
‘NO ES FÁCIL’¹

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND CUBA SINCE 2008

¹ Cuban popular saying: ‘It’s not easy’.

Hic sudavit, sed non frustra!

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INTRODUCTION

EU FOREIGN POLICY AND THE CUBAN CASE UNTIL 2009

This thesis investigates to what extent the EU has maintained a unified foreign policy towards Cuba independent from US influences, in 2008-2016. Amongst the justifications for this study are the international developments surrounding Cuba in the past few years and the lack of studies of them, especially in view of the EU's role. Furthermore, Cuba as a case study can provide insights into EU unity on foreign affairs and EU independence from US foreign policy. This thesis will demonstrate that internal EU unity on Cuba increased throughout the years, while US influence on EU foreign policy towards Cuba decreased.

'Demasiado fastidio para tan poca plata' were the words with which Fidel Castro described the European Union behind closed doors.² With that remark he summed up the in his eyes tiresome relations between the European Union (EU) and Cuba. These relations are quite complicated. Since inside the EU member states often disagreed on what the foreign policy towards Cuba should be. Within the EU especially Spain acted on historical and social ties to its former colony. The loss of its most important colony in 1898, left an enormous mark in Spanish history and culture. Consequently, Spain was often one of the main actors trying to shape EU foreign policy towards Cuba. The EU's policies in general favoured some form of constructive engagement. In contrast, the United States (US) constantly pressured the EU to isolate the island. The US still maintain the embargo put in place at the height of the Cold

² 'Too much nuisance/annoyance for too little money', unofficial statement by Fidel Castro in 2002 on entering the EU Common Position cited in J. Roy, *The Cuban Revolution (1959-2009): Relations with Spain, the European Union, and the United States* (New York 2009) 69.

War. The special interests of Spain and the US in Cuba made the relations between the EU and Cuba an intricate puzzle. While the US tried to influence EU foreign policy making from the outside, from within Spain's tried to determine EU policy on Cuba. As a result, relations between the EU and Cuba do not consist of just two parties, there are four important parties. This remarkable quadrilateral relationship formed the subject of J. Roy's *The Cuban Revolution (1959-2009): Relations with Spain, the European Union, and the United States* (New York 2009). In his book Roy described the dynamics in play between all four parties and concluded that EU-Cuban relations are quite murky. This is due to the lack of a coherent, consequent, and united EU approach on foreign policy because of the different attitudes of member states towards Cuba.³ This was the last extensive work on Cuba's international relations.

There have been significant developments since 2009. In that year, the European Union pledged to conduct a more coherent foreign policy by means of the Treaty of Lisbon. Changes in the treaty meant that individual countries in possession of the EU presidency could no longer press their foreign policy interests. The creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS) followed in 2010. In a broader geopolitical sense, the EU was confronted with several crises in its border regions: Russia displayed a renewed sense of imperialistic tendencies towards neighbouring countries, the Arab Spring toppled regimes and a refugee crisis followed. A joint European approach to these issues, while often emphasized, was just as often far from realised. Then in December 2014 the US and Cuba - seemingly out of nowhere - announced the beginning of a new chapter⁴ among the nations of the Americas, in the words of President Obama during a televised address.⁵ In a similar speech broadcasted

³ *Ibidem*, 165-173.

⁴ Alluding to the biggest changes in fifty years to a policy which was a remnant of the Cold War: 'Through these changes, we intend to create more opportunities for the American and Cuban people, and begin a new chapter among the nations of the Americas.'

⁵ Televised address on 17-12-2014, text available at:

at the same time to the Cuban people Raul Castro stated: ‘Debemos aprender el arte de convivir de forma civilizada con nuestras diferencias.’⁶ The following year embassies were opened in Havana and Washington, a prisoner exchange was held, travel restrictions were eased, as well as some trade restrictions. These developments have been named the US-Cuban thaw, or *deshielo* in Spanish.

Where was the European Union during this historic development? Negotiations about a new bilateral treaty were ongoing since 2014, but progressed slowly and missed the intended deadline at the end of 2015. It took until March 2016 before an agreement was reached. By then the Cuban focus had shifted to the steadily improving ties with the US. This ranged from the restoring of postal and aerial connections to the promise that the US corporation Google would provide Cuba with an internet infrastructure. With US companies appearing on the horizon several EU member states could no longer wait. The Common Position from 1996 that conditioned relations with the EU on democratic progress was still in place. Regardless, various countries organized their own diplomatic efforts and trade missions to Cuba in order to further their economic interests. Developments such as the 2014 US-Cuban thaw and the 2016 EU-Cuban agreement beg for a thorough analysis of the most recent years of EU-Cuba relations.

A brief overview of EU-Cuban relations since 1988

EU interest in Latin-America only began in 1986, after Portugal and Spain became members. Two years later, diplomatic relations with Cuba were established. Until the nineties relations were typical for EU foreign policy; economic cooperation and humanitarian aid combined

<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/12/17/statement-president-cuba-policy-changes> (21-01-17).

⁶ ‘We have to learn the art of living together with our differences in a civilised manner’. Televised address on 17-12-2014, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gBvOwxenODk> (15-11-15).

with a pressure to advance human rights and democracy. Moral and ethical judgement by the EU at certain moments troubled understandings.⁷

In the nineties attempts were made to establish a cooperation aid agreement. These failed after Cuba shot down two planes from a charity organisation that flew in its airspace. Meanwhile, the US government passed legislation that allowed the legal persecution of foreign individuals and companies doing business with Cuba (the Helms-Burton laws), much to the dismay of the EU. Nevertheless, the EU formulated a unilateral policy, called the Common Position, in 1996. It was the brainchild of the Spanish conservative government under the leadership of Prime Minister Aznar. But it drew criticism in Spain, because for the first time in Spanish history it copied the US' hard line towards Cuba. To make matters worse, Cuban exiles had made financial contributions to the conservative election campaign. During a press conference Prime Minister Aznar had to deny that the Common Position was 'dictated by the US' or the 'returning of a favour' for campaign contributions.⁸ Most importantly, the Common Position made clear the EU wanted to encourage Cuba's peaceful transition to democracy. The position entailed Cuba had to show democratic progress if it wanted to receive favourable treatment in the form of a development cooperation agreement. This progress could consist of compliance with human rights, the release of political prisoners, or an end to the prosecution of dissents. Economic cooperation was offered and humanitarian aid would be delivered through NGO's. The Common Position, which amounted to a little less than 700 words, was in place until the new treaty of 2016.⁹

⁷ Roy *The Cuban Revolution*, 10-50.

⁸ El País, M. Vicent, *Las espinas de la Posición Común* (15-01-2014).

http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2014/01/15/actualidad/1389818742_617427.html

⁹ European Council, *Posición común de 2 de diciembre de 1996 definida por el Consejo en virtud del artículo J.2 del Tratado de la Unión Europea, sobre Cuba* (Brussel 1996). Roy, *The Cuban Revolution*, 61-90.

Scientific discourse

Both during and after the Cold War, scholars paid attention to Cuba's international relations.¹⁰

During the Cold War Cuba was an ally of the Soviet Union situated extremely close to US.

This made Cuba an interesting research subject. The collapse of the Soviet Union gave Cuba the opportunity to enter the world stage in a renewed manner, in a limited sense normalizing its relations with other nations. Not only did the Cold War end, Cuba was seen an independent nation and instead of merely a close ally of the Soviet Union.¹¹

In the past ten years, publications on Cuba's international relations have increased. This might be due to that Cuba is no longer seen as a Caribbean colony of the Soviet Union and, instead, as an anachronistic anomaly on the 21st century's world stage. Cuba's international relations are understandably most often examined in the light of US-Cuban relations. Amongst others, D. Bernell concluded before the US-Cuban thaw that the Obama administration might finally break the stalemate.¹² Others propagated comparable viewpoints.¹³ J.F. Gibbs underlined the importance of domestic US politics and certain dedicated hardliner lobbyists which together would hinder change.¹⁴ Yet R.C. Crandall emphasised the great diversity of interests in Washington, making it a very complicated issue that would not be easily resolved.¹⁵ These authors can be typified as being US-centric. There is no denying that the US' embargo can determine Cuba's faith to a large degree. Yet, by

¹⁰ See: C. Blasier and C. Mesa-Lago, *The Role of Cuba in World Affairs: Cuba in the World* (Pittsburgh; London 1979), H.M. Erisman, *Cuba's International Relations: The Anatomy of a Nationalistic Foreign Policy* (Boulder 1985), H.M. Erisman, *Cuba's Foreign Relations in a Post-Soviet World* (Gainesville 2000).

¹¹ Erisman, *Cuba's Foreign Relations*, 206-209.

¹² D. Bernell, *Constructing US Foreign Policy: The Curious Case of Cuba* (London; New York 2011) 8-10, 132-148.

¹³ J.I. Domínguez, 'The George H.W. Bush-Clinton Years' in S.M. Castro Mariño and R.W. Pruessen (eds) *Fifty Years Of Revolution: Perspectives on Cuba the United States, and the World* (Gainesville 2012) 298-299, W.M. LeoGrande and M. Rose Jiménez, 'US-Cuban Relations: Prospects for Cooperative Coexistence; in *idem*, 370-371, V. López 'The Time for Cuba is Coming' in *idem*, 380-381.

¹⁴ J.F. Gibbs, *US Policy towards Cuba, Since the Cold War* (London; New York 2011).

¹⁵ R.C. Crandall, *The United States and Latin America after the Cold War* (Cambridge; New York 2008) 184-185. Considering it was published before the Obama administration, Crandall did not foresee any changes in US policy towards Cuba.

fixating on the US these authors ignore one of the biggest economic blocks in the world. The EU is Cuba's biggest foreign investor and second most important trade partner. Consequently, in recent times it might have had more actual influence on the island's faith than the US.

Especially considering the EU's habit of promoting democracy and human rights worldwide.

Publications focussed on the EU's role are less numerous, though not absent. In a 2012 edited volume by J.I. Domínguez, R. Hernández and L.G. Barberia named *Debating U.S.-Cuban Relations: Shall We Play Ball?* several issues were discussed, including the EU's role in Cuban-US relations. E. Perera Gómez stated that the mutual relationship was burdened by the presence of the US. According to Perera Gómez the EU clearly has problems uniting on the issue and qualms about going against Washington's wishes. In his eyes the EU clearly shapes its foreign policy towards Cuba according to US interests. S. Gratius is less harsh, but does state that EU actions, besides their inherent internal complexity, are mainly reactive. She predicts that if the US lifts the embargo the EU will quickly follow in further rapprochement. Gratius further sees the role of the EU not as a leader but as a mediator. Both Perera Gómez and Gratius pay tribute to the special role of Spain. Yet they see it declining in the future due to the reforms of the Lisbon Treaty and the decline of Spanish political power within the EU.¹⁶ This last argument has been proven incorrect by recent events. Numerous developments, including the Brexit, has seen Spain move into the core of the four most important EU member states. Although both authors acknowledge that the EU does play a role in Cuba's relation, they are sceptical about its independence in foreign policy making. In varying severity, they see the EU not as a leader but merely a follower of US' foreign policy. This is a valid opinion to hold. But it is difficult to corroborate without consulting primary sources on the EU's decision making process.

¹⁶ J.I. Domínguez, R. Hernández and L.G. Barberia, *Debating U.S.-Cuban Relations: Shall We Play Ball?* (London; New York 2012) 100-138.

In 2009 J. Roy published his book on Cuba's foreign relations with special attention to the EU and the role of Spain.¹⁷ The research's objective was to fill a vacuum in literature concerning the EU and Cuba. Roy does see the EU as independent in its foreign policy making towards Cuba. He is of the opinion that the EU has always favoured some kind type of engagement with the island while trying to encouragement peaceful democratic change. Although Roy wrote an article on the same subject in 2012, he added little new information, but concluded that the status quo could benefit Cuba, as thus it can engage EU member states on their own terms.¹⁸ Furthermore, he is very conscious of the various attitudes member states have towards Cuba and how influential Spain has been in the matter. Roy can be categorized as an author positive that the EU has a certain degree independence in foreign policy making towards Cuba. Roy does suffer from the same lack of primary sources as Gratius and Perera Gómez. In resume, the viewpoints in scientific discourse can be divided along three lines: US-centric, EU-sceptical, and EU-positive.

Research questions & scientific relevance

As stated before, developments such as the 2014 US-Cuban thaw and the 2016 EU-Cuban agreement beg for a thorough analysis of the most recent years of EU-Cuba relations.

Especially since comprehensive scientific publications after Roy's 2009 are non-existent. But a vacuum does not directly justify a study. The scientific discourse above has demonstrated the following. First, that there are a substantial number of scholars that maintain an US-centric approach on Cuba's international relations, therewith ignoring one of the world's biggest economic blocks. Secondly, between authors that do pay attention to EU-Cuba relations there is a certain disagreement on to which extent the EU formulates its foreign

¹⁷ Roy, *The Cuban Revolution*. It has to be noted publications on the EU role certainly precede Roy but are less current and therefore not considered for the research questions of this study.

¹⁸ J. Roy, 'The European Union and Cuba' 117-138, in Castro Mariño & Pruessen, *Fifty Years Of Revolution*.

policy towards Cuba independent from US' wishes. Thirdly, these authors have not had access to primary sources that can shed more light on behind-the-scenes considerations. The new developments surrounding Cuba, the lack of research on EU-Cuba relations and since these new developments, scholars' disagreement on EU independence in foreign policy making towards Cuba, and the lack of studies using primary sources, justify this thesis' research.

This thesis will investigate to what extent the EU has maintained a unified foreign policy towards Cuba independent from US influences, from 2008 until 2016.¹⁹ This main question contains two important aspects: EU unity and independence from the US. Therefore, two equally important sub-questions were formulated. Firstly, Was EU foreign policy making towards Cuba free from US influence? EU-Cuban relations provide important insights into the independency from US foreign policy. To what extent does the EU in its international affairs follow US foreign policy, if at all. It has been set out that scholars disagree on this topic. The second sub question is as follows: To what extent did unity exist between member states internally and externally on EU foreign policy? as a case study Cuba can provide insights into EU unity on foreign affairs, due to the widely varying positions of member states and US pressure on member states. The fact that the EU now has the European External Action Service (EASS) with a High Commissioner does not by definition guarantee a united foreign policy. Additionally, Spain has always taken Cuba to heart and has tried to influence relations both positively and negatively depending on its domestic political situation: After coming into power Spanish conservatives and socialists turned around Spain's foreign policy towards Cuba on several occasions. Since relations with Cuba involve sensitive matters such as human rights and - especially for former communistic European countries – historical sensitivities, it

¹⁹ This thesis in part builds further upon an earlier paper written during a 2015 research-seminar at Utrecht University.

is an excellent case to discover the amount of unity between EU member states on foreign policy.

Two concepts used in the research questions need clarifying. Firstly, what constitutes internal and external unity between member states on EU foreign policy. Internally, the amount of disagreement and the nature of the discussion between member states from the method to determine unity. External unity is determined by investigating whether member states adhere to the EU foreign policy towards Cuba. Secondly; what qualifies as US influence on EU foreign policy towards Cuba? This can best be studied by identifying and examining clashes between both sides on Cuba together with examining to which degree the EU can independently shape international relations with Cuba.

According to Gratius, member states' viewpoints on foreign policy towards Cuba can be divided into four categories. Nordic countries and The Netherlands had a strong focus on the defence of human rights, hinging a lot of their stance on Cuba on the progress made in this area. The United Kingdom, Germany, and Austria had a critical position towards the Cuban government also due to the regime's undemocratic character. Former communist Eastern European countries led by the Czech Republic shared the US hard line. Countries sympathetic to Spain's policies of engagement were Portugal, Italy, France, and Belgium.²⁰ Categorisation by other scholars to be roughly the same. This categorisation provides a helpful guideline during this thesis.

This studies' research questions will be investigated during two key periods divided into two chapters. This study has identified two key periods that have defined EU-Cuban relations since 2008. The first period covers the running up to the Spanish EU presidency from 2008 until the presidency itself in 2010. This is a key period because during its presidency of the EU the Spanish government very actively tried to change EU foreign policy

²⁰ Peñalver-García, *Cuba*, 4.

towards Cuba. The second period mostly covers the EU-Cuba negotiations on a bilateral treaty between 2014-2016 and the US-Cuban thaw. This is another key period as both the US and EU were changing their foreign policy towards the island at more or less the same time. Providing an interesting opportunity to examining the dynamics between both parties.

Primary and secondary sources

This research tries to focus on primary sources. This is possible because a large number US diplomatic communications were leaked by the website Wikileaks. Documents from the period 2008 until 2010 can shed light on US pressures on the EU and internal EU discussions from the US's perspective. These have not been used in any of the literature encountered during this research. Regrettably, the database stops after the first two months of 2010. Unquestionably this source has an inherent bias and a strong US-perspective, being aware of this can mitigate the consequences. Irrespective, they still form an invaluable primary source on such a recent topic. These leaked diplomatic cables form a historical source that scholars normally only get their hands on after decades and therefore were purposefully chosen for this research. Similar difficulties surround another primary source: email correspondence from US Secretary of State Clinton, released by the US State Department. The State Department had to release emails from Clinton's term due to the 'Hillary Clinton email controversy' in 2015, Clinton had used private email servers for her official duties. Regrettably, most of the content has been censored before release and the usable emails are few in number. But like the diplomatic cables they are a source that is not normally available and were therefore purposefully chosen. The US centric sources are balanced by using available EU documents on foreign policy towards Cuba. These are for example documents detailing the Common Position, a Country Strategic Paper on Cuba, and the 2016 Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement. Unfortunately, documents containing considerations surrounding the 2016

agreement are still classified. According to the Secretariat of the Council because ‘Full disclosure of the document would therefore undermine the protection of the public interest as regards international relations.’²¹ The second chapter increasingly relies on recent and journalistic sources to describe developments. Although they have several drawbacks, their usage is inevitable due to recent period being investigated. Due to the large number of journalistic sources and articles available combined with the limitations of a master thesis the decision was made to focus. A conscious choice was made to use Spanish daily newspaper *El País* as primary journalistic source. This is because El País is the biggest Spanish language newspaper in print and online. It has a strong reporter network in Cuba and often cites sources from inside the Cuban and Spanish governments. Naturally, this choice comes with risks such as the risk of a bias. Politically for example, the newspaper leans left of the centre. Therefore, in this study its reports are complemented by other sources, to try to prevent these drawbacks.

²¹ Private email correspondence with the General Secretariat of the Council on 27-01-16, 17-02-16, and 22-03-16.

FIRST CHAPTER

THE SPANISH EU PRESIDENCY IN 2010

At the beginning of 2010 Spain received the EU presidency. In the years running up to its EU presidency the Spanish government gave off signals that they intended to review the EU's foreign policy towards Cuba. This gave rise to discussions between member states and US diplomatic efforts in favour of their own foreign policy. Both developments made this a key period in EU-Cuban relations. In this chapter the sub-questions of this research will be examined: Was EU foreign policy making on Cuba free from US influence? To what extent did unity exist between member states internally and externally on EU foreign policy? Both questions will be answered by using primary sources to a large degree. These sources consist of US diplomatic cables detailing discussions between member states behind the scenes on foreign policy towards Cuba and US efforts to promote their views on the matter.

This chapter is structured as follows. The first paragraph briefly sets out the Spanish relations with Cuba running up to Spain's 2010 EU presidency. The second paragraph concerns discussions between member states on Raul Castro's 2008 election and US' attempts to influence the discourse. The third paragraph likewise examines EU unity on Cuba and US influence before and during the Spanish EU presidency. After that a paragraph is dedicated to the actual changes in EU foreign policy during and after that time. Ultimately, this chapter will show that that from 2008 until 2010 the EU maintained a unified towards Cuba with internal discord on whether to change it. Discussions between member states were not held independent from US influences. The primary sources used in this chapter will demonstrate that US intensively tried to influence the EU foreign policy towards Cuba.

1.1 The Spanish context

Spain has been the most active and influential member state of the EU on Cuba. Some authors even boldly speculate that without Spain the EU might never have paid any attention to the island at all. Therefore, this paragraph shortly sketches out Spanish relations with Cuba running up Spain's 2010 EU presidency. It will become clear that relations between Havana and Madrid could be fickle, but always were influential within international politics.

The historical and societal bonds between Spain and Cuba ensured that even during the dictatorship of Francisco Franco (1937-1975) relations between both countries were amicable.²² The Spanish transition to democracy was followed by a reign of socialist cabinets, during which bilateral relations had their hiccups but were generally in good order. Spain always remained an important economic partner. At the same time the regime in Cuba was encouraged to make democratic changes. The conservative party under Prime Minister Aznar came to power in 1996. For the first time in history the conservatives favoured a Spanish foreign policy towards Cuba aligned with the US' hard line. This led diplomatic clashes with Cuba. The pinnacle of this period was the EU's Common Position, which conditions normal relations on democratic reforms. It was Aznar's brainchild. Due to the Common Position bilateral relations were more strained than under Franco.

The EU imposed further diplomatic sanctions after the imprisonment and execution of dissidents by Cuba in 2003. This formed the beginning of the 'Cocktail Wars'. The Cocktail Wars were series of diplomatic clashes that started when EU member states invited Cuban dissidents to their embassies in Havana during official receptions. This move was a response to Cuba's decision to imprison tens of dissidents and execute three hijackers trying to escape abroad. Cuba retaliated by severing diplomatic relations with the EU.

²² Amongst other examples; under Franco ignored the US embargo, despite US pressure. Cuba never acknowledged the republican government in exile and declared three days of national mourning when Franco passed. Both Castro's and Franco's families were from the Spanish region of Galicia.

The Spanish socialists won the elections in 2004 and reinstated their policy of engagement with Cuba. The EU followed suit in 2005. It thought engagement might lead to peaceful democratic changes. The next years slowly but surely saw the easing of tensions. Cuba normalised relations with the EU in 2005. The socialist cabinet of Prime Minister Zapatero actively sought to change the way conservatives had conducted foreign policy on Cuba. This meant moving away from the US' hard line on Cuba. Spain maintained a less US centric approach in general: the socialists won the elections largely because of their promise to withdraw Spanish troops from Iraq. Spain asserted itself more than ever within the EU on policy towards Cuba. During oscillations in political bilateral relations between Spain and Cuba, Spanish trade and investment kept growing until Spain became the island's most important economic partner. It must be kept in mind that like in the US, Cuba is a domestic political topic in Spain. There exist strong domestic feelings in both the US and Spain on how foreign policy towards the Cuba should be conducted due to historical and social ties.²³

Spain took over the EU presidency in 2010 whilst still under the leadership of the socialist party. A large part of the presidency was devoted to putting the Lisbon Treaty (2007) into practice. The treaty entailed, amongst other things, a loss of influence for the country holding the presidency. Its prime minister no longer chaired the European Council and, more importantly, its foreign minister no longer represented the EU in international affairs. This task instead became the responsibility of the high representative and the EASS. Nonetheless, it soon became apparent that Madrid sought a reevaluation of the EU's Common Position towards Cuba, although the messages coming from different cabinet members and officials varied. The Spanish government faced strong domestic criticism on its way of handling the economic crisis. At the same time the Spanish government had to underline that its own

²³ Roy, *Cuban Revolution*, 91-159, C. Paetzold, 'Spanish-Cuban relations, 1990-2003' in H.M. Erisman and J.M. Kirk, *Redefining Cuban Foreign Policy: the impact of the "Special Period"* (Gainesville 2006) 233-259.

economic difficulties did not disqualify it from leading the EU. Hence, many officials did not want to completely hinge the presidency on the issue of Cuba. But it was certain that Spain's Foreign Minister Moratinos would actively seek better bilateral relations with Havana. While Prime Minister Zapatero was a little more hesitant on the matter.²⁴

Despite Spanish plans, the president of the European Parliament did not expect any change in policy towards Cuba in the near future in December 2009. He would be proven right. The death of a hunger striking Cuban dissident in February the following year put an early and abrupt end to Spain's agenda for Cuba. The outrage following this incident made it impossible to persuade European member states with a tougher stance on the island.²⁵

1.2 Raul Castro's election

In 2008 Raul Castro replaced his brother Fidel Castro as President of Cuba. The replacement of Cuba's de facto sole leader was the first major leadership change in decades. This led to international expectations that Raul Castro would implement economic and democratic changes.²⁶ This paragraph shows that Spain saw the change in leadership as an opportune moment to review EU foreign policy towards Cuba. The Spanish ideas were much to the dismay of the US and some EU member states.

As explained in the introduction to this thesis, US diplomatic communications between 2008 and 2010 leaked by the website Wikileaks form a valuable source. They shed more light on internal EU relations from the US' perspective and show the way in which the US tried to influence EU foreign policy. The cables show the ongoing unease between Spain

²⁴ M. Pérez-Stable, *The United States and Cuba: Intimate Enemies* (New York 2011) 137-138, R. Dominguez, *EU Foreign Policy towards Latin America* (New York 2015) 147-148, C. Doleac, *Will the U.S.-Cuban rapprochement affect the relationship between the European Union and Cuba?* (23-02-2015) 2-3. Available at: <http://www.coha.org/will-the-u-s-cuban-rapprochement-affect-the-relationship-between-the-european-union-and-cuba/>

²⁵ N. Peñalver-García, *Cuba: between the EU's conditional engagement and US embargo* (Brussel 2010) 4.

²⁶ Roy, *Cuban Revolution*, 163.

and the US regarding Cuba, as demonstrated by words exchanged during an hour-long meeting between Cuban-American senator Melquíades Martínez and Moratinos in the US embassy in Madrid.²⁷ Martínez was part of the Senate's Committee on Foreign Relations. Martínez was also asked on other occasions by the Obama administration to deliver messages to Spanish government officials. This time Moratinos reacted irritated to US critique:

‘Questioning the U.S. continuing demarches about Spanish engagement with Cuba, Moratinos said, "Are you going to criticize Lula²⁸ for going to Havana? I guarantee he won't see any dissidents during his visit and yet you crucified me when I went to Havana.”’²⁹

This demonstrates US annoyance at Spanish overtures with Cuba and at the same time Moratinos' opinion that a constructive approach would yield better results. Similar disagreement also surrounded the 2008 ascension of Raul Castro to the Cuban presidency. The US saw it as the continuation of the dictatorial status quo, albeit one that had seen Spain walk into a Cuban trap to win support for renewed EU engagement.³⁰ In the US' opinion the face of the regime might transform, but its politics would not. As this chapter will show further on; the Spanish government realised this and instead knowingly used the change in leadership as a useful front to garner support for a change in EU policy. Luckily for the US, the EU remained as polarized as ever, according to the United Kingdom's Foreign Office's Director of the Americas. Much would depend on the Spanish elections, while ‘(...) EU-Latin America Summits tend to be long on speeches and short on achievements.’³¹ Nevertheless, the

²⁷ Wikileaks 'Cablegate' database (available at <https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/>), the organisation has named it the 'Public Library of US Diplomacy' (PlusD). Referencing to the messages will be done with the ID's assigned to them by the Wikileaks organisation and the documents' dates: (PlusD) 08MADRID159_a (13-02-08), 08STATE18320_a (24-02-08).

²⁸ Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, president of Brazil from 2003 until 2011.

²⁹ (PlusD) 08MADRID94_a (13-02-08).

³⁰ (PlusD) 08STATE18320_a (24-02-08).

³¹ (PlusD) 08LONDON727_a (11-03-08) (Director of the Americas Chris Wood).

US embassy in Madrid asked the Spanish government to dissuade the European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid Louis Michel from visiting Cuba during that period. The request was politely turned down.

In a meeting between US officials and the EU-troika on Latin America in Brussels the EU's commitment to dialogue with Cuba was reiterated. But more importantly, the US officials were reminded their government: '(...) should consider the EU as a united Europe and should discuss Cuba policy with all the EU and not just with the member states.'³² This reprimand fell on deaf ears. In April 2008, just a month later, the US embassy in Prague reported on the standpoints of the US' most important supporters within the EU. For example, the government of the Czech Republic was wavering at the sight of growing support and pressures to drop punitive measures against Cuba. This is even more interesting because the country would hold the EU presidency a year later, in 2009. A US diplomat from the embassy in Prague commented the following in a cable to the Secretary of State and the US embassies in Cuba and the EU:

'While the Czechs are a key principled ally on Cuba, and they are particularly active on this topic within the EU, maneuvering [sic] and pressure from "influential member states" over the next few days and weeks will be intense. We can expect the Czechs will hold the line for as long as they believe others are with them. If other key EU member states fold, we can anticipate the Czechs will negotiate for the best deal possible in terms of additional caveats or conditions in return for lifting the measures.'³³

³² (PlusD) 08USEUBRUSSELS378_a (11-03-08).

³³ (PlusD) 08PRAGUE246_a (21-04-08).

On the other half of the playing field, Spain was hoping to use small democratic and human rights improvements in Cuba to gather support. Italy and France had already indicated to be on the Spanish side.³⁴ This was reason for the US ambassador in Madrid to voice his disapproval to Spanish officials from the Foreign Ministry. He also ensured the US Department of State that his government would continue its ‘aggressive engagement’ on Cuba.³⁵ Only a few days later this aggressive engagement earned the embassy’s diplomats a reprimand. This time from the Spanish Director of Foreign Policy towards Ibero-America: ‘(...) Sandomingo made a point of saying during the lunch and again afterwards in private that Spain would strongly prefer the U.S. did not try to split EU opinion on Cuba.’³⁶ The Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs felt that their momentum was increasing and did not want the US to concoct resistance.

However, opinions within the EU needed little splitting. The US embassy in Prague continued to have meet with Czech Foreign Ministry officials. They shared their experiences of EU discussions on Cuba with the US diplomats. As one of the most critical member states Czech representatives were coming under severe pressure from a Spanish led coalition. Meanwhile Sweden, Denmark, Hungary, and the United Kingdom were trying to push a compromise.

Ahead of the EU Foreign Ministers General Affairs and External Relations Council in June 2008 the US Department of State analysed the playing field as follows:

‘Therefore, many in the EU are being swayed by the Spanish argument that the EU needs to engage the Cuban government. The French, the Italians, and the German MFA are

³⁴ (PlusD) 08 MADRID467_a (24-04-08), 09HAVANA683_a (10-11-09).

³⁵ (PlusD) 08MADRID493_a (05-05-08).

³⁶ (PlusD) 08MADRID518_a (09-05-08) Francisco Javier Sandomingo.

squarely on the side of the Spanish, along with the Portuguese, the Slovaks, and the Austrians. The strongest holdouts are the British, the Czechs, and the Hungarians.³⁷

This more or less followed the categorisation of Gratius as mentioned in the introduction. Behind the scenes the UK's Foreign Office's Caribbean Office Chief admitted to US diplomats in London that he was pleased with the manner the UK had secured 'quite a victory'. Ahead of the meeting UK officials had ensured that continuing the dialogue with Cuba would require affirmative consensus of all member states. This was instead of dialogue continuing unless a consensus ended it.³⁸ Meanwhile the Dutch Deputy Director for the Western Hemisphere speculated that the Czechs stood on their own and did not expect them to block EU consensus.³⁹

An analysis by the US Mission to the European Union provides an interesting insight into its views on EU unity in foreign policy before the changes of the Lisbon Treaty. The analysis was made to better understand the inner workings of the EU and to be able to better achieve Washington's goals in the future. The mission observed that the EU's Common and Foreign Security Policy (CFSP) increasingly influenced the European foreign policy agenda, even if policy frequently ended in paralysis or a distorted outcome of each country's wishes. Additionally, 'mid-tier states' were gaining influence at the expense of the traditional trinity of Germany, France, and the United Kingdom. Spain's orchestration of a change in Cuban policy demonstrated how a sole member could gather support for change, despite significant opposition. Additionally, the requirement of unanimity meant that bigger states could threaten to withhold their support for proposals by smaller states on other issues, this was one of the reasons the Spanish were able to secure the abstinence of most Eastern-European states.

³⁷ (PlusD) 08STATE62450_a (10-06-08).

³⁸ (PlusD) 08LONDON1623_a (13-04-08).

³⁹ (PlusD) 08THEHAGUE516_a (13-04-08).

Over the years, the US Mission learned several things about advocating on EU foreign policy. The US Mission reported these lessons back to Washington. Concisely summarized: First, to refrain from spending time and resources on trying to achieve concrete results or changes during official meetings with EU officials. Second, for each issue a new congregation of potential allies had to be sought, outside of the common member states groupings. Thirdly, enter dialogue early and informally with potential allies. The latter had to be done proactively by US embassies in Europe.⁴⁰ In this vein the US Department of State would send out a diplomatic cable a month later that ordered diplomatic posts to reach out to European governments and emphasise a common perspective on Cuba.⁴¹ With the Spanish EU presidency in sight embassies extensively reached out to EU member states officially and unofficially, as was shown above.

The Czech Republic would take over the EU presidency from France at the beginning of 2009. The French government was trying to get EU-Cuban dialogue underway before that happened, because of the hard line the Czech Presidency would take. If dialogue would already be underway it would be difficult to halt. An EU source told the US Mission that pressure on member states for a Cuban dialogue was not political, but instead far more commercial: ‘He said European firms are anxious to get into the nickel and potential offshore oil markets in Cuba and want to leverage the EU's political dialogue to get the GOC [Government of Cuba] to open the door to European investment.’⁴² As the document rightfully comments; the potential source of pressure was less important than the fact that dialogue would likely go ahead. In the long term this could lead to reconsideration of the Common Position. At the end of 2008 the Cuban government accepted an EU offer for

⁴⁰ (PlusD) 08BRUSSELS943_a (20-04-08).

⁴¹ (PlusD) 08STATE74378 (10-05-08).

⁴² (PlusD) 08HAVANA879_a (02-10-08), 08BRUSSELS1540_a (02-10-08), 08BRUSSELS1589_a (14-10-08), 08BRUSSELS1661_a (28-10-08).

dialogue and consequently the diplomatic sanctions from 2003 were lifted.⁴³ Matters would be exacerbated the following year, as momentum for a change in foreign policy towards Cuba kept increasing.

1.3 The Spanish Presidency

The election of Raul Castro was not accompanied by changes in EU foreign policy towards Cuba. Nevertheless, the preceding paragraph did provide insights into the way the US was pressuring EU member states against any change. At the same time, there were divergent views within the EU. Not every member state agreed with the Spanish wish to change policy towards Cuba. When the Spanish EU presidency came closer the topic of Cuba returned to the foreground. Similar to the previous paragraph, this paragraph outlines the way the US tried to influence EU member states and discussions between these member states.

At the end of 2008, President Obama's election eased bilateral relations between the US and Spain. The Spanish government soon communicated that it was looking forward to working with President Obama.⁴⁴ During the 2009 Czech and Swedish EU presidencies discussions on Cuban policy calmly lingered on. With the 2010 Spanish presidency in sight, the US embassy in Madrid voiced concerns about the intentions they had picked up from Spanish officials and diplomats to change the Common Position. It highlighted a genuine concern from the US government for possible future developments during Spain's presidency. These concerns increased further after Foreign Minister Moratinos declared in the Spanish Senate that no member state had spoken against the intentions to reevaluate the Common Position.⁴⁵

⁴³ Roy, *Cuban Revolution*, 161-162, Dominguez, *EU Foreign Policy*, 149.

⁴⁴ (PlusD) 09MADRID71_a (21-01-09).

⁴⁵ (PlusD) 09MADRID1146_a (01-12-2009).

After meetings with high Spanish officials from the Foreign Ministry a cable from the US Interests Section in Havana stated that ‘(...) the Spanish are sounding much more resolute in their aims than they did just one months [sic] ago.’ The Spanish officials made it clear their government saw the Common Position as a big obstacle that had failed in its intentions. While adding that the only limited improvements in Cuban human rights had come bilaterally through Spain. The Spanish ambassador in Havana underlined the differences with the US approach as confrontation opposed to engagement. He also expressed an interesting sentiment of defiance to US pressure: “We have been traditionally ahead of you in engaging with Cuba,” he said, “we can't afford to fall behind.” He dismissed reports of new EU Foreign Minister Ashton's comments on the need to wait for U.S.-Cuba developments as “rookie misstatements.”⁴⁶ US diplomats in Havana expressed concern that the Treaty of Lisbon entailed that unanimous consent was no longer required to change the Common Position. Despite the apparent determination from both the Spanish government as its foreign ministry, the Spanish ambassador added that his government placed EU unity above its Cuban policy.⁴⁷ Further reassurance by Prime Minister Zapatero that Cuba would not form a priority during the presidency did not ease US discomfort. Despite that in a meeting with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton Moratinos also had tried to lull US concerns. He promised that Cuba would not form a priority during the EU presidency. His words soon appeared to be hollow, Moratinos actively went to work to abolish the Common Position. During this same meeting they discussed a request by Raul Castro to Moratinos for a secret communication channel to the US.⁴⁸ It is not certain if the EU knew of this arrangement, but it shows the importance of Spain in Cuba’s international relations. In the beginning of 2010 tensions led to a warning from the US embassy in Madrid towards the Spanish government that ‘(...) such a Spanish

⁴⁶ (PlusD) 09HAVANA726_a (05-12-2009).

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁸ (PlusD) 09STATE129362_a (18-12-09).

initiative would not be well viewed in Washington.’ This warning originated from Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Arturo Valenzuela. A Spanish official tried to reassure the US official that he did not foresee large changes. He added that Valenzuela should not believe everything he read in the press.⁴⁹ Pressure exerted by US diplomacy was without result. Signals from the Spanish government during that period were clear in their desire for a better relationship with Cuba.⁵⁰ One has to keep in mind that this cabinet withdrew Spanish troops from Iraq in 2004. It would have been used to handling US pressure. At the end of January 2010, the Spanish foreign minister even declared in the media that US policy towards Cuba had failed.⁵¹

Interestingly, in the same month Spanish opposition leader and future Prime Minister Rajoy from the conservative party also paid a visit to the embassy for a conversation about a variety of subjects, during which he expressed his appreciation for US policy on Cuba.⁵²

Diplomatic cables from other US embassies in Europe show that the US government was preoccupied with gauging the amount of support Spain could muster within the EU. The US Department of State requested its embassies to elicit the opinions of each country on the Spanish intentions. Not all responses are present in the Wikileaks database, but nonetheless an interesting image emerges. From countries with cables available in the database, Italy, Portugal, and Belgium were the most receptive to the Spanish plans.⁵³ The Netherlands, Slovakia, and Greece were in the middle. The Greek government expressed indifference to the issue.⁵⁴ Slovakia’s government favoured a balanced approach and did not support an extreme

⁴⁹ (PlusD) 09MADRID1146_a (01-12-2009), 09MADRID483_a (19-05-2009), 10MADRID21_a (11-01-2010), 10MADRID25_a (13-01-2010), 10MADRID181_a (18-02-2010), 10MADRID195_a (22-02-2010).

⁵⁰ El País, *Zapatero matiza a Moratinos sobre la política hacia Cuba* (09-01-2010).

http://elpais.com/diario/2010/01/09/espana/1262991602_850215.html

⁵¹ (PlusD) 10MADRID87_a (27-01-2010).

⁵² (PlusD) 10MADRID67_a (22-01-2010).

⁵³ (PlusD) 10BRUSSEL_1 (20-01-2010), 10LISBON8_a (07-01-2010), 10ROME56_a (14-01-2010).

⁵⁴ (PlusD) 10ATHENS21_a (14-01-2010)

position either way.⁵⁵ Dutch diplomats were purposefully holding a middle ground. The director for Western Hemisphere Affairs at the Dutch Foreign Ministry Laurent Stokvis expected that the EU would continue its two-track policy of encouraging reforms and development aid. Furthermore;

‘He acknowledged there was some concern about whether Spain would soften the EU approach toward Cuba, and noted the recent visit of Spanish FM Moratinos to Cuba during which some in the EU felt he exceeded his mandate. Still, after Cuba subsequently released two political prisoners, no one was objecting to Moratinos efforts.’⁵⁶

Most member states expressed reluctance to replacing the Common Position with a bilateral agreement in meetings between US diplomats and officials from European Ministries of Foreign Affairs. The reluctant member states consisted of Eastern, Baltic, and Scandinavian countries, joined by the United Kingdom. Comments made to US diplomats varied. Latvian officials expressed a lack of surprise at the Spanish intentions. The Czech American Department Director Katerina Fialkova saw comments by the Spanish foreign minister as merely testing the waters. She noted that ‘(...) "the time has not come" to move away from the EU's common position (...) She also noted that the Spaniards will need to find balance within the EU, since they are at the extreme end of the spectrum on Cuba (...)’⁵⁷ The Director of the Latin America Department from the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs had recently returned from a visit to Havana. She stated that Bulgaria wanted to see dramatic improvements in human rights before any changes were made.⁵⁸ Her Estonian counterpart

⁵⁵ (PlusD) 10BRATISLAVA12_a (13-01-10).

⁵⁶ (PlusD) 10THEHAGUE44_a (25-01-10).

⁵⁷ (PlusD) 10PRAGUE20_a (14-01-2010). Katerina Fialkova

⁵⁸ (PlusD) 10SOFIA25_a (14-01-10). Svetla Stefanova.

saw ‘(...) Spain's position, as the new EU President, both "strange and difficult to understand.”⁵⁹ Hungarian officials thought it to be the wrong time for any change on Cuba.⁶⁰ The Swedish minister of foreign affairs saw the Spanish intentions as ideas that ‘(...) were peripheral and won't fly.’⁶¹ The British Foreign and Commonwealth Office American Department Head Sujeevan Satheesan found it silly to change the Common Position because it was hindering dialogue with Cuba. Adding that ‘(...) If we have to scrap Common Positions because a third country is annoyed, what is the point?’⁶² He did not expect that there was enough support within the EU to abolish the Common Position. Months earlier German colleagues had already expressed disappointment with the progress on human rights in Cuba.⁶³

The overarching concern of all member states was the human rights situation in Cuba. The pragmatic approach from the Spanish government, including their position as Cuban advocates in the EU, was excellently displayed during a bilateral human rights dialogue between Cuba and Spain in Madrid. The fourth round in a series to ‘allow Spain and Cuba to move forward, building trust to achieve a higher degree of understanding and cooperation on the promotion of and respect for human rights.’⁶⁴ The US embassy realised a Cuban concession on human rights could have consequences for the likelihood of the Common Position changing:

‘MFA [Ministry of Foreign Affairs] contacts insisted the bilateral human rights talks had nothing to do with Spanish efforts to change the EU's Common Position toward Cuba. If

⁵⁹ (PlusD) 10TALLINN3_a (06-01-2010).

⁶⁰ (PlusD) 10BUDAPEST37_a (25-01-10).

⁶¹ (PlusD) 10STOCKHOLM13_a (14-01-2010).

⁶² (PlusD) 09LONDON2909_a (30-12-09).

⁶³ (PlusD) 09BERLIN708_a (12-06-09).

⁶⁴ (PlusD) 10MADRID206_a (25-02-2010).

the Common Position were to have come up naturally, however, Spain planned to advise Cuban officials that if they were interested in replacing the Common Position, they would best be able to influence the EU by releasing all political prisoners.’⁶⁵

In this light, it comes as little surprise that the death of a hunger striking dissident at the end of February put an end to the Spanish plans for Cuba.

1.4 Changes in foreign policy

The failure to change the EU’s foreign policy towards Cuba was very quickly seen as one of the failures of Spain’s presidency by journalists and academics alike. Some criticized the EU for missing an historic opportunity to become a key factor in the Cuban transition to democracy.⁶⁶ On the other hand, Spanish foreign policy had been continuously building momentum for change towards Cuba. It was not enough to meet its final goal. But it did start discussions in an otherwise static situation. This paragraph discusses developments after Spain’s attempt to change the EU’s policy towards Cuba. It will become clear that although a major change did indeed not come to fruition, Spain did achieve limited progress.

The EU adopted a Country Strategic Paper’ on Cuba in May 2010. This type of unilateral document determines the way policy is set out and evaluated, mainly on humanitarian aid. The EU earmarked an indicative allocation of €20 million for the following three years. Three priority sectors were defined for cooperation with the Cuban government: food security, environment and climate change, and expertise exchanges, training and studies. The Common Position remained in place, the Strategic Paper made that very clear: ‘Cooperation in these areas does not imply any changes in the EU policy towards Cuba.’

⁶⁵ *Ibidem.*

⁶⁶ D. Contreras, *La Unión Europea ante los retos de la democratización en Cuba* (Madrid 2010) 18.

Moreover, concerns about the democratic and human rights situation in Cuba were underlined.⁶⁷ A normative approach in line with the Common Position continued and Spain's wish for closer ties were not granted. Still, the fact that Cuba continued to be engaged for three years can be seen as a small victory.⁶⁸

In June 2010 Moratinos announced the liberation of 52 dissidents from Cuban prisons after the mediation of the Catholic Church and himself. Interestingly, the previous paragraph showed that this is exactly what Spanish officials had advised Cuba to do if they wanted to motivate EU foreign policy changes. Spain planned to advise Cuban officials that if they were interested in replacing the Common Position, they would best be able to influence the EU by releasing all political prisoners.⁶⁹ The Spanish foreign minister heralded it as a new stage in bilateral relations.⁷⁰ He would only be partly right.

An exchange of views on the recent political and economic developments in Cuba was held over lunch during a European Council meeting in October. The High Representative was asked to explore the possibilities for a way forward in Cuban relations as a result.⁷¹ Email correspondence from US Secretary of State Clinton, released by the US State Department,⁷² show that Moratinos and Clinton had contact on at least two occasions in the period running up to this decision. However, everything of significance has been classified in the emails.⁷³

⁶⁷ European Council, *Republic of Cuba - European Union Country Strategy Paper and National Indicative Programme for the period 2011-2013* (Brussels 24-03-2010).

⁶⁸ Dominguez, *EU Foreign Policy*, 147.

⁶⁹ (PlusD) 10MADRID206_a (25-02-2010).

⁷⁰ El País, M. González & M. Vicent, *Moratinos: "La liberación de los presos abre una nueva etapa en Cuba"* (08-07-2010). http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2010/07/08/actualidad/1278540002_850215.html

⁷¹ European Council, *Press Release 3041st Council Meeting Foreign Affairs* (25-10-2010).

⁷² As stated before, the State Department had had to release emails from Clinton's term due to the 'Hillary Clinton email controversy' in 2015. Clinton had used private email servers for her official duties.

⁷³ The emails are available online at the US Department of State 'Freedom of Information Act' (USDOS) website (<https://foia.state.gov>). They will be referenced by their corresponding case number, document number, and date. (USDOS) No. F-2014-20439, Doc. No. C05775360 (07-07-2010). (USDOS) No. F-2014-20439, Doc No. C0577404 (24-09-2010).

One can only guess if these were merely courtesy calls or actual policy coordination. Emails further discussed in the next chapter, indicate that Moratinos was merely informing the US of what was to unfold. In the end, the High Representative did not explore possibilities for a way forward in Cuban relations without any sense of urgency. It would take until 2014 for a decision to be reached. These developments are the subject of the following chapter.

1.5 Conclusions

This chapter investigated developments surrounding EU foreign policy towards Cuba in the period running up to and during the Spanish 2010 EU presidency. The first paragraph briefly set out the Spanish relations with Cuba running up to Spain's 2010 EU presidency. The second paragraph set out discussions between member states on Raul Castro's 2008 election and US' attempts to influence the discourse. The third paragraph likewise examined EU unity on Cuba and US influence before and during the Spanish EU presidency. After that a paragraph examined the actual changes in EU foreign policy during and after that time. In these paragraphs, primary sources helped answer this thesis' sub-questions.

To what extent did unity exist between member states internally and externally on EU foreign policy? Were it not for the special interest of Spain, the EU would have been far more united on policy towards Cuba. Spain very much wanted to push towards better ties and ideally a bilateral treaty between the EU and Cuba. This was ultimately made impossible by a combination of political factors. The death of a Cuban dissident early in the Spanish presidency proved to be the final nail in its coffin. Spain was an outlier on the Cuban matter. Although it could garner some support within the EU, most EU member states with varying amounts of strictness all wanted to see progress in human rights from Cuba before considering changing bilateral relations. Internally the EU member states disagreed substantially about Cuban policy, nonetheless externally member states acted together.

Barring Spanish public expressions about their wishes for change in policy, member states adhered to the EU's Common Position.

Was EU foreign policy making on Cuba free from US influence? The US actively tried to influence EU foreign policy decision making in the period from Raul Castro's election to the Spanish EU presidency. The US put to work its diplomatic apparatus with great expedience, even with EU member states that held a certain indifference to the issue. This was done because the Department of State had learned that support could be gathered more easily from member states that were not predisposed either way. Some member states undoubtedly valued their relationship with the US more than any change on policy towards Cuba, making the US influence successful to some degree. Importantly, Spain was pressured severely to change its Cuban plans. This was without direct discernible results. Even if the socialist Spanish government paid little heed to the US, its influence certainly threw more oil onto the fire that was the EU disagreement on united foreign policy towards Cuba.

The introduction of this thesis made clear that the viewpoints in scientific discourse can be divided along three lines: US-centric, EU-sceptical, and EU-positive. This chapter made clear that US-centric authors do a disservice to Cuba's international relations. Developments in Cuba's international relations in this chapter's period heavily involved the EU. The disagreement between EU-sceptical and EU-positive authors echo in this chapter. On the one hand the EU as a whole seemed to see on the US' hard line towards Cuba. On the other hand, there were member states that tried to take matters into EU hands. In this sense, the adoption of the Country Strategic Paper on Cuba is a small victory.

In resume, this chapter has shown that from 2008 until 2010 the EU maintained a unified towards Cuba with internal disunity on whether to change it. Discussions between member states were not held independent from US influence and it was likely in part the reason the efforts of Spain failed in changing the Common Position.

SECOND CHAPTER

EU-CUBAN NEGOTIATIONS AND THE US-CUBAN THAW

Cuba accepted an offer from the European Council for negotiations on a bilateral treaty in the beginning of 2014. These negotiations concluded in 2016. Meanwhile the US and Cuban announced what is now known as the US-Cuban thaw at the end of 2014. The period covered in this chapter includes developments in Cuba's international relations that demonstrate dynamics helpful in investigating to what extent the EU has maintained a unified foreign policy towards Cuba independent from US influences. The first paragraph sets out developments in EU-Cuban relations after the Spanish presidency in 2010. The second paragraph covers developments surrounding the US-Cuban thaw. Lastly a paragraph is dedicated to 2016, the year in which the EU signed a Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement and President Obama visited the island.

Both sub-questions of this research will be investigated in this chapter. The first is whether EU foreign policy making on Cuba was free from US influence. The second concerns the extent of internal and external unity between member states on EU foreign policy. Regrettably, primary sources are almost completely unavailable due to the recent time period. There are some exceptions, such as a number of EU documents and some email correspondence from US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, released by the US State Department. Because of this lack of available primary sources much of the information had to be gathered from journalistic reports. Ultimately this chapter will demonstrate that US influence on EU foreign policy towards Cuba decreased. In the same period EU unity on this foreign policy increased.

2.1 After the Spanish EU presidency

The 2010 effort by Spain to move EU-Cuban relations beyond the unilateral Common Position had limited success. This paragraph describes developments in EU-Cuban relations in the years afterwards, during which negotiations on a new agreement between the EU and Cuba started. This paragraph will show that momentum within the EU for closer relations with Cuba was increasing. But at the same time, a lack of progress saw member states ignore the Common Position and act on their own accord with Cuba.

The decision by the European Council to explore possibilities for progress in EU-Cuba relations was made during a lunchbreak in 2012. The matter was promptly discussed during a meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council, but the ‘exploration of possibilities’ lasted until 2014. Only in January 2014 did representatives authorise the Commission to open negotiations with Cuba on a Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement. A month later negotiation directives were adopted by the Council. The offer of negotiations was hastily accepted by Cuba.⁷⁴ Where was Spain during this time? Unlike four years earlier, European foreign policy was increasingly decided by the Council and High Representative thanks to the Treaty of Lisbon. Regardless, the EU moved forward in EU-Cuban relations only with the approval of Spain according to reports by *El País*. Evidence for this is that after the Spanish conservative regained the government in 2012, Cuba released a Spaniard they kept prisoner. It was a gesture of goodwill towards a conservative party that came with the remembrance of having hardened EU policy towards the island. After their election, the conservative government did not resume the hard line towards the island originally instated by Prime Minister Aznar. Justifying this change of heart the conservative foreign minister José Manuel García Margallo was quoted as saying that Spain’s international influence hinged on its relations with Latin-

⁷⁴ M. Palouš, *Where Are We? The State Of Negotiation Of A New Treaty Between The European Union And Cuba*, (ASCE conference 2014) 1.

America and those depended on normalisation with Cuba. The Spanish foreign minister also reaffirmed the importance of Spain within EU foreign policy making. According to him when the EU discussed common foreign policy towards Russia he listens to his colleagues from Eastern member states, but when matters concern Latin-America they in turn listen to him.⁷⁵

Notwithstanding the leading role of Spain on Cuba, EU foreign policy is made in consultation with other member states. Each country's foreign minister has a say during the Foreign Affairs Council and, as the previous chapter showed, the views on Cuba were widely divergent. What were the different viewpoints and the considerations on the start of new negotiations with Cuba? The document that contains these considerations is regrettably classified.⁷⁶ Consequently, the positions of the member states had to be deduced from their actions and statements.

The visit of Dutch Foreign Minister Frans Timmermans to Cuba preceded the EU's decision to start negotiations. During his visit Timmermans acknowledged that the EU had to improve ties with the island. The EU ought to look beyond political issues to strengthen contact between both regions, although he did not neglect to encourage further human rights reforms.⁷⁷ Dutch emphasis in relations with Cuba had traditionally been on human right reforms in exchange for rapprochement. Yet, reforms on the island had been too minimal to warrant a visit by the Dutch foreign minister. Instead the visit by Timmermans indicated that The Netherlands had changed its position on Cuba. The island would be made a priority area in the region because of the economic opportunities and perceived democratic developments.

⁷⁵ El País, M. González, *España confía en liderar la política de la UE con Cuba* (18-12-2014).

⁷⁶ Public register of Council documents (GS) Do. No. ST 8702 20123 INIT (18-04-2013), Do. No. ST 17116 2013 ADD 1 (28-01-2014).

⁷⁷ Rijksoverheid, *Timmermans moedigt Cuba aan tot meer hervormingen* (07-01-2014).

<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/actueel/nieuws/2014/01/07/timmermans-moedigt-cuba-aan-tot-meer-hervormingen>

De Volkskrant, *Timmermans wil dat Europa banden met Cuba aanhaalt* (07-01-2014).

<http://www.volkskrant.nl/politiek/timmermans-wil-dat-europa-banden-met-cuba-aanhaalt~a3573090/>

The French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius made the next visit to Cuba in April 2014, demonstrating that France also favored restoring relations with Cuba. This was underlined when President Hollande made an official visit in May 2015. He was the first European leader to do so in several years.⁷⁸ During a meeting with Fidel Castro Hollande promised that he would speed up the negotiations.⁷⁹ The 2014 visit by the French foreign minister was followed by a visit of the Portuguese State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Luis de Campos Ferreira. He also expressed a desire to move forward in bilateral relations and cited the improving economic prospects.⁸⁰ Even the UK's Foreign Minister Hugo Swire visited the island, the first British member of government to do so in ten years. The UK had clearly also moderated its stance. Usually the UK formed part of the member states critical on Cuban relations and was an traditional ally to the US in its foreign policy towards Cuba.⁸¹

Spanish Foreign Minister Margallo visited Cuba in November 2014. The Spanish daily *El País* cited diplomatic sources who declared Margallo had arrived in Havana with 'very concrete messages' from the US.⁸² In hindsight these messages were part of the talks leading to the US-Cuban thaw. Officials from the US denied this at the time, but the newspaper quickly retorted that it had been common practice for the US to relay messages to the Cuban regime through intermediaries.⁸³ Nevertheless, Margallo was snubbed by Raul Castro, who declined to meet him and instead send Cuba's vice-president. The reasons for this

⁷⁸ El País, C. Yárnoz, *Francia se adelanta en la UE para normalizar su relación con Cuba* (21-05-2015).

http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2015/04/21/actualidad/1429631985_174799.html

⁷⁹ El País, G. Cañas, *Hollande promete en Cuba hacer todo lo posible para alentar el deshielo* (12-05-2015).

http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2015/05/11/actualidad/1431344541_136972.html

⁸⁰ J. Lecarte, *A new phase in EU-Cuba relations* (European Parliamentary Research Service 23-06-2014).

⁸¹ The Telegraph, D. Boyle, *Hugo Swire first UK minister to visit Cuba in almost decade* (31-10-2014).

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/centralamericaandthecaribbean/cuba/11200459/Hugo-Swire-first-UK-minister-to-visit-Cuba-in-almost-decade.html>

⁸² El País, M. González, *Margallo llega a Cuba con "mensajes muy concretos" de Estados Unidos* (22-11-2014).

http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2014/11/22/actualidad/1416685349_134293.html

⁸³ El País, S. Ayuso, *La enrevesada diplomacia entre Cuba y EE UU* (24-10-2014).

http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2014/11/24/actualidad/1416860002_831838.html

were open to speculation. One source claimed a speech held by Margallo the day before had been ill received.⁸⁴ It is also possible that Raul Castro wanted to make a point to Margallo; Havana was not to be taken lightly. Castro had obviously not forgotten that Margallo was part of a Spanish conservative party that during previous governmental terms had aligned its foreign policy towards Cuba with the US. This was underlined during the visit of future Prime Minister Rajoy to the US embassy in Madrid described in the first chapter. During his visit Rajoy expressed his appreciation for US policy on Cuba.⁸⁵ The Cuban regime would not be unreasonable in thinking the conservatives would resume their hard line after coming back to power.

Portugal and France – as the previous chapter also showed – were part of countries encouraging better relations between Cuba and the EU. The Dutch and British diplomatic visits show that they both eased their critical standpoints. Reportedly not every member state was as enthusiastic, but critical countries did not voice their objections publicly. Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic insisted that improvements in human rights formed an important condition of the new treaty.⁸⁶ The attitudes towards Cuba had changed and were no longer completely in line with Gratius' categorisation set out in the introduction to this thesis.

Academics expressed various views on the announcement when negotiations between the EU and Cuba started. In a short piece published by the EU's Institute for Security Studies Gratius held an optimistic view on negotiations. According to her the negotiations were made possible by Raul Castro's reforms in Cuba, the US' abandonment of its hard-line allowing the

⁸⁴ El País, M. González, *Margallo se va de Cuba sin conseguir que le reciba Raúl Castro* (25-10-2014).
http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2014/11/25/actualidad/1416943298_171803.html#sumario_2

⁸⁵ (PlusD) 10MADRID67_a (22-01-2010).

⁸⁶ El País, L. Abellán, *Los países de la UE aprueban el deshielo de las relaciones con Cuba* (10-02-2014).
http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2014/02/10/actualidad/1392023365_870350.html
Ibidem, *La UE prepara el deshielo con Cuba* (15-01-2014).

http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2014/01/15/actualidad/1389821980_984312.html

EU to proceed, Latin-American countries backing Cuban international integration, and because institutional changes meant that EU foreign policy was no longer at the mercy of disagreeing member states. Instead, foreign policy is coordinated by the High Representative.⁸⁷ Further criticism was expressed by M. Palouš, former Czech Permanent Representative to the UN and ambassador to the United States. Currently he is a lecturer on International Relations at a US university. His article centred on the importance of human rights and the engagement of Cuban civil society during the meetings. Palouš' criticism was that member states decidedly against negotiations, like the Czech Republic, were ignored even though the human rights situation in Cuba had not improved.⁸⁸ Palouš' views are right to some degree; during the first rounds of negotiations the EASS discussed commerce and investments first, and more politically sensitive topics were scheduled for later rounds. A departure from the EU stance that led to the Common Position, where human rights came before any other change in bilateral relations.⁸⁹

At the end of December 2014 talks between the EU and Cuba stalled. This happened just when the subject of human rights came onto the agenda and in the period the US-Cuban thaw began. Some sources cited by El País conveyed that the holdup was because Cuban attention was diverted to the talks with the US. Other sources reported a supposed diplomatic affront.⁹⁰ In 2014 only three rounds of talks were held between the EU and Cuba, with talks being postponed twice. High Commissioner Federica Mogherini admitted that progress was

⁸⁷ S. Gratius, 'Engaging Cuba', in *Alert* (No.13) 21-02-2014.

⁸⁸ Palouš, *Where Are We*, 7-8.

⁸⁹ El País, La UE y Cuba acuerdan refundar su relación económica y política (01-05-2014).

http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2014/05/01/actualidad/1398914265_015417.html

⁹⁰ El País, L. Abellán, *Bruselas empieza a hablar de derechos humanos con Cuba* (01-03-2015).

http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2015/03/01/actualidad/1425243712_321480.html

El País, M. Primera, *Cuba y la Unión Europea inician el diálogo para normalizar sus relaciones* (30-05-2014).

http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2014/04/30/actualidad/1398817318_855943.html

slow, but added her hope that an agreement would be reached by the end of 2015.⁹¹ Three further rounds of talks - including discussions on human rights - were held in 2015, with the last talk taking place in November. The end of 2015 passed without a treaty, even despite a visit to Havana by the High Commissioner to advance the process.⁹² Human rights, the hurdle of critical member states, was proving to be difficult subject.

The previous chapter showed that European firms were already anxious to access the Cuban markets in 2008. Consequently, they were pressuring the EU to move forward on Cuba.⁹³ The beginning of the US-Cuban thaw in December 2014 signified that for the first time since the Cold War US businesses could become the competitors of EU companies in Cuba. As long as the EU-Cuba negotiations were without results the Common Position remained in place. Several member states choose to ignore this and conducted trade missions to Cuba. They ignored the fact that the Common Position conditioned relations on human right advances, of which there had been very little. Spanish, Dutch, French, British, and German trade delegations all visited the island.

2.2 The thaw between the United States and Cuba

As shown in the introduction, EU-sceptical scholars opine that EU talks with Cuba were only possible because the US allowed it. They ignored that the EU had urged the US several times to change its approach both in the economic and political sense. In doing so the EU knew that

⁹¹ Reuters, D. Trotta, EU, *Cuba to speed up talks, seek deal by end of 2015* (24-03-2015).

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-cuba-eu-idUSKBN0ML05020150325>

⁹² El País, L. Abellán, *La UE abre un diálogo específico sobre derechos humanos con Cuba* (22-05-2015).

http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2015/04/22/actualidad/1429728130_426103.html

Ibidem, *La UE trata de cerrar el acuerdo político con Cuba antes de fin de año* (25-03-2015).

http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2015/03/24/actualidad/1427227169_450372.html

EASS, *EU-CUBA: Fifth round of negotiations on a Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement* (10-09-2015).

http://eeas.europa.eu/top_stories/2015/100915_eu-cuba_negotiations_en.htm

⁹³ (PlusD) 08HAVANA879_a (02-10-08), 08BRUSSELS1540_a (02-10-08), 08BRUSSELS1589_a (14-10-08), 08BRUSSELS1661_a (28-10-08).

European business interests could be negatively affected by lifting US restrictions. One estimate cited a minimum of at the very least 150 million dollars.⁹⁴ Gratius, for example, was proven wrong. She predicted that the EU would only move forward after, and if, the US lifted the embargo. Gratius even disregarded a potential role for the EU as mediator.⁹⁵ In the same year Perera Gómez was less harsh, but also doubtful on any change in the near future.⁹⁶ During the onset of EU-Cuban negotiations Washington remained silent, until seemingly suddenly at the end of 2014 the rapprochement was announced.⁹⁷ The US-Cuban thaw followed after the EU had already started bilateral negotiations with Cuba. Thus, who was influencing who? This chapter will demonstrate that Spain helped shape relations with Cuba by assisting in the US-Cuban thaw. At the same time the extrajudicial measures of the US embargo remained in place, hindering EU economic activities in Cuba.

In 2009 the Obama Administration eased restrictions on travel and the flow of capital. During the 5th Summit of the Americas, President Obama declared that the US sought a new beginning with Cuba.⁹⁸ These statements were not without hypocrisy, as the first chapter showed that the EU was pressured during this time to not change its foreign policy towards Cuba. Nevertheless, the regime under Raul Castro reacted positively to Obama's overtures. A new high point was reached when President Obama and Raul Castro shook hands during the memorial service for Nelson Mandela in 2013. It was during this same year that secret talks were held between the US and Cuba. The talks resulted in US and Cuba announcing the improvement of bilateral relations in December 2014. In 2015 embassies were opened in

⁹⁴ Doleac, *Will the U.S.-Cuban rapprochement affect*, 4.

⁹⁵ Domínguez, Hernández, and Barberia, *Debating U.S.-Cuban Relations*, 136-137.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, 116.

⁹⁷ Reuters, R. Emmott, *EU eyes warmer Cuba ties with push for new accord* (10-02-2014).

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-eu-cuba-idUSBREA1913W20140210>

⁹⁸ BBC News, *Obama offers Cuba 'new beginning'* (18-04-2009).

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/8004798.stm>

Havana and Washington, a prisoner exchange was held, travel restrictions were eased, as well as some trade restrictions. Many more measures were relaxed, with as most important one the removal of Cuba from the list of state's sponsoring terrorism.⁹⁹

The involvement of the Pope and Canadian diplomats in US-Cuban talks preceding their rapprochement has been mentioned in the introduction. Canada has held amicable ties with islands for decades, even during the Cold War. The influence of the Catholic church in Cuba has several times seen the release of political prisoners. Additionally, El País cited Spanish diplomatic sources as saying that 'España no estuvo en la cocina, pero sí ayudó a preparar la mesa'.¹⁰⁰ This is corroborated by primary sources. Before a meeting between Margallo and Secretary of State Clinton the latter received messages from several directions - partly through mutual friends - that the Spanish government wanted to work more closely with the US. The messages' essence was paraphrased in the following manner: 'The new Spanish Government wants to re-orient Spanish foreign policy so that it can work with the US in Latin America, especially on Venezuela and Cuba. This will be a significant change from the policies of the previous Spanish Government.'¹⁰¹ Clinton's aides saw this as very helpful. Especially since the messages underlined that the Spanish government anticipated to again lead EU discussions about Latin-America. One email described Margallo as a '(...) great new and helpful colleague--in contrast to his predecessor--He is a committed Atlantisist [sic] and NATO supporter. He also wants to be helpful in Latin America especially in the most difficult countries.'¹⁰² It is clear the Spain helped shape US relations with Cuba.

⁹⁹ Council on Foreign Relations, C. Felter, B. Lee, J. McBride, & D. Renwick, *U.S.-Cuba Relations* (03-02-17).
https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/us-cuba-relations?cid=soc-facebook-in-us_cuba_relations_bgr-032016

¹⁰⁰ El País, M. González, *España confía en liderar la política de la UE con Cuba* (18-12-2014), 'Spain was not in the kitchen, but it did help set the table'.

¹⁰¹ (USDOS) No. F-2014-20439 Doc. No. C05788917 (30-01-2012).

¹⁰² (USDOS) No. F-2014-20439 Doc. No. C05793649 (31-01-2012).

The US-Cuban thaw saw the easing of several measures against Cuba that benefited the international business community. But importantly, the extraterritorial application of the embargo remained unchanged despite EU-US contact on the issue. Despite the supposed relaxed US attitude European companies were still very fearful of facing US fines for doing business with Cuba. For example, all European banks were still extremely reluctant to finance anything remotely connected to Cuba due to the large fines colleagues had suffered. In 2014 French bank BNP Paribas suffered a \$10 billion fine for facilitating transactions linked to Cuba.¹⁰³ This meant that the whole process the Cuban regime had to use to make international payments took a month. As the preceding paragraph showed, the European economic run on Cuba was beginning in an effort to be corner markets before US companies would enter the scene. The US and EU were never seen cooperating on policy towards Cuba, both were improving ties with the island completely separately.

2.3 The year 2016: consolidation and progress?

Developments of the preceding years led to another eventful year for Cuba in 2016. This was the year the Rolling Stones gave a concert in Havana, and other celebrities and jetsetters visited the Caribbean island. The first direct line flight from Miami arrived and the first US cruise ships called into Havana's port. Airbnb made its services available and Google set up servers on the island to speed up access to its services.¹⁰⁴ This paragraph examines two important developments: the signing of a Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement

¹⁰³ BBC News, *BNP Paribas '\$10bn' US fine unreasonable, says France* (03-06-14).

<http://www.bbc.com/news/business-27676000>

¹⁰⁴ BBC News, *US-Cuba commercial flights to resume*, (16-02-16)

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-35590757>

BBC News, *Cuba signs deal for faster internet access to Google content* (12-12-16).

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-38297926>

BBC News, *Airbnb adds Cuba to destination list for US travellers* (02-04-15).

<http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-32161086>

between the EU and Cuba and the historic visit by President Obama to Cuba. This paragraph will set out how EU-Cuban relations improved with the signing of a bilateral agreement.

There were less signs of member states disagreement on Cuba. At the same time US progress stalled after the presidential election.

March was a busy month for the Cuban regime. The EU-Cuba negotiations on a Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement (PDCA) reached their conclusion on the eleventh. The PDCA replaced the Common Position. In December, the Council decided to sign the agreement and it was provisionally applied. At the same time the agreement was submitted to the European Parliament, EU Member States' national parliaments, and the Cuban National Assembly for ratification.¹⁰⁵ The PDCA laid the foundations for improving the bilateral relations between the EU and Cuba. Not only in a political sense, but also to 'accompany the process of updating the economy and society in Cuba by providing a comprehensive framework for dialogue and cooperation.'¹⁰⁶ The agreement touches upon subjects that range from human rights and sustainable development to international terrorism. Shortly said, it is a comprehensive document. Two matters are the most interesting. Firstly, the PDCA contains an abundance of passages on human rights and other aspects of good governance in a manner typical of the EU. It is best demonstrated by article five of the agreement:

'Within the framework of the overall political dialogue, the Parties agree to establish a human rights dialogue, with a view to enhancing practical cooperation between the Parties at both multilateral and bilateral level. The agenda for each dialogue session shall be agreed by

¹⁰⁵ EASS, *EU-Cuba relations, factsheet* (06-12-16).

https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/16558/eu-cuba-relations_en

¹⁰⁶ (GS) 2016/0297 (NLE) *Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Cuba, of the other part*, (Brussels 25-04-16) 12.

the parties, reflect their respective interests and take care to address in a balanced fashion civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights.’¹⁰⁷

Secondly, article 60 on trade and trade cooperation set up the objectives of EU-Cuba trade cooperation. These objectives were concerned with increasing trade and investment flows, promoting the integration of Cuba in the world economy, amongst others.¹⁰⁸ Additionally, eight million euros was allocated for development projects.¹⁰⁹ Fidel Castro could no longer claim the EU was ‘too much nuisance for too little money’. Earlier on this chapter explained that negotiations between the EU and Cuba on a new bilateral agreement took longer than expected because human rights formed a stumble block, but they did form a part of the PCDA in the end. This agreement at the same time formalized economic interests between the EU and Cuba, in doing so it formed a push towards EU more trade and investment. With the signing of the PCDA the EU normalized relations with Cuba. In 2008 until 2010 similar ideas were subject to US disapproval and subsequent diplomatic pressures. But six years later the EU could conduct its foreign policy more independently from US influence.

The end of March saw the US take another significant step towards the normalization of relations with Cuba. President Obama made the first visit to Cuba by a sitting U.S. president since 1928.¹¹⁰ Parallels were drawn to the Berlin wall.¹¹¹ In an address broadcast live with Raul Castro sitting in the audience, Obama urged both countries to press on with reform: ‘I have come here to bury the last remnant of the Cold War in the Americas.’

¹⁰⁷ *Ibidem*, 15.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibidem*, 77-78.

¹⁰⁹ EASS, *Joint press conference with Mogherini and Bruno Rodriguez, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cuba* (11-03-16). https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/5458_en

¹¹⁰ Council on Foreign Relations, C. Felter, B. Lee, J. McBride, & D. Renwick, *U.S.-Cuba Relations* (03-02-17). https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/us-cuba-relations?cid=soc-facebook-in-us_cuba_relations_bgr-032016

¹¹¹ D. Roberts, *The Guardian*, *Obama lands in Cuba as first US president to visit in nearly a century* (21-03-16). <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/20/barack-obama-cuba-visit-us-politics-shift-public-opinion-diplomacy>

President Obama explained that the change in US policy was motivated by the fact that isolation was simply not working.¹¹² A few months later the US abstained for the first time in history during the yearly UN-vote calling for an end to the Cuban embargo.¹¹³

Another historic development in 2016 was the passing away of Fidel Castro on the 25th of November. The long-prepared ceremonies and parades were held during the subsequent nine days of mourning. A part of these proceedings was a farewell ceremony on the Square of Revolution in Havana. International leaders visited Havana for the farewell ceremony. Yet, attendance was surprisingly scarce from nations other than Cuba's close allies. Importantly, attendance by EU member states was very low key. Most EU countries send second rate dignitaries or were represented by their ambassadors. Spain was - predictably - the notable exception. Former Spanish King Juan Carlos attended the ceremony and served as another clear sign that Spain is invested in close relations with its former colony.¹¹⁴

In the running up to 2016 U.S presidential elections the Obama administration tried to loosen restrictions against Cuba as much as possible. This was accelerated when the possibility of a Trump Administration became a reality. As on other subjects, current President Trump has contradicted himself on various occasions. In one of the first months of the Trump presidency an administration official said that the policy towards Cuba is currently

¹¹² Remarks by President Obama at the Gran Teatro de la Habana on 22-03-16, full text available at: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/03/22/remarks-president-obama-people-cuba>

¹¹³ BBC News, *US abstains from UN vote against Cuba embargo* (27-10-16).
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-37784136>

¹¹⁴ P. de Llano, *El País Raúl Castro, varios líderes amigos y miles de cubanos despiden a Fidel en La Habana* (30-11-16).
http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2016/11/30/actualidad/1480486469_918977.html

under review.¹¹⁵ President Trump's statements have been hostile to the Havana regime. When Fidel Castro passed he called him a brutal dictator.¹¹⁶

In resume, the start of 2016 went well for Cuba. The steady improvement of Cuba's international relations continued with the visit by President Obama and the signing of the PCDA with the EU. The passing of Fidel Castro and the election of President Trump were a stark contrast. The meagre EU attendance of the farewell ceremony showed that Cuba was maybe not deemed that important anymore. While the election of President Trump did not bode well. The successful conclusions of the PCDA negotiations shows that the EU was staying on step ahead of the US. It is a sign that US influence on EU foreign policy towards Cuba decreased. In 2016 signs of internal or external disagreement between EU member states on Cuba were absent, making a strong case for European unity on the matter.

2.4 Conclusions

This chapter covered developments surrounding EU-Cuban relations after the Spanish presidency in 2010, the US-Cuban thaw, and the signing of a Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement between the EU and Cuba. In doing so, this chapter provided interesting insights on this thesis' two sub-questions regarding EU unity and US influence. Internally, unity between EU member states on common policy towards Cuba increased. It appears that member states agreed on the negotiations the EU was undertaking with Cuba in the 2014-2016 period. But at the same time the tardiness of negotiations led to external discord. Numerous member states did not want to wait for negotiations to conclude and ignored the Common Position that was still in place to bilaterally improve relations with

¹¹⁵ The Guardian, *Raúl Castro: Cuba won't compromise sovereignty to normalize US relations* (25-1-17) <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jan/25/raul-castro-cuba-sovereignty-us-relations-donald-trump>

¹¹⁶ A. Mars, El País, *Trump llama "brutal dictador" a Castro y entierra la política de Obama* (26-03-16). http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2016/11/26/estados_unidos/1480173796_688650.html

Cuba. This is demonstrated by the visits of a number European dignitaries in the 2014-2016 period. The member states were afraid to miss out on the opening of the island's economy.

Was EU foreign policy making on Cuba in this chapter's time frame free from US influence? If this is judged by its results, the EU's foreign policy was indeed free from US influence. The EU decided to start negotiations with Cuba on a new bilateral agreement before the US-Cuban thaw began. Even though the US Secretary of State Clinton expected the new Spanish conservative government to re-orient its foreign policy towards the US line in 2012. Additionally, negotiations on the PCDA agreement concluded successfully. As a consequence, EU companies had earlier access to the Cuban markets than their US competitors. The US was unable to prevent this, making the EU clearly independent in the way it gave shape to its relations with Cuba.

The introduction of this thesis set out that the viewpoints in scientific discourse can be divided along three lines: US-centric, EU-sceptical, and EU-positive. This chapter made clear that US-centric authors are limited in their views. Even though the US-Cuban thaw is seen as an historic event, the embargo is still in place. While at the same time the EU has negotiated a new rapprochement with the island in the form of a bilateral agreement. EU sceptical authors can claim that negotiations between the EU and Cuba were only concluded after the US-Cuban thaw was announced. Yet, EU-positive scholars will definitely raise objections and declare that improvements in EU-Cuban relations were already underway before any change in US foreign policy towards Cuba. This is corroborated by Secretary of State Clinton's email correspondence, that sounded hopeful in having found a new ally for US policies in the recently elected conservative Spanish government.

In short, this chapter has demonstrated that US influence decreased. Internally EU unity on foreign policy increased. In 2016 the EU increasingly maintained a unified foreign policy towards Cuba independent from US influences.

CONCLUSIONS

Unity in independent foreign policy?

Developments in Cuba's international relations between 2008 and 2016 required a new analysis of EU-Cuba relations, especially since comprehensive scientific publications after 2009 are non-existent. However, a vacuum does not directly justify a study. The justification for this study is to be found in three aspects. First, there are a substantial number of scholars that maintain an US-centric approach on Cuba's international relations, therewith ignoring one of the world's biggest economic blocks. Secondly, between authors that do pay attention to EU-Cuba relations there is a disagreement on to which extent the EU formulates its foreign policy towards Cuba independently from US' wishes. Thirdly, for their research scholars have not had access to primary sources that can shed light on behind-the-scenes considerations. Thus, this thesis set out to investigate to what extent the EU has maintained a unified foreign policy towards Cuba independent from US influences, in 2008-2016. This main question contained two important aspects of EU foreign policy: EU unity and independence from the US. Therefore, two equally important sub-questions were formulated. Firstly; Was EU foreign policy making towards Cuba free from US influence? Secondly; to what extent did unity exist between member states internally and externally on EU foreign policy? These sub-questions were answered with the help of two key periods in recent EU-Cuban relations. The first period was set between 2008 and 2010. It covered Raul Castro's election and the Spanish EU presidency. The second period covered the EU-Cuba negotiations and the US-Cuban thaw until 2016.

The answer to the first sub-question differs per chapter and its corresponding timeframe. In the first chapter, that covered the 2008-2010 period, clear evidence is set out of US influence on EU foreign policy making. Member states were actively lobbied to follow the

US' hard line towards Cuba. The Spanish wishes for a loosening of EU foreign policy towards Cuba went against US' wishes. Therefore, Spain was particularly pressured to drop their plans. US influence on EU foreign policy manifested in the Spanish failure to replace the EU's Common Position. In the end, the EU did not change its Common Position on Cuba. US influence diminished in the period roughly between 2012 and 2016, covered in the second chapter. This is proven by the EU's decision to start negotiations on a bilateral treaty with Cuba and their subsequent successful conclusion. Some member states loosened their critical stance on Cuba to some degree, motivated by economic prospects as demonstrated by the various trade missions in this period.

The second sub-question examined if unity existed between member states internally and externally on EU foreign policy towards Cuba. The first chapter showed how divided the member states were on Cuba in 2010. Without Spain the EU would have been far more united on policy towards Cuba, as the majority of member states were opposed to changing EU foreign policy towards the island. The disagreement was kept internally. This changed a few years later. The second chapter demonstrated that EU foreign policy towards was conducted in a far more united matter. But while most member states were positive on a new bilateral agreement between the EU and Cuba, the length of the negotiations saw member states act disjointed externally. Member states ignored the Common Position that was still in place motivated by the economic opportunities. Especially after the US-Cuban thaw came to fruition member states wanted to act on economic opportunities in Cuba before US businesses could compete.

The introduction explained that the viewpoints in the scientific discourse can be divided along three lines: US-centric, EU-sceptical, and EU-positive. The conclusions above make clear that US-centric authors, who hinge Cuba's international relations on US policy are incorrect. In the timeframe of this thesis EU foreign policy towards the island was at least as

influential as US actions. EU-sceptical authors would answer that this is only because the US let this happen, the EU would never act without the US leading the way. This is disproved in the first chapter that showed that there were member states that could and would stand up to US pressure. The second chapter made clear that the EU started negotiations on a bilateral agreement with Cuba far before the US-Cuban thaw materialized. Simultaneously there was so much US pressure on the EU regarding Cuba that it is not possible to wholeheartedly agree with EU-positive authors. Nonetheless, the EU is a far more important and independent actor in Cuba's international relations than much of the scientific discourse would lead to believe.

The justification for this study has already been touched upon. In addition, the scientific relevance of this thesis' findings are found in its use of primary sources. Normally primary sources that can shed light on behind the scene considerations only become available after decades. Yet, they are crucial in correctly analysing events, researching international relations with only press statements and journalistic articles as sources only provides limited results. Paradoxically, drawbacks of this study are found in the lack of primary sources. The majority of primary sources that were used for this research all originated from the US' diplomatic apparatus. These sources have an obvious bias and on their own cannot provide all information needed for a complete analysis. At the same time these primary sources ran dry in the second chapter. Consequently, this chapter was increasingly forced to use journalistic sources. Even though they might have had access to inside contacts or confidential documents the accuracy and trustfulness of journalistic sources always hangs in the balance. Moreover, this study has had a historical research approach, it could have benefited from a theoretical framework. On the other hand, Cuba's international relations are extraordinary in the modern international politics and would have fitted an existing theory with difficulty. Luckily, this leaves opportunities for follow-up studies. A follow-up study could also improve upon the limited primary sources, provided that access is granted. Another important that begs for

further research is the role and views of Latin-America on the relations between Cuba, the EU, US, and Spain. As was touched upon a few times during this thesis, Latin-America sees US and EU attitudes to Cuba as symbolic for their attitudes towards their region.

This study set out to investigate to what extent the EU maintained a unified foreign policy towards Cuba independent from US influences, after 2008. To conclude, it has found that internal EU unity on Cuba increased throughout the years. Externally, economic opportunities saw member states break rank and disregard EU foreign policy. US influence on EU foreign policy towards Cuba decreased in later years as the EU went ahead independently in successfully seeking normal relations with island, partly in order to secure economic opportunities. In 2009 Roy concluded that EU-Cuban relations were quite obscure, due to the lack of a coherent, consequent, and united EU approach on foreign policy because of the different attitudes by member states towards Cuba. In 2016 this was no longer the case and EU-Cuban relations were on track to become stable and coherent with a unified attitude by member states.

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