



### Original Research Article

# RECOGNIZE THE ACTUAL SITUATION OF THE EMBARGO POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES AGAINST CUBA

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Received: 05.03.2024

Accepted: 10.03.2024

Published: 31.03.2024

### Abstract

In the history of foreign relations of countries around the world, the US embargo against Cuba is considered the most comprehensive, continuous and long-lasting economic sanctions. Persistently existing for more than 6 decades, it has changed ups and downs, causing great impacts and attracting the attention of everyone, especially public opinion and researchers. After the introduction and before the conclusion, the content of this article is divided into three parts. The first part presents the history of the US embargo against Cuba. The next section reviews and evaluates the negative effects of the US embargo policy against Cuba. And the last part gives trends on the possibility of lifting the US embargo against Cuba.

**Keywords:** Recognize, Actual Situation, Embargo, USA, Cuba.

### Introduction

In January 1959, the successful Cuban revolution, establishing the first socialist country in the Western Hemisphere, became a prominent world event. More than three years later, in February 1962, a completely different but equally outstanding event was the United States officially promulgating a comprehensive economic embargo against Cuba. With diverse causes, the embargo policy situation has changed complicatedly over the past 60 years and created many problems. Up to now, the possibility of lifting the embargo also has many levels and in many directions, making it difficult to make an accurate forecast for the upcoming period. This article reviews and studies the entire process of the US embargo against Cuba (origin, causes, scale, form, developments, impacts, reactions, assessments...) and related trends that may occur in the future.

### History of the US Embargo Process against Cuba

After being discovered by Christopher Columbus in October 1492, Cuba became a Spanish colony for four centuries. In the war with the United States in 1898, Spain failed, had to withdraw from Cuba and give the right to take over Cuba to the United States. The Republic of Cuba officially became independent on May 20, 1902 and the leader of the resistance war for independence - Tomas Estrada Palma - became the country's first constitutional President. But for the next five decades,

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Cuba was governed by pro-American capitalist governments and remained dependent on the United States in many aspects, especially in economics, politics, and diplomacy. In March 1952, former President (1940-1944) Fulgencio Batista ran for re-election. Fearing failure, he used the army to stage a coup and establish a military dictatorship.

The Batista government faced strong domestic opposition, especially confronting radical and revolutionary forces led by Fidel Castro. As for the United States, although it still sponsored the Batista government, it began to review and limit its military support. And on March 14, 1958, an arms embargo against Cuba was issued, pursuant to the United States' Trading with the Enemy Act (TWEA) of 1917. TWEA stipulates that the United States can trade (exchange, supply, trade...) weapons and military equipment with other individuals, organizations, and countries, but not for use by these entities weapons and military equipment that serve war or attack each other (that is, not to use weapons and military equipment for hostile purposes). This is considered *the first US embargo against Cuba*, but it does not have the same cause, content, and nature as the system of embargoes in the entire US embargo policy against Cuba later.

In January 1959, the Cuban revolution succeeded, overthrowing the Batista dictatorship and establishing a new communist government, led by Fidel Castro. Initially, the new administration still wanted to maintain friendly relations and support from the United States. In April 1959, Fidel made a friendly trip to the United States, meeting both US Vice President Richard Nixon and US Secretary of State Christian Herter... But Cuba - US relations suddenly deteriorated when, right in mid-1959, Cuba began implementing agricultural reforms, including the nationalization of US businesses and facilities on Cuban territory; at the same time, Cuba also expanded its support for revolutionary movements around the world, especially in Latin American and African countries.

Since March 1960, the US government began planning to reduce the influence of the Cuban revolution and overthrow the Fidel government. In April 1960, the US State Department issued a Memorandum, which acknowledged the spread of communism in Cuba, the Fidel government's support by the majority of the people, and the lack of an opposing political faction effective in Cuba. The Memorandum also stated that the "only means", the "most tactful and discreet policy possible", should be for the United States to adversely impact the Cuban economy, causing severe economic hardship for the Cuban economy, entails negative political and social changes, from which people will become dissatisfied, protest and overthrow the government.

From May 1960, under the pretext of the US arms embargo, Cuba began to openly and regularly purchase weapons from the Soviet Union. In July 1960, the United States reduced its brown sugar import quota from Cuba to 700,000 tons and the Soviet Union responded by agreeing to purchase on behalf of the United States. In June 1960, the administration of President Dwight Eisenhower of the United States refused to export oil to Cuba, causing Cuba to depend on Soviet crude oil. Cuba signed a trade agreement with the Soviet Union under which the Soviet Union would supply 900,000 tons of oil to Cuba. The United States considered this a provocative act, so it ordered its oil and gas companies with refineries located in Cuba to stop processing crude oil that Cuba imported from the Soviet Union; at the same time, canceling the sugar purchase quota from Cuba. In response, in August 1960, Cuba nationalized many large US-owned enterprises in Cuba, including the Cuban Telephone Company (CCE), 3 oil refineries and 36 sugar factories. The Eisenhower administration responded by issuing the first trade embargo - banning the sale of all products to Cuba, except food and medicine. In October 1960, the Cuban government continued to respond by nationalizing all US businesses and most privately owned assets of Americans in Cuba. In January 1961, the United States increased the embargo and officially severed all diplomatic relations with Cuba.

In April 1961, the United States supported and assisted more than 1,500 exiled Cuban reactionary troops who landed on Giron beach to destroy Cuba's revolutionary government of Fidel. But after just over 70 hours of fighting, the landing troops were defeated. Cuba ended all friendly and friendly relations with the United States, and declared that it followed Marxism-Leninism to carry out socialist construction, moving towards a communist society. Cuba also enhanced cooperation and comprehensive alliance with the Soviet Union, allowing the Soviet Union to deploy missile systems (including nuclear missiles) on its territory to confront and threaten the United States. That situation and many other influencing factors caused the John Kennedy administration of the United States to

quickly expand the embargo system. On February 3, 1962, President Kennedy signed Proclamation No. 3447, promulgating an embargo policy on all economic activities between the United States and Cuba. *This complete economic embargo took effect on February 7, 1962.*

Thus, the United States' economic embargo policy against Cuba (Cuba does not call it "embargo", but "blockade" - el bloqueo) was officially issued in February 1962 due to *many reasons*. But whether direct or indirect causes, those causes can be seen quite clearly: (1) Cuba has nationalized all assets of individuals, organizations, and US government agencies on Cuban territory. This violates the material interests and property ownership rights of the United States, causing the United States to respond, and the most appropriate and corresponding punishment is material, financial, and economic punishment; (2) The Cuban revolutionary government prohibited private ownership and placed many restrictions on freedom, democracy, and citizenship. This is a violation of the most basic human rights that the US government as well as any progressive government in the world must have the responsibility to prevent; (3) The Cuban revolutionary government decided to follow Marxism-Leninism, building Cuba into the first socialist country in Latin America; spread his ideas, spirit and revolutionary movement throughout Latin America and the world. This negatively affects the morale and political interests of the United States because Latin America is inherently considered the "backyard" of the United States with many countries with right-wing and pro-American governments. Therefore, the United States must apply solutions to prevent; (4) Cuba strengthens the development of a close alliance with the Soviet Union - the leading country of socialist countries and the main enemy of the United States. Cuba also allowed the Soviet Union to deploy missile systems (including nuclear missiles) on its territory, seriously threatening US security. Therefore, the United States needs to have strategies and plans to limit or/and eliminate this risk; (5) The United States cannot use its powerful military force to attack Cuba, because if it did so, the Soviet Union would immediately intervene and protect Cuba, easily leading to a devastating war between the United States and Soviet Union. Therefore, Cuba should be punished with non-military measures; and (6) Poverty, recession and economic crisis in Cuba will lead to political and social instability, the people will be dissatisfied, unsupportive and even rebel to overthrow the Fidel government. To do this, if economic solutions are applied, economic sanctions will be the optimal choice.

In October 1962, US reconnaissance satellites discovered that Cuba had allowed the Soviet Union to build a nuclear base on its territory. In response, President Kennedy's administration demanded the removal of Soviet weapons and ordered a naval blockade of Cuba, causing an extremely tense situation that lasted 14 days (October 14-28, 1962) with the risk of nuclear war breaking out. But finally, after many negotiations, the United States secretly agreed to withdraw its nuclear missiles from Turkey (a US ally country, located close to Soviet territory) within a few months and committed to not invade Cuba if the Soviet Union withdraws its missiles from Cuba. The Soviet Union approved and later removed the missiles from bases in Cuba.

Since July 1963, the United States banned American citizens from going to Cuba. In Cuba, in a speech in September 1965, President Fidel said that Cubans could come to the United States of their own free will and come to the United States openly, not secretly. A few days later, US President Lyndon Johnson announced that he would open US borders to all Cubans and signed into law an immigration law that prioritized Cuban evacuees with family ties to people living in the United States. According to the US State Department, up to that time, about 270,000 Cubans had immigrated to the United States since January 1959. In November 1966, Johnson signed a law allowing Cubans to come to the United States to apply for permanent residence after 1 year.

In September 1977, US President Jimmy Carter reached an agreement with Fidel to resume limited diplomatic exchanges, allowing officials from the two countries to communicate regularly. The United States opened an interests department with a small staff at its former embassy in the Cuban capital of Havana, under the auspices of the Swiss Embassy (Switzerland took over U.S. interests in Cuba since 1961). Cuba also opened an interest department in the US capital Washington D.C, under the auspices of the Czechoslovak Embassy.

In 1980, Cuba faced strong pressure from hundreds of thousands of people wanting to evacuate the country, as the nation's economy suffered from skyrocketing oil prices and the US embargo continue. When the incident occurred in just 2 days, more than 10,000 Cubans crowded together in front of the Peruvian Embassy to seek asylum, Fidel announced that anyone who wanted

to leave Cuba for Florida (USA) could do so from the port of Mariel for the next 6 months. President Carter welcomed the Cuban people to the United States “with open arms” and about 125,000 Cubans participated in this immigration.

In March 1982, President Ronald Reagan placed Cuba on the list of countries supporting terrorism, criticizing the Fidel government for supporting communist militant groups in African and Latin American countries, especially in Angola, El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua. And Cuba resolutely affirms that “the actions of legitimate national liberation movements cannot be considered terrorism”... On May 20, 1985, the United States established radio services for the Cuban people, with Radio Marti began broadcasting news and entertainment programming to Cuba from studios in the United States. The federally funded broadcasting station was proposed by Reagan in 1981 and established by Congress in 1983. Cuba denounced the service as US propaganda, jamming programs new station's broadcast, and considered the use of the name of national hero Jose Marti a “blatant insult”. Fidel immediately suspended an immigration agreement that had allowed up to 20,000 Cubans to immigrate to the United States each year and allowed the repatriation of about 3,000 Cubans with criminal records or mental illness. Cuba also suspended visits by Cubans living in the United States.

In October 1992, US President George H. W. Bush (Bush senior) signed into law the Cuban Democracy Act (CDA), also known as the Torricelli Act, thereby strengthening US economic sanctions against with Cuba after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. CDA prohibits all ships that have exchanged goods with Cuba within 180 days from docking in the United States, and prohibits foreign subsidiaries/foreign branches of U.S. businesses traded with Cuba. The CDA also limits the amount of U.S. currency traded with Cuba. However, the CDA also offers a roadmap for normalizing relations, conditional on Cuba implementing important economic and political reforms.

A few weeks after the Cuban military shot down two US civilian planes in the waters off the coast of Florida, on March 12, 1996, US President Bill Clinton signed into law the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, also known as called the Helms-Burton Act (HBA), aimed at further tightening and systematizing the US embargo policy. The HBA also sanctions foreign companies doing business with Cuba and/or provokes some US allies to denounce this as a violation of international law. The HBA also stipulates that sanctions can only be lifted after Fidel Castro and his younger brother Raul Castro are no longer in power, Cuba has moved toward free elections and a free press, and has released prisoners. politics... In 2000, the United States began to relax the Cuba embargo policy in trade, with President Clinton signing into law the Trade Sanction Reform and Export Enhancement Act (TSREEA), accordingly The United States can trade with Cuba many agricultural products, food and medicine, and medical equipment, but exports to Cuba can only be paid in cash, sales must be paid in advance and must be sponsored by third country financial institutions.

After more than half a century of tension, due to the needs of both Cuba and the United States, by the second term of US President Barack Obama (2013-2017), relations between the two countries were more open and peaceful. In June 2013, the two sides agreed to promote an 18-month secret negotiation round (with the mediation of Canada and the Vatican). *On December 17, 2014, Cuba and the United States normalized relations, ending half a century of confrontation.* In April 2015, the United States removed Cuba from the list of “countries supporting terrorism”. In July 2015, the two countries opened embassies in each other's capitals. In March 2016, the US President visited Cuba for the first time after the 1959 revolution. In 2016, the US also abstained for the first time in voting to lift the embargo on Cuba at the United Nations General Assembly (previous times all voted against). During the 2 years 2015-2016, the two countries signed 22 cooperation agreements in the fields of anti-terrorism and drug trafficking, anti-informatics crime, sharing experiences in cancer treatment, oil spill prevention cooperation, security and maritime cooperation (Vietnam News Agency, 2017)... The United States loosened many trade embargoes and eliminated some restrictions on money transfers, travel, customs, maritime regulations... for Cuba. The United States also limits, suspends or completely stops many types of support for exiled Cuban reactionary organizations opposing the Cuban government (especially organizations based in the United States).

However, immediately after taking office in January 2017, new US President Donald Trump decided to tighten the embargo on Cuba and support exiled reactionary organizations opposing the

Cuban government. The Trump administration has introduced and applied 243 additional economic embargoes on Cuba (My, 2022) and many incentives and funding for organizations that sabotage the Cuban government. The trade embargo during the last 20 months of Trump's term (April 2019-December 2020) caused a loss of 9.1 billion USD to Cuba (Russia, 2021). On January 12, 2021, at the end of the Trump administration's term, the US State Department added Cuba to the "list of countries sponsoring terrorism", along with warnings about control and severe sanctions that the United States will impose.

Although candidate Joe Biden, when running for US president in 2020, promised to lift restrictions on Cuba, when he took power on January 20, 2021, Biden did not do so, and continued to maintain maintain the policies and embargo measures against Cuba of the previous Trump administration. In June 2021, the Biden administration continued its tradition of voting against the annual United Nations General Assembly resolution calling for an end to the US economic embargo on Cuba (this is the 29th resolution passed with an absolute majority of 184 votes in favor, only 3 abstentions and 2 against being the United States and Israel). Immediately after the large protest of the Isidro movement protesting against the Cuban government in mid-July 2021, President Biden declared his dissatisfaction with the way the Cuban government handled and suppressed, and promised to increase support for the dissidents in Cuba. At the same time, he also introduced sanctions against a series of Cuban officials who once commanded, ordered a crackdown on protesters, and loosened policies on immigrants from Cuba for political reasons. As a result, only by the end of 2021, about 300,000 Cubans (that is, nearly 3% of the country's population) had evacuated to the United States (Hang, 2023), many of them due to discontent and opposition, against the Cuban government.

In mid-May 2022, the United States lifted a series of restrictive measures and embargoes against Cuba, typically 3 issues. First, the Biden administration re-established the Cuban family reunification program that was discontinued many years ago, and accelerated visa issuance. Second, remove the limit on money transfers to Cuba: during the Trump administration, each person in the United States can only send back to Cuba a maximum of 1,000 USD per quarter - this limit ends from here. Third, develop aviation relations, sharply increase flights between the United States and Cuba. However, soon after, on May 20, 2022, the Biden administration added Cuba to the list of a few countries in the world considered "not fully cooperating" in the fight against terrorism. And the embargo policy against Cuba is still extended in 2022 and 2023 (the US embargo policy is extended or suspended or canceled by the government of this country... once a year, usually in September each year).

### **Negative Effects of The US Embargo Policy Against Cuba**

#### ***The United States' embargo policy against Cuba caused widespread opposition***

The United States' embargo policy against Cuba is *strongly and widely opposed* around the world, especially in Cuba, socialist countries and even in the United States. Cuban leaders - from the former Fidel and Raul to current President Miguel Diaz-Canel - have repeatedly condemned and asked the United States to soon lift the embargo, and called on the international community to support them this struggle... As early as 1979, during his visit to Mexico, Pope John Paul II called for an end to the US embargo policy on Cuba. And Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, on May 1, 2009, when talking about his meeting with US President Barack Obama at a summit a few days earlier, declared: "If this barbaric blockade is not lifted, For the Cuban people it is all a lie, it is all a big farce and the US empire will be alive and well, threatening us" (Cambero, 2009). Even some US Presidents also support the early lifting of the embargo, such as Carter who took many measures to ease the embargo on Cuba during his presidency (1977-1981) and when he was no longer President has visited Cuba many times, calling on the United States to lift the embargo policy; and President (2009-2017) Obama pushed for the normalization of relations with Cuba, calling the US embargo policy "rigid and outdated" and "failed". Groups of US congressional lawmakers, from both the Democratic and Republican parties, have repeatedly drafted and submitted to Congress bills to lift the embargo on Cuba (especially in 2015, 2021 and 2023), but so far none of those bills have been passed by Congress. Many international organizations have pointed out the negative and anti-progressive effects of the United States' embargo policy on Cuba, and called for its lifting and ending, as Amnesty

International said in 2009, the embargo has had a negative impact on human rights in Cuba and “states must take into account the impact that imposed sanctions may have on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights in Cuba” (Amnesty International, 2009). And the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC, including 33 countries in the Americas, excluding the United States and Canada) issued a special statement in September 2021, with the content: “Member States CELAC urgently calls on the US President to fundamentally change the imposition of the blockade on Cuba, calling on the US Congress to begin procedures to lift this blockade” (Quyen, 2021).

Opposition to the US embargo policy against Cuba is increasingly expressed in a variety of ways. Over the past 6 decades, thousands of protests against the embargo have taken place around the world, each with participation from hundreds to millions of people, expressed in many forms: from calls, declarations, press conferences to rallies, marches, and demonstrations. In addition, there were quite a few defiances, open violations of the Cuban embargo policy, and some extreme attacks on US power or diplomatic agencies to protest the Cuban embargo. In Cuba, walking protests against the embargo are a common form, but in recent years, protests by means of transport (bicycles, motorbikes, cars...) have developed, for example, to Condemning the US embargo policy, on May 30, 2021, about 20 ships gathered and conducted a parade in Cienfuegos Bay (central Cuba) (Hang, 2021). In the US, there have also been quite impressive protests, for example, film director Michael Moore in March 2007 violated the Cuban embargo policy by sending 3 volunteers who needed health care (they were who was a rescue worker during the 9/11 terrorist attack) went to Cuba for treatment (Minh, 2007); or mid-2021, Cuban-American activist Carlos Lazo and the group Love Bridge (Puentes de Amor) made a walk of more than 2,000 km from Miami to Washington DC to ask the US government to abolish abolish the embargo policy against Cuba (Ha, 2021). The most dramatic event was probably the event on October 16, 2018: at a meeting on human rights at the United Nations headquarters, Cuban diplomats shouted the slogan: “Lift the blockade of Cuba!” and “There is Cuba, there is no blockade!”, and at the same time slammed hammers and books on the table to dominate the speech of US representative Kelley Curie (Le, 2018).

The most widespread and significant objection is that since 1992, every year (except 2020 due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic), the United Nations General Assembly has held a meeting with all members of the United Nations attended to pass a resolution whose full name is “*The need to end the economic, trade and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba*”. This resolution was unanimously passed by the vast majority of members, usually only the United States and Israel (a close ally and recipient of the most US aid) opposed... Most recently, November 2, 2023, the 31st United Nations resolution calling on the United States to end the embargo against Cuba was supported by 187 countries, only the United States and Israel opposed, and Ukraine abstained. Demonstrating Vietnam's consistent stance, Ambassador Dang Hoang Giang - Head of the Vietnamese Delegation to the United Nations - joined a large number of countries in opposing the economic, trade and financial embargo against Cuba, and at the same time, he emphasized that these measures violate international law and go against the principles and basic principles of the United Nations Charter. The Ambassador reaffirmed that Vietnam opposes all forms of unilateral imposition and embargo against sovereign countries. The Ambassador also called on the United States to end the embargo, remove Cuba from the list of countries supporting terrorism and reverse current policies towards Cuba, moving towards complete normalization of relations between the two countries, on basis of equality, reciprocity, respect for each other's national sovereignty and political independence. Vietnam is ready to share experiences, contribute to promoting dialogue and building trust in this process. Mr. Doi Binh - China's Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations - also cited sanctions and embargoes imposed on Cuba over the past 60 years that have caused Cuba to lose nearly 160 billion USD (alone from March 2022 to February 2023, damages amounted to 4.867 billion USD, equivalent to 3 years' worth of food costs for all Cubans). China urges the United States to completely and immediately lift economic, trade and financial sanctions against Cuba, and develop normal relations with other United Nations member countries, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations as well as basic norms in international relations: “The continuing unilateral coercive measures of the United States against Cuba and other countries seriously violate the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, seriously weakens the international consensus on the 2030 Agenda and significantly reduces the right to survival and development of the people of Cuba and other countries. Such actions are not consistent with

international trends of peaceful development and mutually beneficial cooperation and also seriously weaken the efforts of all countries in implementing sustainable development goals. Such actions need to stop immediately” (Anh, 2023).

### ***The embargo policy has created negative effects for both Cuba and the United States***

The United States' embargo policy against Cuba has caused serious negative impacts, causing heavy damage to Cuba. Regarding the *economy*, before Cuba issued the nationalization policy and the United States issued the embargo policy, the United States and Cuba had a close relationship: the United States was a country with a lot of economic investment and economic aid most for Cuba; the United States governs and sponsors Cuba's key economic sectors; the United States is the country with the largest and strongest business system in Cuba; the United States is Cuba's largest export market, and is also the closest source of goods imported into Cuba... But since the United States issued a policy of complete embargo on the Cuban economy (February 1962), that close relationship was completely lost, Cuba fell into economic depression and decline, had to change its alignment and receive economic protection from the Soviet Union and the system of socialist countries. The Soviet Union and socialist countries accounted for 80% of export turnover, providing 95% of gasoline, 57% of food, 51% of meat and most transportation tools, paper, and consumer goods essential use of Cuba (Thao, 2020). Since 1992, since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the socialist countries in Eastern Europe, the US embargo has remained and tightened, and the Cuban economy has once again fallen into crisis, which must be overcome and resolved overcome by self-reliance and developing cooperation with many forms, many regimes, many organizations, and many countries. Despite significant innovation, expansion and achievements, the Cuban economy is still considered to be in recession and crisis at the worst level in the past 30 years, with inflation reaching 70% and Food and medicine are increasingly lacking (My, 2022). One of the fundamental causes of this situation is still the embargo policy against Cuba imposed by the United States. According to statistics from many researchers and experts, the US embargo policy over the past 6 decades has caused the Cuban economy to lose 140-200 billion USD. If we also include price inflation and other related economic losses, the damage is much larger: for example, in 2009, the Cuban government estimated that, since the US embargo, Cuba's losses were has reached 753.69 billion USD; or in 2015, Al Jazeera media estimated that the US embargo cost Cuba up to 1,100 billion USD in 55 years (1960-2015) (Khai, 2021).

The adverse economic impact of the embargo on Cuba entails negative *social* impacts. In Cuba, there are often shortages of food, medicine, clean water and essential consumer goods. On average, the Cuban government has to spend more than 2 billion USD each year to buy food, at a price more than double the actual price (Khai, 2021). Wages for workers are still low and social insurance for them is inadequate... The US government has repeatedly eased the embargo on food and medicine for humanitarian and health reasons. But the positive impact of that is not great compared to the social losses for the Cuban people that the embargo policy causes.

The embargo policy also negatively impacted Cuban *culture*. As soon as the revolution succeeded and it was decided to build socialism, the Cuban government put in place controls and restrictions on the cultural penetration and spread of Western capitalist countries (especially the United States). And since the US embargo policy, the prohibition of American culture in Cuba has become more strict and drastic, and that is not in accordance with the wishes of the people of the two countries, not in line with the trend increasingly expanding exchanges, sharing and spreading culture between countries, regions and around the world. Such a ban on American culture can also lead to unfortunate misunderstandings among Cuban people about the traditions, activities, lifestyle, views, and ideas of the American people.

The embargo policy also caused heavy damage to *tourism* - a key service industry of Cuba, because this policy prohibited all US citizens and people under US jurisdiction from coming, traveling, operating in Cuba (except in some special cases and requiring a license). Before the embargo policy was issued, the country with the most visitors to Cuba was the United States.

The embargo policy also causes volatility and instability in Cuban *politics*, and this is also one of the goals the United States really wants. Economic recession and social unrest due to the embargo will easily lead to political instability and government change. Dissatisfied people and opposition organizations and movements will stand up, demand, resist and even overthrow the

government. The most recent event was the Isidro movement, taking advantage of the economic and social difficulties in Cuba due to the embargo and the Covid-19 pandemic, in mid-July 2021 gathering tens of thousands of people in more than 50 Cuban cities took to the streets to protest, demanding rights and democracy.

*On the US side*, the embargo policy against Cuba also caused significant negative effects of its own. On average, each year, this embargo policy has caused losses to the US economy of nearly 5 billion USD (Phung, 2023) (meaning that since the embargo on Cuba until now, the United States has suffered economic losses of about 300 billion USD). The Cuban embargo has prevented US businesses from accessing Cuba's potential market, leaving this market in the hands of major competitors (especially China), and at the same time the Cuban community in the US (currently more than 2 million people) also protested against the US government separating them from their relatives back home... The increasingly strong and widespread opposition to the US embargo policy against Cuba also undermined America's credibility, image, power, and position in the region and the world.

***Although the US embargo policy against Cuba is large and special, but it does not achieve its basic goals***

In its foreign history, the United States applied an early and widespread embargo policy against competing or hostile countries; each embargo policy only regulates a few specific areas and usually does not last more than 8 years. According to statistics, up to now, the United States has embargoed 46 countries (of which Germany was the first country embargoed by the United States, from 1917 to 1921). Vietnam was also embargoed by the United States for a long period of 30 years (1964-1994). However, looking at the entire process of the US embargo against Cuba, most researchers and experts affirm that this is *the most comprehensive and longest-lasting economic embargo*. “Most comprehensive” because it imposes and affects every aspect and relevant field of the Cuban economy, and “longest lasting” because it is implemented continuously, now for more than 60 years, far exceeding duration of all other embargoes.

Despite being so long and comprehensive, the US economic embargo policy against Cuba *has failed to achieve its basic purpose*. When promulgating and in the process of implementing this policy, the United States always aims for three main goals: (1) In order for Cuba to face difficulties, crises, and economic constraints, it will have to expand and develop its free and democratic like the United States or according to the wishes and orientations of the United States; (2) In order for Cuba to focus on overcoming negative economic disadvantages, there will be no more time, effort and resources to spread and share its revolutionary ideas, spirit and movement spread around the world, especially to Latin American and African countries; and (3) In order for Cuba due to economic difficulties and instability will cause political and social instability, people will hate and oppose the government, leading to riots, overthrowing the revolutionary government, replacing regime, bringing Cuba back to a capitalist regime that is pro-American or/and dependent on the US as it was before the 1959 revolution.

*With the first goal of the United States*, Cuba did not follow the US model or direction at all, but maintained, expanded, and developed freedom and democracy in its own ways: either stable, controlling freedom and democracy (in the past), or legalizing and expanding freedom and democracy (in recent years and now). Cuba's new Constitution issued in April 2019 has supplemented, expanded, and developed many human and civil rights that were not previously regulated (such as private property rights, equal marriage rights, the right to be provided with adequate clean water, the right to have decent housing, the right to have/keep multiple nationalities...). Recently enacted Cuban laws also legalize the most special civil rights and human rights, making Cuba one of the few pioneering countries in this issue (such as the Family Code issued in September 2022 legalizes same-sex marriage, the Euthanasia Act issued in November 2023 legalizes euthanasia...).

*With the second goal of the United States*, although it must focus on economic recovery, Cuba still develops foreign affairs and spreads and shares its spirit, movement, and influence in its own way; cooperate and closely associate with socialist countries, allied countries and neighboring countries; participate in many popular and progressive international organizations and activities; and especially use medical diplomacy and military diplomacy with necessary countries and regions in the world. Regarding medical diplomacy, Cuba established a program to send its medical staff (tens of



thousands of people each year) abroad, mostly to Latin American, African and Oceanian countries, and at the same time bring Medical students and their patients travel to Cuba for training and treatment. Regarding military diplomacy, Cuba participates in many wars around the world, sponsors weapons, sends advisors and soldiers to hot spots in Africa, Central America and Asia (Ethiopia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Yemen...) and was a key military force helping win or seize power in the wars in Algeria (1961-1965) and Angola (1975-1991).

*With the third goal of the United States*, despite many difficulties and economic instability, the political situation in Cuba since the successful revolution in 1959 is still quite stable, the government exists firmly and steadfastly determine the work of socialist construction. To achieve that, in addition to the support of the majority of people, the Cuban government also implements innovative solutions, plans, programs, and policies that are solid, updated, appropriate, flexible, and effective, especially how to improvise activities that negatively affect political security (the government's clever mediation, negotiation and suppression of the Isidro movement during the protests in mid-July 2021 was a typical example).

### **Trends in the Possibility of Lifting the US Embargo against Cuba**

#### ***Factors affecting the ability to lift the US embargo against Cuba***

Looking at the process of more than 60 years of US economic embargo on Cuba and the current context of all aspects, we can see *many favorable factors* that are promoting the possibility of lifting this embargo: (1) Policy The US embargo against Cuba is increasingly strongly and widely opposed in Cuba, in the United States and around the world. Maintaining or/and strengthening the embargo on Cuba will cause the United States to increasingly lose its image, prestige, power, and position in the region and the world; (2) Not only causing heavy damage to Cuba, the embargo policy also causes great damage to the economy and many other sectors of the United States; (3) Implemented continuously, comprehensively, and long-term since its promulgation until now, the US embargo policy against Cuba has not achieved its basic purpose. So it should be abolished, and maybe by abolishing it, the United States will achieve its basic goal, because a free economy - not isolation due to embargoes - can be the driving force behind freedom due to, democracy in Cuba; (4) Just as US President Obama said, the US embargo policy against Cuba today is "rigid and outdated", inconsistent with the trend of flexible, cooperative, interconnected and global foreign policy; (5) The economic embargo policy is considered by the United States to be the optimal choice when Cuba is still sponsored by the Soviet Union and the system of Eastern European socialist countries - a formidable opponent of the United States. But since 1992, that powerful alliance collapsed and Cuba lost its important patronage. The United States today can completely abolish the economic embargo and replace it with other stronger and more effective forms of sanctions (including military solutions) without fear; (6) Cuba is not a risk and does not pose any significant threat to the United States, so the solution to prevent Cuba by embargo is not necessary; (7) The embargo policy has actually caused harm and disadvantage to the Cuban people, not to the Cuban government as the United States expected and desired; (8) The embargo policy will give the Cuban government an excuse to blame and justify the causes of recession, economic crisis and other negative and disadvantages that Cuba has or/and is currently experiencing; (9) The US government's promotion of freedom and democracy by banning Americans from traveling to Cuba or/and doing business with Cuba is considered hypocritical, because the majority of Americans want improve diplomatic relations as well as tourism, trade and financial policies with Cuba; and (10) The embargo prevents Cubans from participating in the digital age by separating them from technology and limiting the flow of electronic information to Cuba.

However, besides many favorable factors, can also see *difficult factors* that are hindering and constraining the ability of the United States to lift the economic embargo against Cuba, which are: (1) The United States should maintain its policy of embargo policy against Cuba because Cuba has not met the necessary conditions to lift the embargo, and the United States will be considered to be giving in and weak if the embargo against Cuba is lifted; (2) The embargo policy allows the United States to put pressure on the Cuban government to expand and develop human and civil rights; (3) The Cuban government frequently demands the easing and/or lifting of the embargo, through provocative actions

and strong protests, causing the United States to raise concerns that those actions will escalate further if the embargo policy is completely canceled; (4) The majority of Cubans evacuated and immigrated to the US due to economic difficulties and dissatisfaction with and opposition to the government. Therefore, Cuban Americans often support the embargo policy. Furthermore, if the United States lifts the embargo and normalizes relations with Cuba, it will be difficult to find a suitable solution for the large number of Cuban exiles who oppose the Cuban government and are living in the United States ; (5) The United States still considers Cuba to be subject to sanctions because it believes that Cuba is still supporting and supporting terrorist activities (for example, helping guerrilla groups attack or overthrow the constitutional government in some countries); (6) Cuba has not shown any willingness to negotiate in good faith with the United States; (7) Because the private economy has only recently been developed by Cuba and is still small, the state-owned economy is still the mainstay. Therefore, lifting the embargo will only help the government but little help the Cuban people. Furthermore, if the embargo continues, the United States will actually embargo the Cuban government, while still supporting, providing, and helping the Cuban people; (8) If the United States lifts the embargo and normalizes relations with Cuba, it may have to pay a huge amount of compensation (Cuba demands 302 billion USD in compensation from the United States due to the blockade and embargo policy caused by the United States - of which 181 billion USD in human damages and 121 billion USD in economic damages, while the United States only asked Cuba to compensate 8 billion USD in damages because Cuba nationalized American private companies (Tuan, 2021)); and (9) If the United States lifts the embargo and normalizes relations with Cuba, it may have to return Guantanamo to Cuba, thus losing an important geostrategic base (according to An agreement that the United States signed with Cuba in 1934, the US Guantanamo base in the Cuban island waters will exist indefinitely in the form of a land lease - every year the United States will pay Cuba by check a symbolic 2,000 USD rent).

### ***Trends in the levels of US embargo lifting on Cuba***

Looking at the entire US embargo policy against Cuba, one of the most concerning issues today is the trend of embargo lifting levels in the near future. Most researchers and experts have proposed 3 levels of embargo lifting in the following 4 specific possibilities:

*The first possibility* is that in the near future, the United States will *hardly change its embargo policy against Cuba*. This possibility is forecast at *a low level*. If we divide the history of the US embargo against Cuba into short, successive periods, each period is 4 years long, corresponding to a term of office of the US President, will see that there have been many periods of time that the following embargo period is virtually unchanged compared to the previous embargo period. This phenomenon often occurs when all three conditions are met: (1) The situation of both the United States and Cuba in the following period does not change much compared to the previous period; (2) The regional and world context in the following period has not changed much compared to the previous period (especially issues related to the United States and Cuba); and (3) The ruling party (the party with a President) in the United States in the later period is also the ruling party in the immediately preceding period (even the President of the later period is the person elected to office second consecutive period). However, in the current situation, all three of those conditions are not met - for example, US President Biden's Democratic Party is the ruling party in the current period of the United States, but could very well become the opposing party, if the Republican Party wins and comes to power in the upcoming period, when the US presidential election in early November 2024 is approaching, and Republican presidential candidate Trump is standing out, surpassing away from support for other presidential candidates. Thus, the US embargo policy against Cuba in the coming period will certainly have many changes.

*The second possibility* is that in the near future, the United States will *completely lift the embargo policy against Cuba*. This possibility is forecast at *a moderate level*. Because, although there are many favorable incentives for lifting the embargo, there are still many difficulties that prevent it from happening, especially two obstacle factors: (1) Policy The US embargo against Cuba is large, comprehensive and has existed for a long time, creating a great weight and inertia, making it difficult to lift immediately; and (2) Although the US President has the biggest role in influencing, deciding, and implementing embargo policy, it is the US Congress that actually has the right to decide whether or not to lift the embargo, by voting for a bill to lift the embargo. In fact, many times bills to lift the

embargo on Cuba have been drafted and submitted to Congress, but up to now, none of them has been passed by the US Congress to become a law effect.

*The third possibility* is that in the near future, the United States will *tighten/strengthen the embargo policy against Cuba*. This possibility is also forecast at a *medium level*. The history of the embargo policy against Cuba shows that it is often loosened or partially lifted by the United States if the Democratic Party is the ruling party, or tightened and enhanced if the Republican Party is the ruling party. This possibility is likely to happen if in November 2024, presidential candidate Trump or another Republican presidential candidate is elected president.

*The fourth possibility* is that in the near future, the United States will *relax and partially lift the embargo policy against Cuba*. This possibility is predicted at a *high level*. Because, it is quite suitable for the current and upcoming situation of the United States, Cuba, the region and the world; compatible with both advantages and disadvantages; and certainly also gains the most support (whether the Democratic Party continues to govern or has to cede that role to the Republican Party after the November 2024 general election in the United States).

### Conclusion

The US embargo against Cuba is the longest, most comprehensive and continuous economic embargo in history. Stemming from direct and indirect causes, the embargo policy has changed complicatedly over the past 60 years, giving rise to many problems and negatively affecting related parties. Although the embargo is often strongly and widely opposed around the world, and the United States has not achieved its basic purpose when implementing it, it still continues today in new environments and conditions. A multi-dimensional view and in-depth study of the United States' embargo policy on Cuba will help those interested understand the nature and impact of this process, and explain its persistence. Although most certainly hope that the US embargo policy against Cuba will soon end, this is truly a complex and difficult issue, forcing all parties to overcome many challenges if they want to solve it, conflicts, and find common consensus to fully normalize US-Cuba relations.

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