



## U.S.–Cuban Trade: When Does a Cold War Strategy Become a Cold War Relic?

The U.S. embargo of Cuba has been a resilient foreign policy, able to weather a variety of political leaders, economic events, and historical eras for over 50 years.<sup>58</sup> In 2011, the Obama administration rescinded earlier restrictions by allowing licensed organizations to grant U.S. citizens permission to make purposeful (academic, cultural, and humanitarian) travel to Cuba. In addition, the Cuban government announced in 2011 that it was easing restrictions on Cubans' ability to buy and sell houses and automobiles and to travel abroad. On the one hand, these moves led to speculation that commercial relations would grow between the two countries. On the other hand, 2010 U.S. mid-term elections gave more power to hard-liners in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate, who want stricter restrictions on U.S.–Cuban relations, such as by limiting the number of flights between the United States and Cuba and revoking visas for executives from non-U.S. companies doing business in Cuba. Many U.S. observers want normal commercial relations with Cuba and many do not. The opposing positions are straightforward and similar to those that have prevailed for over five decades. On the one hand, proponents of normal relations argue that the long embargo has not worked and that U.S. companies have been forced to lose business to competitors from other countries. On the other hand, opponents of normal relations argue that a demoralized Cuban population will overthrow the regime if economic conditions deteriorate just a little more. Further, they argue that there is a moral obligation not to do business with a regime that has been so economically and politically repressive. For instance, Cuba is on the official U.S. list of countries sponsoring terrorism and the list refusing to do enough to prevent child prostitution. Let's first look at the history of the situation.