Preface

With the onset of a revolutionary movement led by Fidel Castro in the decade of 1950s, Cuba in the Caribbean has undergone a major transformation emerging eventually as an internationally influential country not only in the Western Hemisphere but in the world at large. From the position of being merely an appendage of the United States ever since its independence in 1898, Castro's Cuba notwithstanding the hostile policy of the United States in the 1960s, has admittedly established its credentials as a new and truly independent state in Latin America very different from other Latin American countries, including the pre-revolutionary Cuba.

In its somewhat successful effort to alter its own status as well as the calculus of inter-American relations in the recent decades, Cuba has been exposed to different challenges, the most important of which is its physical proximity to a hostile United States. In fact, the successful management of its hostilities with the US constitutes, in a sense, the raison d’être of the Castro regime. Internally, it strengthens the regime's legitimacy while it provides the country with an international influence far in excess of its small size and modest resource capabilities. Hence the study of Cuba's relations with the United States is crucial to an understanding of Cuba's foreign policy.

Paradoxically, despite the severance of Cuban-US diplomatic relations in 1961, the United States has continued to exercise an important influence in the shaping of the Cuban foreign policy. For instance, throughout the 1960s, most of Cuba's foreign policy initiatives were geared towards ensuring the survival of the revolutionary regime in the face of US hostility. Important among these was Cuba's alignment with the Soviet Union. The island's military vulnerability and economic weakness required that any declaration of diplomatic independence from the United States be guaranteed by a
compensatory set of relationships with another super power. Similarly, Cuba's active role in the Third World, be it through the Tricontinental or the Non-aligned Movement was directed towards countering US efforts to isolate Cuba diplomatically and economically within the Hemisphere.

Against such a backdrop, the present study attempts to analyse the course of Cuba-US relations during the 1970s. Definitive studies on the postures, policies and relations between Cuba and the US, particularly with reference to the early 1960s, have been written. Very little attention, however, has been focused on the basis of systematic research on Cuba's foreign policy during the 1970s. No doubt, the major focus of the thesis is not so much to analyse Cuba's foreign policy as much as to study and survey the course of Cuba's relations with the US since 1968.

Most specialists on Cuban affairs believe the year 1968 as constituting a water-shed in Cuba's relations with the Soviet Union, especially in view of Castro's apparent endorsement of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. Ever since, Cuba's relations with the Soviet Union witnessed a steady improvement. Interestingly enough, the year 1968 which saw a change of administration in the US--the Republican administration under Richard Nixon--also heralded a significant change in Cuba-US relations. After almost a decade of unmitigated hostility, modest efforts were made by both Cuba and the United States to seek accommodation with a view to normalize relations. Such efforts were continued until 1976, when following the commitment of Cuban troops in Angola, talks between Cuba and the United States were abruptly ended. Thus the period between 1968 and 1976, which is the focus of the present study, constitutes a more confident and mature phase in Cuban foreign policy when not only were its relations with the Soviet Union stabilized, but after more than a decade of near isolation, Cuba also actively sought to normalize relations with the United States.

Cuban initiatives to seek rapprochement with the US had its own logic and sequence in respect of its global and regional policies. Most scholars, however, have seen Cuba-US rapprochement efforts either as solely the result of US initiatives towards Cuba during the period of detente or, in view of the
increased Soviet influence over Cuban affairs in the post-1968 period, as a consequence of Cuban convergence with the Soviet line in foreign policy. In other words, Cuban-US rapprochement efforts are seen essentially as a fall out of international detente.

While the first view totally discounts Cuban initiatives in seeking accommodation with the US, the second sees Cuba as simply a surrogate of the Soviet Union. But the record of Cuba's relations with the Soviet Union, particularly during the late 1960s suggests that far from being a subservient client state, Cuba often pursued foreign policy postures in defiance of its Soviet patron. The "surrogate" thesis/argument is, therefore, a rather simplistic view that does not adequately explain the complexities of Cuban foreign policy. Rather than adopt either of these approaches, the present study attempts to show that Cuba has always sought to maintain its freedom of manoeuvrability in foreign affairs.

Despite its overwhelming dependence on the USSR, Cuba has always sought to capitalize on shared interests, exploit favourable circumstances and utilize available bargaining counters to expand the parameters of its independence even vis-a-vis its principal ally. Such a strategy has been essential for the pursuit of Cuba's fundamental foreign policy objective, namely ensuring the survival of the revolution without sacrificing the island's independent status. Viewed from such a perspective, the rationale behind Castro's defiance of and eventual accommodation with the Soviet Union in the late 1960s as also, and more importantly in the context of the present study, the logic behind Castro's rapprochement efforts with the US is seen to lie in Castro's need to find a way to maintain what he needed of the crucial economic and military support from the Soviet Union while at the same time to reduce his dependency on that support.

Set in this frame of reference, the structure of the thesis follows a chapterization scheme as given below. Like that of all states, Cuban foreign policy is conditioned by its past. The first chapter, therefore, provides a historical overview of Cuban-US relations against the setting of Cuban independence to show how the very nature of Cuba's close political and
economic ties with the US since 1898 provoked a revolution in the island in 1959. The period, roughly between 1960-1968, was a period signifying the height of hostility between Cuba and the United States. Evolving relations between the two countries during these years are also described in detail in this introductory chapter.

The second chapter attempts to analyse the changes seen in the Cuban postures towards the US during the 1970s against the backdrop of global and regional events. Cuba's closer identification with the Soviet Union on the one hand and the emergence of super power detente are highlighted against which the logic of initiatives taken by Cuba in seeking normalization of relations with the US is discussed. Whatever diplomatic compulsions that prompted Cuba to seek accommodation with the US is also identified. The third chapter describes in detail the actual initiatives taken by Cuba in the political, diplomatic and economic spheres that demonstrated its willingness to normalize relations with Washington. An attempt is also made to identify issues that had hitherto been described as outstanding obstacles to rapprochement between the two countries to show that Cuban stand on these issues too had considerably softened during the period under review. The fourth chapter underlines Cuba's role in Africa, particularly in Angola, and endeavours to see the conflict of interests between Cuba and the US and its impact on the two countries. And the final concluding chapter, while attempting an overview of the brief period of normalization between the two countries also summarizes the preceding analysis.

The present study is based on whatever primary source material that was made available to the present researcher as well as on a variety of scholarly analyses published so far. Where the available source materials were found to be inadequate, such inadequacies were met through consultations with specialists both in Mexico and the United States. For this purpose, a Mexican government scholarship enabled the present researcher to spend a year and a half at the El Colegio de Mexico, Mexico City. A short trip to the US was also provided for by the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.
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"lo que esta obra valga, por ellos va logrado;

yo solo puse el esfuerzo y lo menguade".

(What is good in this work is because of them. I only added the effort and the limitations).

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