?p=18972> (accessed May 7, 2010).

best interest to do so.¹⁰⁷ In recent years, Cuba has lifted restrictions limiting visitors from many other Western countries and may be inclined to continue that trend. The United States would serve as a lucrative market for Cuba's burgeoning tourism industry, considering its relative wealth and proximity to the island, so it is reasonable to assume that the Cuban government will consider ways to tap into that market as a means to bolster the economy. For these reasons, lawmakers in Havana might well be prone to liberalize their policies on travel abroad, particularly if the U.S. State Department were to signal its intention to reciprocate.

Such action would likely draw some opposition from U.S. lawmakers and Cuban Diaspora groups opposed to reengagement, but the White House would not necessarily require their support to move forward, so the risks of this strategy are fairly low. Yet while American soft power in Cuba may well be served by an increase in the volume of Cuban travelers to the United States, its impact upon bilateral relations outside of the limited sphere of travel policy would be limited, and there would seem to be little if any direct effect upon other U.S. foreign policy objectives in the region.

Increasing athletic competition is another option that should be considered as a way of effecting bilateral relations through U.S. soft power. Baseball would seem the most ideal sport for this analysis as it is hugely popular in both countries, having been exported to Cuba by the United States prior to the Cuban revolution, and its inherent soft power is evident. "Baseball is more Cuba's national pastime than it is America's," observes Yale professor Roberto González Echevarría, author of a book on the history of

¹⁰⁷ A 2001 report estimates the annual economic impact from U.S. tourists for the Cuban economy at between \$90-315 million. See "The Economic Impact of U.S. Sanctions with Respect to Cuba," 4-21.

baseball in Cuba. “It was considered modern, democratic and American, while the Spaniards had bullfighting, which was [considered] retrograde and barbaric.”¹⁰⁸

The U.S. and Cuba currently engage in competition on the baseball field in two significant tournaments – the multi-national World Baseball Classic, which features professional players and the Baseball World Cup, which features amateur players – but the two countries do not engage in one-on-one competition outside of those events. If such a series of binational games was to be arranged, it would provide a high profile venue for engagement between athletes, organizers and spectators, potentially enhancing the soft power of both countries in the eyes of the other. Athletic competition between nations does not necessarily improve bilateral relations, but in the case of the U.S. and Cuba friendly sport could represent a symbolically important step toward the reestablishment of more formal and substantive diplomatic ties.

An assessment about the potential soft power in Cuba of American literature, motion pictures, music, and works of art is complicated by the fact that their export to Cuba is prohibited under the terms of the economic embargo. So a change in the law, or certainly to its implementation, would be required in order to test their soft power potency vis-à-vis Cuba.¹⁰⁹ Only by assuming that the Obama administration and Congress would push forward with amending or lifting the embargo completely and that

¹⁰⁸Dan Rosenheck, “Cuba’s Pastime: Beating Foreign Competition,” *New York Times*, March 13, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/13/sports/baseball/13cuba.html> (accessed April 2, 2010).

¹⁰⁹ The Free Trade in Ideas Act, sponsored by U.S. Congressman Howard Berman, first passed by the House of Representatives in 1988 and renewed in 1994, removed power from the executive branch to regulate the transfer of information materials, but a 2009 report produced by the Brookings Institution cites that “successive administrations have narrowly interpreted the Berman Act in order to prohibit Americans from creating music, films, and other artistic works with Cubans.” (Brookings Institution, “Cuba: A New Policy of Critical and Constructive Engagement,” April 2009, 8, http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2009/04_cuba.aspx [accessed May 19, 2010]).

the Cuban government would be receptive to allowing the import of American products can the potential capacity of these cultural assets to effect bilateral relations be assessed.

But by no means can it be assumed that the Cuban government would capitulate to U.S. efforts in this regard. The Castro regime has been historically reticent to the idea of allowing Western, particularly U.S. cultural materials to infiltrate the island, and it would be unrealistic to believe that it would alter its strategy without some inducement. That said however, the Cuban government has in recent decades opened itself to outside investment from and commercial interchange with Canada and western European nations as a vital means of economic support, and such contact with other nations is beginning to have an impact inside Cuba. As Latin American scholar William M. LeoGrande observes, “Cubans [are] increasingly interact[ing] with populations abroad, through tourism, family visits and professional cooperation (all of which the government promotes for economic reasons)...The government can continue to try to quell these stirrings, but it cannot eliminate them because they are an unavoidable by-product of the economic concessions to capitalism Cuba has been forced to make.”¹¹⁰

So if American cultural artifacts and intellectual materials were to make their way to the island (even if done so surreptitiously through the black market) one would expect an enthusiastic response, at least from some quarters of Cuban society, if for no other reason than out of a natural curiosity to learn more about U.S. culture, one defined in many ways by a degree of artistic and intellectual freedom antithetical to the Cuban model and one that Cuban citizens have been denied access to for two generations.

Exposing Cuban citizens to American culture via art, books, film, etc., could be a significant step forward for U.S. perception, i.e., soft power, on the “Cuban street.”

¹¹⁰ William M. LeoGrande, “Conclusion: Cuba’s Dilemma, and Ours,” in *Cuba: The Contours of Change*, ed. Susan Kaufman Purcell and David Rothkopf (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), 129.

Granted, Cuban public opinion about America has historically exercised scant influence over the development of policy in the country, but there is credence to the argument that efforts by the United States to prompt changes in Cuban government policies can only be enhanced by cultivating a level of popular support within the greater Cuban society that will provide sufficient cover for the regime to effect change vis-à-vis the United States should it feel compelled to do so. And, has been demonstrated by the impacts of groundswell uprisings in other authoritarian nations in recent years including Ukraine and Iran, governments are often forced to respond and react to popular movements when they are not officially sanctioned and go against the government's dictate.¹¹¹

We must also consider the possibility that exposing Cuban audiences to American culture could backfire by simply reinforcing negative stereotypes of the United States as imperialist, unilateralist, violent, and highly motivated by material wealth and power. There are myriad films, books, and music that could feed into this stereotype, and should the Cuban government choose to exercise strict control over the import market, which is most certainly within its power, it could choose to promote and allow the distribution of only those American cultural materials that promote the negative stereotypes. That in turn would fuel further negative sentiment about the United States amongst Cuban citizens, undercutting our soft power in the country.

Therefore, it becomes evident that calculating the impact of U.S. soft power resulting from the import of cultural materials into Cuba is a context-specific exercise. So long as the Cuban government maintains strict control over the dissemination of such materials, the probability remains high that U.S. soft power and the impacts from it will

¹¹¹ Admittedly however, authoritarian governments often respond to popular uprisings in severe ways, exemplified by the Chinese government's response to student protests in Tiananmen Square in 1989, in which many protest organizers were killed and others were jailed, in effect halting the protest movement for several years.

remain minimal. But if the government in Havana were to relax import restrictions – which would be expected only if officials were to perceive a tangible benefit from the transaction – it is reasonable to conclude that the exposure to U.S. culture would enhance American soft power on the island and could thereby further feed citizen dissatisfaction with current internal social conditions, only increasing pressures on the government to respond – all of which would align with U.S. policy interests.

Soft Power of American Diplomacy

The potential for American diplomacy to serve as a source of U.S. soft power in Cuba is a complex area of inquiry. Because of the closed nature of the Cuban political and social structure, it is difficult for researchers to accurately assess current Cuban public opinion on issues of international affairs, but it can be reasonably assured that due to the heavy hand of government and limited exposure to external information sources, public opinion is apt to be influenced more by official propaganda, which has been and remains virulently anti-U.S., than by individual and/or academic inquiry. Because of this condition, it can be concluded that American foreign policy does not currently serve as a source of soft power for the United States in Cuba; in fact, it would seem to undermine it.

That said, however, it is not outside the realm of possibility that American foreign policies could become sources of U.S. soft power in Cuba moving forward, particularly if the policies were to be calibrated to resonate with Cuban citizens, institutions, and the government. Those U.S. foreign policies with apparent strong potential to influence Cuban audiences are: 1) immigration/migration policy; 2) U.S. military policy, particularly with respect to the future status of the Guantanamo Bay naval base; and 3) policies impacting Latin American regional law enforcement and security.

The United States has proven an alluring destination for thousands of Cuban émigrés who, since the cessation of formal diplomatic relations between the two nations, have attempted to cross the Cuban Straits to reach American shores, where once they touch U.S. soil gain the opportunity to remain in the country and apply for U.S. citizenship after one year under the terms of the United States’ controversial “wet feet, dry feet policy.”¹¹² This policy is seen as a way of trying to undermine the Cuban government by encouraging Cuban citizens to risk their lives on the high seas in an attempt to reach America.

There are actually several avenues by which Cubans can legally (under U.S. law) migrate to the United States via family-based visas, the Cuban-Family Reunification Parole Program, and the Cuban Lottery – in fact, U.S. policy allows up to 20,000 Cubans per year legal entry into the country – but the Cuban government exercises strict control over the flow of citizens out of the country, requiring émigrés to obtain a Cuban exit permit and to pay up to the equivalent of \$800 U.S. per person to leave.¹¹³

Were the United States to revise its Cuban immigration policy in ways that would be perceived as agnostic rather than antagonistic toward the government of Cuba and more consistent with policies affecting émigrés from other countries, U.S. soft power in Cuba would be enhanced, certainly amongst policymakers in Havana who have historically criticized American policies for unfairly punishing them and their government. And if the policy were to be constructed so as to give equal weight to immigration requests based on familial considerations and those based on

¹¹² Congressional Research Service, “Cuba: Issues for the 110th Congress,” January 22, 2007, <http://www.policyarchive.org/handle/10207/bitstreams/3087.pdf> (accessed June 11, 2010).

¹¹³ U.S. Department of State, United States Interests Section, Havana, Cuba, “Immigrant Visas,” http://havana.usint.gov/immigrant_visas.html (accessed April 9, 2010).

skill/employment opportunities, there is a high probability that the U.S. business community would be strongly in support.

Passing an immigration bill in the current political climate is a significant challenge for the Obama Administration, but the president has once again broached the topic in recent months, hoping to inspire Congress to make the issue a priority.¹¹⁴ Yet many Republican lawmakers continue to press the administration on border security, arguing that it must take precedence over immigration reform. If the administration wants an immigration bill, it may have to reach agreement on border security first, pacifying Republicans and perhaps winning enough bipartisan support to get a bill passed.

Providing more conventional and streamlined ways for Cuban workers and relatives to come to America would also resonate with Cuban citizens, although the Cuban government remains the ultimate gatekeeper in determining how many and which of its citizens are allowed to leave the country. There would be some domestic opposition to such a policy shift within the United States, primarily from anti-immigrant and possibly from pro-labor lawmakers and members of the Cuban Diaspora who remain adamant in their belief that the U.S. must maintain its hard-line political strategy against Havana. But if the opposition was to be overcome and such an immigration policy shift implemented by the Obama administration, there is a high probability that Cuban citizens and officials would respond favorably, enhancing American soft power on the island and clearing a significant hurdle blocking the resumption of normalized relations. A policy shift in this regard would not come without risks, but the risks would be relatively low and the potential benefits fairly high for the United States.

¹¹⁴ Peter Baker, "Obama Urges Fix to 'Broken' Immigration System," *New York Times*, July 1, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/02/us/politics/02obama.html> (accessed July 3, 2010).

Whether or not more normalized immigration policies would serve the foreign policy interests of the U.S. is another question. One could argue that a policy more agreeable to the Cuban government would undermine the United States' long-term interests of democratic reform on the island. But it would seem that the merits of this policy shift – primarily the potential for re-opening diplomatic channels between the two countries – outweigh the potential downside that it would serve as a means for sustaining the Communist political structure in Cuba.

Resolving the long-term status of the U.S. Naval Base in Guantanamo Bay, the only such U.S. military installation located in a nation with whom we have no formal diplomatic relations, is another matter that could provide the United States with significant soft power dividends. The base is currently used to hold international terrorism suspects, but was ordered closed within one year by President Obama in January 2009. Although the deadline has passed, the president is still promising to remove the detainees and shut the prison sometime in 2010.¹¹⁵

The Navy contends that the base is “is essential to Maritime Strategy and serves as a cornerstone of U.S. military operations in the U.S. 4th Fleet Area of Responsibility,”¹¹⁶ while the Latin American scholar LeoGrande argues that the base “is of little security value to the United States but considerable symbolic importance to Cuba.”¹¹⁷ No matter the strategic value of the base for the United States, it would seem

¹¹⁵ Anne E. Kornblut, “Obama admits Guantanamo won’t close by Jan. deadline,” *Washington Post*, November 18, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/11/18/AR2009111800571.html> (accessed May 9, 2010).

¹¹⁶ U.S. Navy, “Naval Station Guantanamo Bay,” <http://www.cnmc.navy.mil/guantanamo/index.htm> (accessed May 9, 2010).

¹¹⁷ William M. LeoGrande, “Cuba’s Future Relations with the United States,” in *Looking Forward: Comparative Perspectives on Cuba’s Transition*, ed. Marifeli Pérez-Stable (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 291.

fairly certain that its closure would elicit a positive response from both the Cuban government and the Cuban people and would serve as a source of good will (i.e., soft power) for the United States. Bilateral relations would be strengthened as a result, although it remains to be determined if such a move would further or undermine U.S. foreign policy objectives. That outcome is dependant on whether or not the base closure proves detrimental to global efforts to combat international terrorism.

It is worth exploring whether policies adopted by the United States in response to regional law enforcement and security challenges in the Caribbean could prove to be a source of soft power for the U.S. in Cuba. With 11 million citizens, Cuba is the most populous nation in the Caribbean and is certainly interested in maintaining order and security in the region. The United States, as a permanent member of the Organization of American States (OAS), is actively engaged in the Organization's objectives of promoting regional "democracy, human rights, security and development."¹¹⁸ Cuba, however, although readmitted as a member of the organization in 2009, has refused to return, citing in an official communiqué the organization's "active role in Washington's policy of hostility against Cuba."¹¹⁹ So it is reasonable to conclude that the United States' current policies as affected through the OAS does not enhance America soft power in Cuba, nor serve as a means by which to improve bilateral relations.

However, there may be other means outside of its role as a member of OAS in which the United States could promote Caribbean security and stability while also gaining favor amongst the Cubans. It could, for instance, provide financial and other means of support for indigenous regionally-based efforts to fight drug and weapon

¹¹⁸ Organization of American States, "What We Do," http://www.oas.org/en/about/what_we_do.asp (accessed June 10, 2010).

¹¹⁹ Granma, "Declaration of the Revolutionary Government," June 8, 2009, <http://www.granma.cu/ingles/2009/junio/lun8/Declaration.html> (accessed June 10, 2010).

trafficking, maintaining a respectful distance from actual operational elements while showing its commitment to helping governments in the region confront these problems.

Such a disciplined and targeted approach by the United States would likely be supported, or at least not opposed, by the citizens and government of Cuba, who like their neighbors wish to live in a peaceful and stable region. It can also be surmised that American citizens, business interests, and lawmakers would also support efforts in this regard. And assuming that the U.S. is perceived in this context as a benevolent neighbor by assisting governments and institutions in the Caribbean in the development of new and improved networks for regional security and cooperation, America's soft power in Cuba would be enhanced. This in and of itself would not necessarily effect bilateral relations, but there is a probability that it would serve to bolster the mutual respect and trust necessary to begin consideration of the resumption of more normal diplomatic relations, all the while furthering key U.S. policy objectives of regional security and stability.

Soft Power of American Ideas

In many respects, America's reputation for ingenuity and innovation is intrinsically tied to its free markets and values, but in this analysis the soft power of American ideas in Cuba is examined separate from that of U.S. markets and values.

Because of the closed nature of Cuba's social structure and the ongoing impact of the U.S. economic embargo, there are limited means by which organic American ideas can be transmitted to and through Cuban society. Primary among these are: 1) through word of mouth from friends or relatives; 2) through information gleaned via the Internet; 3) via the influences exerted by third-party channels and sources. Certainly those Cuban citizens with relatives in the United States are more apt to learn about the intellectual and

technological advancements taking place here and would therefore be more affected by and sympathetic to their effects. But those Cubans who do not have this level of second-hand exposure to the U.S. most likely have little or no understanding of and affinity for American ideas. In fact, their impressions may be more influenced by Cuban government propaganda critical of American enterprise than from the few credible information sources they may have access to.

That said, there are a plethora of third-party or “backdoor” channels through which American ideas can infiltrate Cuban society and enforce positive impressions about the United States. These include: 1) personal contact with foreign visitors from other countries to Cuba; 2) exposure to certain consumer products imported via other nations; and 3) through information and products procured through the black market. Cuban citizens may, for instance, learn about Google’s newest web tool or the latest developments in wind energy development in the U.S. during a conversation with a French tourist in Havana or by reading a copy of the *New York Times* that was sneaked into the country. In cases such as these, the potency of American soft power is potentially strong, not only because of the intrinsic value of the ideas themselves, but also because of the seductive impact of having gained access to information outside of Cuban government control.

There is also reason to believe that amongst Cuban intelligents and policymakers – those with greater access to credible news and information (from both inside and outside the country) and therefore more prone to comprehend the value of the U.S. political and social structure that encourages and nurtures the generation of new ideas – there is potential soft power benefit for the United States. This sub-set of the Cuban population, although small in number, exerts a significant influence over the making of

policy in Cuba, and even though they are considered government loyalists in most cases, the fact that they are exposed to American ideas at all makes them more apt to comprehend and be attracted to them. Therefore, this is a lucrative audience from the U.S. perspective for the resonance of its soft power.

It is difficult, however, to determine the extent to which this soft power dynamic is playing itself out in modern-day Cuba. As with most authoritarian states, party loyalists are rewarded and critics are marginalized, so if individuals in positions of prominence are impacted by and sympathetic to outside influences they are incented to keep their feelings to themselves, thereby reducing any contagion effect. Certainly there are occasions in which American ideas are promulgated for brief periods on Cuban-originated websites, social media sites, and chat rooms, but those that appear openly hostile to the Cuban government and which threaten the status quo are most certainly censored and removed, diminishing their impact upon larger numbers of Cuban citizens.

In a very broad but real sense, the ongoing American economic embargo would seem to greatly inhibit the soft power of American ideas in Cuba by eliminating the opportunity for Cuban citizens to purchase or interact with any form of U.S. consumer product. Without exposure to and familiarity with iPhones or Xbox systems, Cuban consumers are incapable of developing an appreciation for the technological innovation that informed their design. But if the economic embargo were to be lifted or lessened, it is easy to see how the infiltration of American-made products into the country would begin to have an impact upon Cuban citizens and could prove to be a valuable source of soft power for the United States.

Another means by which U.S. ideas could serve as a valuable source of soft power in Cuba is through the proliferation of bilateral educational exchange programs.

After all, these programs serve as a conduit for the exchange of ideas between academics and scholars of both countries. Currently there are limited bilateral educational exchange programs, and therefore their capacity to influence Cuban opinion about the U.S. is quite negligible. But through the expansion of these programs, the United States could open new avenues for significant academic collaboration, allowing scholars opportunities to develop professional and personal relationships and networks, thereby forming potentially highly constructive channels of communication between important and influential citizens of the two countries. Such a policy would be relatively simple to implement and could provide tremendous diplomatic benefits for the United States, which has continued to strictly limit these types of exchanges since the early 1960s.

How these programs would be received and responded to by various stakeholders in the U.S. is a legitimate question. It is reasonable to surmise that at least some of the academic scholarship produced by such collaboration would be quite valuable to foreign relations scholars and students and would also elicit interest from other Americans concerned with and interested in acquiring current perspectives on Cuban politics, culture, and social life. (There is also a probability of course, that some of the scholarship could be quite controversial and raise the ire of U.S. government officials.) Such knowledge would also undoubtedly be of value to domestic lobbying organizations, issue advocacy groups, and policymakers, many of whom admittedly lack updated information and data gleaned from credible sources inside Cuba. Cuban-American Diaspora groups in the United States would also be prone to support this level of bilateral exchange in hopes of bridging divides between the two countries and possibly prodding the two governments closer toward restoring diplomatic relations.

How these exchanges and the scholarship produced would affect U.S. foreign policy is an open question, depending on their content and quality, but it is reasonable to conclude that any accurate and detailed information about Cuban society and governance gleaned through these efforts would be of benefit to U.S. policymakers. Also, the case study analyses of U.S.-China and U.S.-Vietnam relations in Chapter III provides further evidence to support the idea that small-scale collaborative efforts can help effect a thaw in bilateral relations by building the trust and mutual respect necessary to develop more substantive and constructive diplomatic relations later on.

Soft Power of American Markets

In many ways the expressions “the land of opportunity” and “the American dream” are reflective of the magnetic pull that the U.S. free market system exerts on citizens in other countries. Millions are drawn to its shores every year, and those who stay – either legally or illegally – more often than not become productive members of the workforce.¹²⁰ The evidence suggests that Cubans, like many others, are drawn to the United States for reasons of economic opportunity. A 2004 poll of Cuban-Americans, 88 percent of whom were born in Cuba, found that one in four believe that economic reasons are the primary motivation inspiring Cubans to come to America while another 25 percent believe that economic reasons are equally as important as the desire for freedom.¹²¹ And reliable statistics confirm that Cubans who immigrate to the United

¹²⁰ A 2007 White House report indicates that foreign-born workers account for 15 percent of the American labor force, and contribute more in taxes than they receive in public services. See, White House, Counsel of Economic Advisors, “Immigration’s Economic Impact,” June 20, 2007, http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/cea/cea_immigration_062007.html (accessed April 10, 2010).

¹²¹ Institute for Public Opinion Research, Florida International University, “Cuba Policy Study VII,” February, March 2004, <http://www.fiu.edu/orgs/ipor/cuba7/index.html> (accessed April 9, 2010).

States succeed economically – with higher incomes and home ownership rates and lower poverty rates than émigrés from other Latin American countries.¹²² Although only limited numbers of Cuban citizens attempt to leave their country each year, the evidence suggests that in a general sense the prospects of greater employment options, higher wages, and individual initiative in the U.S. prove alluring to the Cuban people and therefore serve as a source of soft power for the United States.

Aside from these general impressions, there may be other more specific ways in which U.S. market forces can constitute potent sources of soft power within Cuba, akin to their capacity to impact bilateral relations with former adversaries China, Russia and Vietnam, as discussed in Chapter III. Assessing their potential value in affecting U.S.-Cuban relations requires careful analysis that takes into account both the history of bilateral economic relations and current U.S. and Cuban interests.

U.S. development aid to Cuba has vacillated in recent years – increasing from less than \$10 million in FY2005 to more than \$30 million in FY2008, with an allocation of approximately \$20 million in FY2011.¹²³ The budget is much smaller than U.S. assistance packages for many other developing nations, and its purpose is quite targeted:

U.S. assistance, through the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), is designed to enhance the efforts of Cubans who advocate a more open society and are working peacefully to create democratic change in a country where they can freely elect their government. Accordingly, Department of State and USAID assistance aims to help Cubans create space for dialogue about democratic change and reconciliation and create a process guided by the Inter-American Democratic Charter that leads to a democratic Cuba being reintegrated

¹²² See Pew Hispanic Center, “Cubans in the United States: Fact Sheet,” August 25, 2006, <http://pewhispanic.org/files/factsheets/23.pdf> (accessed April 9, 2010).

¹²³ U.S. Agency for International Development, “Latin American and the Caribbean, Cuba Overview,” http://www.usaid.gov/locations/latin_america_caribbean/country/cuba/ (accessed March 29, 2009).

with the Inter-American community. USAID will provide support and materials to civil society and democracy activists to enable them to build their capacity to articulate their desire for democratic change.¹²⁴

Before Castro gained power in Havana, the United States was heavily invested in Cuba, both in the public and private sectors. And it is fairly certain that U.S. economic assistance and private investment would increase dramatically if there were to be effective reform within the Cuban government. But in lieu of that possibility, the examination below will focus on three possible scenarios in which the United States could under current circumstances attempt to leverage its market soft power to affect a thaw in bilateral relations: 1) increased humanitarian aid; 2) open trade channels; and 3) increased remittances.

Increased Humanitarian Aid

Under the first scenario, the United States would consider increasing the amounts of direct humanitarian assistance to the island, consistent with or even greater than assistance packages granted to other developing countries. The challenge would lie in the effective implementation of such a plan. Without American officials on the ground, there are increased risks that monies would be diverted to unintended purposes and would be siphoned off by corrupt government officials. These risks could be mitigated, however, by working with trusted international partners and other nations with a presence in Cuba and who have constructive relations with the Cuban government.

How such increased amounts of aid dollars would be received by the Cuban people and their government is difficult to calculate. Because the dollars would be funneled through other institutional partners and NGOs there would be few if any visible

¹²⁴ U.S. Department of State, “Congressional Budget Justification: Foreign Operations, Fiscal Year 2009,” <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/budget/cbj2009/101368.pdf> (accessed March 28, 2010), 633.

signs of U.S. involvement. That would most likely satisfy the wishes of Cuban government officials but would also reduce the potential of bolstering U.S. soft power amongst the populace. And because the government maintains such strict control over information flow, including Internet access, there is little probability that the majority of Cuban people would learn the true source of the assistance dollars.

Opening Trade Channels

A second scenario in which U.S. market power could be harnessed in Cuba involves opening trade channels to allow Cubans access to U.S. products and vice versa. Such action would most certainly entail political finesse by the Obama administration and would raise the ire of many anti-Castro groups in the United States and abroad. But if successful, the administration would provide a substantive avenue for reengagement with citizens, businesses, and government officials in Cuba, touching the many layers of Cuban society required to maximize the effect of U.S. soft power.

As discussed in Chapter I, renewing economic ties with Havana would most likely be applauded by many corporate interests in the United States, but other stakeholders in the bilateral relationship, particularly those private sector firms whose assets were seized by the Castro regime in the years immediately following the revolution, would vehemently oppose such a move and would likely fuel a prolonged and heated debate on the topic within the U.S. That in turn could further erode the domestic support necessary to effect the policy change. However, by gaining access to imported Cuban citrus, rum, sugar, tobacco, and other products for the first time in a half century, many Americans would be inclined to gain a new appreciation for Cuban culture, thereby boosting Cuban soft power in the United States. The positive public sentiment

engendered amongst American audiences would most likely serve to boost support for further bilateral cooperation and could, via the influence of popular opinion, help steer U.S. policy in that direction.

Opening the Cuban market to U.S. goods would seemingly serve to bolster American soft power on the island. Although relatively few Cubans have the financial means to afford some of the higher-priced American-made products, their very presence in Cuban stores and throughout other layers of Cuban society would provide citizens with exposure to tangible commodities from the United States, perhaps for the first time in their lives. The effect of this could be quite powerful in an isolated nation in which citizens have had little or no exposure to Americans and American products for two generations. And while not every imported product or product line would elicit positive reactions from Cuban consumers, it is reasonable to conclude that in general even limited trade between the two countries would at least moderately engender feelings of good will amongst many Cubans toward the United States.

How American economic soft power would further U.S. foreign policy goals on the island is another consideration. While enhanced economic interchange does not in and of itself push the Cuban government any closer to democratization, it would introduce a variant of Western-style capitalism into the socialist state while also enhancing the prospect of additional foreign direct investment from the United States. Limited bilateral trade links by themselves will not necessarily fast forward a transition to a full market economy in Cuba, but they will help advance the process by way of forcing the Cuban government to further recognize and respond to those free market pressures that define and impact the global economy. Latin American scholar Manuel Pastor Jr. reasons that “this sort of approach could find some support among mid-level leaders in

Cuba, many of whom are frustrated by current government policy, and could serve as the basis for a peaceful transition.”¹²⁵ By influencing mid-level and/or upper-level government leaders, U.S. foreign policy interests would be served.

And motivated by self-interest to closely monitor trade agreements, representatives from both countries would work together in both bilateral and international settings, establishing more and higher functioning lines of communications between the two nations. The cooperative spirit that could result from this joint venue may help lay the groundwork for additional bilateral cooperation between the two nations – in areas like border protection and in anti-terrorism and anti-drug efforts – all of which are important priorities for U.S. foreign policy. Of course there is also the potential that the two nations could spar over trade rules and regulations, fueling tensions and creating new animosities, but the disputes would most likely be heard within the context of the World Trade Organization and other international institutions, lessening the potential for protracted conflicts.

Increased Remittances

Another means by which to bolster U.S. economic soft power in Cuba is through remittances sent by Cuban émigrés in the United States to their families on the island. New rules that took effect in September 2009 lifted the cap on the amount and frequency of remittances sent by Cuban-Americans to family members in Cuba.¹²⁶ These policy

¹²⁵ Manuel Pastor Jr., “Cuba’s Potential as a Market Economy,” in *Cuba: The Contours of Change*, ed. Susan Kaufman Purcell and David Rothkopf (Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), 51.

¹²⁶ U.S. Department of the Treasury, “Fact Sheet: Treasury Amends Cuban Assets Control Regulations to Implement the President’s Initiative on Family Visits, Remittances, and Telecommunications,” September 3, 2009, <http://www.treas.gov/press/releases/tg273.htm> (accessed March 29, 2010).

changes are expected to increase the aggregate remittances from current annual totals, which range from between \$400 million to \$1 billion.¹²⁷ It is reasonable to surmise that increased remittances from Cuban-Americans will engender positive responses from beneficiaries and others within their close social networks, serving to enhance U.S. soft power on the island.

Although the remittances directly benefit their recipients, they may also indirectly benefit the Cuban government financially through the imposition of taxes and other revenue transfers. An argument could therefore be made that unlimited remittances will undercut U.S. foreign policy objectives of regime change on the island by propping up the Cuban economy, thereby reducing internal pressures on the government and sustaining its hold on power. This is a legitimate critique that would seem to neutralize the soft power impact of higher remittances.

Soft Power of American Values

Accurately gauging Cuban opinion about American political ideals and values is a difficult exercise. Few credible polling firms conduct opinion research in Cuba and those that do are limited by strict government controls. But the results from some recent polls can help inform this analysis of the soft power of American values and domestic policies within Cuban society.

A public opinion survey conducted by the International Republican Institute (IRI) in the summer of 2009 found that Cuban citizens were growing more and more concerned about their personal economic prospects. More than 85 percent of those surveyed indicated that if allowed the opportunity to change from the nation's current economic

¹²⁷ U.S. Government Accountability Office, "Economic Sanctions: Agencies Face Competing Priorities in Enforcing the U.S. Embargo on Cuba," GAO-08-80, November 30, 2007, 34.

system to a new market-oriented system, they would do so. More than 20 percent told pollsters that changing the current political system would improve the nation's economy – the most popular response to the question. When asked how they would vote if given the opportunity to change the current political structure to a democratic system “with multi-party elections, freedom of speech and freedom of expression,” more than 75 percent of those polled indicated they were in favor, up from 61.5 percent in April 2008.¹²⁸

While these data do not specifically measure how Cubans respond to American values per se, it does provide relevant insight into how contemporary Cubans feel about certain ideals – specifically democratic political values, freedom of speech, freedom of expression, and a free market economy – that are endemic to the United States and other Western nations. Most certainly Cuban citizens would be expected to express disapproval with some specific U.S. policies – the lack of universal health care access for example – but the polling data supports the contention that in general Cuban citizens harbor positive feelings about many of the basic rights and freedoms that most Americans also value highly. Yet it remains difficult to measure the degree to which Cuban citizens associate those freedoms that they long for with the United States. After all, access to information about the United States and the rest of the world is severely restricted on the island; while 34 percent of Cuban citizens report having an email account, only 8.6 percent report having both email and Internet access.¹²⁹ So we cannot necessarily deduce that their endorsement of economic, political, and social freedoms necessarily imply their

¹²⁸ “Cuba Public Opinion Survey,” 16-19.

¹²⁹ “Cuba Public Opinion Survey,” 33.

admiration for America. Therefore, it becomes difficult to calculate the specific effect of U.S. soft power in this regard.

That said, it is reasonable to conclude that Cuban elites, including government officials, who are privy to current and accurate information from outside the country, are able to make the connection between economic, political, and social freedoms with the United States and the West. (We can speculate that that is one motivation behind the Cuban government's strict control over information access by the general public.) This is an important point to consider due to the current political conditions in Cuba in which only those few Cuban citizens – primarily upper-level government officials – with access to information exercise influence over public policy. So, if sufficient numbers of mid- and upper-level government officials who do have access to information are affected by U.S. soft power vis-à-vis U.S. domestic policies and values, there exists the possibility that their influence upon Cuban policy decisions could align with U.S. interests. However, we must also consider that those in power in Cuba have a strong incentive to maintain power and would therefore be disinclined to change the political structure in any significant way, negating any significant positive influence of U.S. soft power upon their policy decisions and, therefore, upon U.S. foreign policy interests.

Most certainly then, a primary objective for U.S. policy in Cuba should be the development of an open society in which a larger percentage of Cuban citizens would have greater access to information from outside the country. There are four primary mechanisms by which the United States could seek to accomplish this objective: 1) through increased direct targeted assistance; 2) via the efforts of other nations, international institutions and non-government organizations (NGOs) that maintain good

relations with the Cuban government; 3) through the work of private broadband providers on the island; and 4) via the seeding of bilateral journalist exchange programs.

Increased Direct Targeted Assistance

Directing U.S. foreign aid monies to increase broadband access in Cuba would be a challenging proposition. The Cuban government would be highly reluctant to accede to such a plan although it might be incented to allow limited improvements in broadband access – in public libraries for instance – should the program include some benefits for the government, such as hardware or software upgrades and/or increased high-speed Internet capacities for federal agencies, for instance.

Efforts Initiated by Other Nations

Actions initiated by other countries, international institutions, and NGOs could also further the development of an open society in Cuba without the direct hand of the United States. This would seemingly be a more realistic policy preference for the U.S., given Havana's outright hostility to the American government. Other nations would seem to have legitimate, politically palatable motivations for wanting to increase broadband access on the island. Latin American allies and neighbors, for instance, may wish to enhance communication channels between relatives and business partners, for example. NGOs working in Cuba would also benefit by expanded broadband access and could work within existing network structures to assist in those efforts.

Private Broadband Providers

The United States government could support the efforts of private broadband providers to enter the Cuban market. Once again, the Cuban government would be prone to oppose such ventures given the potential threat of expanded information access to undermine its authority in the country, but it might be enticed into allowing limited broadband access for business owners and everyday citizens in exchange for higher tax revenues and/or improved Internet services for government officials and agencies.

Journalist Exchange Programs

Finally, the formation of journalist exchange programs – either on a bilateral or multi-lateral basis – holds great potential for assisting in the development of an open society in Cuba. In the sharing of ideas and best practices, Western journalists would help lay the groundwork for a free and flourishing media in Cuba, which would align with U.S. interests. Although there are currently very few avenues for uncensored reporting on the island, a robust and viable journalist exchange program would produce a cadre of capable journalists available for duty if and when additional avenues are made available.

In this chapter, I have analyzed how the five components of U.S. soft power could affect U.S.-Cuban relations in current-day geopolitical circumstances. The most salient findings from this analysis will be identified and the implications of this research on U.S. foreign policy moving forward will be discussed further in Chapter V.

Chapter V

Findings and Implications

The analysis of American soft power and U.S.-Cuban relations developed in the preceding chapters provides valuable insight into an unusual bilateral relationship, and produced an abundance of provocative findings that inform several important conclusions of interest to citizens, political scientists, and policymakers in both countries. The findings are applicable to both current and future international relations strategy and are not exclusive to U.S.-Cuban relations, as this study demonstrated the capacity of soft power, redefined for the 21st-century during the course of this investigation, as an international relations instrument useful across a multitude of cases and contexts.

Key Findings

This research examined whether or not and how specific changes in United States foreign policy strategies vis-à-vis Cuba can enhance U.S. soft power in Cuba and improve bilateral relations without undermining, if not advancing, longer-term U.S. foreign policy objectives.

The analysis elicited several general findings relative to contemporary U.S.-Cuban relations: 1) with its current foreign policy strategic framework, U.S. soft power in Cuba is minimal; 2) by effecting certain low-cost, low-risk changes to foreign policy strategy, U.S. soft power in Cuba would be enhanced; 3) enhanced U.S. soft power in Cuba would advance bilateral relations in several specific areas; and 4) enhanced U.S.

soft power in Cuba would further U.S. foreign policy objectives in Cuba and throughout the region.

Under current conditions U.S. soft power in Cuba is minimal for multiple reasons, not the least of which is the extraordinary control over information access and public opinion yielded by the authoritarian government apparatus in Havana. Cuban citizens are in many ways shielded from outside influences, particularly those exerted by and from the United States. But the policies promulgated by the U.S. government also contribute to the lack of American soft power in Cuba. Its longstanding resistance to diplomatic and economic interaction with the Castro government retards the development of significant soft power gains for the United States. But the analysis demonstrated how calculated adjustments to U.S. foreign policy strategy – some of which would seem to be relatively complex and politically difficult, and others of which would be relatively simple and straightforward to implement – could enhance U.S. soft power in Cuba even without the support or acquiescence of the Cuban government.

Of all the potential components of U.S. soft power examined in this study, four demonstrated the greatest potential to both advance U.S.-Cuban relations and further other U.S. foreign policy objectives: 1) economic interchange; 2) educational exchange programs; 3) American values and ideals; and 4) American foreign policies relating specifically to migration and immigration. These findings are interpreted through the lens of an expanded soft power theory and are reliant upon the implementation of specified revisions to U.S. foreign policy strategy. (See Table 4.)

U.S. soft power primary and secondary components	Current for. pol. strategy	Altered for. pol. strategy	Bilateral relations Risks/Benefits	Impact upon U.S. foreign policy objectives
CULTURE				
Athletic competition	2	3-4	Low/Low	Neutral
Cultural materials	1	2-3	Medium/Med.	Neutral
Travel regulations	1	2-3	Low/Low	Indirect positive
DIPLOMACY				
Guantanamo Bay	0	5	Med-high/High	Unknown
Regional security	0	3	Medium	Positive
Migration/immigration	0	5	Medium/High	Direct positive
IDEAS				
Educational exchange	1	5	Low/High	Direct positive
Intellectual	0	3	High/Medium	Indirect positive
Technological	1	4	Medium/Med.	Indirect positive
MARKETS				
Development aid	1	2	Low/Low	Neutral
Remittances	2	2	Low/Low	Neutral
Trade policy	0	5	Medium/High	Direct positive
VALUES				
Democracy	3	3-4	Low/High	Direct positive
Freedom of expression	2	3-4	Low/High	Indirect positive
Freedom of the press	1	3-4	Low/High	Indirect positive
Justice/rule of law	1	3-4	Low/High	Direct positive

Table 4. Findings regarding impacts of U.S. soft power on U.S.-Cuban relations.

The table above presents the findings of this investigation in a condensed fashion, using a 1-to-5 rating scale that places a numeric value on the capacity of U.S. soft power in Cuba under current conditions and under conditions produced by specified alterations to U.S. public policies. The perceived risks and potential benefits to the United States of leveraging each of the identified soft power sub-components to advance bilateral relations is rated on a scale of low-to-high. The potential impact of each sub-component to advance U.S. foreign policy objectives is evaluated on a negative-to-positive scale, and, when relevant, appraised on its precision (direct or indirect) as a foreign policy resource for the United States. The most valuable sources of U.S. soft power are those

found to possess low risk and high potential to advance bilateral relations, while also having a direct and positive impact upon U.S. foreign policy objectives. The findings relative to each soft power sub-component examined in this study are explained in detail below, following a discussion of the viability of the expanded soft power theory in current-day international relations.

A New Soft Power Theory

Professor Joseph Nye's original theory of soft power, devised in the late 1980s, remains an important and relevant doctrine to advance the understanding of international power systems and relations between nations. During the course of this investigation, it became evident that the theory as defined by Nye is too narrowly constructed for current-day international relations, and was expanded and refined to include five primary components: 1) culture; 2) diplomacy; 3) ideas; 4) markets; and 5) values. The inclusion of markets as an element of contemporary soft power theory may be a controversial one – considering that many wrenches in a nation's economic toolbox are coercive in both their intent and effect – but the evidence supports the notion that others can and do serve as a means of attraction and seduction, if utilized appropriately, and should be considered as sources of national soft power on the global stage in the 21st-century.

The evolution of the theory of soft power reflects the changing nature of our world and its dynamic political power structures, and is necessary to sustain its relevancy in contemporary international relations scholarship.

Strongest Sources of U.S. Soft Power in Cuba

The analysis revealed that trade policy represents a potentially lucrative method by which to significantly enhance U.S. soft power in Cuba and improve relations between the two countries. Under current conditions relative to the effects of the U.S. economic embargo, the soft power of American markets is severely constricted; citizen consumers in Cuba are all but denied access to any U.S. goods and services. A more liberalized trade policy would alter this dynamic tremendously, exposing Cuban citizens to American consumer products and vice versa, serving to enhance the soft power of each country in the eyes and minds of citizen consumers in the other. Also, the interchange between agents of the private and public sectors from both countries would likely foster a sense of good will and trust between critical elements of civil society, furthering bilateral relations and serving larger U.S. foreign policy objectives to expand free market enterprise on the island. Although there are some associated risks with this change in American policy, specifically an anticipated backlash from some U.S. and multi-national corporate interests, the potential benefits are high and the impact upon U.S. foreign policy objectives would be direct and positive.

This analysis also demonstrated the tremendous soft power value of educational exchange programs. The evidence suggests that the risks for such exchange would be low and the potentially payoffs could be quite high. Universities and think tanks in both nations would be inclined to participate (or not) based on their own interests without requiring or necessarily prompting the direct involvement of either government. (Academics would argue that government involvement would equate to interference and would therefore be inclined not to participate under such circumstances.) But the scholar-to-scholar academic dialogue and interchange that would result from educational

exchange and cooperation would serve as a bridge between the two cultures and could create myriad opportunities for the development of important scholarship of benefit to academics and students, issue advocates, and policymakers. The research produced by these cooperative ventures would likely serve to clarify important policy issues of interest to both countries, furthering mutual understanding, thereby serving to enhance prospects for bilateral relations. The analysis revealed no identifiable downsides for U.S. foreign policy in the development of educational exchange; in fact, the evidence suggests that our policy objectives in the region can only be strengthened by greater understanding of those issues that jointly affect the U.S. and Cuba.

The analysis also demonstrated the potentially robust soft power of American ideals and values in Cuba via the development of a more open society on the island. The study brought forth several compelling reasons why that element is so critical to maximize the impact of U.S. soft power. Four options to incite the development of an open society in Cuba were identified and explored in Chapter IV, and two of them – targeted assistance facilitated through other nations, international organizations and NGOs; and the development of journalist exchange programs – demonstrated a strong potential for increasing broadband Internet and other forms of communication and information access on the island, thereby increasing American soft power and its influence upon Cuban citizens and policymakers. U.S. foreign policy objectives would be greatly served by the development of a more open society in Cuba, and the prospects for bilateral relations would be strengthened by a Cuban government that would be compelled by its own self interest to respond to citizen pressure incited by increased access to credible information and the enhanced transparency that would result. Once

again, the risks of such a strategy for the United States are low and the potential payoffs are quite high.

And finally, the potential for certain American foreign policies to enhance U.S. soft power in Cuba is quite high, according to this analysis. Under current conditions, American diplomacy and its foreign policies are filtered through the lens of the Cuban government, thereby undercutting their potential soft power to influence most Cuban citizens and to positively effect bilateral relations. But the analysis demonstrated that changes in American migration and immigration policies could significantly bolster U.S. soft power within Cuba and also positively impact U.S. foreign policy objectives.

U.S. immigration policy has been and remains an issue of contention among U.S. citizens and policymakers, but the evidence in this analysis shows that it harbors strong potential to serve as a source of American soft power in Cuba and to positively impact U.S.-Cuban relations moving forward. An immigration policy that aligns the treatment of Cuban émigrés with that of émigrés from other countries would bolster U.S. soft power in Cuba by demonstrating the United States' commitment to a consistent set of rules absent the adversarial qualities inherent in the current policy. If larger numbers of Cuban émigrés were to migrate to the United States as a result, they would serve as de facto ambassadors of Cuba, thereby enhancing the development of more informal ties between the two nations, an antecedent to more formalized diplomatic connections. The analysis demonstrates that this would be a medium risk policy option for the United States, but one that with potentially lucrative benefits.

Mid-level Sources of U.S. Soft Power in Cuba

The analysis revealed that several potential sources of U.S. soft power possess a moderate capacity to influence citizens and policymakers in Cuba and to advance bilateral relations, but the adjustments in American foreign policy required to maximize their impact entail greater risks and/or would likely result in lesser benefits than the four options listed above.

Reducing or completely ceasing American military operations at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base could prove enormously beneficial for U.S. soft power on the island. Both the Cuban people and their government would certainly interpret such a U.S. policy change as a good will gesture, thereby enhancing the prospects for bilateral relations, at least over the short term. The closure would come with a medium to high level of risk, however, due to the possibility that international security efforts could be undermined as a result. This risk level may be too high for U.S. policymakers to take on at this time.

The United States is unable to leverage its membership in the Organization of American States (OAS) as a means by which to affect its soft power in Cuba at the current time because of the Cubans' disregard for the organization. But there are other strategies by which the U.S. could seek to enhance its reputation as a "good neighbor" in the Americas. By supporting indigenous efforts to strengthen regional law enforcement development and security, the United States could gain favor among Cuban citizens and government officials. The risks from such a strategy are low and the potential benefits would be moderate with the most likely positive outcome being the building of trust and mutual respect necessary for the establishment of normalized bilateral relations.

Increased athletic competition would primarily serve as a potentially symbolic gesture with some capacity to bridge the cultural divide much like "ping-pong

diplomacy” did in helping thaw U.S.-Chinese relations in the early 1970s. But there is scant evidence to support the claim that this type of low-level, low-volume interchange by itself would do much to further the cause of bilateral relations and/or advance the United States’ foreign policy objectives in Cuba and the region.

The evidence suggests that the increased person-to-person contact afforded by enhanced travel opportunities between the U.S. and Cuba would break down cultural and social barriers and increase understanding between individual citizens. There would seem to be little risk to this strategy, but the potential payoffs do not appear as robust as those options previously discussed. While those who participate in such programs and those whom they meet in their travels would gain new insight by such personal interaction, there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that these low-volume exchanges would serve to bolster bilateral relations and/or serve U.S. foreign policy objectives on a macro level.

Uniquely U.S. ideas – specifically those that convey a sense of American ingenuity and innovation – currently hold little or no resonance within Cuba because of the closed nature of Cuban society and the inaccessibility of American-made products, but could serve as sources of soft power moving forward, assuming that the United States ends its economic embargo and allows for bilateral exchange on a number of different levels. As discussed above, increasing educational exchanges with Cuba is a fairly low-risk method by which the United States can enhance the soft power of American ideas in Cuba, but the lifting or at least easing of the U.S. economic embargo is another strategy that also holds promise in this regard. There are some risks in this strategy, however, as there may be a reticence amongst U.S. policymakers to the sharing of highly advanced U.S. intellectual and technological knowledge with Cuba, although this fear may well

subside with the fostering of good will and trust between the countries that could develop over time. The power of American ideas could therefore provide some benefit to bilateral relations, although their impact upon general U.S. foreign policy objectives would be only indirectly positive or neutral over the short and medium term.

Low-level Sources of U.S. Soft Power in Cuba

The other sub components explored in this study – cultural materials, development aid, and remittances – while they certainly serve as soft power assets for the United States in other cases, hold little potential to enhance U.S.-Cuban relations or to further U.S. foreign policy objectives vis-à-vis Cuba policy.

There is a strong tendency to believe that American art, books, films, and music serve to promote U.S. soft power in foreign countries across the world. While this condition may be true elsewhere, the potential influence of these sorts of cultural materials in Cuba is severely constricted by the strong hand of the Cuban government. As conveyed in the analysis, even if trade restrictions were to be relaxed and American art, books, film, and music were to be imported in large quantities to the island, the Cuban government would be prone to exercise such strict editorial control over distribution of the content that American soft power would more likely be undermined than enhanced.

The evidence also seems to discredit the idea of American development and/or humanitarian aid as a potent source of soft power in Cuba. The inherent challenges of administering aid dollars in appropriate ways are extremely complex as the opportunities for malfeasance on the ground are high and the potential payoffs for the United States in terms of its soft power are low as Cuban recipients are apt not to be cognizant of the

source of the aid dollars. It would seem apparent then that development aid serves only as a minimal source of American soft power on the island with relatively little or any impact upon bilateral relations.

Remittances is another area that would seem to hold tremendous value as a source of American soft power in Cuba as it does in other countries, but the evidence in this analysis does not bear that out. As discussed in Chapter IV, unlimited remittances, while serving as a tremendous source of economic support for a limited number of Cuban families, may also serve as a source of revenue for the Cuban government and as a means of relieving internal economic pressures on the regime, thereby providing it additional sustainability. This result would undermine U.S. foreign policy objectives and fails to advance bilateral relations in any favorable respect.

Lessons for U.S. Foreign Policy

Several important lessons for contemporary American foreign policy can be drawn from this analysis of soft power and U.S.-Cuban relations. Perhaps the most salient is that bilateral relations are ripe for change and there are several low-risk/high-reward options in America's policy toolbox that can be strategically deployed in the pursuit of improved relations with Havana.

At a time of war and elevated concerns over terrorism, nuclear proliferation and other serious international threats, there would seem to be minimal desire by the Obama Administration and members of Congress to enter into any protracted battles over Cuban policy. Although there have been signals from the president and his advisors that this administration values diplomacy over confrontation and engagement over estrangement,

the White House has only taken baby steps so far along the road toward rapprochement with Havana.

History also serves as a powerful impediment blocking normalized diplomatic relations with Cuba. Even today, 50 years after the Castro-led revolution, there remain many hard feelings and legitimate sources of disagreement and discontent on the part of multiple stakeholders on both sides of the Cuban Straits. It may well prove impossible for the United States government to resolve all disputes and assuage all hard feelings before reengaging with the Cuban government; indeed it would seem inconsistent with current Obama Administration foreign policy to set firm conditions under which Washington would initiate diplomatic overtures to Havana.

But if and when the administration chooses to move forward on this matter, it would seem wise to do so utilizing the strategies outlined in this analysis in order to achieve the larger objective of reconnecting with the Cuban people and society on a variety of platforms – from businesses and consumers to scholars and travelers. Direct government-to-government interaction is not necessarily irrelevant in this context, but neither is it the primary soft power method for effecting change vis-à-vis bilateral relations. Each of the four soft power variations identified above as the highest performers in this analysis possess the potential by themselves and in combination of helping overcome the enmities fomented by the 50-year gap in productive U.S.-Cuban relations by their capacity to enhance understanding and build trust and good will, thereby pushing toward a more constructive phase in the bilateral relationship.

Of course there will be many domestic critics who dismiss these strategies and denounce all efforts to reengage with Cuba so long as the citizens there live under authoritarian rule. There are many solid philosophical reasons for opposing

rapprochement with Havana, and they have held sway over the nation's foreign policy framework for the past half century. Yet they have not succeeded in effecting any significant political changes in Cuba and have thereby failed as foreign policy instruments. For that reason the Obama Administration should consider wielding a different set of instruments in its diplomatic toolbox and may well be inclined to do so if the perceived risks are small and potential benefits high. And in some ways, with the nation's attention focused on many other more serious and urgent foreign policy matters, this may be a propitious time politically for the administration to exercise its initiative vis-à-vis Cuba. If so, the soft power options outlined here should be strongly considered as a part of that new strategy.

These lessons may also be applicable to other similar sectors of the U.S. foreign policy portfolio, particularly those cases in which America's hard power has been rendered impotent and bilateral relations have reached an impasse. There are a handful of cases that match this criterion – from Iran to North Korea to Venezuela – in which the United States is estranged from foreign governments and has limited avenues of diplomatic communications. In many respects, U.S. hard power assets have failed to achieve U.S. foreign policy objectives in these cases due to extreme logistical challenges, intransigent foreign leaders, and other reasons, leaving soft power as possibly the lone remaining strategy by which to affect substantive change.

Of course not every source of American soft power will be equally effective in the cause of improving bilateral relations, but a calculus like the one undertaken on these pages will help determine the most promising soft power options at our disposal in each specific circumstance. As Professor Nye has observed, soft power is not a blunt instrument and cannot produce instantaneous success in every case in the foreign policy

realm, but over time and with careful planning and execution it can serve to advance the interests of the United States by convincing others to want what we want.

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