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US economic sanctions on Cuba: An analysis of the reasons for their maintenance

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Abstract:

This paper investigates why the US economic embargo against Cuba is still in place, despite its lack of effectiveness towards the stated objectives of the US government. An explanatory approach with two theoretical frameworks from economics and political science is applied. The paper explores the assumption that the embargo is not in place to achieve a systemic change in Cuba, but rather because it satisfies certain interest groups in the US. An article with similar methodology from 1997 is updated, and the strength of established interest groups is re-evaluated. It is concluded that US interest groups supporting the maintenance of the sanctions against Cuba have significantly weakened since 1997. Additionally, the general US population's support for the embargo, while already weak in 1997, has further weakened and made a rapprochement of the US toward Cuba, especially under a Democratic Presidency, increasingly likely.

Keywords: trade sanctions, Cuba, economic embargo, political interest groups

JEL codes: D72, F51, N42, P16

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1. Introduction

In 2019, the United Nations Plenary renewed its call on the United States (US) to end their economic, commercial and financial embargo on Cuba for the 28th consecutive year (UN News, 2019). According to the Cuban government, the cost of the sanctions amounted to a total of 933 billion US-Dollars (USD) over the 60 year period of their maintenance until 2018, taking into account dollar-depreciation, or 134.5 billion USD at today's prices (Representaciones Diplomáticas de Cuba en el Exterior, 2018). Next to the crippling financial and economic disadvantages caused by the sanctions, the Cuban government and many international researchers also suggest that they have a negative impact on the Cuban population's health, including being the major cause for outbreaks of diseases, malnutrition, a lack of medical supplies and missing access to medical services and that these sanctions thereby constitute a violation of human rights (Akbarpour Roshan and Abbasi, 2014; American Association for World Health, 1997; Garfield and Santana, 1997; Kuntz, 1994; Román, 1998).

The US Department of State justified the imposition of the embargo in 1961 on the basis of "certain actions taken by the Cuban government", most likely referring to the uncompensated nationalisation of US companies on Cuban territory by the Cuban government which resulted in the halt of diplomatic relations between the two countries (BBC News, 2012). Later US legislation points out that the principal goal of the sanctions program is to enforce the Cuban government's respect for human rights and to enable democracy in Cuba to grant the Cuban people freedom (*Cuban Democracy Act*. United States Code, 1992).

Given the enormous negative economic, social and humanitarian impact that the embargo has on the Cuban population, the effectiveness of the sanctions must be continually reassessed and weighed against the former to ensure the proportionality of the measures and to limit unnecessary suffering of the civil population. Recent studies find that the economic embargo has so far been ineffective with regard to the objectives set by the US government (DeMelfi, 2006; Fekadu, 2016; LeoGrande, 2015a; Sabatini, 2020; Yoon, 2017). Even former US President Barack Obama admitted during his speech to the Cuban people in 2016 that "what the United States was doing was not working" and that "a policy of isolation designed for the Cold War made little sense in the 21st century" (Obama, 2016) and reinstated diplomatic ties to Cuba as a first step

to normalise their relationship. However, significant steps to end the embargo as a whole have not been taken, so far, and the Trump administration even reversed some of the previous provisions.

The purpose of this paper will be to determine the most decisive factors underlying the maintenance of the sanctions program despite its apparent failure to meet foreign policy goals. To do so, an interest group model developed by Kaempfer and Lowenberg (1988) will be applied to the case of Cuba. The model will be extended with a concept from political science introduced by Bulpitt (1986). His research focuses on the assumption that political leaders do not necessarily act according to ideological principles but rather for the maintenance of their political power, which is exemplified by the British conservative party under Margaret Thatcher.

The case of Cuba has been chosen for multiple reasons. First, unlike other countries that are subject to major US economic sanctions, e.g. Iran, Cuba and the US are in close geographical proximity. Prior to the introduction of the economic embargo the US was Cuba's main trading partner (Copeland et al., 2011, pp. 163–166), implying that an increased trade volume would be, or at least has historically been, mutually beneficial for both countries. Second, despite having been altered multiple times throughout its course, the sanctions program has been in effect for an extended period, allowing for conclusions on its effectiveness and possible policy adaptations. Third, Cuban expatriates form a significant interest group in certain regions of the US. The United States Census Bureau estimates the number of people in the US with a Cuban origin to have been at 2,381,565 in 2019, or about 0.7% of the total US population (US Census Bureau, 2020). In Florida, where they are mostly concentrated, their share of the population is around 7.4%, arguably making them attractive to consider for electoral strategies. Fourth, the presence of ideological reasons for the maintenance of the economic sanctions, as pointed out by US authorities in the Cuban Democracy Act, is crucial for this paper as it is prerequisite for the link between political motives and the sanctions program.

As Seigle (1997) already analysed the topic of sanctions against Cuba with Kaempfer and Lowenberg's interest group model, his study will be used as a starting point and compared to the current situation. This paper will answer the research question "How has the lobbying power of political and economic groups for maintaining the US

sanctions on Cuba evolved since 1997?” To do so, in section two the general topic of economic sanctions as well as literature on their effectiveness will be explored to reason the assumption that the influence of interest groups might be the decisive factor for the sanctions’ maintenance. The methodology used will be presented in section three. Consequently, in section four the specific case of Cuba will be analysed, including a list of key legislation on the topic. Seiglie’s interest group list featuring political and economic lobbies possibly influencing US politicians’ actions with respect to the maintenance or lifting of the sanctions program will be presented and the current situation of said interest groups as well as their opinions on the matter of the Cuba embargo will be explored. From there, section five will draw conclusions on the change in pressure on political leaders from the respective groups to uphold the sanctions program when compared to 1997. Section six will discuss potential implications of the findings for the short and medium-term.

The author expects to find that there are both economic and domestic political reasons that make the maintenance of the Cuba embargo beneficial for the purpose of US administrations’ maintenance of political power. It is furthermore expected that the strength of influencing factors has changed since 1997 and that the political and economic support for the upkeep of the sanctions has been weakened, which is reflected by the reinstatement of diplomatic ties between the US and Cuba during the Obama administration.

2. Economic sanctions

Broadly defined, economic sanctions are “measures of an economic – as contrasted with diplomatic or military – character taken to express disapproval of the acts of the target or to induce that [target] to change some policy or practices or even its governmental structure,” (Lowenfeld, 2008, p. 698). The party imposing the sanctions will be called ‘sender’, the party targeted by them ‘receiver’. This section will give an overview of their different types, forms, their goals, and research done on their impacts and effectiveness to contextualise the measures introduced against Cuba and to justify the assumption of their ineffectiveness.

2.1 Types of economic sanctions

As economic sanctions have become an increasingly important instrument in the area of foreign policy, there are different views on their categorisation. A selection of them will be shown in the following.

Galtung (1967, p. 381) and Baldwin (1971, p. 19) propose a differentiation between positive and negative sanctions, positive sanctions being a form of incentive that will only be granted if the sanctioned party relents. While the author acknowledges the importance of positive sanctions, they will not be covered in the paper as the US sanctions program against Cuba so far consists only of negative sanctions and the additional coverage of the theory on positive sanctions would exceed the limited scope of the paper.

Carter (1988, p. 1164) categorises US sanctions into five categories according to their targets: US government programs (foreign assistance, fishing rights, landing rights, etc.); exports; imports; private financial transactions; and international financial institutions. Kaempfer and Lowenberg (2007, p. 869) provide three categories: they merge import and export sanctions into trade sanctions; investment sanctions, which take into account the possibility of corporate investments; and so-called “smart sanctions” targeting mainly the elites or high government officials of the country and featuring foreign asset freezes and travel bans.

Another distinction that has been made by the authors listed above is the difference between unilateral and multilateral; the former being imposed by one single sender country and the latter depending on international collaboration. This difference will be of importance when discussing the effectiveness of the sanctions. As the types used by Kaempfer and Lowenberg seem to incorporate the highest number of possible sanction forms, due to the terminology “investment sanctions” rather than Carter’s “private financial transactions sanctions”, their choice will be applied in the following Table 1 to describe the different forms that sanctions can take.

Table 1: Types and forms of economic sanctions

Type	Meaning	Forms	Examples
Trade sanctions	Target loses export markets / is denied critical imports / receives lower prices for exports / pays higher prices for imports (Hufbauer et al., 2009, p. 36)	Quotas, tariffs, non-tariff barriers (NTB), embargoes	US Cuba sanctions, China-US trade conflict
Investment sanctions	Target country's commercial and official channels of investment are hurt by imposing sanctions on their finance	Side-effect of trade sanctions (increased risk and uncertainty drives investors out), ban on investment in certain sectors, halt on state aid, denial of membership in int. organisations	US sanctions on Venezuelan and Iranian oil industry, denial of Cuban IMF membership by the US representative
Targeted Sanctions	Target only narrow range of individuals, companies, organisations in sanctioned country who are held responsible for disapproved behaviour; reaction to widespread opinion that broad economic sanctions do not work or even have negative side effects, cp. "rally-around-the-flag effect" (Galtung, 1967, pp. 389–390)	Freeze of assets, transaction ban, restrictions on investment, limitations on trade with certain goods e.g. arms or oil, or travel bans on individuals	Freeze of assets and travel restrictions imposed on six Russian citizens close to President Putin as well as one Russian entity by the EU27 as reaction to the poisoning of the Russian opposition politician Alexey Navalny

Source: Author compilation

2.2 Foreign policy objectives

This sub-section specifies the reasons for which economic sanctions are introduced. The list of foreign policy objectives was taken from Hufbauer et al. (1990, p. 38).

Change target-country policies in a relatively modest and limited way:

The change of policy associated with this category of sanctions is modest to the national values of the receiver, yet of high importance to the sender. Examples are sanctions against human rights violations or religious persecution, such as the asset freeze against high officials of Nicaragua as a consequence of the alleged human rights violations in the country (US Treasury, 2020).

Change the target country's regime:

The destabilisation of a country for political objectives has been present especially during the Cold War period. It was used by both the US and the Soviet Union to promote their respective ideology abroad. One of the most well-known examples for this is the subject of this paper, the US embargo on the communist-ruled Cuba.

Disrupt a military adventure:

As Hufbauer et al. (2009, pp. 9–15) note, economic sanctions have been used numerous times in history to alter countries' militaristic behaviour. Examples for this include the reaction to Greece's invasion of Bulgaria in 1925 and the US's success in convincing Egypt to stop supporting rebels in Yemen and Congo by halting development and food aid. However, it is also noted that, unlike the two examples, most attempts to disrupt military adventures with economic sanctions failed.

Impair the target country's military potential:

Mainly present during the two World Wars, the use of economic sanctions to hinder countries in the development of their military has once again gained public awareness with the cases of sanctions against the nuclear programs of Iran and North Korea.

Change target country policies in another major way:

Hufbauer et al. (1990, p. 38) relate this very broad area to issues like the attempt to enforce a surrender of territory but also to disrupt political support for controversial regimes.

2.3 *Effectiveness of economic sanctions*

The degree to which economic sanctions reach their desired foreign policy outcomes is controversially discussed by international researchers. The following review of a limited sample of research on the topic does not claim to be complete nor does it aim to draw a definite conclusion on the effectiveness on economic sanctions. It will rather serve as an introduction to some theories on why they might not be effective. However, there is a clear tendency in relevant literature towards concluding the general ineffectiveness of economic sanctions.

There is an enormous amount of research suggesting that sanctions are typically ineffective or only partly effective. Hufbauer et al. (2009, pp. 158–159) find that only 34% of economic sanctions are partly successful in achieving their foreign policy objectives, depending on the type of goal and the type of sanction. Modest demands such as the release of political prisoners were successful in about 50% of the cases analysed, while stronger demands showed a lower effectiveness. Morgan et al. (2014, p. 550) updated the Threat and Imposition of Economic Sanctions (TIES) dataset to cover a period from 1945 to 2005 and find, based on this broad and expressive data, that out of all unilateral sanctions in the period, only 31% were effective with respect to their goals. Considering the more successful multilateral sanctions (51% success rate), a general success rate of 37.5% for all sanctions in this period is established, which confirms Hufbauer et al.'s results.

Galtung (1967, pp. 386–387) finds that there are multiple factors influencing the probability of effectiveness for broad economic sanctions as a foreign policy tool, especially if the sanctions are unilateral. For example, the degree of substitutability of the sanctioned good(s) – either internally, through domestic production, or externally, through trading with nations who are either not part of the sender countries or non-

compliant with the sanctions – is found to be of central importance. Also, the significance of goods from the receiver in the sender country / countries plays an important role in terms of how strictly trade sanctions will and can be enforced. Nations with a high percentage of foreign trade in their gross national product (GNP) are particularly vulnerable to economic sanctions as they depend on goods from abroad. Countries with high degrees of economic independence, such as the US or Russia, are relatively invulnerable.

In a case study on economic sanctions against Rhodesia (modern Zimbabwe), Galtung also explains that broad economic sanctions are perceived by the population of the receiver country to be a collective punishment and thereby bring the population closer together, reinforcing the regime that the sanctions are trying to harm in what he calls the “rally-around-the-flag effect”. The reaction to this effect is the focus toward more targeted sanctions, also called smart sanctions. With this approach, the sender country tries to harm the receiver population as little as possible and focus instead on the elites and people with political power who are held responsible for the addressed issue. However, Haass (1998) finds that smart sanctions, just like economic sanctions in general, are not very effective. As one of the major reasons for this he names the difficulty associated with identifying the individuals to be sanctioned. Hufbauer et al. (2009, pp. 139–141) agree with this view, stating that while “smart sanctions” are better than doing nothing and can serve to expose a rogue state, they tend to be ineffective in actually changing the receiver’s behaviour.

Another reason for economic sanctions potentially not causing the desired effects is the sanctions-buster phenomenon: when one country embargoes another country, a third party may show up because of economic or political reasons to make up for what has been denied by the sender. Hufbauer et al. (1990, p. 12) describe the problem of so-called “black knights” offsetting the lack of otherwise irreplaceable things such as military aid for mostly political reasons. An example for this behaviour is the case of Cuba during the Cold War, when the Soviet Union acted as black knight to finance the Cuban regime and thereby partly shield it from the negative effects of the sanctions program. The Soviet Union thereby ensured the survivability of the Communist regime of Cuba against the economic pressure from outside to maintain and strengthen the Soviet influence in the region. While Early (2011, pp. 399–400) surprisingly concludes from numerous studies on the topic that there is only weak evidence that a politically

motivated sanctions-buster or black knight lowers the effectiveness of economic sanctions, he also finds that when combined with economically motivated sanctions-busters, the expected effect becomes clearly visible. An economically motivated sanctions-buster is a party that replaces the share of foreign trade that the embargo cuts off from the receiver for commercial reasons, as the void left by the sudden withdrawal of trade partners symbolises not only uncertainty but also profit opportunities.

A way for the sender to prevent this phenomenon from happening too easily is the extraterritorial application of sanctions, which the US in particular is making increasing use of. Their role as superpower, the lever of access to by far the largest consumer market on earth and their leading and close to irreplaceable position in the field of financial transactions, the US dollar being the global currency, allows them to enforce their sanctions regime not only on domestic, but also on international entities and persons. An example for this can be the sanctions on the Chinese company “Zhuhai Zhenrong Company Limited”, one of four licensed Chinese crude oil importers, that was accused of non-compliance with US sanctions on the subject of trade with Iranian crude oil in July 2019 (He, 2019; Sultoon and Walker, 2019). Secretary of State Michael Pompeo announced that the sanctions against the company would consist, among others, of a block of all property and interest in property in the US or in control of a US person as well as the effective exclusion of the company from the US financial channels and travel bans to chief executives.

Another current association with US extraterritorial sanctions is three US senators’ threat to impose “crushing” sanctions on the city of Sassnitz (Germany) if it continued to equip ships in their harbour that work on the pipeline project Nord Stream 2, a gas pipeline connecting Germany and Russia that faces heavy opposition from especially the US. Extraterritorial sanctions enjoy overwhelming bipartisan support in both US chambers because of their high capacity to enforce foreign policy goals. Nevertheless, Haass (1998) finds that they may also have undesirable side-effects and that they can even make things worse for the US by increasing anti-American sentiments in the population of allied countries. This can over time lead to a weakening of their overall position in international relations and diplomacy.

Additionally, researchers suggest that beyond their potential ineffectiveness, economic sanctions may worsen many aspects of the civilian population's situation. For example, as covered in the introduction, there may be implications from the trade restrictions and the general isolation from other countries for the peoples' health. Other researchers link the employment of economic sanctions to an increase of the repression of the civilian population and a further deterioration of several human rights (Peksen, 2009, p. 59; Wood, 2008, p. 505). On the other hand, the endogeneity of sanctions must be taken into account when discussing their negative impacts; e.g. the reason for which the sanctions are imposed must be excluded in the analysis of their effects. Gutmann et al. (2018) for example find that, contrary to other analyses, economic sanctions can improve the civilian population's human rights when factoring out endogenous effects.

The paragraphs above point out that the literature concerned with the effectiveness of economic sanctions does, for various reasons, leave room for the argument that they might not be leading to the desired outcomes and are sometimes even counterproductive with respect to the goals they are trying to achieve. This assumption leads one to question what else might be motivating political leaders to impose or maintain such sanctions despite the evidence on their ineffectiveness.

3. Methodology

This paper will henceforth use a predominantly descriptive approach by presenting evidence and drawing conclusions from it. In the interpretation of said evidence, it will refer to two theoretical foundations that have very similar implications for the topic, yet stem from different research fields. The first one is an interest group model used by Kaempfer and Lowenberg (1988) to explain a reasoning behind economic sanctions that is not related to their foreign policy goals but rather to the political and economic motives of interest groups. It has been applied to the case of Cuba by Seigle (1997); his interpretation will be presented and revised according to current circumstances. The second one is Bulpitt's (1986) essay on statecraft. This section will present both methods.

Kaempfer and Lowenberg (1988) use their interest group model to reject the classical theory that economic sanctions are supposed to inflict the highest possible economic

harm on the receiver to achieve a change in policies. They argue that the sanctions are rather used to satisfy certain domestic interest groups. If applied to the receiver instead, they argue that their model can enforce the desired policy change without inflicting enormous economic harm to the broad population by explicitly targeting the relevant interest groups in the respective country (cp. “smart sanctions”).

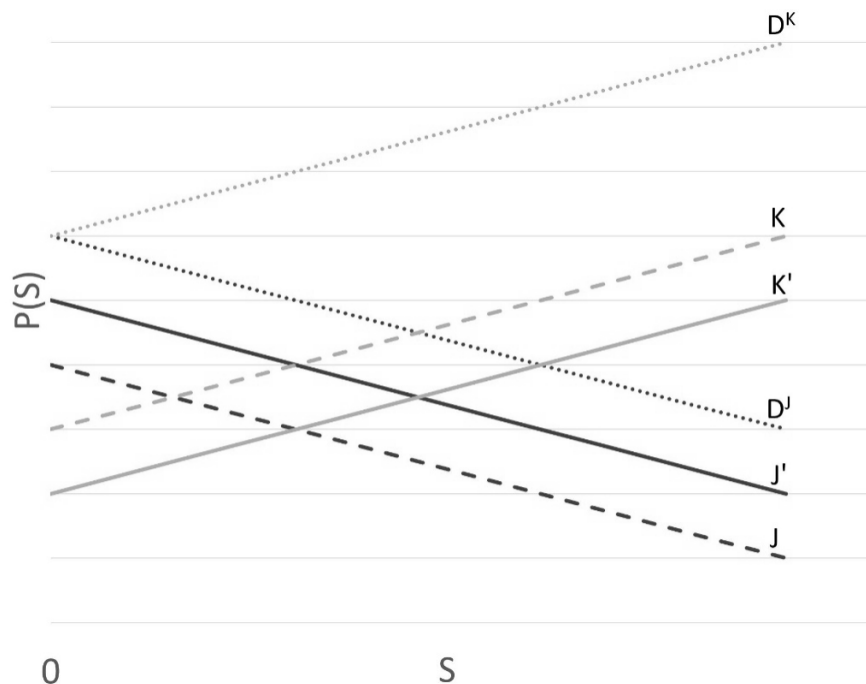
The model assumes that the utility maximisation function of an individual member i of a country's society I with respect to economic sanctions is depending on the respective income changes to each individual that is associated with the introduction (or lifting) of sanctions. The implementation of economic sanctions against a target state would alter the income of society as a whole in a sender state negatively through market distortions, therefore $\sum_i Y_1^i < 0$. Kaempfer and Lowenberg further divide the society I in three parts (J , K and L) depending on their projected opinion on economic sanctions on the target state according to the associated effects on their income levels so that $Y_1^j > 0$, $Y_1^k < 0$ and $Y_1^l = 0$.

Kaempfer and Lowenberg acknowledge that, if the pressure for sanctions was exclusively related to income changes, the demand curves of those who support and those who reject sanctions would intersect at a “sanctions level” below zero as the income of the society as a whole would be negatively affected. Due to different anomalies and political factors incorporated in the model, though, the pressure of group J is stronger and that of group K weaker than could be explained by income effects alone. For instance, it is assumed that the group K would be a much larger group than group J and that the additional “income” from lowering the sanctions level would be split among such a big group that for each individual k , the incentive to lobby for less sanctions would be rather low when compared to group J 's members' commitment toward more sanctions as they would strongly benefit from them individually. Related to this is another relevant factor: free riding. As sanctions are seen to be a public good whose demand is determined by a certain group's willingness to pay, each individual member's willingness to pay will be lower than their actual demand in both groups. This is due to the group members' implied assumption that the rest of their group will provide for sufficient financial means to satisfy the demand, anyway, making the personal contribution neglectable. This effect is stronger in groups with less political efficiency, favouring the supporters of sanctions.

Furthermore, the imposition of economic sanctions does not only cause income effects but also moral ones. The motivation to advocate for a “good cause” on an international level must be considered as well, strengthening once again the position of sanction proponents. Taking all the named factors into account, Kaempfer and Lowenberg describe the reasoning of imposing economic sanctions with the model illustrated in Figure 1.

The intersection point of D^J and D^K describes the market clearance considering only pure income effects, which would be at 0 Sanctions imposed. The third population group, L, is not shown in the model, as their income does not correlate with sanction levels. The graphs J and K incorporate the assumption of differing degrees of free riding present in both groups making group J relatively more efficient in its demands and shifting the market clearance to a positive level of sanctions. J' and K' expand the model with the utility enhancement caused by the sanctions themselves on an ideological level shifting the demand for sanctions of both groups upwards and thereby increasing the level of sanctions needed to clear the market.

Figure 1: Economic sanctions interest group model



source: Kaempfer and Lowenberg, 1988, p. 788; graphic by author

Bulpitt's (1986) essay on statecraft argues with the case of the conservatives in the UK under Thatcher. He finds that the actions taken by the government can be said to have a certain consistency but not in their connection to a certain ideology but in their "party statecraft". In this he is referring to the "art of winning elections" and subdivides this into five parts that are important for a party trying to do so:

- (1) Party Management: the particular structure of the UK parliament, which will not be explained in detail, makes this variable more important and difficult than in most other democracies but very much comparable with the United States party system which is of importance for this paper. Their bipartisan system implies a much more diverse variety of political ideologies is present in each of the parties as they are supposed to represent such a large share of the population, in the US even more so than in the UK. The shape of the party and its inner conflicts may therefore have a strong implication for the actions taken by respective governments.
- (2) A Winning Electoral Strategy: This variable is defined by the policies that are being proposed that are popular with the voters but that can also motivate the party members to believe in having a chance of winning the election.
- (3) Political Argument Hegemony: The party's arguments regarding important problems or policies should be either generally accepted or at least more appealing than the political opponent's ones.
- (4) A Governing Competence: Bulpitt interprets this to be a question of policy implementation rather than policy choice. A governing party may choose not to try implementing a policy that accords with their ideology because, for various reasons like strong opposition or other problems in the implementation process, they consider its implementation unrealistic. Thus, the competence is related to the governing party's level of realism in policy adoption.
- (5) Another Winning Strategy (no further specifications made by Bulpitt)

The statecraft of a party can be defined by analysing each of the previously listed factors. This paper will not explicitly do so but rather derive areas from it that might be worth looking at for the interest group analysis. The five categories will also serve as a tool to interpret the potential effects that the findings in certain interest groups may have on political decision makers in the US.

This paper contributes to the existing literature on the topic of US-Cuba sanctions by consolidating approaches from economics and political science to draw a more concise picture of political decision makers' reasoning behind the maintenance of said sanctions program.

4. Application to the case of Cuba

This section begins by introducing the US economic sanctions against Cuba that are in place and quickly summarising the history of their imposition. It then defines interest groups in the US that are concerned with the maintenance of the sanctions program and analyses their standpoints as well as their change in influence since 1997.

4.1 US economic sanctions against Cuba

In 1959, the US government under President Eisenhower was evaluating possible measures to take against the Cuban government. Fidel Castro's increasingly anti-American rhetoric and the nationalisation of US property in Cuba was something that they needed to address, however, the measures in question were quite controversial (LeoGrande, 2015a, pp. 940–941). As Cuba was at that time economically dependent on the US – the majority of Cuban sugar went to the US and this trade relationship accounted for 20% of Cuba's GNP – the biggest possible levers that the US had were in the trade sector. Cuba had the right to sell a fixed amount of sugar to the US at 2 cents above world market price; cutting this quota would have been disastrous for the Cuban economy. Still, different actors in the US State Department opposed this step, as they feared that the measure could have a counter-productive effect, allowing the Cuban government to blame the US for already present problems with the economy and rally the population around them.

When the Cuban government signed a trade agreement with Russia in 1960, trading sugar for oil, US companies in Cuba refused to process the Russian oil on the advice of the US government and Fidel Castro nationalised these companies in response (LeoGrande, 2015a, pp. 940–942). As a reaction to this step, US President Eisenhower cut the Cuban sugar quota. Consequently, Castro nationalised most US companies in Cuba and Eisenhower retaliated by banning all exports to Cuba except

for food and medicine. In 1961, Eisenhower terminated diplomatic relations with Cuba, stating: “There is a limit to what the United States in self-respect can endure. That limit has now been reached,” (Eisenhower, 1961). In 1962, newly-elected US President Kennedy extended the sanctions program against Cuba to a full embargo by imposing a ban on imports from Cuba under the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (LeoGrande, 2015a, p. 942).

Until then, the embargo was based on two pieces of legislation: the Trading with the Enemy Act of 1917 (TWEA), granting the US President the power to restrict trade between the US and its enemies in times of war or national emergencies (*Trading with the Enemy Act of 1917*. US Congress, 1917), and the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 which specifically allows the President to “establish and maintain a total embargo upon all trade between the United States and Cuba” (*The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961*. US Congress, 1961). Until today, there are four more Acts that are of central importance to the matter:

- (1) In 1963, the US passed the Cuban Asset Control Regulations under the TWEA applying to all US persons and requiring the issuance of specific licenses with respect to Cuba trade and travel (*Cuban Assets Control Regulations*. Office of Foreign Assets Control, 1963). The requirements under these regulations are constantly updated, most recently in 2019, to match the sitting President’s policies with respect to Cuba.
- (2) The Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 (CDA) addresses US concerns regarding the Castro government’s alleged constant violations of international standards of Human Rights and was aimed to achieve a “peaceful transition to democracy in Cuba through the application of sanctions directed at the Castro government and support for the Cuban people” (*Cuban Democracy Act of 1992*. US Congress, 1992). The act grants the President the right to exempt countries that support Cuba¹ from assistance under the Foreign Aid Act covered before, as well as sales under the Arms Export Control Act. It also states that vessels engaged in trade with Cuba must not load or unload freight anywhere in the US until 180 days after their activities in Cuba.

¹ “Supporting Cuba” is defined as grants, sales, guarantees or insurances on terms that are more favourable than the generally available ones in the market, again exempting food donations and medical supplies.

- (3) The probably most significant piece of legislation with respect to Cuba sanctions is the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (Libertad) Act of 1996, also called the Helms-Burton Act. It is the basis for the extraterritorial application of US sanctions as it extends the application of former legislation to foreign companies trading with Cuba. These companies may then be subject to US sanctions due to their trading activities with Cuba and are therefore effectively forced to choose between the US and the Cuban market (*Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act of 1996*. US Congress, 1996).

It also reinforces the US opposition to Cuban membership in any international institution and enables the Secretary of the Treasury to withhold membership fees to international organisations that are granting loans to Cuba against the vote of the US representative.

Additionally, Title III of the Act grants US persons whose property had been nationalised by the Cuban government the right to claim compensation from the current (foreign) asset holders. Title III was suspended continually from 1997 to 2019 due to trade tensions with the EU until President Trump allowed it to come into effect.

Lastly, the Act specifically defines the circumstances under which the embargo will be lifted in a legal framework, removing executive decision-making power from the President and making steps toward an end of the sanctions regime much more difficult. For the sanctions program to be lifted, a democratically elected government must be in power in Cuba, which would need to be confirmed by Congress.

- (4) The Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act permits the trade of agricultural and medical goods on the basis of one-year licenses, provided that the commodities are paid for either in cash in advance or by a third country financial institution (*Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement*. US Congress, 2000).

On a further note, in 1982, Cuba was designated by the US as a “state sponsor of terrorism” (US Department of State, 2019). This termination results in a further source of sanctions; restrictions on foreign assistance, a prohibition of weapons sales and stricter controls on dual-use goods sales as well as financial restrictions (US Department of State, n.d.). It can be concluded that the embargo imposed on Cuba in

the 1960s because of the nationalisation of US property, ties to the Soviet Union and the support for revolutionary regimes in South America, has been extended over the years and is still in place. It prevents the vast majority of trade, investment, travel and tourism between Cuba and the US while also punishing non-US companies for their involvement with trading activities related to Cuba. The most significant step toward an easing of the relationship between Cuba and the US has been made by US President Obama with the reinstitution of diplomatic relations between the countries in 2015, the lifting of Cuba's status as "state sponsor of terrorism" and the announcement to review the embargo as a whole (US Embassy in Cuba, n.d.). However, the decision on Cuba's status as state sponsor of terrorism has been revoked by President Trump in January 2021 and remains to be reviewed again by the Biden administration (US Department of State, 2021).

The political targets of the embargo varied over the years (LeoGrande, 2015a). First, as mentioned earlier, the US rationale was to replace the Cuban government, thus, to provoke a regime change. Already in 1964, the Undersecretary of State defined four key objectives of the program: (1) to reduce the spread of revolution to other American states; (2) to establish in the Cuban population that their current government cannot fulfil their needs; (3) to demonstrate that there is no room for communism in the West; and (4) to make Cuba a more expensive "Communist outpost" for the Soviet Union (Ball, 1964). These goals can be categorised to be an attempt to "change target country policies in another major way" following the classifications of Hufbauer et al. (1990, p. 38).

4.2 Interest groups in the US

Seigle (1997, p. 233) defines four main interest groups concerned with the sanctions on Cuba in the US. This paper will follow his classifications. The first one is the unorganised Cuban American community in the US, who are facing negative income effects from the embargo – Seigle reasons this with medicine and remittances they send to their families in Cuba – and are, according to the study, ideologically indifferent or positive toward it. The second is the organised Cuban American community in the US which, according to Seigle, has an ideological interest in the maintenance of the sanctions. Third, there may be business groups profiting from the exclusion of Cuba

as trading partner. Fourth is the share of the American population opposing the sanctions program because of negative income effects from transaction costs associated with the embargo, potential utility restrictions as they are hindered to travel to Cuba and potentially because of ideological consensus with the Cuban regime.

In the further course of his paper, Seigle also covers the situation in Cuba and the public opinion towards (limited) reforms. The purpose of this thesis, however, is only to analyse and update the situation in the US. Seigle finishes his paper with the conclusion that the embargo, and economic sanctions in general, are not effective when it comes to provoking a policy change in Cuba as the Cuban government is, despite the embargo, able to find the financial means needed to run the country outside of US capital markets. He therefore finds that the sanctions program must rather be connected to the interests of the listed groups than to US foreign policy goals. In the following, the author will introduce the four groups and update their desire regarding sanctions against Cuba to the present-day level to find whether the support for the embargo has strengthened or declined.

4.2.1 Unorganised Cuban Americans

To understand the points of view present in the Cuban American population in the US, the emergence of the Cuban American community will be highlighted in the following. In the early 1990s, there were only around 15,000 Cubans living in the US as compared to the close to 2.4 million there are today (Mastropasqua, 2015; US Census Bureau, 2019). The arrival of the community has largely occurred in four waves: 1959-1962, 1965-1974, 1980 and 1993-1995 (American Experience | PBS, 2017).

The first wave of immigrants consisted predominantly of people who fled from the newly established government under Fidel Castro. As Castro quickly nationalised the property of the wealthy population, most of the refugees came from this layer of society. The second wave, counting around 250,000 Cubans leaving their country, arose mainly from the more extreme actions taken by the Castro government, namely the communisation of private property and shutdown of many small businesses which led more skilled workers and middle-class people to terminate their support for the revolution and emigrate from Cuba.

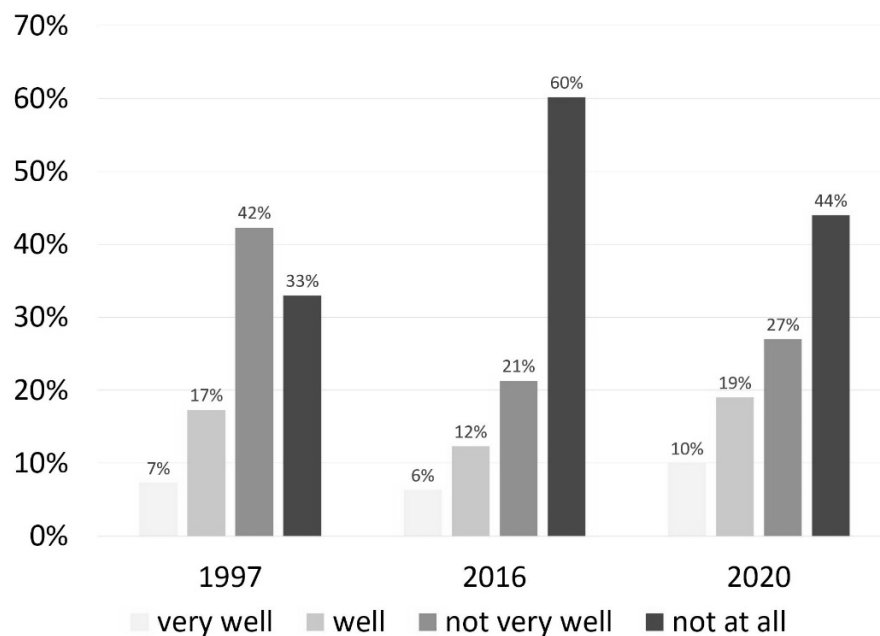
In 1980, an incident at the Peruvian embassy in Havana led Castro to remove the security guard from the entrance, making way for about 10,000 Cubans who fled into the embassy only hours later (History.com, 2009). Castro had no choice but to open the port of Mariel, allowing everyone to leave who wished to do so. During this giant boat lift, around 125,000 Cubans fled to the US. Especially embarrassing to the Cuban government and dramatically shifting the image of the Cuban American community in the US was the fact that more than 70% of the refugees came from the working class, which the revolutionary Castro regime claimed to be fighting for. Among the refugees were also a considerable number of prisoners released from Cuban jails and mental health facilities which, as a side-effect, created political resistance in the US against the immigration of Cubans.

The fourth big wave was caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union which had so far been the base of the Cuban state's finance. Within three years, Cuba's economy shrank by more than a third and in the face of the resulting political uprising, Castro once again allowed everyone who wanted to leave to do so. Summarising, it should be noted that the overwhelming majority of people who fled from Cuba to the US did so because they disagreed with the Castro government, which gives a first idea of their preferences toward the embargo.

Florida International University (FIU) surveys the Cuba Poll offering an opportunity to examine the change of the Cuban American population's support for US-Cuba policies. To match the purpose of this paper, the author chose to compare the 2020 statistics with 1997 results, with the latter having been published in the same year as Seigle's interest group analysis, even though an older version of 1991 is available that shows even stronger differences to the 2020 poll. The Cuba Poll analyses the opinion of Cuban Americans in Dade County, a region including the city of Miami where the biggest share of the Cuban American community is located (Grenier and Gladwin, 1997, 2016; Grenier and Lai, 2020). As the polls until 2016 showed a fairly clear trend, the author decided to also include the statistics of 2016. The authors of the polls refer to the trend-reversal as being related to the Trump presidency and the new (or rather old) tone in the relationship between the US and Cuba (Grenier and Lai, 2020, p. 6). The data presented in the following refers to percentages excluding "don't know" and "no response" answers, thus only the participants who had an opinion on the topic are represented.

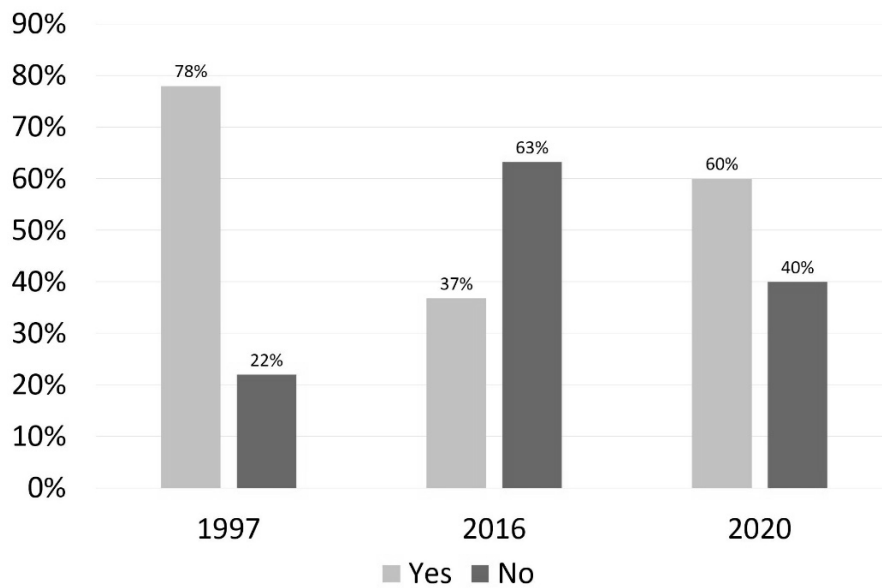
Results show that, when compared to 1997, Cuban Americans in 2020 are more convinced that the embargo might have been effective (worked very well or well – 1997 / 2020: 24.6% / 29%). In 2016, however, the situation was totally different with only 18.6% stating that the embargo worked very well or well (cp. Figure 2). The data on the question whether the embargo should be continued shows similar results. When compared to 1997, Cuban Americans' sentiment toward stopping the embargo increased dramatically from 22 to 63.2% until 2016 and fell again to 40% until 2020 (cp. Figure 3).

Figure 2: FIU Cuba poll: How well has the embargo worked?



Source: Grenier and Gladwin, 1997; Grenier and Lai, 2020; graphic by author.

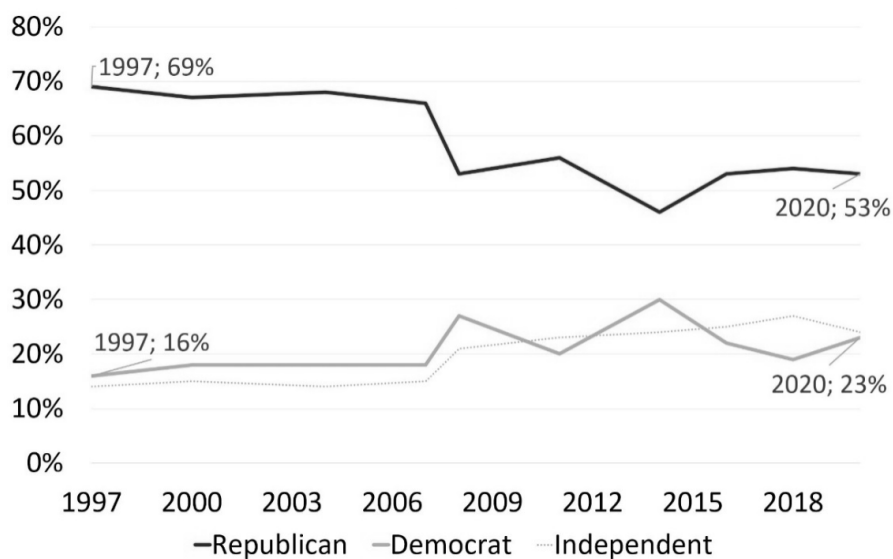
Figure 3: FIU Cuba poll: Should the embargo be continued?



Source: Grenier and Gladwin, 1997; Grenier and Lai, 2020; graphic by author.

The data on voter registration for political parties in the US among Cuban Americans in Dade County is more consistent, showing continuous decline in registered Republicans and continuous growth in registered Democrats. However, in 2020, the clear majority of registered Cuban Americans in the region were still Republicans (cp. Figure 4).

Figure 4: FIU Cuba poll: Cuban Americans' registration for political parties

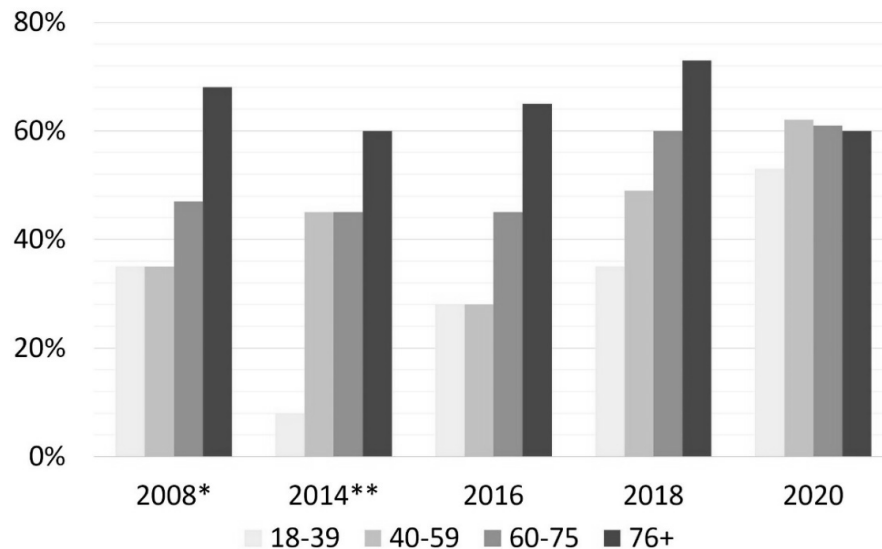


Source: Grenier and Gladwin, 1997, 2016, 2018; Grenier and Lai, 2020; graphic by author.

Another factor that has often been included into analyses of the topic is the demographics of the Cuban American population in the US and its possible implications for the development of lobbying in favour of the embargo. Given the data from the FIU Cuba Polls from 2008 onwards, this aspect is controversial (Grenier and Gladwin, 2008, 2014, 2016, 2018; Grenier and Lai, 2020). The data shows that, indeed, the younger Cuban Americans are comparatively less supportive toward the continuation of the embargo, although their support has increased strongly over the last 6 years. In 2020, the difference between the youngest age group and the other Cuban Americans was less than 10% (cp. Figure 5).

The data shown is only partly comparable as the methodology differed in that different age groups were used for 2008 and 2014. It is expected that the drop of support in 2014 in the lowest age group is partly attributable to the narrower age group used in the study. Also, the differentiation into age groups is not available for the years prior to 2008 so that a comparison of 1997 to today is not possible in this aspect with the given data. Nevertheless, it shows an interesting trend and calls into question the argument that the support for the embargo among Cuban Americans will dramatically change in the future only due to demographics.

Figure 5: FIU Cuba poll: Support for the continuation of the embargo (age groups)



Source: Grenier and Gladwin, 2008, 2014, 2016, 2018; Grenier and Lai, 2020; graphic by author.

* 2008 age groups differed as follows: only three groups; 18-44, 45-64, 65+; 2008 graphs for age groups one and two were therefore set equal and groups three and four do not exactly correspond to the legend. ** 2014 age groups differed as follows: 18-29, 30-44, 45-64, 65+

Overall, the support of the unorganised Cuban American population in the US toward the US embargo on Cuba has declined since 1997 (cp. especially Figure 3). While there has temporarily been a strong majority against its continuation, that trend has been reversed during the last four years, but the support level is still well below the 1997 level.

4.2.2 Organised Cuban Americans

The most influential organisation associated with Cuban Americans in the US is the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF) (LeoGrande, 2015b, pp. 476–480; Seigle, 1997, p. 233). Founded in 1981 by Jose Más Canosa, a wealthy Cuban expatriate living in Miami, the CANF is a group dedicated to lobbying for the interests of their Cuban American members (Fulton, 2019). Its goal is the promotion of freedom and democracy in Cuba. In this, its approach has been rather extreme in the past and involved the support for various terrorist activities against the Castro regime. Más Canosa, as a right-wing Republican, had especially close ties to the administration of Ronald Reagan which was formed at the same time as the CANF and whose policies toward Cuba he influenced significantly. However, he was also associated with the campaign of Democratic President Bill Clinton, who gained financial and political support from the CANF.

The CANF reportedly had a strong say in the US legislation directed toward Cuba that has been covered earlier. The hard-line approach to handling the Castro administration was supported by a big share of Cuban Americans at least until the end of the Cold War (Henn, 2008, p. 1). However, the opinion on this issue among Cuban Americans has begun to differ since then, which has likely decreased the efficiency of the lobbying of the CANF and will continue to do so in the future. Also, the death of its long-time chairman Jose Más Canosa in 1997 and the more moderate views of his son and successor Jorge Más Santos split the organisation itself into hardliners and rather moderate voices just like the whole of the Cuban American community, decreasing the CANF's political efficacy (Marks, 2003). As a reaction to the more moderate views of the CANF after 1997, former CANF members formed the Cuban Liberty Council which represents a new but much weaker Cuban American hardliner centre since then (Lovato, 2004, p. 24).

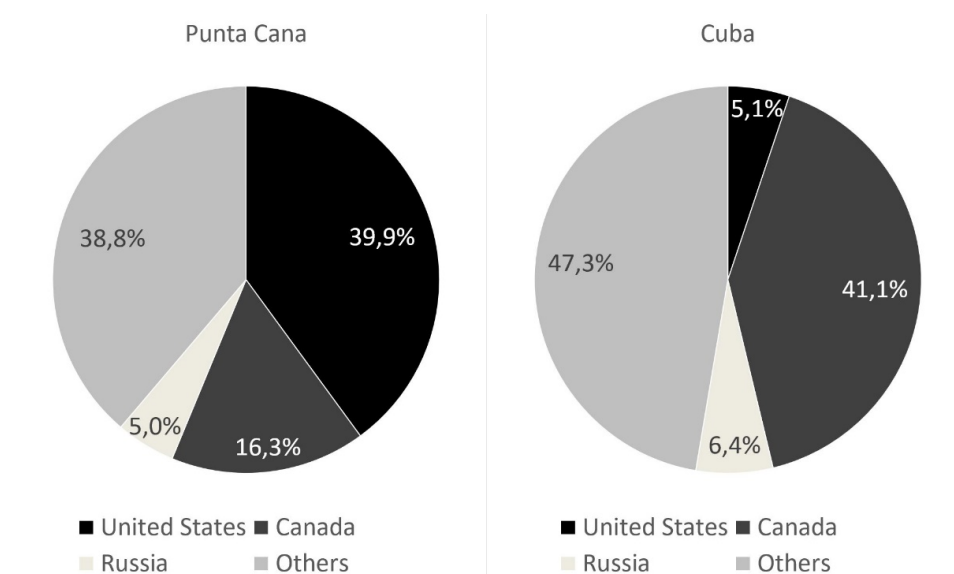
As the death of Jose Más Consa in 1997 can be understood as a turning point in the influence of both the CANF and Cuban Americans' support for it, it is relatively safe to assume that the importance and influence of this organised group must have deteriorated since Seiglie's article in 1997. Also, it has been established that the organisation itself has become more moderate since then as the hardliners are not in control of the chair anymore. Groups other than the CANF have not been able to establish a comparable level of influence so far.

4.2.3 Business groups supporting sanctions

To be able to assess which US business groups should have an interest in the maintenance of the Cuba embargo, it is important to understand the structure of the Cuban economy and its main pillars. According to Passport (2020), the two main industries on the island nation are tourism and sugar; two groups that have a considerable presence in the US as well.

The Cuban tourism industry is strongly affected by the travel restrictions imposed by the US government which have even been tightened by the Trump administration (Passport, 2020). The last round of new regulations in 2020 prohibits most stays at Cuban state-owned hotels and eliminates general licenses for traveling to Cuba and for importing Cuban alcohol and tobacco products for personal usage (Shane et al., 2020). Still, tourism remains one of the largest industries in Cuba. Between January and March 2020, the top five origins of tourists that came to Cuba, not taking into account the Cuban diaspora that otherwise would have ranked second, were Canada (~403,000 tourists), Russia (~63,000), the US (~50,000), France (~45,000) and Germany (~39,000) (Statista, 2020). To put this into perspective, the arrivals at the airport of Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, are listed as a comparable proxy for Central American island nations not under US embargo in Figure 6. It can be derived that under normal circumstances, US tourists would likely constitute one of the largest sources of income to the Cuban tourism industry because of the close proximity of the two countries as well as the location in the popular Caribbean region.

Figure 6: Origin of international tourists arriving in Cuba (Jan.-Mar. 2020) vs origin of international air passengers arriving in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic (2018)



Source: Statista, 2018; Statista, 2020; graphic by author.

The strong regulations for US tourists work like a de facto protective measure for other travel destinations in the Caribbean region as they make US customers, who would otherwise go to Cuba, choose another destination in the area and thus boost tourism there (Romeu, 2014, p. 2). However, Romeu (2014, pp. 20–21) suggests that the end of the embargo would increase tourism in the whole area by 4% as a result of US tourists overwhelming the Cuban market and redirecting tourists flows from other nations to nearby destinations. The largest beneficiaries would be Venezuela (+12.8% tourists, probably explainable by the very limited number of US tourists in Venezuela today and the resulting lower reduction of US tourists from an opening of Cuba as destination) and Colombia (+8.8%). The biggest losers in the tourism industry after the end of the embargo would be Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands (-17.4%, respectively). Unfortunately, while a total impact on US domestic tourism cannot be concluded given that other US destinations such as Florida were not examined, the impact on Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands shows the dimensions to which the US tourism industry is protected by the embargo and would be affected by its termination.

The second pillar of the Cuban economy is its largest employer: the sugar industry (Passport, 2020). However, the branch has been shrinking for years now. In 2018,

Cuba even had to import sugar from France after a bad harvest (Frank, 2018). It can be argued that the success of the Cuban sugar producers was mainly due to comparatively favourable conditions of trade with the Soviet Union and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon) and that the fall of the Soviet Union equally meant the fall of Cuban sugar, as it is not competitive under world market conditions (Pollitt, 2004, p. 346). Mainly for this reason, the US Congressional Research Service concludes that possible concerns of an opening of the Cuban market from the agriculture industry are rather focused around tropical fruits and vegetable products (McMinimy, 2016, pp. 10–11). As US sugar imports are subject to special conditions, the Cuban sugar industry would not be an issue for its US competitors even if the Cuban government chose to heavily invest in the business and increase capacities significantly. It is also expected that the whole of the US agricultural industry would strongly benefit from an end of the embargo as it would potentially allow US food producers to export their goods to the highly import-dependent Cuba.

It can be concluded that while the effects of opening Cuba on US businesses cannot be determined precisely they have likely changed positively since Seigle's study in 1997, as the Cuban sugar industry weakened further. Therefore, the defined US businesses' incentives to lobby toward the maintenance of the Cuba embargo should, if they did not diminish, at least not have strengthened since 1997.

On a further note, it is recommended for future research to analyse different fields of the economy, as other US business groups might see major opportunities in an opening of the Cuban market. In particular, the technology gap between the US and Cuba in some fields like the automotive industry, information and communication technology and mobile connectivity might, depending on the terms of a possible opening of the market, create prospects for US companies. The lobbying efforts of these other business groups has not been analysed by this study, yet might solidify the assumption that the US economy would rather benefit from the new potential trading partner.

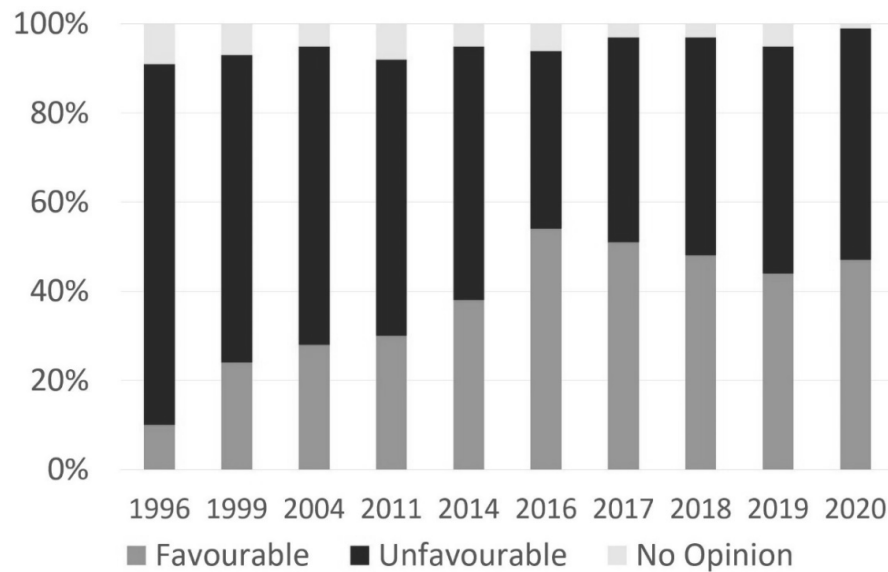
4.2.4 US Americans opposing the embargo

Seigle essentially follows Kaempfer and Lowenberg's argumentation in comprising the share of the population that opposes the sanctions program into one interest group.

The underlying assumption for this is that, through the imposition of trade barriers between the two countries represents a distortion of the free market, the income of the general population is lowered which should make the affected people more critical of the sanctions. Of course, this is a broad categorization and the specific reasons for which individuals oppose the embargo differ just as much as the extent to which they oppose it. However, a more accurate segmentation of this group and the following analysis of the differentiated sub-groups would largely exceed the scope of this paper.

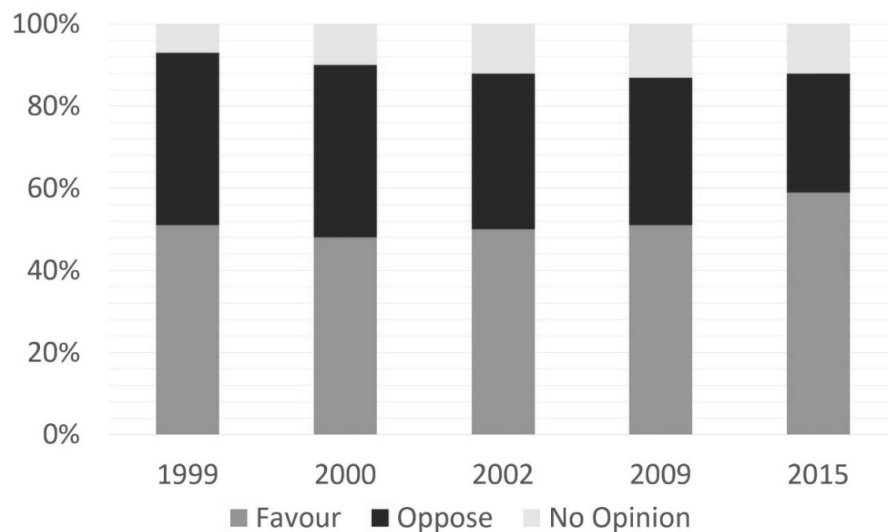
Unfortunately, there is not a lot of research on the public opinion of US Americans on the Cuba embargo that is being conducted on a continual basis and could therefore serve as an indicator for a possible change in public support of the sanctions. Gallup (2020) provides an interesting proxy for this in their survey about US citizens' overall opinion of Cuba between 1996 and 2020. In this survey it is clearly visible that the US population's opinion toward Cuba has strongly shifted in these 24 years (cp. Figure 8). At some point between 2014 and 2016, the percentage of people who saw Cuba as rather favourable exceeded the percentage of those who deemed it rather unfavourable for the first time. The trend reversal after 2016, that has been discussed in 4.2.1 on the matter of Cuban Americans support for the embargo, is present in the general US population as well, even if not as strong and it will be a question for the next four years, whether a new Democratic US President will shift the population's opinion on the matter again.

Figure 7: Gallup poll: US citizens' overall opinion of Cuba



Source: Gallup, 2020; graphic by author.

Figure 8: Gallup poll: US Americans favour / oppose an end to the embargo



Source: Gallup, 2020; graphic by author.

US Americans' opinion on maintaining the Cuba embargo has been assessed by Gallup (2020) until 2015 and shows a weaker, but still significant shift towards "favour ending the embargo" (cp. Fig. 9). From 1999 to 2015, the percentage of the interviewed who stated to favour ending the embargo rose from 51% to 59% and the percentage of those who opposed an end of the embargo shrank from 42% to 29%.

While there seems to be no continual assessment of US Americans' support for the embargo that have been updated after 2015, there are some polls that can at least give a glimpse of the current situation. The PEW Research Center (2016) found in a survey that, from January 2015 to December 2016 the share of US citizens who support an end of the embargo rose from 63% to 75%. Excluding the "don't know / refuse" responses, the value in December 2016 even was at 79.8% showing an overwhelming support of the general population for an end of the embargo. The Morning Consult (2017) comes to a somewhat similar result in June 2017; in their poll 61% of the interviewed supported an end of the embargo. Factoring out "don't know / no opinion" responses, that share was at 76.25% ("don't know / no opinion" was a lot more popular in the Morning Consult poll than in the PEW one).

From the data above it can be derived that the overall opinion of US citizens toward the Cuba embargo strongly changed since 1997. While at this time a majority already supported ending the embargo, this majority rose and stabilized over the years and the share of people supporting the sanctions program shrank decisively.

5. Discussion

To assess the effects on policy making that the derived change in public opinion and lobbying efforts will cause, it is critical to analyse the actual importance of the matter for the parties in the US. This is because, even though it is evident from the research presented above that support for the embargo is deteriorating, it may or may not be perceived as a decisive point for voters which would ultimately influence the respective parties' strategy on the matter, following Bulpitt's observations on statecraft. This would, more precisely, be the key to assess whether an end to the Cuba embargo would be part of the "winning electoral strategy" described in his criteria on statecraft assessment. This analysis is diving deep into the political system of the US and, due to scope constraints, will not be done in detail. What is relatively unproblematic to describe, though, is an estimation of the relative strength of the interest groups concerned with the Cuba embargo, which could be used as a proxy for their importance to political parties.

Unorganized Cuban Americans, for instance, make up for about 0.7% of the US population (US Census Bureau, 2020). To put that into perspective, the share of

Mexican Americans is at 11.3%. In Florida, where the clear majority of Cuban Americans in the US live, their share is about 7.4%. From these figures it becomes relatively clear that politicians on a national level have little to no interest in shaping national US policies in favour of the unorganized Cuban American population to achieve a winning strategy. Their interests cannot be considered “important” with regard to Bulpitt’s criterium of “political argument hegemony”. This may be different in the state of Florida, but a single state has, due to the legislation that the embargo is written in, close to no power in achieving a change to the US Cuba policy.

The Organized Cuban Americans can be described as political force and must therefore be assessed as one. While, with the chosen methodology, it will not be possible to quantify the strength of their influence on political leaders, Kaempfer and Lowenberg’s interest group model provides for an interesting tool to describe the change of strength over time according to different criteria. The influence level of group J, which in the model is the group in favour of sanctions, is, among other factors, assessed by the degree of free riding present in the group which is determined by their political efficiency. As concluded in 4.2.2, the political efficiency of the Organized Cuban Americans has weakened over the last 20 years, implicating a higher degree of free riding present in the group which would affect the sanctions equilibrium negatively. With the other factors (income effects of sanctions and ideological positioning toward them) remaining relatively stable, it can be concluded that the level of influence that this group has on political decision makers has lowered since Seigle’s study.

The influence of the selected industries could not be determined by the author. This is due to different reasons: first, the travel and tourism industries would not be affected as a whole, but only in certain states close to the Caribbean region which makes any attempt to link the size of the industry to their influence on political decisions on the matter of Cuba policy awkward. Second, the agricultural industry comprises sugar but also tropical fruits and vegetables. The change in power of the respective interest groups found in 4.2.3 was not conclusive because the different branches do not have homogenous interests in the topic. Therefore, both the direction and the degree of the resulting change in influence on political decision makers would not be conclusive either. Third, with the chosen methodology, there is no possibility to quantify how interested the respective industries are in the matter of the Cuba embargo, which lets

a possible assessment of the industry sizes, financial means or lobbying efforts seem inconclusive.

It seems like the overall US population is convinced that the Cuba embargo should end but, as predicted by Kaempfer and Lowenberg's model, not very engaged in the topic. Cuba has not been a decisive point in the voting behaviour of the average US American in the 2020 election (Bleiker, 2020), which makes it unlikely for the political parties to include the issue in their electoral strategy. Following Bulpitt, the parties would rather try to avoid the issue because the lobby against the sanctions is not active enough and the implementation of the associated legislation is difficult, as an end to the embargo would have to go through the two chambers and is not possible to just push through by presidential executive order. This is because the measure under which the embargo could be ended is a democratically elected government being established in Cuba, which has to be certified by congress under the Helms-Burton Act. As this continues to not be the case, this piece of legislation would have to be adapted to make any major change in the US Cuba policy.

For the reasons indicated above, it is concluded that the maintenance of the US economic sanctions against Cuba are, contrary to the author's initial expectations, not directly attributable to a strong political or economic lobby in the US that advocates for it. It has been shown that existing lobbies for a continuation of the embargo have either significantly weakened during the last 20 years or that their goals cannot be clearly defined, as it is not unambiguously identifiable whether the respective interest groups would profit or lose from an opening of the Cuban market. Instead, the author expects that the justification for the maintenance of the Cuba embargo lies in the rather low political activism of its opponents which leads political leaders to not include the issue in their agendas. Another key aspect that has been found is the awkwardness of changing US-Cuba policies due to the Helms-Burton Act that wrote the embargo into law and hinders the sitting President from removing the sanctions program by executive order. The so-called "governing competence" of political leaders defined by Bulpitt makes it more attractive for them to ignore the issue and avoid the potential failure of not being able to implement a policy they promised to deliver.

Another way to interpret the maintenance of the sanctions program from the foreign policy perspective could be deterrence. Hufbauer et al. (2009, p. 6) point out that the

assumption of economic sanctions' ineffectiveness can never be truly decisive, as it cannot be known which actions have been prevented by the imminent threat of new sanctions. In fact, Hufbauer and Jung (2020) find that recently deterrence has become one of the main reasons for states to impose sanctions on their adversaries. Applied to the Cuba embargo it may be argued that while it did not lead to the desired outcome in Cuba, it might still be a cautionary tale for other states.

The second hypothesis, stating that there should be significant change in the strength of factors of influence on the matter since Seigle's paper in 1997, has been proven correct. The interest groups established by Seigle as an adaptation to the interest group model of Kaempfer and Lowenberg (1988) have been analysed thoroughly and it has been concluded that the change in the equilibrium of forces during the last 20 years must have been directed toward an ease or lift of the sanctions program.

6. Outlook

As shown multiple times in this paper, 2016, the year of the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States, marks a turning point in many US Americans' and Cuban Americans' opinions toward the embargo on Cuba. Especially for this reason, it will be interesting to observe whether the upcoming Democratic presidency will be willing and able to make significant changes to the US-Cuba policy. While newly elected President Joe Biden said in September 2020 that he considers Trump's approach to the topic a "failure" and that he wants a "reset of the US-Cuba policy" (Sesin, 2020), the incredibly loaded domestic political agenda of the new US President might make the Cuba question relatively unimportant.

Another factor will be the President's control over the two chambers in the US government. While for at least the first two years of the upcoming Biden presidency, the house of representatives will be under relatively stable Democratic control (235 to 199 seats), the US senate, which would be just as important for a possible change to the Helms-Burton Act, will be evenly split (50 to 50 seats). In case of a 50-50, Vice-President Kamala Harris will have a tie-breaking vote. Because of this de facto majority, it seems at least possible that the Democrats can pass legislation against the resistance of the Republican Party. The decisive questions will be whether President

Biden will be willing to address the Cuba embargo even though a change to the Helms-Burton Act could possibly fail because of the very thin majority in the senate and if so, whether he will be able to unite every single Democratic senator or some of the Republicans to support the motion. Future research on the topic is recommended to include an analysis of the Republican and the Democratic party's respective positions and voting behaviour on the matter to assess the likelihood of a change to the Helms-Burton Act being able to pass through the two chambers.

With the methods and sources listed in this paper, a close monitoring of public opinion towards an easing or lifting of the sanctions program is possible, however, as explained in section five, public opinion may not be the decisive element on this issue. To further explore this observation, it may be helpful to link the maintenance of the Cuba sanctions program to the gap between public opinion and policy implementation in the US. For instance, Lax and Phillips (2012, p. 164) find that while there is a strong correlation between voter preference toward a policy and the implementation of said policy, public preference is only translated into policy about half the time. According to them, conservative policies are overrepresented with respect to the median voter's preferences in states with conservative governments, and states with a liberal government show an overly liberal tendency. This finding could explain some aspects of the divergence between public opinion and government action on the Cuba embargo. This is especially likely, given that the topic is far from dominating party strategies, making election results less representative to what the public's opinion on this specific issue is.

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