



[click for info](#)

ABOUT FPA EVENTS BOOKSTORE GLOBAL FORUMS JOB BOARD NEWS RESOURCE LIBRARY

CUBA

FOREIGN
POLICY
ASSOCIATION
1948

GREAT DECISIONS

EDUCATORS CORNER

STUDENTS CORNER

GO IN YOUR COMMUNITY

FREQUENTLY ASKED
QUESTIONS

GUIDES

Explore a Topic
with our guides

Great Decisions 2000

Africa
Humanitarian Aid
Middle East
Russia
Southeast Asia
The European Union
US Role in the World

More Topics

China and Taiwan
Conflict Resolution
Cuba
IMF & World Bank
Int'l Elections
Korea
Mexico
NATO
Terrorism
United Nations

In Focus

Cuba 2000: A Watershed Year in Relations With the U.S.

After years of relative stability in the Cold War between the United States and Cuba, the year 2000 brought a rash of significant activity, the highest-profile since the massive 1994 influx of *balseros* (rafters) fleeing to Florida and the 1996 downing of a small plane flown into Cuban airspace by four members of a Miami exile group, followed by the passage of the "Helms-Burton Act" aimed at penalizing non-American companies or countries that do business with Cuba.

The roots of this most recent whirlwind can be considered, as most media-attuned Americans are aware, the events surrounding Thanksgiving 1999 when five-year-old *balsero* shipwreck survivor Elián González was brought ashore only to become the center of a bitter power struggle between his Miami relatives—backed by many in the Cuban-American exile community and right-of-center American politicians—and his father, backed by the Cuban government and public opinion. Coming in the wake of the highly publicized visit of Pope John Paul II to Havana in 1998, by the time the tug of war had ended with Elián's return to Havana on Independence Day weekend 2000, the American public had become far more sensitized to the issues in Cuban-American relations and issues than at any time in years -- possibly in generations. With particular regard to *l'affaire* Elián, a majority came to believe that the most hardline anti-Castro Miami Cubans and pressure groups such as the Cuban American National Foundation were not just in the wrong but rabidly unreasonable in their machinations to keep a motherless child from his father merely to score political points against the régime of Fidel Castro. Despite the fact that the Cuban-American community in South Florida is far from monolithic these days, its public image in the rest of the United States quickly turned from righteous victims to amoral fanatics.

Within Cuba itself, the past half-dozen years have seen the growing inequalities of a largely dollarized economy contribute to increasing cynicism about, *La Revolución*. In its 41st year, the contretemps was an almost suspiciously well-timed godsend for Castro's regime; virtually the entire populace felt strongly that the youngster should be returned to his father, and an aging Castro's transformation of him into an obsessive national *cause célèbre* yielded a shot in the arm for the *commandante*'s popular support. As the crisis dragged on for months, however, people wearied of being dragooned into incessant pro-Elián demonstrations; the total and unobvious monopolization of nightly television programming (one of the only forms of entertainment in much of the country); and increased fuel shortages and electrical blackouts widely attributed to diversion of resources to the "Return Our Child"

Global Forums

Click to join a discussion on [Cuba](#)

Upcoming Events

[Reconnecting America and the United Nations](#)
January 10, 2001

[Can We Learn to Live Together? \(NY\)](#)
January 30, 2001

[\[more events \]](#)

Take Action!

Connect to Congress, email your opinion, track legislation and get a Guide to the Hill. [click here](#)

Join FPA

Become a member of the Foreign Policy Association!. [click here](#)

FPA Newsletters

Sign up for one or more of these free or line newsletters from FPA:
Global Views, FPA Today, Great Decisions Online, Global Jobs, Foreign Policy Alert

SUBSCRIBE

Site Search

Enter Keyword:

GO

[Advanced Search](#)