CONCLUSION
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The major objective of the present thesis has been to describe the course of Cuba's relations with the United States in a span of eight years, from 1968 to 1976. While these years constituted the two Republican administrations of President Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford in the US, these very years marked a watershed in the Castro-led revolution of the Caribbean island of Cuba. For, Cuba during these very years, witnessed major transformations in its domestic order as well as in its foreign policy postures. While efforts were afoot to "institutionalize the revolution" domestically, it was also a period when Cuba's strained relations with the Soviet Union were replaced by a new and mutually supportive harmony. Alongside, Cuba took significant steps to repair its isolation in the Western Hemisphere. Above all, these were the very years when Cuba's policy towards the US became markedly less militant in fact, though not necessarily in rhetoric.

Much has been written on the motivations of the US seeking accommodation with Cuba during these years. Along with graphic descriptions of friendly US postures and overtures towards Cuba spearheaded by the Nixon-Kissinger team, there obtains detailed analysis of the imperatives of such a policy of US rapprochement with Cuba. The trend towards the diplomacy of rapprochement in most analysis is attributed to the futility of the policy of hostility towards Cuba. Above all, analysts have underlined not infrequently that in terms of a strategic threat, Castro's Cuba at best had a "bee-sting" capability and not resources enough to launch an attack on its own.

Be that as it may, none of these scholarly analyses however offer any adequate explanation or insight into understanding Cuba's motivation to seek reciprocal accommodation with the US especially during these years. It
has been pointed out at some length in the monograph that ever since the advent of Fidel Castro, one important plank of the island's foreign policy has been to preserve its revolutionary image of being an avowed opponent of imperialism which often translated into action, meant anti-Yankeeism. However, while adopting a posture of outward hostility towards the US, it was at no point escalated to conveying an open or direct provocation to the US. During the first decade of the revolution, Cuba's relations with the US were largely dictated by the policy overtures of the latter. To that extent, it called for no great effort on the part of the decision makers in Cuba to charter a policy towards the US. In other words, whatever its policy, it was largely reactive.

By 1968, Castro was forced to direct the course of Cuba's role in the world affairs with a view to strengthen support for his regime both domestically and internationally, or at least slow down any possible erosion of support that the passage of years and domestic economic difficulties had brought the island. The exit of "Che" from the Cuban scene and the impossibility of achieving the 10 million tons target of sugar production had placed the island on a critical precipice. If heightened Cold War tensions in the early years of the revolution offered scope for manoeuvrability for Cuba between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, the end of the 1960s witnessing far reaching changes in super power relations offered little leeway for Cuba "to fish" to its advantage in the changing international scene.

While these were the crucial circumstances in which Cuba was compelled to choose an independent course of action, these very circumstances greatly circumscribed such a policy option. Admittedly, the critical economic situation forced Cuba to seek and solicit increasing Soviet assistance. In the process, its policy of promoting and supporting armed struggle in Latin America as a means to maintaining its independence had to be discontinued. Consequently, Castro was left with one foreign instrument less. He in fact, had to abandon his earlier precondition for the restoration of relations between Cuba and the rest of the Latin American countries which included among others, open condemnation by the Latin American countries of the
"crimes" committed against Cuba by "Yankee imperialism'. Instead, he was satisfied if a country in the Western Hemisphere seeking relations with Cuba "behaved independently" of the US.

This turn-about in Castro's policy towards Latin America occurred notwithstanding Castro's conditional support of Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, in which he implicitly demanded that if the Soviets could "send their forces to crush a counter revolution in Czechoslovakia", they should "cease supporting also in Latin America those rightists, reformists, submissive and conciliatory leaders, enemies of the revolutionary army, struggling in opposition to the peoples liberation".

The Soviet response was one of punitive retaliation. It not only suspended the level of the critically needed petroleum deliveries to the island, but also delayed signing the annual trade protocols, all with a view to force Cuba cave in. From the Soviet point of view these economic offensives offered the desired results. So when the "prodigal son" returned, the Soviet Union warmly welcomed him. Beginning in the 1970s Soviet-Cuban economic interaction accelerated. Soviet Union paid a premium for Cuban sugar, as high as three times the world prices in the late 1960s. By 1972 the two signed as many as five trade agreements and also established institutional means for widespread economic collaboration. With the launching of the Cuban and Soviet Union commissions for economic, scientific and technical collaboration in 1970 joint production began in such areas as agricultural machinery and equipment, and management of Cuban satellite communications and fishing. In 1972 Cuba joined the COMECON. Simultaneously, the level and rate of military dependence on Soviet Union also increased. Soviet navy visited Cuba since 1969. Cuban ports were used to give Soviet submarine crew free time on shore, servicing facilities and opportunity to restock general supplies. Increasing Soviet military presence in turn enabled Cuba to reduce the size of its standing armed forces and contributed to a decline in its military budget share of the national income.
Most observers of Cuban foreign relations have described the years between 1968-1976 as one of heightened Soviet-Cuban relations to a point that the latter had become critically dependent on the Soviet Union. In explaining the course of events leading to normalization of relations between Cuba and the US, therefore, they tend to argue that it was more an outcome of US initiatives masterminded by Henry Kissinger. Or at best as some argue that it was largely an outgrowth or a fall-out of super power détente. What is suggested is that for whatever considerations it was the US which sought and solicited the normalization of relations with Cuba. In sum it was totally an American initiative.

The question that such hypotheses not convincingly answer is why did Castro's Cuba respond positively to the unilateral US overtures for normalization at a time when the island country seemed to have regained its foreign policy initiative. For, after all, by the 1970s, Cuba had reordered its relations with the rest of the Latin American countries which helped Cuba redeem its isolationism in the Western Hemisphere. Also, Cuba had managed to refurbish its rather strained relations with the Soviet Union to an extent that Soviet-Cuban relations had reached a high point during these very years. Under these rather encouraging trends why should or as it did, Cuba respond favourably to the friendly overtures of US? Having overcome hemispheric isolationism and having gained the confidence of Soviet Union all the more why should Fidel Castro have not maintained a posture of cool aloofness towards the US, notwithstanding the latter's friendly gestures? But the record of Cuba's relations with the US during these years, as has been described in the monograph, show not only positive responses to US overtures but initiatives with a view to normalize relations with Washington.

The first initiative on Cuba's part came from Fernando López Muino, the Cuban ambassador in Mexico who in January 1974 stated that Cuba would be willing to hold political talks with the US 'with the single and irrevocable condition' that Washington end its twelve year economic blockade of the island. Subsequently, Castro himself reiterated the same stand on several
occasions. In view of the fact that any talk of US-Cuban rapprochement had hitherto remained stalled because both sides insisted on their respective set of preconditions for negotiations, Cuba's suggestion of a single condition formula for negotiations certainly constituted a major initiative towards normalization of relations with the US.

Interestingly enough, Cuba, during these years, also appeared willing to deemphasize issues that had been hitherto underlined as the outstanding obstacles to rapprochement. Thus by Castro's own admission to Senator George McGovern during the latter's trip to Cuba in 1975, Guantanamo was only "a secondary issue" which could be resolved at a later time. Similarly, US claims for compensation had ceased to be a salient issue in US-Cuban relations. This was made evident by the fact that representatives of some of the expropriated companies themselves visited Cuba in the mid-1970s with a view to assess the market there. Some even made sales to Cuba under special licenses. In fact, with the exception of the precondition of lifting of blockade, all other conditions, though not totally dropped, were assigned a lower priority by the Cuban government both in terms of importance and time.

Indeed, in an effort to be more accommodating, Cuban intransigence over the lifting of the embargo too was subsequently moderated. Talking to the members of the American press who had accompanied Senator McGovern to Cuba, Castro dropped his earlier insistence on a complete lifting of the embargo and stated that pending the complete removal of the embargo, discussions with the US could move ahead if the US would only lift its ban on trade in food and medicine.

Castro, it would appear, was particularly hopeful of reaching an accommodation with the US under President Ford. In sharp contrast to his vitriolic attacks on Nixon, Castro took a rather benign view of Ford. Encouraged by the fact that Ford, unlike Nixon, had no personal links with Cuban counter-revolutionaries, Castro saw the former "with a certain hope in the sense that he may, after all, adopt a different policy towards Cuba". Castro also singled out Henry Kissinger for some praiseworthy comments. In
showering such rich tributes on the American leadership, Castro was perhaps hinting that he was inclined to do business with them.

Not all Cuban overtures, however, were at a rhetorical level. The early 1970s also saw Cuba taking a few positive steps at the diplomatic level. The most significant of these undoubtedly were Cuban initiatives to reach an anti-hijacking accord with the US. Specifically, an anti-hijacking law promulgated by the Cuban government in September 1969, which provided for the return of hijackers to their countries of origin through bilateral agreements, formed the basis of a five year anti-hijacking accord signed between Cuba and the US in February 1973. The initiative to implement the accord, too, came from Cuba when it not only returned hijackers to the US but also a ransom of $2 million--described as "a positive step and a sign of good will" towards the US.

In addition, departing from the policy of the 1960s, Castro during the mid-1970s issued a series of invitations to a host of US journalists as well as politicians, academicians and businessmen to visit Cuba. Highly accessible and cordial to each one of them, he even discussed the possibilities of US-Cuban rapprochement with a number of them as also used these occasions to make important "gestures of good will" towards the US. For instance, in deference to American concern for human rights in Cuba, especially the plight of political prisoners, Castro allowed two visiting US Congressmen, Senators Clairbone Pell and Jacob Javits in October 1974 to visit a prison camp and even agreed to release four Americans held prisoners in Havana.

During these visits, the Cuban government also evinced a keen interest in bilateral exchanges with the US in sports, cultural and scientific activities. More importantly, the Cuban government signalled its eagerness to interact with the US in the economic field. The Cuban leadership spoke frequently of the need for "vanguard" technology which was "not yet available in the socialist camp" and for which Cuba needed to restore its economic relations with the US. In fact, invitations were extended to select US businessmen--such as Cyrus Eaton and Edward Lamb to visit Cuba to study the prospects of US-Cuban trade. Most significant in this regard was the invitation to Martin
Klingenberg, a Washington attorney who had been instrumental in the establishment of US trade relations with China.

Lest any of these overtures be interpreted as Cuban capitulation to the US, Castro periodically continued to lash out at the US during these years. Thus even while moves were afoot to reach an anti-hijacking accord with the US, Castro in April 1971 refuting the possibility of Cuba making any "first move" towards the US categorically stated that "such a gesture...will never be made." Similarly, Ambassador López Muino’s statement signifying a softening of Cuban stance towards the US was immediately followed by a "clarifying note" from the Cuban foreign ministry which was much harsher in tone. These outbursts, of course, underscored a major principle of Cuban foreign policy: defiance of the US. In fact, defiance of the US at a rhetorical level during these years seemed to represent a way for Cuba to maximize its leverage within the framework of détente and coexistence, even to take advantage of the Soviet détente efforts towards the US. Besides, such a strategy also offered Cuba the opportunity to counter the loss of its leverage, previously generated through the "export of revolution". Aware that his integrity as a leader and that of the revolution he symbolized, depended on sustaining Cuba’s image as an opponent of imperialism, Castro maintained a rhetorical offensive against the US even while cautiously exploring possibilities for rapprochement.

That Cuba was as much inclined to normalize its relations with the US as the latter was towards the island country cannot be gainsaid. What is more, such a move on the part of Cuba was almost simultaneous to its seeking accommodation with the Soviet Union also cannot be gainsaid. What then was the logic or the rationale in the seemingly contrary/contradictory trends in Cuba’s foreign policy postures during the period under consideration, namely 1968-1976?

Those who argue that the rapprochement between Cuba and the US during this period was a fall out of super power détente tend to underplay or even ignore these conflicting trends. To them, as has been stated before, Cuban rapprochement with the US was largely a consequence of the latter's
initiative leaving little or no option to Cuba. To them, an island country such as Cuba—small, weak and historically dependent—had and will have but little latitude in respect of its foreign policy options. Therefore, in times of heightened Cold War confrontation between power adversaries, countries such as Cuba, placed in a bind, have to choose one or the other adversary as the guarantor of whatever its vital national interest, and in times of détente or coexistence between such adversaries, perforce normalize relations with both.

This may well be so. But Cuba’s record in a period of heightened Cold War tensions since its revolution during most part of the decade of 1960, however, suggests that it did not choose one or the other adversary wholly. In fact, during the years of 1960-1968 Cuba maintained a posture independent of both super powers and attempted to create and cultivate a constituency of its own in the Third World, be it through the Tricontinental or the Non-aligned movement. It did opt for an accommodation with the Soviet Union which neither during that period nor subsequently meant severing totally its links with the West. In other words, during the period of comparable, indeed, critical economic and military dependence in its nascent stage of the revolution, Cuba pursued a policy independent of its alliance with the Soviet Union or its apparent hostility towards the United States.

What is suggested here is that the very inherent weakness of Cuba in terms of its size, location and resources endowed upon it a surprising amount of leverage in its relationship with both super powers and greatly facilitated some manoeuvrability between them in a period of Cold War confrontation. Precisely for these considerations therefore, Cuba had to normalize relations with one of the super powers, in this instance, with the US while seeking accommodation with the Soviet Union at a juncture when the two power adversaries themselves were consummating a détente.

This, however, leaves one question begging or unanswered, i.e., does it mean that Cuba’s rapprochement with the US was largely on account of super power détente? Reformulated differently, does it suggest that Cuba would not
have sought rapprochement with the US but for super power détente? In the judgement of the present writer the answer to the question is in the negative. Irrespective of the super power détente, simultaneously with Cuba's inclination and initiative towards accommodation with the Soviet Union it would have sought rapprochement with the US. Cuba's overtures, as the analysis shows, in terms of normalization of relations with the US predate super power détente. In fact, the period of 1968-1976, as has been stated earlier, marks a new beginning in respect of Cuba's international relations and especially its relationship with the two super powers. The earlier years commencing from the consummation of the revolution till 1968 was a period when Cuba distanced itself from the US more as a consequence of Washington's hostile postures and policies. Also, during the same period, it adopted a circumspect policy of opening up its relations with the Soviet Union less by its own choice than thanks to the friendly overtures of Moscow. The upshot of such a policy orientation over the years together with certain obvious domestic circumstances--important amongst which is the irreparably deteriorating economic situation--led the Cuban policy makers realize before long the futility of such a course of action. Once it became obvious that such a policy orientation in the end had led Cuba to veer too closely to the Soviet Union, to a point of becoming a surrogate and a satellite of the latter, abridging admittedly its leverage and independence, Cuba's leadership obviously sought recourse to an apparent normalization with the US, an exercise intended to avoid abject dependency. After all, one of the major planks of the Cuban revolution was to correct the island's historic dependency distortion or status. Once therefore, when it became clear that seeking socialist options had its deleterious implications of becoming perforce a surrogate of the Soviet Union, the choice then became one of dependency management. Seen in this perspective, it is possible to argue that Cuba's rapprochement with the US had less to do with super power détente. At best the super power détente enabled Cuba to camouflage its new policy orientation. It is equally possible to argue that Cuba's seeking normalization of relations with the US was only inevitable, perhaps, even imperative once the island was forced into the Soviet orbit, a predicament which became beyond the control of Cuba. Without such a policy initiative of seeking
rapprochement with the US it would not have been possible for Cuba to steer an independent course of action internationally, be it in Africa in the mid-1970s or be it in Central America in the mid-1980s.