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Ineffectiveness of Coercive Sanctions in Changing Cuba's Communist Regime

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Explanation of the Methodology

Research Method

For the proposed study, the writer will employ a qualitative research design. While the topic of any particular research is not the sole determinant of methodology, factors relative to it may direct the researcher toward one type of methodology over another. In other words, research method selection should flow from what the researcher is trying to find out (Silverman, 2004). Perhaps taking a more direct stance, Marshall (1996) explained that the research questions should determine the choice between the two major methodological forms, quantitative or qualitative, despite the preference of the researcher. Therefore, both the purpose of this proposed study and the research questions developed to explore that purpose underlie the writer's selection of qualitative research methodology. Specifically, to execute the purpose of this research, which is to determine the effectiveness or lack thereof of economic sanctions, existing literature on the topic in the context of America's embargo against Cuba will be examined using the following two research questions:

Q1: Given that transnational linkages sustain international capital and finance exchange, primarily as foreign investment and remittances, what is the potential negative impact of activities undertaken by overseas investors and migrants on economic sanctions (particularly those applied unilaterally)?

Q2: To what extent do transnational actors located in the country imposing sanctions impact the direction of long-term foreign policy objectives of any country involved on either end of economic sanctions?

These are the sorts of questions that lend themselves to numerous types of qualitative research, because they rely on subjective perceptions of a specific event for analysis, in this case the American embargo against Cuba. While such information could be drawn and analyzed from numerous sources, in this case the researcher will focus on scholastic literature to deduce major themes posited by academicians, then determine answers to both research questions based on an integration of the existing body of work. To be precise, the qualitative method to be employed is that of a case study completed through use of research and review of literature as the information collection tool. Additionally, the writer will suggest

further new research that would both augment this study and provide a more current or alternative perspective on the topic, given global changes in the political climate that are occurring daily. The perspective presented herein and results are drawn from current literature as construed and interpreted by the researcher, so is by definition of limited scope.

Qualitative Design

The process following most qualitative studies involves participants presenting their views and perceptions about an identified problem (or phenomenon) through some type of narrative or responsive method. Such typologies include discussions or interviews, or questionnaires and surveys (Lester, 1999). As Welman and Kruger (1999) explained, the expected outcome of qualitative research is to discern the social/psychological experience from the respondents' viewpoints. Therefore, participants chosen for these types of qualitative research must meet select criteria, meaning that they should have experience with the problem or phenomenon at issue, and be able to accurately articulate that experience to the researcher (Magilvy and Thomas, 2009). In many cases, the data-gathering steps of a qualitative study include interviewing of participants who will respond to open-ended questions, which allow for elaboration and are less susceptible to researcher influence. The interview questions are designed to consider and help elicit answers concerning the purpose of the study. Participants' responses are then carefully scrutinized. Such analysis of information gathered invariably will generate patterns and themes that lead to rich description and understanding of the issue being examined (Magilvy and Thomas, 2009).

Case Study

One type of qualitative tool departing from the above-described narrative methods or use of interviews, questionnaires, and surveys as gathering techniques was chosen for use in this research: the case study. Researcher recently began using and developing case studies to augment their arsenal of tools for investigating trends and specific situations in many scientific disciplines, and is favored for use by social scientists, psychologists, anthropologists, and ecologists, to name a few. In this research,

case study is optimal due to the political and economic aspects of social science driving the research. This methodology is very fitting when testing theoretical models by applying them to phenomena that occur in the real world, or when analyzing an actual longitudinal occurrence (something that took place over a period of years, as is the case herein). “Basically, a case study is an in-depth study of a particular situation rather than a sweeping statistical survey. It is a method used to narrow down a very broad field of research into one easily researchable topic” (Shuttleworth, 2016, p. 1). While it is possible that case studies may not answer all questions about a given topic completely, due to their highly-focused nature, they do reveal general ideas and trends that enhance continued elaboration upon the chosen topic or phenomenon of study (Shuttleworth, 2016).

In fact, certain researchers dismiss the use of a case study for the very reason of its narrow focus, claiming that studies that cover a limited field produce results that are not transferable or incapable of extrapolation to address a topic adequately. This notion was mentioned in the appropriate section as one of the inherent limitations of this or any case study. Conversely, others researchers have countered that because most case studies are not hypothetical, they provide more realistic responses than a purely statistical or narrative format. The actual impact probably lies between these disparate viewpoints, making it beneficial for researchers to integrate the two constructs. Through this blended process a successful case study may focus on a limited phenomenon, but would be enhanced if expanded to include additional, generalized information-gathering processes. A second key benefit of case studies is their flexibility. While scientists tout the certainty and objectivity of empirical (quantitative) research that focuses on proving or disproving a hypothesis, a case study, like other forms of qualitative research, might defy the anticipations of the researcher completely. The result could be a research leading in an unexpected and significant new direction entirely. In addition, researcher selection or preference for the case study type over other methods, especially statistical, can be related to scale. While those wedded to quantitative methodology may shun case studies, such research can be an essential tool for those pursuing topics in psychology, anthropology, health,

ecology, or, as in the study at hand, political, and economic implications. Finally, case studies are just more interesting to read than statistical reports, so they may appeal to a broader audience. Indisputably, whether research is intended for scholastic or public consumption or both, expanded readership is preferable.

Therefore, one major advantage of the case study research design is that the researcher can focus on specific and interesting cases. Examples may include testing a proposition or theory by analyzing a specific case. Alternatively, one may choose to view an interesting topic through the lens of single or limited experience. In this case at hand, the methodology blends these two approaches, as the proposition that flows from the research questions is being tested (that the embargo against Cuba has not been effective due to interference from foreign or domestic actors, among other things); in addition, the Cuban embargo is interesting in and of itself. It is one of the longest-standing unilateral economic sanctions in history, has been revised several times, and has recently been challenged by the Obama administration after nearly 70 years in place, although what may happen under the current administration could alter this direction. The case study herein focuses upon the interaction between two countries, close in geographic proximity but at opposite ends of the political spectrum, and can be a powerful and focused tool for understanding the social and economic pressures driving the embargo. One caveat to readers is that case studies derive from perceptions, and are in fact designed to provoke reasoned debate. Therefore, correct or incorrect will never present in a well-executed case study; provocative ideas, however, will ideally flow from the analysis (Miller, 1968 p. 23).

Methods of Data Collection

Quantitative and qualitative methods each rely on associated forms of data collection or information gathering. Due to the fact that qualitative studies often concern opinions or perceptions, these studies can require narrative techniques such as Creswell described: interviews, open-ended questionnaires, surveys, and even interpretation of artifacts such as paintings and poetry (Creswell,

2013). Most common collection measures for Quantitative methods include numerical or statistical data from empirical experiments. The qualitative study undertaken herein relied on examination and review of current literature on the topic, such as scholastic journals and articles, primary documents and statistical representations.

Literary Study/Review

Qualitative process, according to Leedy and Ormrod (2010), involves the collection, analysis, and interpretation of information or data to foster understanding the phenomenon under investigation, which in this case is a case study of the American embargo against Cuba. In order to maintain control on subjectivity by avoiding unnecessary imposition of researcher bias, most methodologists recommend triangulation, or utilizing more than one method of gathering or validating data (Shenton, 2004). Such diversity ensures that qualitative data gathering used in a case study based on literary review represents a holistic approach producing fresh viewpoints and new knowledge. Objectivity in a qualitative context does not mirror that of a quantitative research and experimentation; still, care is required to preclude overt researcher bias from tainting or directing the work. When discussing qualitative methods, renowned methodologist Creswell was concerned about the extent to which a researcher might interject his or her personal perspective to analysis of the case (Creswell, 2013). Thus, contrary to its statistics-driven counterpart, qualitative research revolves around collecting mostly textual data with subjective overtones. For this research the case study is comprised literally of textual data, which role is to describe, explain, and contextualize the specific case under consideration rather than link causality and other factors between variables, as would occur in a quantitative construct.

There are numerous methods of assuring against excess bias via use of data triangulation. Specific techniques might include initial data collection via questionnaire, coupled with subsequent corroboration through follow-up interviews or request for self-validation by the participants through reexamining their responses for accuracy and thoroughness. In the present case, however, the collection

and analysis will involve extant literature. Triangulation is achieved through consultation of diverse literary genres and forms; both composed articles and primary documents form the crux of the examination and reveal meanings from different perspectives. Using material garnered from time frames also allows for triangulation's objectivity, because older articles espouse pre-Cold War ideology, while more recent, revisionist writings challenge their predecessors' validity or are based on new, post-Cold War circumstances. This coincides with the precise definition of literary research of any historical rather than current topic, which acknowledges that an ever-flowing stream of events and continuing changes will accompany advances in the human condition. Numerous social, political, economic, and cultural institutions will alter the perceptions of what is being recorded as time proceeds. Historical-based literature review research attempts to bundle these events together in a manner that makes sense. It is essentially a meaning-making exercise that aims not at the accumulation of, but rather the interpretation of potentially evolving fact-based frameworks. Acknowledging the necessity to limit researcher bias, this type of analysis mandates reasoned interpretation. For a case study such as this, to add significant knowledge, according to Leedy and Ormrod (2010), interpretation must occur. Context becomes paramount, as the researcher must consider not only *what* phenomenon occurred, but *when* it happened or was reported. This places a responsibility upon the researcher to discern and present a factually-supported rationale for understanding the chosen phenomenon – be it an event, person, state, or even the whole historical era – from a clear vantage point. For this research that fresh outlook stems from both historical and present analysis of the U.S.-Cuban embargo and the particular barriers obstructing its success.

Pure literary research began less than two hundred years ago, circa 1850. It increased in usage during the 1930s and later in the 1980s (Hoover 2008), and currently includes the field of historical literary research as well. Its acceleration accompanied “the huge growth in the availability of electronic texts, increasingly sophisticated statistical techniques, and the advent of much more powerful computers that have produced much more accurate and persuasive analyses” (Hoover, 2008, p. 1).

Thus, technology enabled increased styles of literary analysis, developed through the use of applications and programs that quantify characteristics of literary texts numerically, utilizing mathematics for measurement, classification, and analysis. Even in qualitative studies, quantitative approaches are most naturally associated with questions of authorship and style [for example authenticating different portions of the Christian Bible by author or period]. Such techniques are not limited, however, and are adeptly used “to investigate larger interpretive issues” (Hoover 2008, p. 1). Often studies will rely on literary sources for interpretation of the meaning within texts that reveal contextual explanations regarding politics, societal change, and the influence of power, which are essential to the current study. This makes it incumbent upon the literary scholar to closely scrutinize and analyze the details of the text in order to reassemble those details in a coherent argument revealing the overall textual imperative. Using interpretation free from encumbering bias, literary scholars aim to present convincing arguments regarding phenomena drawn from the perceptions inherent in texts they interpret (Kusch, 2009).

The cornerstone for empirical quantitative research is objectivity, and viable qualitative studies depend on the same, although perhaps framed or measured differently. Integral to qualitative research that is literary based is the mandate for exemplary accuracy and integrity in textual reading and digesting. Such demands for solid scrutiny permit scholars to arrive at values and judgments justified through carefully read and accurately presented facts. In the mainstream tradition, academics accept certain limitations, including that physical reading and personal interpretation may be incomplete and incapable of exhausting the plethora of existing details that technical quantitative applications may achieve (Kusch, 2009). This potential deficiency, however, should not deter literary-based researchers from assuming the mantle passed to them by previous literary researchers of “interpreting the meaning and significance of what happened in the texts and how the text represents those events” (Kusch, 2009, p. 1). Indeed, human review empowers literary-based studies to elicit new meaning within texts, by delving further than what the author may have intended due to new events or changing eras (as

demonstrated by the revisionist articles discussing the Cuban missile crisis presented earlier in this paper). Those literary reviews based on strict language parsing discern understanding from the linguistic conventions themselves. Conversely, historical literary researchers interpret texts that may involve social, moral, or political choices. Such context informs readers with lessons regarding the outcome from a multitude of choices, depending upon source deviation/triangulation, as is the case herein.

Reliability and Validity

Two key factors necessary for any type of methodology connect the usefulness of data gathered and its analysis to its reliability and validity. Reliability means that a study's results would be close if not identical if performed by other researchers, during disparate time periods, through differing forms, or a combination of these (NWEA, 2004). Validity simply implies that research actually measures what it intends to measure. Although these factors are often stressed more in the quantitative rather than qualitative research context, they are significant in either approach.

At a minimum, reliability and validity foster truth, thoroughness, accuracy, and quality in qualitative research (Trochim, 2007). As explained previously, one of the paramount concerns regarding researcher truthfulness spawns from decrease in bias. This occurs, as stated, by employment of at least some of the techniques that fall under the triangulation rubric (Trochim, 2007). One of the hallmarks of triangulation in qualitative research is that it will “involve several investigators or peer researchers’ collection of the data at different time or location” (Golafshani, 2003, p. 604).

Triangulation was present in the current study through the review of diverse types of documents from different eras. According to methodologists, the numerous methods of triangulation may include, but are not limited to, the following, listed with the applicability of each to the current study:

- a. Adopt well-established research methods (intense scrutiny of established research).
- b. Develop an early familiarity with the culture being investigated (attained through prior classwork, exposure to individual assessments and reading about the Cuban embargo)
- c. Random sampling to reduce bias (n/a in a case study)
- d. Triangulation (promoted via use of various source types from different time periods)

- e. Tactics to ensure honesty (scrupulously analyzing the sources with integrity)
- f. Iterative question (n/a)
- g. Negative case analysis (looking at dichotomous positions, as presented herein)
- h. Frequent debriefing sessions (n/a)
- i. Peer scrutiny (n/a)
- j. Reflective commentary (researcher self-reflection)
- k. Background checks (n/a)
- l. Participant self-authenticating checks (n/a) (Shenton, 2004).

Ethical Issues

Due to the lack of human subjects, ethical issues often present such as those enumerated in the Belmont Report (HHS, 1979) are absent here. Notwithstanding, in a literary analysis of this type the researcher must make all efforts to avoid bias in interpreting the writings of others. Self-opinion may be expressed in the results section, but not during data collection. Cautious, precise reading of the authors' works with respect to their original meanings (while not necessarily agreement) is also part of ethical historical literary analysis, given that interpretations of texts may fluctuate over time.

Summary

Qualitative methodology is comprised of studies that depend upon lived experiences of human subjects yielding perception and opinion as opposed to numerical or statistical outcomes common to quantitative projects. The nature of the study being conducted herein is to analyze the history, focusing upon success or failure, and specific reasons behind either concerning the United States' longstanding embargo against Cuba. Thus a qualitative method is optimal for this paper.

In many instances, qualitative studies derive from participant narratives gathered through techniques such as interviews, surveys, focus groups, and questionnaires. Such collection styles allow for analysis on a broad scale of a multitude of topics. This research, however, employed the method of a case study. Case studies enable researchers to conduct an in-depth analysis of either a theoretical or an actual phenomenon, and the ability to ascertain highly specific information about the selected issue due to the concentrated process employed. This case study examined the embargo against Cuba,

highlighting the various actors and their roles: foreign governments, multinational corporations (foreign or domestic), migrant entrepreneurs, international sojourners, edible exporters, and indirect investors. These international agents demonstrably had the ability to negatively influence the effectiveness of the U.S. embargo.

In order to collect information for this study, the researcher relied on literary review and then analysis of existing documents, both composed articles and primary documents, undertaken via an historic viewpoint. Such techniques are distinct from pure literary analysis accentuating the linguistic viewpoint. Under that process, grammar and literary style may be compared or analyzed, sometimes using technological applications or computer programs, to detect similarities or unique characteristics that would lead to specific interpretations. The amount of output available when technology is involved exceeds that of human resources, but quality may be compromised as programming limits results. For this study, the researcher employed traditional reading and interpretation to reach conclusions that addressed the research questions posed. An underlying bifurcated theoretical framework of Evolutionary Economic Geography (EEG), modified to an international context, and behaviorism, to explain the rationale behind economic sanctions *ab initio*, supported the questions explored. EEG iterates that corporate behavior can affect economic conditions, and behaviorism stands for the proposition that positive or negative actions will occasion specific behaviors in the subjects (hence the concept, whether correct or not, that an embargo's negative impact might induce Cuba to change its actions, possibly reject Communism, or at least and conform with American expectations). This amounts to nothing less than economic coercion. The coercive nature was exacerbated because the cause of the embargo, Cold War anti-Communism, collapsed along with the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. Once the Soviet threat dissipated, American politicians justified the embargo as a pretext to prompt the Cubans to rise up against communism based on economic strife caused in part by the sanctions. The following section will present results of the analysis of this literary research.

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