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# Tyler Morning Telegraph

## Embargo of Cuba is a policy failure

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As the old year ends, so too does a policy that has been demonstrably ineffective in achieving its aims over half a century: the U.S. embargo of Cuba.

President Barack Obama has made the right move in calling for normalization of relations with that anachronistic Communist state. Congress should follow suit, by lifting the embargo.

Writing for the Cato Institute, Doug Bandow outlines the solid reasons why even conservative opponents of most of Obama's policies should applaud this shift.

"A half century ago the Castros created a nasty dictatorship and allied with the Soviet Union," he says. "But the Soviet Union, Cold War, Soviet-Cuban alliance, and Moscow subsidies for Cuba are all gone. Only the Castro dictatorship lives on, despite the embargo. Over the years the rest of the world ignored Washington's ban. Even after the cut-off of Soviet transfers the sanctions did not bring Havana to heel."

So it's time to try something new.

"Normalization is long overdue," Bandow contends. "There's no longer a security argument for isolating Cuba. At home the Castros are thugs, but that's old news and hasn't been affected by a half century of sanctions. What we know as a result of essentially a controlled experiment with the embargo is that sanctions do not release political prisoners, generate competitive elections, unseat dictators, create a free press, or foster a market economy."

In fact, the sanctions arguably kept the Communist regime in place.

"U.S. policy essentially made Fidel Castro," Bandow says. "Had Washington dismissed his regime, he would have receded in global importance, just another windbag dictator in charge of a poor, small state. Instead, for decades he was seen as the premier global opponent of Yanqui Imperialism."

Bandow says we can expect improvements, but not an immediate transformation.

"Cuba is not only poor, but also suffers from the ravages of a state-controlled economy," he says. "Cubans are limited in what they can buy and also in what they can produce to sell. However, Washington should not offer 'aid,' whether for commercial or developmental reasons, to Havana in response. Moreover, while greater economic and political contact will be naturally seditious and undermine Communist Party rule, the regime has carefully controlled past foreign

investment, limiting its impact. But foreign visitors and businessmen still will have a positive influence. Of course, much more will still need to be done to encourage a freer society.”

Bandow doesn't (at least in this case) make the more fundamental argument for lifting the embargo. Conservatives should be willing to put their policy where their mouth is.

We know that free markets are the superior economic system, lifting more people out of poverty and raising life expectancies and standards of living for billions of people worldwide. Capitalism always and everywhere proves superior to socialism.

So let's allow free markets to work their magic. An embargo, of course, is the opposite of free market economics.

Our most effective weapon against the Castro regime is to show the Cuban people what life can be like without it.