

Emilia Hernández
English Castle Bilingual School
Danlí, El Paraíso, Honduras
Cuba, Conflict

Ending Conflict in Cuba

Cuba is an island nation in the Caribbean Sea. Cuba has a socialist unitary republic with a single chamber of parliament. For 20 years Cuba became a democracy and was friendly with the US. That changed in 1952 when Fulgencio Batista, a former president, carried out a coup, took control, suspended the constitution, and imposed a repressive regime. Fidel Castro took power in 1976. The US feared communism expansion, so they set up the embargo to strangle Cuba's economy. The Bay of Pigs operation, during which the US sent CIA agents to Cuba in an effort to seize control of the country and tried to assassinate Castro, failed. Castro requested aid from the Soviet Union. It nearly sparked the third World War. That scared everyone and they all settled down into a peaceful but stranded relationship.

Cuba's ruler, Fidel Castro, created the first communist nation in the Western Hemisphere. He served as president from 1976 to 2008. In 2008, Raul Castro officially took over as leader after his brother Fidel. Following Raul Castro, Miguel Díaz-Canel was elected president of Cuba. Since the middle of the 20th century, he is the first leader of Cuba who is not a Castro. However, nothing has changed, he has the same ideology as Fidel and his brother. They have a Marxism-Leninism ideology in which supposedly everyone should have the same.

Communism is the belief in a society without different social classes in which the methods of production are owned and controlled by all its members and everyone works as much as they can and receives what they need. (Cambridge Dictionary n.d.) There is only one party, there is no separation of powers, there is no respect for individual freedom, everything is subordinated to the party, with the excuse of the "common good". The economy is heavily run by the state. There are no free unions and no right to strike. Economic disaster and the limitation of individual freedoms. That's all communism has achieved in over a hundred years.

People in Cuba have been denied their right to a free trial, free speech, and free press. Independent media is prohibited by the Constitution. The Internet is limited in Cuba. People don't have internet connection in their houses; it's only available in some public squares. The internet costs \$1.63 per hour, which is impossible to afford with the average Cuban salary which is \$30 to \$40 a month. The government has complete control over social media. Press is unable to report on what is truly taking place. The Cuban government punishes any type of criticism directed at them. In 2021, a Madrid-based rights group reported that Cuba was holding 251 political prisoners (Roth, 2021).

Another aspect that affects Cuba is the considerable amount of emigration. Emigration is the process of leaving a country permanently and going to live in another one. (Cambridge Dictionary n.d.). 11 million people live on the island; more than 2% of them have immigrated to the US. The US Border Patrol

detained over 203,000 Cubans between January and September 2022 (Hassan, 2023). The largest migration since Fidel Castro has occurred as a result of the pandemic and the U.S. sanctions that have devastated Cuba's economy. The economic crisis in Cuba grew worse because of the Covid-19 pandemic. On July 11, 2021 took place the largest anti-government protest since the Cuban Revolution in 1959. These protests were the reaction to the way the government handled the Covid outbreak. They suffered from food and medicine scarcity. They blamed the U.S when authorities realized that there were now more people without access to medicine. 88 of the 262 most necessary medicines were "unavailable," according to the leader of the government-run pharmaceutical industry group.

Inflation is an issue that impacts Cuba. According to the International Monetary Fund, inflation is the rate of increase in prices over a given period of time. Cuba and Venezuela lead the ranking of the most economically "miserable" countries. The government explains the poor outcomes of the Cuban economy by pointing to the continuation of some causes like the US embargo, the structural flaws in the national economy, and the drop in tourism both during and after the pandemic. After remaining at low and stable levels for more than 20 years, there has been an increase in the growth of the level of general prices in Cuba since 2020, especially in 2021. The Office National Statistics and Information Office (ONEI) reports that annual inflation in August 2022 was 34.1%. According to estimates from international agencies, this metric will be over 60% by year's end (EIU, 2022), demonstrating the continued existence of intense demands to raise prices.

Before 1959, Cuba was one of the most developed countries in Latin America. It showed higher socioeconomic indexes than many regions in the center of the United States and Southern Europe. Cuba Platform estimates that currently 80 percent of Cuba's food is imported. Politicians prioritize exporting rather than supporting and providing for their own. Cuba's agricultural sector has a lot of potential. René Dumont, a well-known agronomist, once said, "with proper management, Cuba could adequately feed five times its current population." At the moment, Cuba cannot even feed its own population. 1.4 million people left the island after Fidel Castro's guerrilla forces overthrew dictator Fulgencio Batista in 1959, starting the largest refugee flow into the United States in history. Cuba has continued to be one of the top countries that transfer migrants to the United States.

According to the Census, the average Cuban family size is 2.57 people. Their typical monthly salary varies from \$30 to \$40 for those who work for the government. A bar of cheese on the island costs the equivalent of a judge's monthly pay. The main obstacles they encounter include low pay, lack of food, and job restrictions. These problems are faced by most Cubans. They don't get paid enough, they can't afford anything in a country where everything is expensive.

Cuba's major crops are sugarcane, rice, citrus fruits, potatoes, plantains, bananas, tomatoes, and corn. The collapse of the sugar agro-industry, which was the engine of the Cuban economy for many years, has caused the historical export performance of Cuban agriculture prior to 1989 to drastically decline. The value of agricultural product exports represents less than 25% of what was generated in 1989. According to Crop Trust, Cuba consumes between 87 and 97 percent of its food energy from non-native crops. Cuba

exported goods in 2019 for more than US\$1.2 billion. Among the main products are tobacco (23.8%), sugar (17.5%), alcoholic beverages (8.07%), nickel (11.1%) and zinc (6.5%), according to data from the Economic Complexity Observatory of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Cuba has one-third of its land cultivated. Due to the soil's high fertility, up to two harvests may be grown there each year. Agriculture has long been affected by the yearly precipitation's high degree of variability. Agriculture is critical to developing countries, it can help reduce poverty, increase income and improve food security.

The government is Cuba's biggest problem. The dictatorship has affected Cuba for over 60 years. There are many strict policies that have stopped The United States from getting involved. Cuba needs to find small ways of working together that could make a big difference. Reforms are frequently required as societies around the world seek more democratic systems of governance in order to improve decision-making procedures, guarantee fair representation of social groups, and the transparency and accountability of governmental operations. Governments can become more efficient with the support of reforms, which can also promote social stability and maximize economic potential.

In my opinion, the United Nations should be part and be included in the election process. In order to guarantee that the entire process is honest and fair so that Cuba has a democratic election and all the participation and votes are valid and taken into account so they can have an unexceptionable government.

Investing in infrastructure is another way. According to Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.), infrastructure are the basic systems and services, such as transport and power supplies, that a country or organization uses in order to work effectively. To integrate national markets and provide connections to international markets, infrastructure reduces distance between areas. It's important to determine the potential locations and types of economic activity. By increasing factors of production; an economy can create more jobs, land, and capital. In that way, start focusing on increasing productivity of these factors.

The country could also try to increase foreign investment to help expand Cuba's economy. International investors are individuals or organizations based outside of a nation who make investments in a company. Businesses are purchased by organizations based on their predicted performance on an international market, in addition to their success in their country. Corporations can buy new goods and technologies and advertise their current goods to new markets by purchasing interest in overseas assets. Extending the free importation of goods, allowing international companies to participate in the Cuban market, and authorizing the purchase of foreign currency with an exchange rate that varies are all necessary to address the country's main economic problem; high inflation. To attract foreign investors we have to create a stable business, develop a skilled workforce, invest in infrastructure, and build a strong international relationship. Governments can increase economic growth, create jobs, and support foreign direct investment. It could support the country's effort to improve.

In Cuba most people work for the government, their salary varies from 30 to 40 dollars monthly. People cannot afford basic services. In 2021, Cuba legalized small and medium private companies with up to 100 employees allowed. The government approved the first 35 MSMEs (Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) just ten days after the law went into effect and the first applications were submitted. Of these, 32 were private and three were state-owned, and the majority were involved in food production, manufacturing, recycling activities, technological activities, and local development projects. Yondainer Gutiérrez is an example of a Cuban businessman. He developed an app for restaurants. At only 29 years old, he is one of the creators of AlaMesa, an island-wide restaurant chain with more than 900 locations. As there are few resources of this kind in Cuba, he has been able to design this programme so that it may be used without an internet connection. My idea is to be able to help many people to undertake and start their own companies independently of the government in order to have their own income. In addition, I would also like to go all over the country giving talks and workshops to empower many people to start their own businesses. This plan would be presented to a large organization such as The United Nations.

Cuba is an island nation with great potential that they haven't taken advantage of. Cuba has been involved in many conflicts throughout the years. The Cuban Revolution led by Fidel Castro which made Cuba the first communist nation has affected tremendously everyone in the island. To maximize Cuba's potential we need to try to help and find more ways to better their economy. Reforms can help to seek a democratic government. Increasing foreign investment and investing in infrastructure can help expand Cuba's economy. We can make such good impacts with these solutions. Recognizing the potential of this nation and working to improve it is extremely important. We could help develop Cuba and become the great nation they once were.

References

- Census. “Cuba Demographics 2023 (Income, Population).” *Name Census*, <https://namecensus.com/demographics/illinois/lake-county/cuba/>
- Communism*. Cambridge Dictionary. (n.d.). Retrieved September 30, 2023, from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/communism#>
- Cuba*. Crop Trust - Securing our food, forever. (n.d.). <https://www.croptrust.org/pgrfa-hub/crops-countries-and-genebanks/countries/cuba/>
- Emigration*. Cambridge Dictionary. (n.d.). Retrieved April 14, 2023, from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/emigration>
- Food and Agriculture. Cuba Platform. (n.d.). Retrieved March 30, 2023, from <https://cubaplatform.org/food-and-agriculture>
- Hassan, Tirana. “World Report 2023: Rights Trends in Cuba.” Human Rights Watch, 20 Jan. 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/cuba>
- Infrastructure*. Cambridge Dictionary. (n.d.). Retrieved April 14, 2023, from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/infrastructure>
- Moya, D. P. (2023, August 27). *Emprendedores cubanos exitosos*. *Emprender Fácil* <https://www.emprender-facil.com/emprendedores-latinos-exitosos/emprendedores-cubanos-exitosos/?amp=1>
- Oner, Ceyda. “Inflation: Prices on the Rise.” *International Monetary Fund*, <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/fandd/issues/Series/Back-to-Basics/Inflation>
- Roth, K. (2022, January 13). *World Report 2022: Rights trends in Cuba*. Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/cuba>
- Suchlicki, Jaime, and Cuban Studies Institute. “Home.” Cuban Studies Institute, <https://cubanstudiesinstitute.us/>
- Vicent, M. (2021, September 30). *El Gobierno de Cuba autoriza las primeras 32 empresas privadas*. *El País*. https://elpais.com/economia/2021-09-30/el-gobierno-de-cuba-autoriza-las-primeras-32-empresas-privadas.html?event=go&event_log=go&prod=REGCRART&o=cerradoam