CUBA-AMERICA RELATIONS: PRESENT, PAST & FUTURE

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ABSTRACT

“Time can never be the same”. This verdict suits on international affairs. On 17th December, president of USA proclaims that they are reinstating their diplomatic relationship with Cuba. This announcement terminates the half-century dispute between America and Cuba. Cuba is one of those five countries which are still communist. For a better understanding of current relations between Cuba and America, we should first put a glance on its historical background.

KEYWORDS: America, Cuba, Castro, Communist, Relations.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Republic of Cuba is the biggest western island of West Indies at a median place in North and South America. It is an archipelago, capital is Havana. Fertile soil and mineral resources gained the attention of Spain, America, and The Soviet Union. Cuba was ruled from 16th century to 1898 by Spain then after a war between America and Spain, America defeated Spain and leadership over Cuba customarily shifted to America (in 1898 when America and Spain's dispute terminated Spain handed over the leadership of these places to America which were Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Guam). On 20th May 1902, Cuba appeared as an independent state on the map of the world but America did not transfer their navy bases from the island. America kept the authority of interfering in Cuba's internal affairs till 1934(Maher, 2004). In 1933, Fulgencio Batista came to power but during his era corruption came to its peak which provoked the citizens for the uprising and this uprising took the shape of a revolution. The main character of this revolution was opposite group's leader Fidel Castro. He attacked different fronts and after a desperate struggle of six years on 1st

January 1959, he succeeded in ending the era of Batista and then Fidel Castro and his army took over Havana(Felter & Renwick, 2015). **Before Castro came to power**, both countries have had better relations but after that, they faced many changes. Which includes harsh proofs and sometimes both faced international crisis. After 1961, diplomatic relations between America and Cuba ended and whenever both countries needed to communicate with each other, they used Switzerland as the communicator(Suddath, 2009).

1940's constitution ended in January 1959 and some new laws were made. Fidel Castro became the prime minister and his brother Raul Castro became his deputy. Just after four months of being in power, he visited America(Felter & Renwick, 2015). In 1948, an organization named Organization of American States (OAS) which is of western countries which are responsible to maintain peace among member states and promote regional development. It is an ancient international organization and its roots meet up with the 18th century. It oriented from 1889 to 1890 in Washington DC and had been signed in Bogota in 1948 and in December 1951 they started working on it. This organization plays role in democratic values, security of mutual benefits and social problems like prosperity, terrorism, illegal medication and corruption(www.oas.org).

1952 was the darkest time in Cuba and America relationship because this was the time when American spy aircrafts got proofs that the Soviet Union had made their air missile bases in Cuba. During the revolution of 1959, Mr. Fidel had to face grave antagonism from many presidents. In 1961, Castro announced that Cuba had become a communist country and for the sake of its better future he officially announced Marxism and Leninism. Because of this, Cuba was removed from the membership of OAS in December 1962(www.oas.org).

Fidel Castro with his companions and the Soviet Union provided Cuba with a high reputation in the struggle for its practical ideology. D. Eisenhower Dwight was the first American president who placed economical restrictions on Cuba in 1960 and in 1961, he ended all diplomatic relations with Cuba(Baker, 2014). In April 1961, American president John F. Kennedy tried to take over a part of Cuba and to end the government of Castro because he wanted to end the communist system but the armed forces of Fidel Castro defeated him. After this, when Cuba kept Soviet Union's missiles for 13 days, this matter became a grave issue. After these many opportunities came like the fall of Berlin wall and

disintegration of USSR but there was no progress in the relations of both countries(Baker, 2014).

When America repaired its relations with communist countries like China and Vietnam, so Cuba stood with other communist countries like Iran and North Korea that did not have any sort of relations with America. Then America ended all its economic and official relations with Cuba and became concerned about the increasing relations of Cuba and the Soviet Union it was obvious, because the Soviet Union placed its missiles in Cuba to use them against America when needed. This situation seemed like the biggest international crisis after the 2nd World War(Garth, 2011). In 1964, OAS banned all diplomatic and commercial relations with Cuba. On the other side, Cuba was getting aid from the Soviet Union in the sector of education, economic and health. With this, Cuba was participating in revolutionary movements in Latin America and the rest of the world.

In 1972, relations between Cuba and Eastern Europe became stronger when Cuba got the membership of Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA). Elections were held for the first time in Cuba after the revolution and Fidel Castro was elected as president and his brother as vice-president.

Cuba did all its work separately from OAS till this organization voted in favor of Cuba that members of the organization could normalize relations with Cuba. In 1976 Cuba was trapped in with Angola's matter and in 1977 in Ethiopia's matter. Because of which relations with the US got worse(www.oas.org). OAS consists of 35 independent states, Cuba remained separated from 1962 to 2009 and now they do not want to be with the organization.

In April 1980, when restriction of immigration was softened 125,000 citizens of Cuba migrated to Florida. In 1981, Cuba showed interest in American foreign policy and made it crystal clear to America that all weapon sources of guerilla groups were destroyed in Central America. In 1981, both countries were melting ice but America remained still on its aggressiveness so increased the economic restrictions and there was only one airway which they sealed(Felter, 2015). In 1982, tourism and investment from America were forbidden. In 1983, American armed activates increased and they took over Grenade which resulted in the

faceoff of both countries' armies and the only hope at the matter of peace in Central America was ended.

In 1975, Senator Frank Church presented a report to the Senate which proved that America planned officially the killing of Fidel Castro between 1960 and 1965. According to the report of "Cuban American National Foundation Miami" in 1997, America tried to kill Fidel in a conference which was going to be held in Isla Margarita. According to Fidel, America and their partners try to kill him more than 600 times (Conradt, 2012).

ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP

Cuba was a lower-class country with a high level of illiteracy. All the beaches and production of sugarcane and sugar were captured by foreigners (Sweig & Rockefeller, 2013). America ended its diplomatic relations with Cuba in 1960 and also did an economic blockade of Cuba, which caused Cuba to face much of a financial crisis. America dropped explosive materials on Cuba which destroyed the crops of Cuba and America also provided aid to rebel groups which robbed the citizens, destroyed the industrial areas and skilled workers. Pirates of America made boats, beaches and ships of Cuba their target and government of America did not leave any chance to harm Cuba (Nagi, 2010).

The economic crisis got on their peak when the Soviet Union was defeated. The price of oil which was 7.40 before the Soviet Union got defeated was now selling at much higher rates in markets. Sugar, which Cuba used to sell to the Soviet Union at high rates now had no market and the aid that Cuba used to get from the Soviet Union was ended. Cuba was out of food, fuel, and necessary things, this time was the darkest time of Cuba when Cuban citizens were out of their food. Because of the lack of oil, the transportation was at its least and now America strengthened its embargo (Nagi, 2010).

The American boycott is still in progress since 1962 in one face or another. America, not only banned Cuba's trade but also imposed sanctions on any country if it tried to do trade with Cuba.

Raul Castro (who took over his brother's place when he was getting through his operation in 2006) symbolized that Castro wanted to talk with America. After taking over the presidency, Raul Castro made some

reforms because of which many benefits were given to citizens like tourism which was restricted before. Now they not only could buy computers, cellphones and other gadgets by which they could look into the outer world but they also could increase their earning. Because of these amendments, they could give benefits to the agricultural sector.

IMMIGRATION

America is making propaganda against the socialist government of Cuba since the half century and the point is based that every year many Cuban leaves their country and make their way back to America, most of them choose the illegal way. Due to which they had to face many incidences and this is a big challenge for Cuba's communist government. This type of migration gives birth to many questions which point out the traditions of socialist way. Has the socialist system satisfied the Cuban nation? Does Cuba's nation still have faith in its revolution? Does Cuba's nation not get their basic needs? And the main question if the socialist system is for people's benefit then why people are preferring American system over Cuba's? And besides these, we see the news that many people get drown in the sea trying to run away from the communist state.

This gave a new charm to the revolution going in Cuba. And now brain drain had started as many doctor and skill full people started shifting to America and when there was a lack of educated people in a country and brain drains then you could not even imagine what that state had to face. After that America started getting over the 'Bay of Pago' and the missiles crisis followed. American propaganda got speedy after bay of Pago and they executed two propaganda plans. First, American president Kennedy banned the migration of people from Cuba to America due to which people had to face many issues. People started migrating illegally in boats and Cuba did not make any step on this and the second step was Adjustment Act which gave at the spot immigration to those peoples who migrate from Cuba and this open the gate of illegal immigration (Wasem, 2009).

The second immigration crisis started in 1980. In 1984, an agreement was made according to which America had to provide Cuba 20 thousand visas per year, but the promise was not fulfilled. This gave birth to a new crisis. After the destabilization of Soviet Union, America forced many people to migrate from Cuba to America which made Cuban

government weaker and gave away to America to meddle in Cuban internal affairs (Wasem, 2009).

In July 1984, Cuba and America properly negotiated about the immigration and returning of Cuban citizens to their country. In December, the ratification of the agreement started and 2,746 Cuban citizens came back to Cuba who migrated from Cuba to America in 1980. When a human right crisis started in Cuba, the immigration accord between both countries ended and relations of both countries declined again (Wasem, 2009). .

Cuba had full confidence on USSR till 1991 but when USSR order their most of troops to leave Cuba then Cuban government opposed the move as because they felt danger from America. Again, America started the application of restraint on the economy of Cuba and the immigration story remained to endure until the century ended.

In the previous century, the restrictions which were applied by America seemed high and low, time by time. In 2001, a friendly atmosphere was made between these countries because after the attack of 9/11 America declared a war against Afghanistan and they wanted to use Guantanamo Bay as their naval base and Raul Castro assisted America. In 2002 May, American president Jimmy Carter visited Cuba. After 1928, he was the first famous personality who visited Cuba but relations between both countries became more tensed when America added Cuba's name in a list of Axis of Evil and doubted that Cuba might be helping terrorists.

NEW ERA OF ASSOCIATIONS

If we say that America had to face many failures in past about the foreign policy of Cuba, this would not be wrong. Restrictions till five centuries and attempt to weaken the government of Castro did not make any democratic change. In 2009, they celebrated the 50th birthday of revolution in which Fidel Castro came to power (Huddleston & Pascual, 2010).

In new era if we talk about American policies, so before talking about the policies of Barak Obama, first, we look at the policies of previous presidents. When Fidel Castro started the era of revolution, Eisenhower was the president of America and he proposed the 'Bay of Pago' plan. But in 1961 John F. Kennedy took over the throne. In the sight

of Fidel Castro, Kennedy alone should not be blamed for the bay of Pigo as that plan was of Eisenhower and its vice president Nixon and it was not in Kennedy's hand to stop them. Then happened the crisis of missiles and Lyndon B. Johnson became America's president for some time (Nagi, 2010). After that Nixon became the president of America and he not also gave the fuel to the war to Vietnam, but he also played a major role in the collapsing the throne of a Latin American nation, Chile's president Salvador Allende. When Watergate scandal disclosed, Nixon had to resign and Gerald Ford became the president of America. In the era of Nixon and Ford, American policies remained same but when Carter became the president of America then some changes occurred. In the period of Carter, diplomatic relations restarted. After Carter, Ronald Regan became the president, he was totally against socialism and did not make any progress towards Cuba (Nagi, 2010).

After Regan, George Bush became the president and followed the same furious strategy and then Clinton became the president and he also followed the same game plan. After that George Bush Junior became the president and in his tenure, Cuba faced an extreme trouble. 19th of March 2009, when America attacked Iraq, but before two hours of attacking Iraq, America kidnapped a plane of Cuba and landed it in Miami and they forced the crew and passengers to take American nationality. Just after ten days of this incident, another plane of Cuba was kidnapped and the crew and passengers aboard were harassed. George Bush Junior wanted to end socialism from Cuba but the nation of Cuba didn't accept it (Nagi, 2010). Now we will discuss the recent president Barak Obama who made a historical decision of reconciliation with Cuba. On 13th of April 2009, Barak Obama said that he wanted to eliminate all sanctions from Cuba for a certain time. He permitted the citizens of America and Cuba to meet up with their relatives in either country or send money but this restriction has remained same for those who lived on an island. On 17th of December 2014, America changed its policy towards Cuba and Barak Obama announced in White House and president of Cuba Raul Castro in Havana that they wanted to reestablish relations between both countries and both countries were to reopen embassies. They would resolve all previous problems and get over from those policies which provided any harm to both countries' relations. By these steps, citizens of both countries could make the most of and could add a new and happy chapter in their lives (De Young, 2015).

These announcements were the result of secret negotiations of 18 months between the two countries which were started by Pope Francis on the exchange of prisoners and ended at the conversation between presidents of both countries at a telephone (Pace & Lee, 2014).

Since 1961, this was the first direct contact between both countries. During the bay of Pago scenario, America tried to collapse the government of Fidel and after that America showed full opposition to communism. They are 90 miles away from each other in geographic aspect but the economic and political differences are increasing day by day. John Kerry announced that next month they would visit Cuba to talk about the reconciliation of both countries. He would be the first Secretary of State who would visit Cuba in 60 years. Cuba released an American hostage after this announcement was made (Pace & Lee, 2014).

There were no amendments to the policies of America towards Cuba but Barak Obama revived the policy and concluded that they could make better results by working on different doctrine. Obama took the risk to reestablish relations with the country where ten previous presidents refused to go. According to a survey conducted by New York Times in October, every six out of ten Americans wanted to normalize their relations with Cuba. Obama ordered John Kerry to establish all diplomatic relations which were forfeited since 1961 and establish their embassy in Havana by which they could visit Cuba. He also ordered John Kerry to work on issues like terrorism, drug trafficking, usual security. In this condition, we must get over this situation when we are facing Al Qaida and other dangerous parties like Al Qaida (December 2014).

America praised Cuba when they sent its many health workers in Africa to fight against Ebola. America believed that together could get rid of this disease (December 2014). After allowing for travel and transaction of money, America showed interest in releasing three Cuban agents. As a result, Cuba also released America's intelligent agent who was captivated from two decades. Obama also announced that US citizens could now freely use their credit and debit cards in Cuba and they would increase the facilities for Cuba by which improvement could be made in private sector of Cuba (December 2014).

American financial institutions would have the permission to open accounts in the banks of Cuba. Same as exporters of America would now be allowed to export their goods in Cuba. After this technical

communication will be improved. By this, citizens of Cuba could communicate with the outer world in a better way (December 2014). Obama assured about the prisoners and assured American help for the nation of Cuba to meet up with the values of the 21st century. If we work together we could get peaceful environment, security and democracy and could enhance our efforts for a future today. America wants to focus on future's benefit and forget the past mistakes (December 2014). According to Obama, these matters in which both countries differ from each other should be eliminated and we will show the same act in the sector of human rights and democracy. Obama thinks that because of past half century, nations of both countries had faced lots of trouble.

The American president was accompanied by the Catholic Church, Human Right Watch, and American Chamber of Commerce in his decision. But on the other side, some members of Republicans were not only against this decision but they thought that this was totally wrong. John Kerry also removed the name of Cuba from the list of countries which support terrorist activities. On the other hand Obama made financial changes on a large scale for Cuba. John Kerry said that we want to make better relations with Cuba and we'd serve our time, money and resources to make it happen. If these relations heal then this would be a major step from 1961 (the year when Obama was born) they had been ever made. Raul Castro supports this but his brother Fidel Castro who was the first leader of Cuba never took part in such steps (December 2014). America shows interest in increasing economical trading with Cuba. Obama is focused on rising economic relations with Cuba and he has also removed restrictions from traveling to Cuba for domestic, educational and governmental level visit. But for now, touristic visits are still banned. In Cuba's opinion, this is aiming that America will change its foreign policy. However, Obama's presidential years are ending he is not impartial about immigration and he is also resisting towards his foreign policy about Cuba. He thinks that he will make better relations with Havana until his presidential era ends (December 2014).

Just a day after this astounding announcement, Cuban citizens filled up with new hopes of better employment and many more. But also, there were some doubts that Cuba had high crimes rate and drugs usage and it might be possible that tourist from America could be trapped in such activities. Trade would increase but some drawback could also take place (December 2014).

Cuban president said that there are many grievances on plentiful matters but we should resolve all matters in a sophisticated way. Many Americans take Cuba as a big threat to America. A CNN report which was released in 1983 showed that 29% people of America take Cuba as a threat. In 1994, this percentage decreased to 13% and further decreased to 12% in 1997.

After this change, Cuba will get many economic advantages. Havana will get economic advantages from this because Venezuela, who provides aid to Cuba, is facing a financial crisis due to the decrease in oil rates. This crisis has disturbed the government of Castro that will this aid continue in future? After seeking virtuous relations with America there will be some change in the economy of Cuba.

Cuban president has said that America should respect communism otherwise relations can be affected. While speaking to the National Assembly, he stated that both nations would respect each other's social and political morals (Quintana, 2014). Barak Obama is re-establishing the Cold War doctrine for Cuba and both countries are working on the matter of prisoners. A delegation from America will visit Cuba in upcoming months and will talk about politics and human rights.

CONCLUSION

After having a glimpse on the relations of Cuba and America, we came to know that how both countries set a half-century journey together and they went through terrible situations. But in international relations, all situations change when interests come in between. By this decision of Barak Obama, many questions arise.

The first question that all Cuba's economic restrictions have ended? No, whenever America see its interests, it will change its policy. The second question that why the policy changed when it was continued from 1961 to 2015? Even embassies were closed and now there is complete freedom in business and permission for traveling freely on both sides. This will help both countries in economic progress. The third question that how much America would get affected by this policy? Because this will not only affect Americans relations with other countries but it can also provoke terrorism. American commercial increment can hurt the American economy (Smith, 2014).

Is there something else behind Obama's decision about Cuba? This can be possible that after the failure of applying political and economic restrictions, they are now planning a new game for the termination of

communism. In Obama's policy, this is not clear that in Latin America and the Caribbean what will they choose between Communism and Socialism? During the Cold War, no progress was made that's why making good relations is the better option. Raul Castro made it clear in his 20th December speech that no one can blame us that making good relations with America means that we're changing our ideologies.

Another side of Obama's policy is to enhance the diplomatic relations of America with Cuba and reopen embassies in both countries. As far as economic restrictions are concerned, they will remain same for the time. United Nations took votes on 28th October, only 2 countries were against from which one was itself America and second was Israel out of 188 countries. On the other side, those countries which had good relations with Cuba favored the decision. But doubts about economic restrictions remain same. After all, both countries should re-establish their policies while keeping the past experiences in mind and concentrate on those aspects that got them parted.

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