Making State Action Possible: The United States and the Discursive Construction of 'The Cuban Problem', 1960-1994

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In July of 1960, Dwight D. Eisenhower announced that Cuba had become a problem for the United States.[1] In response to Nikita Khrushchev's commitment of Soviet support for Cuba and the Castro government, Eisenhower declared that the 'close ties' that had 'developed between the Soviet and Cuban governments' indicated 'the clear intention to establish Cuba in a role serving Soviet purposes in this hemisphere'.[2] The problem of Cuba was thus defined, in typical Cold War fashion, as 'the establishment of a regime dominated by international Communism in the Western Hemisphere'.[3] The much publicised 'Cuban problem'[4] had arrived, and US hostility towards Cuba began to grow, manifesting itself in persistent and diverse attacks on Cuba's physical security, on its sovereignty, on its head of state, and on its economy.[5]

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1. This was not the first time, of course. In the nineteenth century, a much debated 'Cuban question' concerned whether or not the United States should annex Cuba outright. See Louis A. Pérez, Jr., *Cuba and the United States: Ties of Singular Intimacy* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1990), pp. xiii-xv.
2. Dwight D. Eisenhower, 'Statement by the President concerning Premier Khrushchev's announcement of support for the Castro regime in Cuba', 9 July 1960, *Public Papers of the Presidents: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1960-1961* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1962), p. 567.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 568.
4. The phrase 'the Cuban problem' became customary in 1960. See, for example, Richard P. Stebbins (ed.), *The United States in World Affairs, 1960* (New York, NY: Harper and Brothers, 1961), p. 298.
5. The history of US hostility towards Cuba since its 1959 Revolution is well known. For discussions of the physical threat that the United States has posed to Cuba, for instance during Operation Pluto and the invasion at the Bay of Pigs or during the Cuban missile crisis, see Pérez, Jr., *op. cit.*, in note 1; Carla Anne Robbins, *The Cuban Threat* (New York, NY: McGraw Hill, 1983); and Robert E. Light and Carl Marzani, *Cuba versus CIA* (New York, NY: Marzani and Munsell, 1961). The persistent attempt by the United States to abrogate Cuban sovereignty is evidenced in Edward Lansdale, 'The Cuba Project (Program Review and Basic Action Plan for Operation Mongoose)', 20 February 1962, reprinted in Laurence Chang and Peter Kornbluh (eds.), *The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962: A National Security Archive Documents Reader* (New York, NY:

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Given this orthodox US definition of 'the Cuban problem' as a Cold War threat of Soviet and Communist interference in the Western hemisphere, one might expect that it, and the attendant hostile US foreign policies, would disappear with the much vaunted 'end of the Cold War'. This has not been the case, however: 'the Cuban problem' has persisted, and pugnacious US policies towards Cuba and the Castro government have proceeded apace. Of course, it could be suggested that this merely reflects a time lag: that such policies have persisted as a result of inertia. However, hostile US policies towards Cuba have so far been actively and deliberately reasserted by two post-Cold War administrations. In September of 1991, in the wake of the 'Velvet Revolutions', George Bush asserted that

> some have suggested to me that now is the time, given the enormous changes in Eastern Europe, changes in the Soviet Union, the changes for democracy south of Mexico, that now is the time to alter our policy towards Cuba. Let me tell you something, I'm not going to change it one single bit.[6]

The New Press, 1992), pp. 23-37, and examined by Louis A. Pérez Jr., *Cuba under the Platt Amendment 1902-1934* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986), and *op. cit.*, in note 1. US attempts to assassinate Castro and other members of the Cuban government are discussed in Warren Hinckle and William W. Turner, *The Fish is Red: The Story of the Secret War against Castro* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1981); US Senate, Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, *Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders: An Interim Report*, 94th Congress, 1st Session, 20 November 1975 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1975); and Taylor Branch and George Crile, III, 'The Kennedy Vendetta: How the CIA Waged a Silent War against Cuba', *Harper's Magazine* (Vol. 251, No. 1503, 1975), pp. 49-63. Finally, the US embargo against Cuba is discussed in US Department of State, 'Establishment of United States Export Controls: State Department Statement', 19 October 1960, in Richard P. Stebbins (ed.), *Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1960* (New York, NY: Harper and Brothers, 1961), pp. 521-24; US Congress, 'The Foreign Aid and Related Agencies Act, Fiscal Year 1963', Public Law 87-872, approved 23 October 1962, excerpt in Richard P. Stebbins (ed.), *Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1962* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1962), pp. 373-74; David Detzer, *The Brink: Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962* (New York, NY: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1972); and Morris H. Morley, *Imperial State and Revolution: The United States and Cuba, 1952-1986* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). For Cuban reactions to this US harassment see, among others, Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado, Speech, 8 October 1962, United Nations, General Assembly, 17th Session, *Plenary Meetings*, Volume II, 5 October to 20 November 1962; 'Text of U.N.-Cuban Notes', *New York Times*, 28 October 1962, p. 31; Tad Szulc, *Fidel: A Critical Portrait* (New York, NY: William Morrow, 1986); Fidel Castro, 'There is Only One Road to Liberation: That of Cuba, That of Grenada, That of Nicaragua', Speech, 26 July 1980, in M. Taber (ed.), *Fidel Castro Speeches: Cuba's Internationalist Foreign Policy, 1975-1980* (New York, NY: Pathfinder Press, 1981), pp. 316-38; and 'Transcript of Fidel Castro's Remarks at the Havana conference on the Cuban Missile Crisis', 11 January 1992, Foreign Broadcast Information Service, in Chang and Kornbluh (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 330-45.

6. George Bush, 'Remarks at the Beacon Council Annual Meeting in Miami, Florida', 30 September 1991, *Public Papers of the Presidents: George Bush, 1991* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1992), p. 1233.

Nor did US policy change with the advent of the Clinton administration. 'I support the embargo against Cuba', Bill Clinton avowed in 1994, 'and I believe that it should stand until there is some real movement toward freedom and democracy' in Cuba.[7] As a result, the United States has continued, despite the opposition of its allies, in its aggressive embargo against Cuba, and has persevered in its calls, especially through Radio Martí, for the elimination of the Castro government.

This raises at least two interesting questions. First, how is it possible for hostile US foreign policies towards Cuba to remain virtually unchanged in the face of dramatic systemic upheaval? After all, if the alleged reason for US hostility towards Cuba—*i.e.*, the Soviet Union and the Cold War—disappears, then, all else being equal, that hostility should disappear as well. This raises a prior and more important question: what has made it possible in the first place for the United States to pursue a relentlessly hostile foreign policy towards as small and weak a state as Cuba? How, in short, do we account for US hostility towards Cuba from 1960 through at least 1994? We argue that, to begin to explain what made this enduring US antagonism possible, an account of the US construction of 'the Cuban problem' *as* a problem is needed. Rather than being a self-evident fact, this 'Cuban problem' was, and continues to be, a discursive construction. Moreover, it is this discursively constituted 'Cuban problem' that has enabled both the existence and the persistence of US hostility towards Cuba.

The article is organised as follows. In the first section, we examine two prominent traditions, namely realism and the analysis of belief systems, for the explanation of state action, and argue that neither adequately accounts for the existence and persistence of this US hostility. In the second section, we sketch out some basic components of a discursive explanation of state action. We then, in the third and fourth sections, provide a detailed account of the discursive construction in the United States, both during and after the Cold War, of 'the Cuban problem'. In a brief fifth section, we discuss the relation between our discursive account of 'the Cuban problem' and domestic-politics arguments which cite the 'clout' of Cuban-Americans. In conclusion, we argue that discursive analyses should be added to the stock of analytical tools used to study international politics.

Conventional Approaches to State Action

Conventional accounts of state action often take two general forms: realist explanations, which focus on material capabilities and the structure of the international system; and psychological explanations, which focus on the beliefs of state officials. Neither of these approaches, however, provides a complete explanation for US hostility towards Cuba, because both take for granted the discursive conditions of possibility for state action.

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7. Bill Clinton, letter to the authors, 22 January 1994.

Realism, Material Capabilities, and System Structure

Realism, because its explanation of state action focuses on questions of security and insecurity, might furnish us with a way to account for US belligerence towards Cuba.[8] Central to realism is the assumption that the international system is anarchic. In such a system, the absence of a Leviathan both leaves states in a permanent security dilemma, a perennial and never completely successful search for security, and requires that they pursue that security on their own, through self-help. States are thus constrained to vie for power in order to procure and then to protect their security. This rudimentary realist model cannot, of course, account for US hostility towards Cuba. As a relatively small and weak state, Cuba is always *potentially* insecure in a competitive world populated by more powerful states, but anarchy alone cannot explain why Cuba has *actually* suffered persistent US hostility and aggression.[9]

To account for US hostility towards Cuba, a realist would have to explain why Cuba in particular poses a threat to the United States. Since, within realism, threats are typically deduced from capabilities, the explanation of the Cuban 'threat' to US security, and so of US hostility towards Cuba, might consider Cuba's material capabilities. However, such an account, not surprisingly, is unsatisfactory. After all, Cuba is a very small state which is both economically and militarily weak.[10] An examination of Cuba's capabilities, then, can tell us

8. We use the label 'realism' to refer to a broad research program that encompasses both the classical realist theory associated with Hans Morgenthau and E.H. Carr, as well as the more recent structural version of realism associated with Kenneth Waltz. See Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, Fifth Revised Edition (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978); Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, Second Edition (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1964 [1946]); and Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1979). For a similar treatment of realism as a single research tradition, see Justin Rosenberg, 'What's the Matter with Realism?', *Review of International Studies* (Vol. 16, No. 4, 1990), pp. 285-303. One among many discussions of the differences between these variants of realism can be found in Richard K. Ashley, 'Political Realism and Human Interests', *International Studies Quarterly* (Vol. 25, No. 2, 1981), pp. 204-36.

9. On the indeterminacy of realist theory, see Robert O. Keohane, 'International Institutions: Two Approaches', *International Studies Quarterly* (Vol. 32, No. 4, 1988), p. 381.

10. Cuba is a cluster of islands with a combined area of 42,800 square miles and a population of 10.8 million in 1992 (*Europa World Year Book, 1994, Volume I*, Thirty-Fifth Edition (London: Europa Publications Limited, 1994), p. 902). According to 1991 estimates, Cuba's GNP was $17 billion and its per capita income was $1,580 (*CIA Hypertext World Fact Book* [Electronic Database] (Bangkok: Bangkok Security Associates, 1993)). It is a mono-economy that has long been dependent on the export of sugar. Although some diversification of Cuba's economy has been achieved through import substitution and export diversification, sugar had only fallen to 73 per cent of its total exports by 1989 (*Europa World Year Book, 1994*, *op. cit.*, p. 904). 'Cuban armed forces in early 1985 represented the second or third most powerful military force after the United States, and possibly Brazil, in the Western Hemisphere' (Phyllis Greene Walker, 'The Cuban Military', in Philip Brenner, William M. LeoGrande, Donna Rich, and Daniel Siegel (eds.), *The Cuban Reader: The Making of a Revolutionary Society* (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1989), p. 276). However, they are certainly no match

only that Cuba does *not* pose an economic or a military threat to the United States. Perhaps, then, realists might argue that the polarity of the system, the distribution of power across states, accounts for the US stance on Cuba.[11] The United States was hostile towards Cuba, on this account, because of the competitive nature of bipolar superpower politics. During the Cold War, in other words, the United States was competing for power with the Soviet Union, and so, for purposes of its own security, had to counter Soviet moves in Cuba. However, this explanation is problematic for at least two reasons. First, reference to system polarity cannot account for continued US aggression across different system structures. If US state action was determined by the imperatives of bipolar superpower politics, then the end of the Cold War and the disappearance of the Soviet threat should signal a decline in that hostility. Yet, US antagonism towards Cuba has not fundamentally changed.[12]

Second, and less obviously, the realist argument based on polarity cannot even explain US hostility during the bipolar system itself. Explaining US aggression in terms of superpower competition would require, at least, that 'the Cuban problem' was in fact directly attributable, as Eisenhower claimed, to the 'Soviet threat'. Even assuming that there was a 'Soviet threat', it can only problematically be invoked to explain US hostility towards Cuba. The orthodox story of the deterioration of US-Cuban relations after the 1959 Cuban Revolution makes such a realist attribution, placing the onus both on the Cuban government and on the bipolar, Cold War struggle between 'freedom' and 'communism'. In a State Department description of the unfolding of these relations, for example, Cuban actions towards the United States were depicted as follows:

> [e]lements of the Castro movement were engaged in anti-American activities even during the revolution against Batista. Soon after it came to power in 1959, the Castro government turned away from its previous promises, permitted Communist influence to grow, attacked and persecuted its own supporters in Cuba who expressed opposition to communism, arbitrarily seized US properties, and made a series of baseless charges against the United States. It ignored, rejected, or imposed impossible conditions on repeated US offers to cooperate and negotiate. In 1960 Cuba established close political, economic, and military relationships with the Sino-Soviet

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for the military might of the United States.

11. See, for example, Waltz, *op. cit.*, in note 8, pp. 97-99.

12. One might argue that small states faced with a 'hegemonial' or unipolar system lose their bargaining power and so face increased great power hostility. See, for example, Michael Handel, *Weak States in the International System* (London: Frank Cass, 1981), p. 172. However, this fails to explain why North Korea and Vietnam are not faced with a post-Cold War increase in US aggression, while Cuba is.

> Bloc, while increasing the pace and vehemence of its measures and attacks against the United States.[13]

The next paragraph then recounts the US response to these alleged Cuban provocations, implying that all of these US actions *followed* both Cuban hostility towards the US, and Soviet and 'Communist' influence there:

> [i]n mid-1960 the United States and its allies initiated a series of measures as a deliberate response to Communist efforts to establish a beachhead for subversion in this hemisphere. The United States prohibited the further import of Cuban sugar into this country. Exports, except for certain foods and medicines, were prohibited soon afterward. In February 1962, the President made the embargo substantially complete, extending the import prohibition to indirect as well as direct purchases.[14]

This apparently straight-forward narrative clearly implies, through its focus both on Cuban actions and on Soviet and 'Communist' influence, that bipolar superpower competition precipitated US hostility towards Cuba. These events can be presented quite differently, however, with correspondingly different conclusions about the genesis of 'the Cuban problem'.

An alternative narrative might highlight the flip-flopping of hostile actions between the United States and Cuba, not only portraying a chain of escalatory disagreements (rather than unilateral Cuban, Soviet, or 'Communist' hostility), but also indicating that the United States (rather than Cuba, the USSR, or 'Communism') bore much of the responsibility for that escalation. Such a narrative might begin with calls in the US House and Senate, heard already in the spring of 1959, for the overthrow of the Castro regime and for economic sanctions against Cuba.[15] Particularly insulting to Cubans was the New York *Daily News*' January 1959 call for the restoration of the Platt Amendment, which would permit US military intervention in Cuba.[16] It could then be pointed out that, in January of 1960, Congress had been asked to approve presidential control over the sugar quota in order to give the administration a lever to use against the new Castro government.[17] In February of 1960, because it feared an imminent

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13. US Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, 'Developments in the Cuban Situation: Questions and Answers', *Foreign Affairs Outlines*, Department of State Publication 7454, Inter-American Series 81 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1962), pp. 1-2.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Robbins, *op. cit.*, in note 5, pp. 72 and 81.
16. See Hugh Thomas, *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 1076.
17. E.W. Kenworthy, 'US will indict Cuba before OAS on "Slander" Issue', *New York Times*, 18 June 1960, p. 8. Congress granted Eisenhower this power on 5 July; on 6 July, he cut the quota to zero. Using sugar as a tool to punish the Castro government became the subject of a lively debate. Those opposing this strategy included both domestic American sugar producers, who worried about presidential, rather than Congressional control over the sugar quota and those who thought that such a move

cut in its sugar quota, the Cuban government signed a trade agreement with the Soviet Union, arranging to barter sugar for oil.[18] It could also be noted that even Fulgencio Batista, in the 1950s, had looked to the Soviet Union as an alternative to the US market for Cuban sugar.[19] In mid-June, calls for the United States 'to really do something' about 'the Cuban situation' increased.[20] In late June, the American-owned oil refineries, with US government encouragement, refused to refine Soviet crude oil.[21] In response, and amidst additional fears that their US sugar market was about to disappear, Cuba nationalised the Texas Oil Company petroleum refinery on 29 June[22] and the refinery of Esso (Cuba) Inc. on 1 July.[23] As expected, Eisenhower completely eliminated the Cuban sugar quota on 6 July. On 9 July, Khrushchev announced Soviet willingness to use force to protect Cuba from armed US intervention,[24] and he informed the Cuban government on 10 July that the Soviet Union would increase its purchases of Cuban sugar to make up for the US cut.[25] On the basis of this alternative narrative, in short, it looked like 'Washington actually wanted to precipitate a crisis' over Cuba.[26] The disintegration of US-Cuban relations, the development of 'the Cuban problem', and the implementation of aggressive US policies against Cuba actually preceded Soviet involvement in Cuba and, if they did not cause it, at least contributed to Cuba's perceived need for economic and military relations with the Soviet Union.

This alternative description of the collapse in 1960 of US-Cuban relations illustrates a major difficulty with the realist account of the evolution of 'the

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might strengthen Castro domestically. On the former, see William M. Blair, 'US Weighs Move on Cuba's Sugar', *New York Times*, 9 January 1960, p. 24; on the latter, see the editorial comment, 'Cuban Sugar Quota', *New York Times*, 12 January 1960, p. 46.

18. Harry Schwartz, 'Soviet Will Send Cuba Vital Goods', *New York Times*, 19 February 1960, p. 6.

19. Robbins, *op. cit.*, in note 5, p. 17.

20. Senator George Smathers (D-Florida), 18 June, quoted in E.W. Kenworthy, 'Senators Assail Castro's Actions', *New York Times*, 23 January 1960, p. 6. He was not alone in fanning the flames of hostility against Cuba. On the same day, Kenworthy also reported Representative Daniel Flood (D-Pennsylvania) as arguing that 'Cuba is more of a satellite country of Russia today than Poland and certainly more than Yugoslavia'; Senator Lyndon Johnson (D-Texas) as charging that Cuba might be the next place chosen by Khrushchev to increase 'cold war tensions'; and Senator Hubert Humphrey (D-Minnesota) as asserting that Castro's upcoming visit to Moscow was 'another effort on the part of the Russians to put their imprint on Latin America'.

21. Jules R. Benjamin, *The United States and the Origins of the Cuban Revolution: An Empire of Liberty in an Age of National Liberation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 194.

22. R. Hart Phillips, 'Castro Orders Seizure—Also Bitterly Attacks US Sugar Bill', *New York Times*, 30 June 1960, p. 1.

23. Tad Szulc, 'Last Two Refineries Seized by Castro; Oil Supplies Low', *New York Times*, 2 July 1960, p. 1.

24. 'Excerpts From Khrushchev's Talk Pledging Aid to Cuba', *New York Times*, 10 July 1960, p. 2.

25. R. Hart Phillips, 'Khrushchev Tells Cuba He Will Buy Sugar US Barred', *New York Times*, 11 July 1960, pp. 1 and 10.

26. Robbins, *op. cit.*, in note 5, p. 95.

Cuban problem' and of US policy towards Cuba. Realism operates with the empiricist assumption that an independent reality is directly accessible to observers and so can be known without mediation. International politics is thus understood to be 'a domain of hard truths, material realities, and irrepressible natural facts'.[27] It is assumed, correspondingly, that decision-makers and analysts can objectively assess these realities, including especially the distribution of power in the system, and can therefore accurately recognise threats to the security of states. In other words, the unproblematic apprehension of the external world, and thus of threats, is taken as given. It is for this reason that Hans Morgenthau argued that decision-makers should overcome their 'aversion to seeing problems of international politics *as they are*'.[28] However, as recent social theory has shown, the external world does not present itself unproblematically to the observer. Instead, we always understand our environment in a mediated fashion, through a process of interpretation.[29] Understanding the situation faced by a state, and determining whether that situation constitutes a threat, is an interpretive exercise.

The assumption that Cuba posed an objective threat to the United States is challenged by Cuba's relative economic and military weakness. Moreover, the assumption that there existed an objective US-Cuban conflict to which US policy was merely a response is challenged by the plausibility of the alternative account of the unfolding of that conflict in 1960. As that narrative indicates, US actions can be understood themselves to have produced 'the Cuban problem' to which the United States was ostensibly responding. More importantly, the canonical US narrative, illustrated in the State Department account, itself both constructed these events in a particular way, as 'the Cuban problem', and represented them as 'hard truths' about US-Cuban relations. The 'facts' on which realism relies in constructing its explanations, in other words, are already a narrative construction. As we will demonstrate in more detail below, representing Cuba as a major 'problem' for the United States that demanded an aggressive policy response required significant interpretive labour. The realist tradition, with its empiricist assumption that threats are 'irrepressible natural facts', ignores this interpretive

27. Gearóid Ó Tuathail and John Agnew, 'Geopolitics and Discourse: Practical Geopolitical Reasoning in American Foreign Policy', *Political Geography* (Vol. 11, No. 2, 1992), p. 192.

28. Hans Morgenthau, *In Defense of the National Interest: A Critical Examination of American Foreign Policy* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951), p. 7, emphasis added.

29. Indeed, as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe have argued, 'the entire development of contemporary epistemology has established that there is no fact which allows its meaning to be read transparently'. See Laclau and Mouffe, 'Postmarxism Without Apologies', *New Left Review* (Vol. 166, 1987), p. 84. This insight underpins diverse contemporary social theories, although it is typically ignored in mainstream approaches to the study of international relations, and especially in realism. For an overview of contemporary developments in theories of language and meaning, see Michael Shapiro, *Language and Political Understanding: The Politics of Discursive Practices* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), or Michael J. Gibbons, *Interpreting Politics* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1987).

work. It thus cannot explain US policy-makers' understandings of 'the Cuban problem' and so cannot account for the possibility conditions for US hostility towards Cuba. One of the few traditions for the study of foreign policy that has concerned itself with the process of interpretation which is missing from realism is that which analyses belief systems. It is to this alternative that we now turn.

Belief Systems and Interpretation

Whether conceptualised as an image, a cognitive map, or an operational code, belief systems are thought to have a significant impact on state action. Specifically, belief systems, understood as 'a set of lenses through which information concerning the physical and social environment is received',[30] explain 'how political actors perceive, diagnose, prescribe, and make choices in specific situations'.[31] The standard argument is threefold. First, beliefs exist in the minds of individuals: 'beliefs, memories, feelings, thoughts, desires, fears, and hopes are mental properties, internal to the individual, and for that reason essentially private in character'.[32] Second, these mental properties function as a filter between individual perception and the external world. Due to this filter, 'decision makers tend to fit incoming information into their existing images and theories'.[33] This implies the third argument. The external world does not present itself, unmediated, to the observer, as realists assume; instead, it is always interpreted. Because belief systems literature recognises the importance of interpretation, it is potentially more useful to us than is realism. Examining the beliefs of US state officials might help us to appreciate why they have persistently understood Cuba to be 'a problem', thus making belligerent foreign policies towards Cuba both possible and seemingly appropriate.

Such an analysis might point to a Cold War belief system in which the United States was pitted against Soviet ideology and, by extension, against perceived purveyors of Soviet ideology, such as Cuba. According to this argument, US decision-makers interpreted Cuba as a threat to the United States. Further, because of their entrenched beliefs that Cuba was a puppet of the Kremlin, that Cuba provided international communism with a beachhead in the Western hemisphere, and that communism was mortally dangerous to the United States, they pursued an aggressive policy towards Cuba. However, even if we grant that

30. Ole R. Holsti, 'Cognitive Dynamics and Images of the Enemy: Dulles and Russia', in David J. Finlay, Ole R. Holsti, and Richard R. Fagan (eds.), *Enemies in Politics* (Chicago, IL: Rand McNally & Company, 1967), p. 29.
31. David S. McLellan, 'The "Operational Code" Approach to the Study of Political Leaders: Dean Acheson's Philosophical and Instrumental Beliefs', *Canadian Journal of Political Science* (Vol. 4, No. 1, 1971), p. 75.
32. Richard Little, 'Belief Systems in the Social Sciences', in Richard Little and Steve Smith (eds.), *Belief Systems and International Relations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 45.
33. Michael J. Shapiro and G. Matthew Bonham, 'Cognitive Process and Foreign Policy Decision Making', *International Studies Quarterly* (Vol. 17, No. 2, 1973), p. 165.

US state officials held these beliefs during the Cold War, it is unclear whether reference to them can adequately explain the persistence of US policy towards Cuba. After all, despite the notion that Cuba was 'a problem' because of its perceived association with the Soviet Union, changes in beliefs about the latter have not led to changes in beliefs about the former. If a Cold War belief system helped to shape US anti-Cuba policy during the Cold War, then why has this policy not changed with the 'end of the Cold War'? Belief systems theorists would have to amend their initial analysis to argue that the beliefs determining US policy towards Cuba were more 'fundamental' than Cold War thinking. They would have to claim, that is, that some basic beliefs have persisted despite more superficial changes of opinion about specific 'attitude objects' such as the Soviet Union and the Cold War.[34] In this vein, belief systems analysts might respond that Cuba continues to be a threat because it is still 'a communist country'. This suggests that the primary motive for US hostility towards Cuba was that Cuba, in conjunction with the Soviet Union, posed a 'communist threat'. However, at least one recent post-Cold War study of belief systems does not even test for 'communist' attitudes in its post-Cold War (1992) surveys of American opinion leaders, thus tacitly rejecting the notion that 'anti-communist' beliefs are fundamental to the beliefs of US officials.[35] We are therefore left wondering which 'fundamental' beliefs about Cuba persisted such that they could explain the continuation of US hostility after the Cold War.

Even if the belief systems approach could identify such 'fundamental' beliefs, it still faces serious difficulties, most notably its subjectivism: that is, its assumption that international relations can be explained in terms of what goes on in the minds of individuals. The literature on belief systems dichotomises the 'objective' environment from the 'subjective' one, and then proceeds to argue that subjective beliefs mediate people's understandings of their external world.[36] This dichotomising has important empirical and methodological consequences: to study beliefs and to make them amenable to standardised measurement and analysis, analysts must devise techniques for objectifying 'subjective meanings'. They therefore use tools like survey research to try to recover subjective meanings and so to demonstrate empirically the causal efficacy of beliefs. What they actually do, however, is to *infer* beliefs from a set of observable and quantifiable behaviours: *e.g.*, from answers to survey questions. Because the correlations between survey responses and beliefs cannot be demonstrated, this inference can only be justified by making the further assumptions that certain statements (on survey questions and in responses) correspond to certain beliefs and that respondents answer questions truthfully (or that analysts can somehow

34. Ole R. Holsti and James N. Rosenau, 'The Structure of Foreign Policy Beliefs Among American Opinion Leaders—After the Cold War', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* (Vol. 22, No. 2, 1993), pp. 235-78.
35. *Ibid.*
36. See, for example, Harold Sprout and Margaret Sprout, 'Environmental Factors in the Study of International Politics', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (Vol. 1, No. 4, 1957), pp. 309-28.

verify the veracity of the responses they get). Hence, at each step in such an analysis, epistemological and ontological assumptions are allowed to stand in for empirical demonstrations.[37] That is, inasmuch as beliefs can only be inferred from some set of observable behaviours, the analyst does not actually know what goes on inside people's heads.[38] Instead, the relationship between beliefs and behaviours is *assumed*, based on the correlation of one set of behaviours (*e.g.*, survey responses) to another (*e.g.*, policy choices).

Such methodological acrobatics are both unsatisfactory and ultimately unnecessary. If one rejects the subject/object dichotomy and adopts, instead, the view that the social world is intersubjectively constituted, one need not infer 'subjective beliefs' from one set of behaviours in order to explain another. A focus on intersubjective processes of meaning creation, in contrast, is more empirically sustainable than the presumption of belief systems analysis that beliefs can be known inferentially. This is so because intersubjective meanings are more directly accessible: they are already part of the overt social practices in which people engage. Moreover, treating beliefs about international politics as idiosyncratic, as individual-level phenomena that reside in the heads of state officials, ignores their conditions of possibility. In fact, individual beliefs are neither meaningful nor, strictly speaking, possible without the socially constituted and shared language in which they find expression. Beliefs, that is, require a prior language—a discourse or web of meaning—to exist and to be intelligible. The discourses or 'codes of intelligibility'[39] through which experiences are classified and invested with meaning are therefore not the possession of individuals; instead, they pre-exist any particular individual. Nor is discourse simply a medium for the expression of an individual's thoughts or beliefs; rather, it is a social practice through which thoughts and beliefs are themselves constituted.[40] None of this, of course, denies the existence of subjective mental processes; rather, the claim is that subjective understandings are derived, in the first place, from intersubjective practices. By treating beliefs as discrete individual-level phenomena, belief systems scholars ignore the discursive practices through which social reality, beliefs, and actions are co-determined, that is, how they are constituted and made meaningful in relation to each other. Examining the (inferred) beliefs of individual state officials, including beliefs

37. For an elaboration of some of these issues, see Mark Laffey and Jutta Weldes, 'Beyond Belief: Ideas and Symbolic Technologies in the Study of International Relations', paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, San Diego, CA, April 1996.

38. Psychoanalytic theory, of course, complicates the picture even further, suggesting—with the introduction of the notion of the 'unconscious'—that one does not even know what goes on inside one's own head.

39. Stuart Hall, 'Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Post-structuralist Debates', *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* (Vol. 2, No. 2, 1985), p. 105.

40. The discursive constitution of individual beliefs or subjectivity is discussed by Rom Harre and Grant Gillett, *The Discursive Mind* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 1994), and John Shotter and Kenneth J. Gergen (eds.), *Texts of Identity* (London: Sage Publications, Ltd., 1989).

about 'the Cuban problem', thus does not indicate what made those beliefs, and the attendant state actions, possible. A major problem with studies of belief systems is that they stop short of recognising the discursive constitution and reproduction of individual beliefs.

In summary, neither the realist nor the belief systems approach to state action adequately accounts for the construction of 'the Cuban problem' and so for the persistent hostility of US foreign policy towards Cuba. The realist approach cannot explain, nor does it even ask, what made it possible for Cuba to be understood as a threat in the first place. The belief systems approach does suggest an answer to this question (*i.e.*, firmly held beliefs of US state officials), but it ignores the intersubjective and performative character of the discursive practices through which state officials (and others) actually interpret their world. So our basic question remains: how has 'the Cuban problem' been constituted such that the sustained US policy of aggression against Cuba has been made possible and even seemingly sensible?

A Discursive Approach to State Action

An important but largely unrecognised consequence of the inequality of states in the international system is the asymmetric capacity to define or be defined.[41] One of the generally overlooked capabilities of great powers, then, is precisely their ability to define identities, both their own and those of other states. Through the discourse of 'the Cuban problem', the United States has constructed and continues to construct particular and contestable identities both for itself and for Cuba, and it is these identities that render aggressive US policies towards Cuba sensible, and sometimes even (apparently) necessary.[42] The discourse of 'the Cuban problem' is thus what David Campbell has called a 'representation of danger'.[43] Our thesis is that US hostility towards Cuba and the persistence of its combative policies into the post-Cold War era have been made possible by a particular discourse—that of 'the Cuban problem'—which has, for the United States, constructed the United States, Cuba, and the 'problem' between them in a particular way.

This discourse of 'the Cuban problem', like any discourse, is a set of capabilities: a set of 'socio-cultural resources used by people in the construction of meaning about their world and their activities'.[44] It is 'a language or system

41. Mark Laffey and Himadeep Muppidi, 'Can We Build Bridges with Epistemic Communities? Rationalism, Constructivism, and International Relations Theory', paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association—Midwest, East Lansing, MI, November 1992.
42. For discussions similar to our own on the importance of discursively constituted identities in international relations, see David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), and William Connolly, *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), especially Chapter 2.
43. Campbell, *op. cit.*, in note 42, Chapter 1.
44. Ó Tuathail and Agnew, *op. cit.*, in note 27, pp. 192-93.

of representation that has developed socially in order to make and circulate a coherent set of meanings'.[45] As such, discourses do not function as explanatory causes in the conventional (*i.e.*, Humean) sense.[46] Rather, they are sets of rules ('grammars') for ordering and relating discursive elements in such a way that particular meanings are constituted. As a result, it makes no sense to say that one term or element of a discourse 'causes' the meaning of another. Instead, it is the relationships between them, as shaped by the rules of a discourse (or grammar), that constitute their meanings.[47] A discursive account, therefore, highlights relations of constitution by exposing the way in which a particular discourse—that of 'the Cuban problem'—both constrains and enables the production of particular understandings of 'the United States', of 'Cuba', and of the relations between them. Examining constitutive relations, in turn, highlights the 'possibility conditions for the existence of [meaningful] phenomena'.[48]

A discourse, then, is a structure of meaning-in-use that is both intersubjective and, in part, linguistic. It is linguistic in that language is a central sign system that provides the resources out of which representations are constructed. It is intersubjective in that the language through which people construct meaning is necessarily shared. Connolly put it this way: '[t]he language one shares with others...provides the medium within which our ideas, judgements, purposes, and emotions are constituted. To share this language is to share a range of criteria for making distinctions, picking out objects, reaching judgements'.[49] The meanings

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45. John Fiske, *Television Culture* (London: Routledge, 1987), p. 14.

46. In Humean terms, 'causality' refers to a relation between two discrete and independent events or entities, is defined as 'constant conjunction', and can be identified if there exists 'priority, continuity, and constant conjunction'. See Wesley C. Salmon, *Four Decades of Scientific Explanation* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 1989), p. 107.

47. In this sense, discourses are analogous to the 'causal mechanisms' of scientific realism. According to scientific realist explanations in the social sciences, causal claims refer to the 'causal powers' of social agents which are conferred onto those agents by the social structures and relations that constitute them. Social power can therefore be defined as 'the capacity to act possessed by social agents in virtue of the enduring relations in which they participate'. Jeffrey Isaac, *Power and Marxist Theory: A Realist View* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), p. 80. Causality is thus understood generatively and relationally. An adequate explanation, on this view, must identify the underlying causal mechanisms or causal powers that lay bare the 'conditions of possibility' of the phenomenon in question. Our discursive account of the production of 'the Cuban problem' is analogous to this form of explanation: discourses are the structures which provide the capabilities or social powers through which meaning is created. For discussions of different versions of the scientific realist conception of causation, see, among others, Jutta Weldes, 'Marxism and Methodological Individualism: A Critique', *Theory and Society* (Vol. 18, No. 3, 1989), pp. 369-71; Rom Harre and Edward H. Madden, *Causal Powers: A Theory of Natural Necessity* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1975); and Wesley Salmon, *Scientific Explanation and the Causal Structure of the World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984).

48. Stephen J. Majeski and David J. Sylvan, 'Modeling Theories of Constitutive Relations in Politics', paper presented at the XVth World Congress of the International Political Science Association, Buenos Aires, July 1991, p. 8.

49. William E. Connolly, *Appearance and Reality in Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 110.

produced through a discourse 'preexist their use in any one discursive practice',[50] or, as we have already discussed, by any one individual. Discursive practices, in turn, are social acts, enabled by a discourse, through which some relevant aspect of the world is actively defined and constituted.

The claim that the world is discursively constituted does not entail the more extreme assertion that there is no 'external reality' outside of human consciousness, if by 'external reality' is meant physical reality. What is at issue in our claims for the discursive production of the world is *meaning* and its social effects, not physical existence. As Trevor Purvis and Alan Hunt explain, '[o]f course earthquakes occur, and their occurrence is independent of consciousness; but it is their construction in discourse that determines whether they are "movements of tectonic plates" or manifestations of "the wrath of the gods"'.[51] Hence, we are not advocating a form of metaphysical idealism. We are arguing, instead, that discourse provides the symbolic resources out of which the *meaningful* world is created. Discursive practices, in turn, are the activities through which people create their world and populate it with objects, with subjects, with 'histories and dilemmas',[52] and with dangers. It is in these activities that identities are produced.[53]

In this context, it is worth noting explicitly that discourses encompass two analytically distinguishable aspects—linguistic practices and non-linguistic practices[54]—that are both vital to this process of constitution. Explanations focusing on linguistic practices thus do not oppose explanations that focus on non-linguistic practices, since both are in fact moments of any discourse. What such an approach does oppose, however, is the assumption that non-linguistic practices are unmediated social phenomena (*e.g.*, the product of 'given' or 'real' interests). Put another way, it opposes the conventional distinction between 'the ideational' and 'the material', and the related assumption that attention to 'the material' alone (or, for that matter, to 'the ideational' alone) is all that is required to explain social phenomena. In this study, we emphasise linguistic practices not because they alone enable US policy towards Cuba, but because we are centrally concerned precisely with establishing the *linguistic* conditions of possibility that enabled US Cuban policy from 1960 until at least 1994. This is not to suggest, however, that non-linguistic practices have been incidental to the US construction of 'the Cuban problem'. The non-linguistic aspects of the US discourse of 'the Cuban problem'—including such practices as blockading an

50. Fiske, *op. cit.*, in note 45, p. 15.
51. Trevor Purvis and Alan Hunt, 'Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology...', *British Journal of Sociology* (Vol. 44, No. 3, 1993), p. 492.
52. Ó Tuathail and Agnew, *op. cit.*, in note 27, p. 194.
53. For theoretical accounts of the construction of identity, see Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatuses', in Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. B. Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971), pp. 127-86; Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory* (London: Verso, 1979); Stuart Hall, *op. cit.*, in note 39; and Connolly, *op. cit.*, in note 42.
54. Laclau and Mouffe, *op. cit.*, in note 29, pp. 82-84.

island, implementing an embargo, infiltrating covert action units, organising a counter-revolutionary underground movement, and engaging in acts of economic and industrial sabotage—contribute importantly to the construction of state identities. This includes 'weak' states hardly able to protect their sovereignty, and 'great powers' with significant control over small states.[55]

The October 1962 placement of Soviet missiles in Cuba, to offer one concrete example, provided a referent to which the Kennedy administration and others could articulate the category 'national security threat'. In this sense, we acknowledge that if the Soviets had not placed their missiles in Cuba, there might not have been a 'Cuban missile crisis'.[56] However, an explanation focussed only on this 'material fact' accepts that the mere presence of those missiles was a 'threat' to US security. A discursive explanation, by contrast, would ask how these nuclear-capable missiles came to be constructed as 'threats'. To be sure, the detonation of a nuclear warhead in a populated area will result in the loss of human life. This consequence derives from thermonuclear physics and human physiology. The US objection to the missiles in Cuba, however, was not based on such general claims about the threat that all nuclear weapons pose due to their physical properties. It was, instead, based on more specific claims about the identities of the states possessing the weapons, and, hence, about the 'nature' of those particular weapons themselves. A discursive analysis would highlight how the non-linguistic act of placing 'Soviet' missiles 'in Cuba' was articulated within the US discourses of 'the Cuban problem' and 'the Cold War', which constructed the Soviet Union as 'aggressive' and 'duplicitous', Cuba as a 'Soviet puppet', and the Soviet missiles, therefore, as *offensive* weapons. This is in marked contrast to the discursive constitution of extraterritorial US nuclear missiles, which were constructed as the *defensive* weapons of a 'peaceful' and 'democratic' US state charged with 'defending the free world'.[57] In short, over and above any physical facts about the detrimental effects of nuclear explosions, state officials systematically engaged in interpretive practices in order both to constitute particular objects—the Soviet missiles in Cuba—as 'threats' and then to devise policies for dealing with them. This interpretive moment is what we

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55. Such non-linguistic practices and their role in constructing 'the Cuban problem' have been studied extensively. See, for example, Pérez, Jr., *op. cit.*, in note 1; Morley, *op. cit.*, in note 5; and Robbins, *op. cit.*, in note 5.

56. The qualifier 'might' is important. 'Crises', such as oil shortages, can be manufactured in the absence of physical referents. Moreover, most people never actually saw the Soviet missiles in Cuba (nor would they have known how to interpret reconnaissance photographs). That has not, however, kept them from accepting, on faith and in deference to experts and officials, that there actually were Soviet missiles in Cuba.

57. For a more extensive analysis of the construction of the so-called 'Cuban missile crisis', see Jutta Weldes, 'The Cultural Construction of Cises: US Identity and Missiles in Cuba', in Jutta Weldes, Mark Laffey, Hugh Gusterson, and Raymond Duvall (eds.), *Cultures of Insecurity: States, Communities, and the Production of Danger*, (unpublished manuscript, 1996), as well as Jutta Weldes, *Constructing National Interests: The Logic of US National Security in the Postwar Era*, PhD Dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1993, Chapters 6, 7, and 8.

refer to as a linguistic practice. Such a linguistic practice may be related to the physical facts about certain weapons, but this is not a necessary connection. In fact, the maintenance of the US nuclear arsenal, located both in the US and abroad, has depended on avoiding precisely this articulation between 'all nuclear weapons' and concerns with 'threats to human life'.[58] Physical facts, then, do not alone determine what meanings will be attached to particular weapons. The 'threat' posed by the missiles in Cuba was a complex discursive effect of 'the Cuban problem' and 'the Cold War', one with both linguistic moments (*e.g.*, the interpretive practices according to which the missiles were marked 'offensive' and hence as 'threats'), and non-linguistic moments (*e.g.*, the missile deployment itself).

Any empirical analysis of a discourse and the attendant linguistic practices—including an analysis of 'the Cuban problem'—requires a discussion of 'its topic area, its social origin, and its ideological work' or ideological effects.[59] For the discourse of 'the Cuban problem', these are easily identified. Its topic area, quite simply, is US-Cuban relations since 1959. This discourse establishes the identity of post-revolutionary Cuba, the identity of the United States, and the relations that do, should, and cannot obtain between them.[60] The social origins of this discourse are equally clear: 'the Cuban problem' is primarily a discourse of the US state.[61] Of course, the claim that 'the United

58. See, for example, Carol Cohn, 'Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals', *Signs* (Vol. 12, No. 4, 1987), pp. 687-718.

59. Fiske, *op. cit.*, in note 45, p. 14.

60. These identities are also produced out of the articulation of the discourse of 'the Cuban problem' with other discourses. Particularly important are the discourse of 'the Cold War', with the attendant Soviet and 'international Communist' threats, and the discourse of 'the Western Hemisphere', in which countries of Latin America are constructed as 'sister Republics' of the United States who occupy a so-called 'Western Hemisphere' that falls under exclusive US protection through the Monroe Doctrine and its successors. Examining these additional discourses is beyond the scope of this paper. They are discussed extensively in Weldes, *Constructing National Interests, op. cit.*, in note 57, Chapter 8.

61. Our analysis of the discourse of 'the Cuban problem' has many similarities to other empirical analyses of state discourses, including those offered by Campbell, *op. cit.*, in note 42; David Campbell, *Politics Without Principle: Sovereignty, Ethics, and the Narratives of the Gulf War* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1993); Simon Dalby, 'Geopolitical Discourse: The Soviet Union as Other', *Alternatives* (Vol. 13, No. 4, 1988), pp. 415-42; Simon Dalby, 'American Security Discourse: The Persistence of Geopolitics', *Political Geography Quarterly* (Vol. 9, No. 2, 1990), pp. 171-88; Simon Dalby, *Creating the Second Cold War: The Discourse of Politics* (London: Pinter, 1990); Simon Dalby, 'The "Kiwi Disease": Geopolitical Discourse in Aotearoa/New Zealand and the South Pacific', *Political Geography* (Vol. 12, No. 5, 1993), pp. 437-56; various of the analyses in James Der Derian and Michael Shapiro (eds.), *International/IntertextualRelations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1989); Roxanne Lynn Doty, 'Foreign Policy as Social Construction: A Post-positivist Analysis of US Counterinsurgency Policy in the Philippines', *International Studies Quarterly* (Vol. 37, No. 3, 1993), pp. 297-320; Richard Price, 'A Genealogy of the Conventional Weapons Taboo', *International Organization* (Vol. 49, No. 1, 1994), pp. 73-103; and Michael J. Shapiro, 'The Construction of the Central American Other: The Case of Guatemala', in Shapiro, *The Politics of Representation: Writing Practices in Biography, Photography and Policy*

States defines' itself and Cuba through the discourse of 'the Cuban problem' entails both a reification and an anthropomorphisation of the state. The actors actually engaging in discursive practices, and so doing the defining, are primarily, although not exclusively, those individuals who inhabit the offices of the US state.[62] This is because it is US state officials who are authorised to speak for 'the United States': they are formally charged with defining the threats facing 'the United States', deciding on the actions to be taken by 'the United States', and implementing the policies of 'the United States'.

The ideological effects of the discourse of 'the Cuban problem' are apparent as well. While the relationship between discourse and ideology is neither simple nor settled, we maintain, with Purvis and Hunt, that discourse is a process, while ideology is an effect.[63] That is, a discourse has ideological effects in that it privileges certain groups and interests, and is always implicated in the production and reproduction of power relations. It is a form of what Foucault called 'power/knowledge'.[64] In the case of the US discourse on 'the Cuban problem', the knowledge produced aids in the practice of US statecraft and so, first and foremost, serves to enhance the power of the US state. It privileges the US state over domestic actors, including the US public, in the making of foreign policy. It also privileges 'the United States' over other states and, in so doing, reproduces US power over them. Identities and power are thus the primary ideological effects of discursive practices.

In examining the discourse of 'the Cuban problem' we are asking what made US state action possible. That is, we are addressing a 'how-possible question', one which asks 'how meanings are produced and attached to various social subjects/objects, thus constituting particular interpretive dispositions which

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Analysis (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), pp. 89-123. Our analysis is quite different, on the other hand, from the work of scholars such as Richard Ashley and R.B.J. Walker, who have set themselves the task of deconstructing the discourse of International Relations (IR) theory, particularly realism, rather than the discourse of states or, more accurately, of state officials. See, for example, Richard K. Ashley, 'The Geopolitics of Geopolitical Space: Toward a Critical Social Theory of International Politics', *Alternatives* (Vol. 12, No. 4, 1987), pp. 403-34; R.B.J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); and Walker and Ashley, 'Reading Dissidence/Writing the Discipline: Crisis and the Question of Sovereignty in International Studies', *International Studies Quarterly* (Vol. 34, No. 3, 1990), pp. 367-416.

62. While US state officials are the most prominent agents in the (re)production of these representations, other 'intellectuals of statecraft' (Ó Tuathail and Agnew, *op. cit.*, in note 27, p. 193), including the 'defense intellectuals' associated with weapons contractors and weapons systems (Cohn, *op. cit.*, in note 58) and 'security intellectuals' of think tanks such as RAND (Dalby, *Creating the Second Cold War*, *op. cit.*, in note 61), play a role as well. Moreover, as our analysis below indicates, this discourse is (re)produced as well by agents outside of the state, including academics, columnists, journalists, and the producers of Radio Martí.

63. Purvis and Hunt, *op. cit.*, in note 51, p. 496, and Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 1991), Chapter 7.

64. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. C. Gordon (New York, NY: Pantheon, 1980).

create certain possibilities and preclude others'.[65] In particular, we are asking what made it possible, and indeed commonsensical, for a large and powerful state like the United States tenaciously to pursue a belligerent foreign policy towards a small and relatively weak state like Cuba, and to continue to do so despite dramatic changes in the configuration of international politics. We are also asking, conversely, what has made it seemingly impossible for the United States simply to come to terms with Castro's revolution and Cuba's revolutionary experiment. To answer these questions, we argue that the US discourse of 'the Cuban problem' has made it possible for the United States to define Cuban identity in opposition to its own.[66] Further, because interests follow from identity, this discourse also entails that US interests and Cuban interests conflict.[67] It is thus the discourse of 'the Cuban problem' that has produced the US interest in pursuing belligerent policies towards Cuba. Furthermore, both the identities constructed and the interests they entail provide warrants for, or justifications of, these hostile and aggressive foreign policies. By defining 'the United States' and 'Cuba' as antagonistic objects with incompatible interests, the hostile policies pursued by the US are rendered both sensible and, on occasion, seemingly unavoidable.

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65. Doty, *op. cit.*, in note 61, p. 298. Doty contrasts 'how-possible' questions to the conventional questions of foreign policy analysis which ask 'why particular decisions resulting in specific courses of action were made'. These 'why questions' are inadequate, as Doty explains, because they are incomplete. In particular, they 'generally take as unproblematic the *possibility* that a particular decision or course of action could happen. They presuppose a particular subjectivity (*i.e.*, a mode of being), a background of social/discursive practices and meanings which make possible the practices as well as the social actors themselves' (p. 298), emphasis in original. See also Alexander Wendt, 'The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory', *International Organization* (Vol. 41, No. 3, 1987), pp. 335-70.

66. The discursive construction of US and Cuban identities takes place within at least three different contexts: an international context, a US context, and a Cuban context. A more complete understanding of international identity construction than we have space to undertake here would require that we take into account the complex relations among these contexts. For example, in this article we treat the official US discourse of 'the Cuban problem' as hegemonic relative to the official revolutionary discourse of the Cuban state; it is so both within domestic US politics and in much of international relations. In these contexts, the revolutionary Cuban discourse is counter-hegemonic and, thus, potentially subversive. However, what counts as a dominant discourse depends largely on social context. In the context of Cuban politics, this seemingly subordinate discourse is itself hegemonic and is in turn challenged by other, counter-hegemonic discourses internal to Cuba. Moreover, relations among various discourses are not limited to those of opposition, that is, of hegemonic versus counter-hegemonic discourses. While the official US and Cuban discourses do largely stand in opposition to one another, as do the official and dissident Cuban discourses, other relations, such as those of co-optation or complementarity, may exist among discourses as well.

67. On the connection between identities and interests, see Stuart Hall, 'The Toad in the Garden: Thatcherism Among the Theorists', in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988), pp. 35-73; Hall, *op. cit.*, in note 39; Alexander Wendt, 'Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics', *International Organization* (Vol. 46, No. 2, 1992), pp. 391-425; and Weldes, *Constructing National Interests, op. cit.*, in note 57, Chapter 5.

The US Construction of 'The Cuban Problem' in the Cold War

The 'Cuban problem' arose not long after the Cuban Revolution. According to this discourse, 'the revolutionary government established by Fidel Castro in Cuba at the beginning of 1959 had early revealed signs of Communist infiltration as well as virulent animosity toward the United States'.[68] Furthermore, according to this representation, 'the attempt of the Soviet government to take the Cuban revolution under its direct protection' brought the Cold War 'for the first time into the heart of the Americas' and established 'a Communist bridgehead ninety miles from the United States'.[69] Through this 'Communist infiltration', the Cuban revolutionary leaders had 'expressly repudiate[d] the traditional concept of representative democracy' and had begun to show 'less interest in reforming the existing political system than in promoting a thoroughgoing social revolution—a revolution which, moreover, was not confined to Cuba but, in their view, was ultimately destined to be extended to the rest of Latin America'.[70] Because Cuba had re-established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, it had also become 'easy to picture the Communist network that could develop throughout the Americas around the nucleus of the Soviet embassy in Havana'.[71] The Cuban leadership was thus understood to be 'walking hand in hand with the Sino-Soviet bloc', and the Cuban revolution was understood to have been transformed into the 'Cuban- and Communist-inspired threat of "Fidelismo"'.[72] As Robert McNamara later admitted, by 1960, the US administration had become 'hysterical about Castro'.[73] What made this 'hysteria' possible?

A number of central arguments entailed in the discourse of 'the Cuban problem' help to account for US anxieties about Cuba and Castro. First, it was constructed as counter to the integrity of the 'Western Hemisphere' and to the 'American values' of the 'American family' for a Communist power to interfere

68. Stebbins, *op. cit.*, in note 4, pp. 292-93. See also John F. Kennedy, 'Senator John F. Kennedy on the Cuban Situation: Presidential Campaign of 1960', 18 October 1960, *Inter-American Economic Affairs* (Vol. 15, No. 3, 1961), pp. 79-95, and US Department of State, 'Cuba', State Department Publication 7171, Inter-American Series 6 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1961).

69. Stebbins, *op. cit.*, in note 4.

70. Stebbins, *op. cit.*, in note 4, p. 294. See also Kennedy, *op. cit.*, in note 68; and US Department of State, 'Department Reports on Cuban Threats to the Western Hemisphere: Summary', *Department of State Bulletin*, 22 January 1962, pp. 129-30.

71. Stebbins, *op. cit.*, in note 4, p. 305. See also Adlai Stevenson, 'Statement of April 17', Statement to the UN General Assembly, 17 April 1961, reprinted in *Department of State Bulletin*, 8 May 1961, pp. 668-75; US Department of State, *op. cit.*, in note 68.

72. Stebbins, *op. cit.*, in note 4, pp. 314 and 331. See also Eisenhower, *op. cit.*, in note 2, pp. 567-68, and Adolf A. Berle, 'The Inter-American System and the Program for Economic and Social Progress', Address to the Association of the Bar of the City of New York, 12 April 1961, reprinted in *Department of State Bulletin*, 1 May 1961, pp. 617-21.

73. Robert McNamara, quoted in US Senate, 'Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders', *op. cit.*, in note 5, p. 157.

in the region.[74] As Senator Mansfield claimed in 1960, '[w]hat is at stake is larger than Cuba and Castro'.[75] Cuba was a 'problem' because the Cuban Revolution had forced a breach into the long-standing and hard-won solidarity of the Western hemisphere, allowing the Soviet Union to meddle in the affairs of the so-called 'American family'.[76] Just as 'international communism' was represented in US Cold War discourse as directly connected, through a global conspiracy, to 'the Kremlin',[77] so too Castro and the new Cuban government came to be represented as 'tools' of the Soviet Union.[78] In 1960, in response to Khrushchev's public pledge to support revolutionary Cuba, Eisenhower drew on these discursive resources, arguing that the 'close ties that have developed between the Soviet and Cuban governments...shows [*sic*] the clear intention to establish Cuba in a role serving Soviet purposes in this hemisphere'.[79] The 'Cuban regime' had been 'seized' by 'the Sino-Soviet bloc'.[80] In the discourse of 'the Cuban problem', then, Cuba acquired a particular identity: it was 'a new satellite' established by 'the Russians', situated 'only 90 miles from American shores',[81] and governed by 'Khrushchev's chief puppet in the Caribbean'.[82]

Second, since Cuba had been defined as a Soviet 'satellite' governed by a Soviet 'puppet', it also made sense in this discourse to claim that 'under Castro Cuba has already become a base and staging area for revolutionary activity throughout the continent'.[83] Consistent with this construction, Kennedy was determined 'to prevent any new state from going down the Castro road and so

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74. The elements of the discourse of 'the Cuban problem' mentioned in this section are discussed in more detail in Weldes, *Constructing National Interests*, *op. cit.*, in note 57, Chapter 8.

75. Senator Mike Mansfield, 'New Horizons for the Americas', Speech delivered to the Special Session of Congress, 8 August 1960, reprinted in *Inter-American Economic Affairs* (Vol. 14, No. 2, 1960), p. 93.

76. See, for example, Mansfield, *op. cit.*, in note 75, p. 93, and US Department of State, *op. cit.*, in note 68, p. 34.

77. See, for example, George F. Kennan, Moscow Embassy Telegram No. 511 ('The Long Telegram'), 22 February 1946, reprinted in Thomas H. Etzold and John Lewis Gaddis (eds.), *Containment: Documents on American Policy and Strategy, 1945-50* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1978), p. 58; Dwight D. Eisenhower, 'Message of the President on the Mutual Security Program for Fiscal Year 1960', 13 March 1959, reprinted in Paul E. Zinner, *Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1959* (New York, NY: Harper and Brothers, for the Council on Foreign Relations, 1960), p. 95.

78. See, for example, US Department of State, *op. cit.*, in note 70, p. 130. See also, Adlai Stevenson, 'UN Security Council Hears US Charges of Soviet Military Buildup in Cuba', Speech to the UN Security Council, 23 October 1962, *Department of State Bulletin*, 12 November 1962, p. 730-31, and Dean Rusk, 'American Republics Act to Halt Soviet Threat to Hemisphere', Statement to the Council of the Organization of American States, 23 October 1962, reprinted in *Department of State Bulletin*, 12 November 1962, p. 721.

79. Eisenhower, *op. cit.*, in note 2, p. 567.

80. Berle, *op. cit.*, in note 72, p. 618.

81. Kennedy, *op. cit.*, in note 68, p. 91.

82. 'Summary of Editorial Comment on United States Break in Relations with Cuba', *New York Times*, 5 January 1961, p. 10.

83. US Department of State, *op. cit.*, in note 68, p. 25.

giving the Soviet Union a second bridgehead in the hemisphere'.[84] After all, aggressive totalitarian regimes are never content with one small victory. Instead, successful totalitarian aggression is typically followed by further aggression, so that allowing the Soviets to retain one 'bridgehead' in the Western hemisphere would undoubtedly spur them on in their ambition to establish another. According to the discourse of 'the Cuban problem', then, Cuba had become 'an action base from which teams of Communists, backed by the Soviet Union and Communist China, are seeking to turn the Caribbean Sea into a Communist lake'.[85] As a result, throughout the 1960s, Cuban 'Communist agents' were represented as

> fomenting revolution in almost every Latin American country, leading guerrilla operations in Argentina, plotting political assassinations in Columbia, shipping arms to Venezuela, and inciting student riots in Puerto Rico. Cuban-based guerrilla training schools were said to be graduating thousands of Latin American subversives each year who were sent back to their homelands to lead Cuban-style revolutions.[86]

The so-called 'Cuban missile crisis'[87] was constituted using the same discursive resources. The Soviet missile deployment was represented as an instance of general communist, not simply Soviet, penetration of the hemisphere which, particularly if it were to be successful, raised the odds that other communist interventions in Latin America would follow. Dean Rusk could therefore argue that the 'missile crisis' highlighted 'the growing intervention of the international Communist movement in this hemisphere'.[88]

Images of 'Communism' spreading from Cuba across all of Latin America seemed sensible in part because US Cold War discourse already depicted Latin America as suffering from depressed economic conditions which meant that

84. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), p. 772.

85. 'Cuba's Latin Goal behind US Break', *New York Times*, 4 January 1961, p. 6. See also Stebbins, *op. cit.*, in note 4; Kennedy, *op. cit.*, in note 68; US Department of State, *op. cit.*, in note 68; US Department of State, *op. cit.*, in note 69; and Stevenson, *op. cit.*, in note 71.

86. Robbins, *op. cit.*, in note 5, p. 3. As Robbins notes, however, 'most of the allegations raised against Cuba during the 1960s proved to be either spurious or exaggerated. While the Castro government was ideologically committed to the export of revolution, it never had the military means or the support of its allies necessary to mount a major campaign' (p. 4). Although the US government estimated that Cuba was training between 1,000 and 2,500 Latin American guerrillas a year during the 1960s—for a total of between 10,000 and 25,000 Cuban-trained revolutionaries—no more than 2500 were actually trained from 1961 through 1969 (p. 53).

87. We add the modifier 'so-called' because these events can be represented and understood quite differently. In the Soviet Union, for instance, they were part of the very different 'Caribbean crisis', while in Cuba, they were part of the 'October crisis'. For an extensive analysis of the discursive construction of this crisis, see Weldes, *Constructing National Interests*, *op. cit.*, in note 57, Chapters 6, 7, and 8.

88. Rusk, *op. cit.*, in note 78, p. 721.

'these countries offer fertile fields for Communist economic coercion'.[89] In this discourse, conditions in Latin America were understood to enhance the danger of the Cuban revolution. As one commentator put it:

> [t]he Cuban revolution has had reverberations throughout Latin America. Castro and his rebels have caught the imagination of the humble people who, in many countries, wish they could destroy their own military cliques as Castro destroyed Cuba's. Vast numbers of these common people also wish to effect similar land reforms and other programs of the kind Castro has inaugurated since coming to power.[90]

The Cuban Revolution, in other words, provided an attractive model for economic and political change. According to the logic of 'the Cuban problem', the exploitation by 'Communists' of economic and political conditions in Latin America—conditions that made it 'profitable for agitators to try to create the popular image of Uncle Sam as an exploiter of the downtrodden masses, and to give a distasteful connotation to the "Yanqui"'[91]—meant, as well, that the hemispheric leadership position of the United States was in jeopardy. Given this representation of the dangers of the new revolutionary Cuba, the task of the United States was clear. Both in order to prevent communist expansion and in order to retain its leadership position in the hemisphere, the US had to 'compete with Fidel Castro', and indirectly with the Soviet Union, 'for the allegiance of a continent in revolutionary ferment'.[92] Otherwise, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., warned in 1961, if the United States allowed 'another Cuba' in the Western hemisphere, 'the game would be up through a good deal of Latin America'.[93]

The Alliance for Progress provided a strategy to overcome these dangers, to undermine the appeal of the Cuban model of revolutionary change, and to bolster US prominence in the region. It was, in short, designed to provide for the 'containment' of Castro and the Cuban Revolution[94] and, thereby, for the 'containment' of Soviet influence in the Western hemisphere, while at the same

89. C.P. Cabell, 'The Nature of the Communist Threat', Address to the National Security Commission, Meeting of the American Legion, Minneapolis, MN, 21 August 1959, reprinted in *Vital Speeches* (Vol. 25, No. 4, 1959), p. 751.

90. Robert J. Alexander, 'Cuba and the Sugar Quota', *The New Leader*, 21 March 1960, pp. 4-5. See also US Information Agency, 'United States Information Agency's Estimate of the Latin American Situation', 28 March 1961, reprinted in *Inter-American Economic Affairs* (Vol. 15, No. 2, 1961), pp. 88-91, and William J. Fulbright, 'Senator Fulbright's Defense of HR 6518', reprinted in *Inter-American Economic Affairs* (Vol. 15, No. 1, 1961), pp. 72-78.

91. US Information Agency, *op. cit.*, in note 90, p. 90.

92. Schlesinger, Jr., *op. cit.*, in note 84, p. 760.

93. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., quoted in Thomas G. Paterson, 'Fixation with Cuba: The Bay of Pigs, Missile Crisis, and Covert War Against Castro', in Thomas G. Paterson (ed.), *Kennedy's Quest for Victory: American Foreign Policy, 1961-1963* (New York, NY and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 127.

94. Schlesinger, Jr., *op. cit.*, in note 84, pp. 783-84.

time reproducing the US identity as the hemispheric 'leader'.[95] To enhance the chances for success in this struggle, the Alliance for Progress was constructed as a *revolutionary* and uniquely *American* alternative to the Cuban/Soviet development model. Douglas Dillon, for instance, attempted to sell the Alliance in Latin America by invoking José Martí, the 'father' of the Cuban Revolution: '[i]t was the great American—José Martí', Dillon pronounced, 'who reminded us that "We Americans are one in origin, in hope, and in danger". We meet today in fulfilment of that concept—brought together by our common origin, fired by our common hopes, determined to conquer our common dangers'.[96] In charting 'the future course of our hemisphere', Dillon invoked standard images not only of the 'common' heritage and values of the 'American family', but of its common spirit of revolution. Having proclaimed that the American states faced 'a revolutionary task', he continued:

> [b]ut we are no strangers to revolution. From the shores of the Americas almost 200 years ago went forth the call to freedom and national independence which today guides men's actions in all the turbulent continents of the world. It was our hemisphere that first proved that men could rule themselves, that colonial shackles could be cast off, and that governments could be the instruments of men's liberty. This was the spirit of our revolution and of the revolutions it inspired. It is the spirit which has shaped our hemisphere.[97]

Arguments such as these attempted to construct a single 'American' identity, based ostensibly upon a common history of revolution in the pursuit of freedom, that encompassed both the United States and the rest of 'the Americas', while excluding Cuba. This identity, then, provided warrants for US state action. Specifically, it justified US attempts to contain the Cuban model of revolutionary change, and, thereby, attempts to contain Soviet and communist expansion into the Western hemisphere, and simultaneously, to maintain US hegemony in the region.

The third component of 'the Cuban problem' was the challenge which revolutionary Cuba presented to US identity, and particularly to its global

95. See, for example, US National Security Council, 'NSC 68: United States Objectives and Programs for National Security', 14 April 1950, reprinted in Etzold and Gaddis (eds.), *op. cit.*, in note 77, p. 390; Mansfield, *op. cit.*, in note 75, p. 96; and Stevenson, *op. cit.*, in note 78, p. 728.

96. Douglas Dillon, 'Statement at a Special Meeting of the Economic and Social Council of the OAS', Punte del Este, 7 August 1961, reprinted in *Department of State Bulletin*, 28 August 1961, p. 356. This invocation of Martí, of course, completely ignored the fact that Martí had become a firm opponent of the United States and of US policy towards Cuba and the rest of Latin America (Pérez, *op. cit.*, in note 1, pp. 78-81). For a fuller analysis of the appropriation of Martí in US foreign policy discourse, see Diana Saco, *Voices from the Distance: Radio Marti and the (Pen)Insular Construction of Cuban Identity* (MA dissertation, Florida Atlantic University, 1992), pp. 86-100.

97. Dillon, *op. cit.*, in note 96.

credibility. This challenge became particularly acute during the 'Cuban missile crisis'. As Hans Morgenthau argued shortly afterwards, '[t]he Soviet presence in Cuba...affects the prestige of the United States as a great power'.[98] Drawing on the same discursively constituted US identity, Zbigniew Brzezinski similarly insisted that 'the presence of Communism in Cuba...forces the United States to back down from a traditionally proclaimed position and imposes upon it a humiliation which is bound to have international implications'.[99] The discourse of 'the Cuban problem', then, constructed Cuba, despite its small size and its slim resources, not only as a danger to the 'Western Hemisphere', to the 'American family', and to the US leadership role in the region, but as a threat to the identity of the United States as a global superpower.

Finally, the discourse of 'the Cuban problem' entailed the argument that 'Castro and his gang have betrayed the ideals' of a Cuban revolution that had initially 'reflected the aspirations of the Cuban people' for 'individual liberty and free elections',[100] for a 'better way of life' and 'the full opportunity to improve their status' on the basis of 'free and democratic institutions'.[101] Indeed, as one analyst has put it, 'the "revolution betrayed" argument was advanced early and repeated often' and became 'the linchpin of the North American propaganda campaign against Cuba'.[102] The leaders of Cuba's revolutionary regime, according to this discourse, 'betrayed their own revolution' when they 'delivered that revolution into the hands of powers alien to the hemisphere'.[103] In response to Cuban charges of US involvement in the Bay of Pigs, for example, Adlai Stevenson drew on this discursive construction when he denounced Castro in the United Nations, arguing that 'Dr. Castro chose to embark on a systematic betrayal' of the pledges of the Cuban Revolution, and thus 'presided over a methodical and shameless corruption of his own revolution'.[104]

In contrast to the malevolence attached to the Cuban government through this image of 'betrayal', expressly positive characteristics were (at least sometimes) ascribed to the Cuban population, thus placing 'the Cuban people' in stark contrast to 'the Castro regime'. As a result, the discourse of 'the Cuban problem' portrayed Castro's government as being without the support of the Cuban people

98. Hans Morgenthau 'Negotiations or War?' *The New Republic*, 3 November 1962, p. 9.

99. Zbigniew Brzezinski, 'Cuba in Soviet Strategy', *The New Republic*, 3 November 1962, p. 7.

100. John F. Kennedy, 'Excerpts from Kennedy Talk on Cuba', 6 October, reprinted in *New York Times*, 7 October 1960, p. 20.

101. US Department of State, 'The Land Problem in the Americas', Department of State Publication 7112, Inter-American Series 62 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1960), p. 3.

102. Pérez, *op. cit.*, in note 1, p. 249.

103. US Department of State, *op. cit.*, in note 68, p. 1.

104. Stevenson, *op. cit.*, in note 71, p. 670. See also Rusk, *op. cit.*, in note 78, p. 721; and John F. Kennedy, 'The US Response to the Soviet Military Buildup in Cuba', Report to the American People, 22 October 1962, Department of State Publication 7449, Inter-American Series 80 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1962), p. 10.

who, it was asserted, continued to share the liberal aspirations of all Americans.[105] The representation of the 'revolution betrayed' accorded with the standard US Cold War representation of the populations of Communist-governed countries as 'held captive'[106] by, and thus necessarily opposed to, their 'puppet' governments who actually serve 'the Kremlin'. Accordingly, then, the United States should oppose Communist regimes, but should not 'make enemies of the...people instead of the evil men who enslave them'.[107] In 1960, in a policy statement on Cuba, Eisenhower drew on these images, describing Cuba as 'a country with whose people the United States have enjoyed and expect to continue to enjoy a firm and mutually beneficial friendship'.[108] In the discourse of 'the Cuban problem', then, 'the Cuban people' were constructed as distinct from 'the Cuban regime' and, in contrast to their leaders, as sharing the same aspirations as other members of 'the American family'. On this logic, they could be treated as the object of US friendship and of legitimate US concern. Moreover, since 'the Castro regime' was represented as having betrayed 'the Cuban people', it made sense within this discourse not only to treat the Cuban people as separate from that regime, but to depict them as disaffected from it. In urging that the 'Cuba Project [Operation Mongoose] proceed with all possible haste', Brigadier General Edward Lansdale reproduced this image:

> there is evidence that the repressive measures of the Communists, together with disappointments in Castro's economic dependency on the Communist formula, have resulted in an anti-regime atmosphere among the Cuban people which makes a resistance program a distinct and present possibility.[109]

Furthermore, he added, the 'Cuban people feel helpless and are losing hope fast'.[110] Relations between 'the Castro regime' and 'the Cuban people', then,

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105. John F. Kennedy, *op. cit.*, in note 100, p. 20.
106. US Congress, Joint (Senate) Resolution, 'The Captive Nations', in Richard P. Stebbins (ed.), *Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1959* (New York, NY: Harper and Brothers, 1960), pp. 206-207.
107. US National Security Council, 'NSC 68: United States Objectives and Programs for National Security', 14 April 1950, reprinted in Etzold and Gaddis (eds.), *op. cit.*, in note 77, p. 392.
108. Dwight D. Eisenhower, 'Statement by the President Restating United States Policy toward Cuba', 26 January 1960, in Eisenhower, *op. cit.*, in note 2, pp. 135-36. See also Dwight D. Eisenhower, 'Statement by the President on Terminating Diplomatic Relations with Cuba', 3 January 1961, in Eisenhower, *op. cit.*, in note 2, p. 891.
109. Lansdale, *op. cit.*, in note 5, p. 23. See also Dean Rusk, 'Secretary Discusses Cuban Situation on "News and Comment" Program', 30 September 1962, *Department of State Bulletin*, 22 October 1962, p. 597, and Kennedy, *op. cit.*, in note 100, pp. 14-15.
110. Lansdale, *op. cit.*, in note 5, p. 23.

were consistently represented as antagonistic.[111] As a result, the possibility that the Cuban people might actually support the Cuban revolution and oppose US policy towards Cuba was, within this discursive logic, rendered virtually unthinkable.

This construction of 'the Cuban people' and 'the Castro regime' denied that the Cuban government represented the wishes of the Cuban people, and instead depicted the Cuban leadership as a gang of treacherous communists who had enslaved the Cuban population.[112] This portrait, of course, also implied that the revolutionary Cuban government was illegitimate in the eyes of its own people, which, in turn, legitimised US hostility towards the Cuban Revolution and its leadership. As a result of these constructions, Castro's charges that US policy towards Cuba persistently violated Cuban sovereignty[113] could be dismissed. An illegitimate government, after all, should not be allowed to conceal or protect its nefarious doings behind the veil of sovereignty. The discursive construction of the antagonism between 'the Cuban people' and 'the Castro regime' also entailed a warrant for US action. In its dual identity as the leader in the global battle against communism and as the protector of the Western hemisphere, the United States was obligated to assist the Cuban people to overcome their enslavement and to facilitate the realisation of their true aspirations. As Senator Mansfield argued in 1960, in the face of acts which 'grossly outrage the conscience of the Americas', the 'doctrine of non-intervention' is 'not adequate to the need'.[114] An illegitimate Cuban regime that oppressed its own population was just such a 'gross outrage'. On this construction, actions taken by the United States with respect to Cuba were not aggression against a legitimate state, as was repeatedly charged by the Cuban government. Charges of US aggression against Cuba were thus deflected by constituting both an identity for Cuba which denied that Cuba had a legitimate government that could claim sovereignty in international politics, and an identity for the United States as global and hemispheric leader.

The US discourse of 'the Cuban problem' constructed a host of objects to be protected by the United States, of other objects which posed threats to the United States, and of warranting arguments which defined for US state officials what US relations with Cuba were about. According to the logic of this discourse, allowing a 'Communist' government to remain ensconced in Cuba would have limited, or would have appeared to limit, the ability of the United States to curtail the communist subversion of the American family, thus undermining US

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111. While the opposition of 'the Cuban people' to 'the Castro regime' was treated as an axiomatic truth within the discourse of 'the Cuban problem', this was, and is a contestable representation. Even Philip Bonsal, former US Ambassador to Cuba, has acknowledged that the US perception of popular opposition to the Cuban government was overly influenced by 'our largely anti-Castro informers'. For this latter comment, see Pérez, *op. cit.*, in note 1, p. 248.

112. See, for example, Kennedy, *op. cit.*, in note 104, p. 14; US Department of State, op. cit., in note 68, p. 1; Stevenson, *op. cit.*, in note 71, p. 670.

113. See, for example, 'Text of UN-Cuban Notes', *op. cit.*, in note 5, p. 31.

114. Mansfield, *op. cit.*, in note 75, p. 99.

credibility and prestige as a great power. This logic helped to elevate 'the Cuban problem' to almost mythic proportions within US discourse. As former White House and State Department official Richard N. Goodwin remarked, 'the entire history of the Cold War, its positions and assumptions, converged upon the "problem of Cuba"'.[115] Faced with such dire consequences for its identity if Cuban communism were permitted to flourish, the United States had no alternative but to pursue an aggressive policy towards Cuba, one designed to undo the Cuban Revolution, in order to rid itself of this threat. US hostility towards Cuba, then, was made possible by the prevailing US construction of the identities of, and the relationship between 'Cuba' and 'the United States'. The discursive construction of identity that we have described here helps to explain how it was possible for a great power like the United States to engage in over 30 years of aggression against a small state like Cuba. During the Cold War, the discourse of 'the Cuban problem' produced immense hardships for Cuba. It produced identities for 'Cuba' and for 'the United States' that virtually ensured that Cuba would face unrelenting hostility and aggression from the United States. As we now argue, by 1994 this hostility had not yet come to an end.

The US Reconstruction of Cuban Identity in the 'New World Order'

US policy towards Cuba in the late 1980s and into the 1990s has not responded to changes in the global distribution of power that characterise the post-Cold War era. Nor has it responded noticeably to changes in administration. Despite the exhaustion of the threats perceived by the United States to be emanating from the Soviet Union and the 'international Communist movement', and to be channelled against the Western hemisphere through Cuba, and despite shifts from the cold warrior Reagan administration, through the Bush administration, to the domestically-oriented Clinton administration, 'the Cuban problem' remains and the United States persists in its hostility.

While Mikhail Gorbachev was advocating *glasnost* and *perestroika*, the Reagan administration took an increasingly militant stance towards Cuba. US constructions of the sources of instability in Latin America partly account for this renewed vilification and isolation of 'Cuban Communism'. As had been the case throughout the Cold War, the Cuban government continued to be charged with aiding revolution and subversion in Central America and Africa.[116] In addition, it was now also accused of being involved in the drug trade and of supporting international terrorism.[117] Cuba was not represented merely as supporting

115. Richard N. Goodwin, quoted in Paterson *op. cit.*, in note 93, p. 125.
116. See Ronald Reagan, *Reagan on Cuba: Selected Statements by the President* (Washington, DC: Cuban-American National Foundation, 1986), pp. 22-23 and 13, respectively. For overviews of US-Cuban relations in the 1980s, see Pérez, *op. cit.*, in note 1, pp. 257-63, and Jorge I. Domínguez, 'US-Cuban Relations in the mid-1980s', in Irving L. Horowitz (ed.), *Cuban Communism*, Sixth Edition (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1987), pp. 473-88.
117. Reagan, *op. cit.*, in note 116, pp. 28 and 45-46, respectively.

home-grown revolutions in Nicaragua and elsewhere; instead, it was reconstructed as the catalyst of Central American violence and instability.[118]

It was in this context that, in 1985, Reagan and members of the anti-Castro Cuban exile community in the United States inaugurated Radio Martí with the avowed intent of providing 'the Cuban people' with allegedly 'objective' news and information. As then vice-President Bush noted, '[w]e see Radio Martí as the voice of truth in Cuba. Castro's response to Radio Martí shows how dangerous truth can be to a dictator'.[119] Radio Martí transmissions are particularly illustrative of how US constructions of 'Cuba' and 'Communism' in the discourse of 'the Cuban problem' have been rearticulated to accommodate the end of the Cold War.[120] Recent US constructions of Cuba still draw, in significant ways, on the discourse of 'the Cuban problem' as it constituted US interests in, and policy towards Cuba during the Cold War, but some of the details of that 'Cuban problem' have been rearticulated.

During the Cold War, as we have suggested, Cuba was constructed as a Soviet minion and a projection of 'the Soviet threat' into the Western hemisphere. As recently as 1991, Radio Martí transmissions were still representing Cuba in these terms. According to one 'testimonial' segment from 2 July, for example, the Cuban Revolution of 1959 obtained for the Soviet Union 'its first beachhead in American territory' and 'brought forth a profound ideological and economic dependence' on 'the Russian empire'. With the disintegration of the 'Soviet bloc', however, Cuban communism is now constructed as a phenomenon that will not survive much longer: 'Castroism, while it may seem long to us, is a passing accident. As things are today, it is dead. Although the cadaver is not yet mindful of its own lifelessness; people, it is a cadaver'.[121] Popular US news programmes have reproduced these constructs succinctly in their discussions of Cuba. In 1992, for instance, *MacNeil/Lehrer* offered a segment on Cuba entitled 'Focus—Numbered Days?'[122] while *Frontline* aired 'Castro: The Last Communist'.[123] The key rearticulation in US constructions of Cuba and Castro is from 'Communism' as a Soviet-led international communist threat to

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118. *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23. See also 'National Bipartisan Commission on Central America (Kissinger Commission) Report' (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1984), pp. 107-108.

119. George Bush, *Bush on Cuba: Selected Statements by the President* (Washington, DC: Cuban American National Foundation, 1991), p. 23.

120. It might be argued that Radio Martí transmissions are not the best data for this kind of analysis because discursive constructions in a *propaganda* program are deliberate and sometimes intentionally 'false'. However, the construction of US and Cuban identities takes place in multiple venues, including propaganda programs like Radio Martí. Furthermore, these discursive practices have particular effects (for example, a particular identity is constructed for Cuba) which occur regardless of the intentions of the speakers.

121. Commentary by Cuban exile Roberto Valero, RMP, 2 July 1991. All discussions of Radio Martí transmissions are based upon Diana Saco's translations. They are cited as RMP. For a more detailed study of Radio Martí and lengthier discussions of the transmissions analysed, see Saco, *op. cit.*, in note 96.

122. Public Broadcasting Service, 21 January 1992.

123. Public Broadcasting Service, 11 February 1992.

'Communism' as dead or, at least, as dying. Given the presumed global renunciation of communism which the demise of the Soviet bloc has come to signify, references to geopolitical concerns about the integrity of the Western Hemisphere have also waned. In their place, we find the rearticulation of 'the Cuban problem' in terms of, among other things, the alleged universal aspirations of the people and as the normative imperatives of a new international community.

The discursive effort to rearticulate 'the Cuban problem' in light of recent global changes has involved the drawing of parallels between 'the Cuban people' and 'the people of Eastern Europe'. One regularly scheduled Radio Martí program entitled *Voces de la Liberdad* ('Voices of Liberty') aired 'testimonials' by Eastern Europeans intended, in large part, to draw lessons for 'the Cuban people' from the Velvet Revolutions of the late 1980s.[124] Against the backdrop of 'communism is dead' and 'Castro is immovable', Eastern Europeans have been constructed as people who, when faced with 'repressive' conditions 'like those facing the Cuban people', took steps to change them: '[t]he Cuban government keeps depriving its people of their rights and of the possibility of a better future. But in Eastern Europe, what appeared impossible has become a reality. Today can be heard the Voices of Liberty'.[125] 'Liberty', in this context, is still defined, as it was throughout the Cold War, in terms of liberal democratic and market freedoms. The situation faced by Eastern Europeans was one of a people subjected to 'Communist experiments' with a centralised economy; these 'experiments' had interfered with their 'natural' aspirations for 'liberty', 'diversity', 'economic progress', and 'democracy'.[126] According to this rearticulated discourse of 'the Cuban problem', this is the situation that 'the Cuban people' still face, because Castro remains 'immovable' despite the dramatic changes in Eastern Europe. Among the lessons to be drawn from Eastern Europe, then, is that the struggle for freedom 'demands the efforts of each citizen':[127] 'when we are stuck in a situation that doesn't permit us to grow like human beings...we have no choice but to take the road to change'.[128]

Recapitulating the well-worn US appropriation of the rhetoric of 'revolution' in promoting the Alliance for Progress, the concepts of 'revolution' and 'change' in contemporary US discussions of 'the Cuban problem' have been disarticulated from the socialism of the Cuban government and rearticulated to 'pro-democracy' movements in Eastern Europe.[129] In the process, the discourse of 'the Cuban problem' persists, but the nature of 'the problem' has been redefined as intransigence in the face both of Communist failure or 'death', and of the universal aspirations for pro-democratic change that have emerged in the post-

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124. RMP, 2 July 1991.
125. *Ibid.*
126. Commentary, RMP, 12 July 1991.
127. *Voices of Liberty*, RMP, 2 July 1991.
128. *Realidades* ('Realities'), editorial aired as part of *Revista Juvenil* ('Youth Review'), RMP, 1 July 1991.
129. See, for example, Bush, *op. cit.*, in note 6, p. 1233.

Cold War era. Months after the fall of the Berlin Wall, for instance, Bush drew on this reconstruction, asserting that

> Fidel Castro should be celebrating along with other countries the demise of the Berlin Wall. Instead, Castro is criticizing Gorbachev for being not true to a communist revolution. He's out of step. He's swimming against the tide. He is a symbol, the lone holdout of a Marxist totalitarianism that has failed all around the world. And he ought to be better to his people than that.[130]

Moreover, after the dismantling of the Soviet Union, Bush stated simply that 'Castro's vision of the future is to cling to a failed past. His determination to keep Cuba an antidemocratic Communist state dooms the Cuban people to a predetermined fate'.[131]

While these aspects of 'the Cuban problem' were being rearticulated, US policy towards Cuba became more, rather than less, aggressive. The end of systemic superpower competition has not been matched by a cessation of US anti-Castro policy; instead, it has led to a renewed drive towards spurring 'democratic change' in Cuba. Nowhere is this more evident than in the fact that in 1992—*after* the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, *after* the failed coup of August 1991 in the former USSR, and *after*, in effect, the dismantling of the Communist Bloc and the 'end of the Cold War'—the United States strengthened its policy of isolating Cuba by passing the Cuban Democracy Act. This act revitalised the 32-year-old embargo against Cuba in order to 'promote a peaceful transition to democracy in Cuba through the application of appropriate pressures on the Cuban Government and support for the Cuban people'.[132]

The defense of the Bill offered by Representative Robert G. Torricelli (D-New Jersey) is instructive since it focuses not on US security but on 'human rights', 'democratic freedoms', and 'the Cuban people's suffering'; that is, on the normative concerns of the 'New World Order'. In its effort to persuade Castro to change, the Bill blends 'carrots and sticks' by permitting donations of food, medicine, and medical supplies 'to a Cuban government that recognizes human rights and basic democratic freedoms' and by providing improved telephone and mail service between the US and Cuba. 'But', Torricelli continues, 'the bill tightens a United States embargo that was slowly eroding to make it more effective'. The point of the Bill is to send a clear message to Castro that US policy will not change until Castro himself initiates liberal democratic reforms, constructed as both morally defensible and historically unavoidable. After all, as

130. Bush, *op. cit.*, in note 119, p. 64.

131. George Bush, 'Statement on the 90th Anniversary of Cuban Independence', 20 May 1992, reprinted in *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, 25 May 1992, p. 905.

132. US Senate, *Cuban Democracy Act of 1992*, Report for the 102nd Congress: Bill Text Report for S.2918, 102nd Congress, 2nd Session [Online]. Available through LEGI-SLATE.

had been assumed in the Cold War discourse of 'the Cuban problem', it was obvious that 'Mr. Castro remains the base cause of the Cuban people's suffering'. Furthermore, according to Torricelli, '[m]ost of our trading partners...are disillusioned by their failed attempts to persuade President Fidel Castro to embrace minimal reforms'.[133] On this view, then, the tighter sanctions established in the Bill reflect the normative imperatives of an 'international community' concerned with human rights violations and the lack of democratic freedoms in Cuba.[134] Bush also defended US policy towards Cuba by invoking concern for the normative and historical imperatives of the 'New World Order': '[t]he Castro dictatorship cannot and will not survive the wave of democracy that has swept over the world'.[135] In this 'New World Order', Bush happily noted, 'Castro is on his own'.[136]

Furthermore, as the Cuban Democracy Act indicates, this rearticulated discourse retains the US 'leadership' identity and, thus, US prominence in the promotion of a peaceful transition towards democracy in Cuba. Warrants for this leadership role are related to the established US identity as the 'defender of the free world'. However, with the recent shift from discussions of 'the free world' to discussions of 'the New World Order', explicit constructions of the United States as 'defender of the free world' have receded. In their place, as Radio Martí transmissions indicate, there has surfaced a US 'leadership' identity grounded in the fact that the United States is 'the first and most powerful

133. Robert G. Torricelli, 'How to Bring About Change in Cuba', *New York Times*, 10 August 1992, p. A16.

134. Despite US claims that the Cuban Democracy Act reflects the concerns of the 'international community', it has been soundly criticised by many countries, including allies of the United States. Since the mechanisms for tightening the embargo—*e.g.*, sanctioning foreign subsidiaries of US companies trading with Cuba and prohibiting ships trading with Cuba from docking in US ports for six months—would effectively subject foreign subsidiaries and shipping companies to US policy on Cuba, a number of US trading partners, including Canada, Great Britain, and Mexico, have argued that the bill infringes on their sovereignty (David Clark Scott, 'Plan to Stiffen Cuba Ban Annoys US Trading Allies', *Christian Science Monitor*, 23 June 1992, p. 1, and Julie Wolf, 'Cuba Embargo Angers EC', *The Guardian*, 9 October 1992, p. 15). In fact, on 24 November 1992, the UN General Assembly voted 59-3 to demand that the United States lift the embargo against Cuba. Only Romania and Israel voted with the United States, while 71 countries abstained (Stanley Meisler, 'U.N. Rebuffs US on Cuba Embargo', *Los Angeles Times*, 25 November 1992, p. A1). Furthermore, in June of 1994, 19 Latin American nations, plus Spain and Portugal, called for 'the elimination of unilateral economic and trade boycotts' of Cuba ('Castro Dons Civies for Latin Conference', *New York Times*, 6 June 1994, p. A3), while Canada restored economic aid to Cuba ('Canada is Restoring Aid to Cuban Regime', *Plain Dealer*, 21 June 1994, p. 6A). Despite these challenges to US policy, some US officials have continued to push for extended sanctions against Cuba: under a 1995 bill, for instance, Clinton's $263 million aid plan for Russia would be reduced by $200 million, the amount Russia pays Cuba 'for keeping the listening post' (Juan J. Walte, 'One-two Punch Hits Russian Aid Plan', *USA Today*, 10 February 1995, p. 4A).

135. Bush, *op. cit.*, in note 131.

136. George Bush, 'Statement on Actions to Support Democracy in Cuba', 18 April 1992, reprinted in *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, 27 April 1992, p. 676.

democracy in the world'.[137] This slightly revamped US identity, in turn, provides a warrant for US action. It implies that the United States can and should take a leadership role in supporting pro-democratic movements wherever they emerge and in promoting democracy in those places, like Cuba, where spontaneous pro-democracy movements by the people are possible (given current social and economic hardships) but are systematically repressed.[138] Ultimately, this US identity helps to make sensible Bush's urging that a US-led international community should isolate Castro and help spur the transition to democracy in Cuba: '[w]e urge all democratic governments to join us. No nation should help bankroll this [Cuban] dictatorship'.[139]

Despite concerns that the new Clinton administration might 'go soft' on Cuba,[140] it continues to understand US-Cuban relations in the terms of the discourse of 'the Cuban problem'. Clinton endorsed the Cuban Democracy Act during his campaign and has continued to support it. In March of 1993, for example, he asserted that 'I have no change in Cuba policy except to say I supported the Cuban Democracy Act, and I hope some day that we'll all be able to travel to a democratic Cuba'.[141] In response to our question, at a May 1993 public address, as to why the United States continues its embargo against Cuba, Secretary of State Warren Christopher declared that the embargo would help spur a necessary change in Cuba, and that continued US pressure on Cuba was warranted by the fact that 'Castro is a relic of the past'.[142] In short, despite the end of the Cold War, no real change in US policy towards Cuba had taken place by 1994. The United States has continued through the discourse of 'the Cuban problem' to construct both its own identity and Cuba's identity in a way that makes the persistence of US hostility and aggression towards Cuba both sensible and laudable.

Discourse or Domestic Politics?

In contrast to our discourse-oriented explanation, at least one alternative explanation for the continuity in US policy towards Cuba has recently been suggested, namely that high-pressure domestic politics was the key to

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137. See, for example, *Enfoque* ['Focus'], RMP, 1 July 1991.

138. See, for example, Samuel Huntington, interview on *Enfoque*, RMP, 1 July 1991.

139. Bush, *op. cit.*, in note 136, p. 676.

140. Mimi Whitefield, 'Cuba Not Seen as Clinton Priority: Some Say Administration Might Work to Improve Ties', *Miami Herald*, 12 January 1993, p. 6A.

141. Bill Clinton, March 1993 interview, rebroadcast on *This Morning*, Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), 4 November 1993. See also his 'Remarks on Cuban Independence Day', 20 May 1993, reprinted in *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*, 24 May 1993, pp. 916-17.

142. Warren Christopher, Public address given at Ted Mann Concert Hall, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, 27 May 1993.

understanding President Bush's position on Cuba.[143] In particular, Carla Ann Robbins contends that US policy towards Cuba remained unchanged during the Bush years due to electoral and lobbying efforts by the Cuban-American community in south Florida. Many of these activities have been conducted by members of the Cuban-American National Foundation (CANF), 'a millionaires' club of right-wing 'exiles' with a hefty campaign war chest and the support of many south Florida voters'.[144] The Foundation was organised in 1981 by Jorge Más Canosa[145] and other wealthy Cuban business leaders in Miami in order to lobby for anti-Castro policies and to help finance politicians sympathetic to *La Causa* ('the cause'). Its resources have helped to give CANF enough political clout to influence US policy towards Cuba from the early 1980s into the post-Cold War era.[146]

On the face of it, then, CANF's policy influence provides a good example of a non-discursive explanation for the persistence of US policy towards Cuba. Cuban-American resources, on this view, are material factors that make it possible for Cuban-Americans to bring pressure to bear on US officials, thereby perpetuating the political and economic harassment of Cuba. However, to raise this as an objection to our discourse-oriented analysis is to assume that Cuban-

143. We focus in this section on only one example—the role of the Cuban-American National Foundation—of both the importance of, and the problems involved in explaining the existence and persistence of 'the Cuban problem' in terms of domestic politics. One could, of course, provide other examples, including, for instance, the role of, and the discursive practices involved in the 1960 US presidential election with the prominent Republican pressures on the Kennedy campaign to appear 'tough' on Cuba. See, for example, Weldes, *Constructing National Interests*, *op. cit.*, in note 57, pp. 532-535; Branch and Crile, *op. cit.*, in note 5; and James Nathan, 'The Missile Crisis: His Finest Hour Now', *World Politics* (Vol. 27, No. 2, 1975), pp. 256-81.

144. Carla Anne Robbins, 'Dateline Washington: Cuban-American Clout', *Foreign Policy* (Vol. 88, 1992) p. 163.

145. In the same year, Más Canosa was appointed to Reagan's Presidential Commission on Broadcasting to Cuba. For CANF's role in organizing Radio Martí, see John S. Nichols, 'When Nobody Listens: Assessing the Political Success of Radio Martí', *Communication Research* (Vol. 11, No. 2, 1984), pp. 281-304.

146. CANF's 65 directors make annual contributions of $10,000 per campaign to the foundation and contribute another $10,000 per campaign to the Free Cuba PAC (Robbins, *op. cit.*, in note 134, p. 173). Between 1983 and 1988, campaign contributions totalled $385,400 (John S. Nichols, 'The Power of the Anti-Fidel Lobby', *The Nation*, 24 October 1988, p. 389), and, in the 1991-92 campaign cycle, Free Cuba PAC contributions were expected to amount to between $250,000 and $400,000 (Robbins, *op. cit.*, in note 134, p. 173). In addition to lobbying and campaign contributions, CANF also publishes studies on purported atrocities and repression in Cuba and on the need for Cuba's continued economic and political isolation. (See, for example, 'The Issue is Cuba...', mail-order circular (Washington, DC: Cuban American National Foundation, n.d.) CANF also receives Federal grant support from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). According to Nichols, one of the first NED grants was awarded to CANF 'to gather and disseminate information about the human rights situation in Cuba' (Nichols, *op. cit.*, p. 389) and, by 1988, CANF had received a total of $390,000 in Federal NED funds. It is interesting, in this context, that the NED was created in 1983 as an '*apolitical* mechanism for making Federal grants to private organizations working to advance democracy abroad' (Nichols, *op. cit.*, in note 146, p. 389, emphasis added). Clearly, how 'democracy' is defined is not considered, on this view, to be a political issue!

American identities and interests, and the 'clout' that Cuban-Americans enjoy in US politics are not, in important ways, also shaped by the US discourse on Cuba. It is to assume that linguistic explanations somehow oppose material or non-linguistic ones; that is, that one of these two types of factors has to take priority in causal explanations. As we argued earlier, however, linguistic and non-linguistic practices are intimately connected. We would argue, moreover, that domestic politics is one of several sites in which these elements come together. Consequently, we would agree that CANF 'has a lot of money' and that this basic material resource can account for some of its power in US domestic politics. We would add, however, that this material power alone cannot account for what Robbins refers to as 'Cuban-American clout'.

Why, for example, is CANF understood to be qualified (and federally funded) to disseminate 'information' about Cuba? Why, similarly, are CANF members asked to give 'testimony' at Congressional hearings on 'the Cuba problem'?[147] One could begin explaining this aspect of Cuban-American 'clout' by noting that the US discourse of 'the Cuban problem' not only constructs the related state identities of the US and Cuba, it also constructs other actors as relevant to 'the Cuban problem'. In particular, it enables the subject position of 'the Cuban exile', and privileges this identity in foreign policy decisions on Cuba.[148] To be more specific, the US discourse on 'the Cuban problem' opens up a space for the articulation of Cuban émigrés (especially those who left Cuba in the early part of the Revolution, that is, pre-Mariel Boatlift) as political refugees rather than merely as immigrants. 'Immigrants' are typically constructed as those in search of economic opportunities that their homelands could not supply. By contrast, 'the Cuban exile' is understood as someone searching for political freedom; in effect, someone who left revolutionary Cuba because the conditions there were 'repressive'. The first-hand experience of the self-evidently 'repressive' conditions in Cuba which 'the Cuban exile' ostensibly possesses helps to accord 'the Cuban exile' a privileged status as an 'expert' qualified to give 'testimony' on 'the Cuban problem'. This status, however, is itself made possible in the first place through the discursive construction of Cuba as a 'repressive Communist regime' and the comparative construction of the United States as 'leader' of 'the free world'.

In short, we agree that material—or non-linguistic—conditions matter, but not in self-evident ways; they have to be interpreted, for example, as 'repressive'. We also agree that the influence of certain key players at the domestic level matters, but not always in self-evident ways; for 'status' and policy 'relevance' to confer privileges onto particular players, their identities as 'experts', for

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147. One instance of this was the Torricelli-Graham Bill that became the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992. CANF members helped to formulate and gave testimony in support of the Bill. In fact, Christopher Hitchens has argued that 'the moral author of the Torricelli-Graham bill [was] Jorge Más Canosa', the founder of CANF (Hitchens, 'Minority Report', *The Nation*, 8 June 1992, p. 774).

148. For an elaboration of the discursive construction of 'the Cuban exile', especially in relation to Radio Martí transmissions, see Saco, *op. cit.*, in note 96.

example, have first to be constructed. Given this, discursive practices, and particularly linguistic practices, also matter. This is so, because both interpretation and the constitution of identity require a discourse, a symbolic field that makes possible the constitution of meaning about both places and people. Rather than assuming that Cuban-Americans are self-evidently powerful (because of their material resources), we would argue that their clout cannot be understood without reference to their construction as 'Cuban exiles', a construct that is shaped in important ways by the very discourse which we are analysing here: the US discourse of 'the Cuban problem'.

Conclusion

In examining the US construction of 'the Cuban problem' from 1960 through 1994, we have tried to demonstrate that state action is, at least in part, a discursive, and thus also a linguistic artifact. This claim is likely to seem heretical to many students of international politics. However, as our analysis has shown, the hostile nature and the endurance of US policy towards Cuba cannot adequately be explained by reference to conventional factors such as relative material capabilities, system structure, or decision- makers' beliefs alone. A satisfactory account of US state action, of its persistent hostility towards and aggression against Cuba, requires a satisfactory answer to the question, what enabled that hostility? It is to this question that our analysis has been addressed.

In offering this account of US Cuban policy from 1960 through 1994, we hope to add to the growing literature showing that discursive analyses can contribute important insights into the making of state action. Addressing 'how possible' questions does not preclude examining the constraints placed by system structure on state action (as realists do), or the effects of idiosyncratic individual beliefs on foreign policy (as analysts of belief systems do), or the effects of lobbying groups (as some analysts of domestic politics do). Rather, as we have shown, a discursive approach opens up an additional set of questions, about the discursive conditions of possibility enabling particular state actions, which, we maintain, are also of importance in the attempt to understand international politics. For this reason, we argue that discursive analyses should be added to the stock of tools deployed for the study of international relations and foreign policy.

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