

# History of fidel castros leadership styles



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This paper will discuss a brief history of Fidel Castro, his leadership styles, characteristics, and the determinants that occurred during his rise to prominence. It provides his sources of power, and further examines his effectiveness or non effectiveness as a leader. Research on Fidel Castro and his leadership was conducted through online sources which include three academic.

### **Importance:**

What relationship could be found between the Fidel Castro, the followers, and the situation? What were his perceived positive and negative qualities? What outstanding traits could be detected within Fidel Castro?

### **About Fidel Castro**

Fidel Alejandro (Ruz) Castro was born in Biran Cuba on August 13th 1926 to Angel Castro and Lina Ruz in the Eastern Province of Cuba. Fidel was the third child of his siblings by father, Angel Castro. Although he was born out of wedlock, he was privileged to upper-middle class living environments. He was educated in a private boarding school, attended college and later went on to Harvard Law School. At Harvard, he became engrossed in the political climate in Cuba especially as it relates to the nationalism, anti-imperialism and socialism. (Castro's Biography, 2010)

Castro was married to Mirta Diaz Balart. They had one son whose name was Fidelito which meant " little Fidel". Her family was wealthy and Fidel Castro capitalized on this opportunity and as a result was exposed to a much wealthier lifestyle and at the same time, was able to network with key political associations. The marriage ended after six years because of a lack

of financial support for his family. Mirta was his second wife. (Castro's Biography, 2010)

Castro's enthusiasm for reform and social justice led him to the Dominican Republic in an attempt to help overthrow Mr. Rafael Trujillo. Although this attempt was not successful, this did not deter him from the fight for social justice. He was part of an anti communist party that was formed with the aim of exposing government corruption, developing strategies to gain economic independence and implement social reform in Cuba.

Although his attempts to overthrow the leader at the time, General Fulgencio Bartista failed, he never gave up. He was sentenced to jail for those attempted coups but continued the fight to become Cuba's leader, in an effort to make the changes he was hoping to fulfill. This long struggle was finally realized on January 1st, 1959 when he assumed the leadership of the government. He appointed his brother, Raul Castro the duties of commander of the armed forces on February 15th 1959.

## **Leader type and history**

" Charismatic leaders are exceptionally self-confident, are strongly motivated to attain and assert influence, and have strong conviction in the moral correctness of their beliefs" (House & Aditya, p. 416). Fidel Castro is a charismatic and transformational leader. Nahavandi states that transformational leadership includes three factors, of the three we identified these to define Castro; charisma and intellectually simulated that in itself helped Castro achieve the drastic change he sort for Cuba. That is the social and political reform he aimed to achieve as a leader.

## **Were there any cultural characteristics that helped him in leadership? Would he be an effective leader elsewhere?**

The country's culture played an important role in the behavior of Fidel Castro. His personality and character evolved as he joined groups and eventually they developed their own culture. Cultural characteristics affect who we consider an effective leader.

In Trompenaars' study of cross cultural organizational culture, Castro fits in the family category which states that they are power oriented, caring leader; he cared deeply for the poor so much that he took forceful from the rich to give to the poor of his beloved Cuba. He also was focused on building relationships but these relationships should not be outweighed by the outside source. We saw he formed partnership with a number of counterparts such Che Guevara of Mexico, the Soviet Union, Grenada and Africa. (Castro's Biography, 2010 and Navandi 2009)

## **Does he reflect any of the concepts of early theories of leadership?**

Castro demonstrated leadership traits very early in his childhood. Trait theory indicates that leaders are born not made. His qualities as a leader further reiterated this point. Castro had a natural ability to influence his followers. He understood the people of Cuba especially the poor. This had a positive impact on the people of Cuba especially knowing that he was not born into a poor family and was therefore for the poor.

As stated in the text "Contingency Era theory leadership view is that personality style, behavior of effective leaders depends on the situation in which there are placed" (Nahavandi 2009).

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This was evident when Castro took the opportunity to be a liberator to the people in the time when they were very dissatisfied with the leadership style of the Bartista government. He saw an opportunity to gain trust and followers, and as the person he was took full advantage of the situation. His approach was successful. hence the reason for the massive followers.

(Castro's Biography, 2010)

Castro, because of his characteristics was deemed to become a leader, regardless of the context. Research shows that Castro demonstrated an A2 decision style in the normative decision making model. Nahavandi states that A2 leaders seek specific information however they make the decisions alone.

## **What are the traits and characteristics that make him a leader?**

As with all leaders he had both positive and negative qualities. In researching, it was noted that the positive qualities at his early stage as Cuban leader outweighed the negatives. His motivation helped the lower class Cubans raise their level of self esteem. He was able to manage the country well, despite the restrictions placed from outside sources namely the United States. As a result, he remained true to his beliefs and values. Most of all he was a challenger; he inspired his followers, took on great responsibilities and showed courage in the face of danger. In an effort to accomplish his goals and objectives, he took the lead in all the coups that were attempted. He never left his followers to enter the battles of war alone.

On the other hand, he was a stubborn leader who led with an iron fist. At times, he was believed to be over confident and it was mainly because of his educational background and experience. (Nahavandi 2009)

He was an authoritarian leader and as such he was not willing to accept change. This was evident during the early part of his leadership. He was indeed coercive; he displayed this behavior when his subordinates were punished for not following his orders.

In our research, we identified Castro as a type A leader and the Nahavandi states that the characteristics and behavior that accompany these types of leaders are their need to be in control. Throughout the entire research there were reports that stated Fidel Castro's need to gain control of Cuba and to be its leader. His demonstration of poor delegation, like to work alone and hard working are all characteristics which he possess and are characteristics of Type A leaders. (Nahavandi 2009)

Mr. Castro is relatively medium Machiavellian because of his effectiveness as a leader and has had a history of easily manipulating his followers in an effort to achieving his goals and objectives; that was to change Cuba's political climate, taking care of the needs of the poor and win support through his message and passion for his people. Careful analysis shows that based on the Myer Briggs Type indicator where he was a little of all the categories. For example, as the sensation thinker he would establish rules and regulations, jump to action too quickly at times and push others to get to the point. The others are not suited to his character. As a sensational feeler, the most applicable is the reluctance to accept change. In the intuitive

thinker and feeler categories, these are the two that would apply to Fidel Castro, architect of progress and ideas and good communicator. (Nahavandi 2009)

## **Leadership Style of Fidel Castro**

Based on our research, Fidel Castro has displayed leadership styles of being both a charismatic and transformational leader. He was more a dictator-charismatic leader. He was able to gather his followers through his charisma as opposed to gathering them through his external power of authority. Fidel was always concerned about the well-being of his people, especially the less fortunate ones. Thus he took away wealth and property from the more fortunate Cubans and distributed to the less fortunate. He had a vision for the people of Cuba and thus was able to use his vision through the people to expand his power.

One of his visions was to ensure that the less fortunate had their essential needs. In addition, he promised the people of Cuba free education in which he delivered. By doing this he believed that he was being very sensitive to the needs of his people. Although Fidel was a charismatic leader, he frequently displayed a dictatorship leadership style. The people of Cuba were not allowed freedom of speech. Under his ruling the people of Cuba were not allowed to leave Cuba for a vacation elsewhere. People who did not support his party were reprimanded and not given equal opportunities. Some people of Cuba were even afraid to utter the name, Fidel Castro. Instead they would make a 'beard pulling sign' in order to make someone know they were referring to him. Cubans were also denied access to certain beaches and hotels. This had caused insults to the people of Cuba. (Halliday, 2008).

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Another element of leadership style displayed by Fidel Castro, was his ability to be a transformational leader in that he had the ability to influence his followers ethics, values and standards. He also showed deep emotions towards his followers. He would also articulate the problems within the system and would endeavor to solve those problems. He also empowered his followers by use of his own strengths and belief. (Marques, 2010)

### **Leadership perspectives of non-profits**

Leaders of non-profit organizations are associated with having a social mission which include saving the environment, feeding the home and housing the homeless. These leaders also reflect and support ideological goals. Leaders of non-profit organizations also enjoy his/her work and hence they are motivated to perform in the best interest of the organization.

Fidel Castro displayed leadership traits very early in his childhood days by showing his determination and self- confidence. This came about during his early childhood days when his friends belonging to the upper class in society did not include him in their many social activities. (Marques, 2010).

His leadership reflected the viewpoint from non-profits. Cuba has been a communist country from since 1950, when Fidel Castro took over the government in a rebellion. The concept of communism deals with equality for all and the distribution of wealth. Fidel believed in the equality and he saw the need to meet the needs of those who were less fortunate and those who needed to have the basic needs for survival. Hence the reason why Fidel implemented free health care systems for all Cubans and foreigners. Today, Cuba is known for performing many major surgeries. Children are given free



education in primary and secondary level. There is one teacher to every ten Cuban students. Free tertiary education is also given. In terms of infrastructure, the roads in Cuba are adequate, although there are inadequate public transport systems in place. (The First Post, 2010).

Communism and Socialism go hand in hand. Cuba is also termed as a socialist country. Under the socialist movement, the Cuban government owns the state and all its industries. The socialist movement allows Cubans to have free access to goods and services. The special needs of the oppressed are addressed under this system. In 1959, Fidel saw the need to socialize the economy because of the economic and political stronghold the United States of America had on Cuba. Fidel believed that the Cuba needed to trade in order to live and under the socialist system this was possible. By doing so, the standard of living was raised by the people of Cuba. The sectors in pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, technically and highly educated workforce, had set apart Cuba from the rest of the third world countries. These positives all occurred under the leadership of Fidel Castro. (Durand, 2003).

### **The absence of participative management style**

Fidel Castro was known for his authoritative leadership style and therefore did not allow for participative management styles. He was very authoritative and he dictated all the policies and procedures. He directed and controlled all activities without the inclusion of his members of the government or the people of Cuba on a whole. The people of Cuba were not free to leave the country as they pleased. For example, going on a vacation to another

country was not allowed. Cubans can travel only if the government authorizes them to do so.

He did not include his ministers in his decision making process. He would make the decisions and then advise them. They were not allowed to dispute his decisions. Fidel did not share information with his colleagues. Therefore it was difficult for his Ministers to exhibit their skills and talents. His ministers were not allowed to determine work schedules for the development of Cuba, neither were they given enough opportunities to make decisions regarding the budget for the country. Fidel and his brother Raul made many of those decisions. This resulted in his ministers and followers were not motivated and they felt that they were not given the opportunity to be part of many of the decisions he made. Because of his leadership style, creativity and innovation were two crucial elements his ministers were lacking. The only time Fidel delegated his powers, was when he got sick and was unable to rule Cuba any longer. He delegated his power to his younger brother, Raul Castro. Raul was given the leadership by Fidel Castro. The people of Cuba were not given the opportunity to vote for a leader. In this instance we can conclude that nepotism was a factor in his decision making. (The First post, 2010).

Participative management is very important in organizations because leaders and managers should seek to make the most of its followers. Their followers should be given the opportunity be part of the decision making process. By doing so, new ideas can be developed and implemented for the betterment of the organization. (Author unknown, 2010).

## **Leader of change?**

Fidel Castro could not be considered a leader of change because he believed that his way is the right way and he believed in the communism concept. He wanted power over the entire Cuban nation and did not want any intrusion from the outside forces, especially the United States of America. He believed in what he stood for and was very rigid in his decision making process. His autocratic and dictatorship styles were strong indicators that Fidel did not want change in his way of thinking and his decision making process.

Yes he wanted change in terms on wealth and property being evenly distributed throughout the country. When Fidel came into power, rent was cut by fifty percent (50%) for people who received low wages. He nationalized the telephone companies and the rates were cut in order that civilians were able to pay their utility bill. Casinos and nightclubs were closed down by Fidel because he saw those two institutions as corruption for the country. A high percentage of the Cuban population was illiterate. Many persons in rural areas could not read or write. Since Fidel took office, free education was given to all the people of Cuba. In terms of the health systems, new training schools were built for doctors. Infant mortality rate fell when he came into power. However, he did not want change in terms of another political party ruling Cuba. Fidel was of the opinion that his leadership style was best suited for the people of Cuba. He wanted change in terms of corruption. (Simkin, 2010).

Fidel was adamant about remaining in power without any interference from outside sources and he strongly believed that his country should be ruled the way in which he ruled. Because of his strong will and influence on many of

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his followers, he did not want to be removed from power, because he believed that he was the best ruler for Cuba. Therefore, he did not want any changes to come about regarding his ruling or leadership style. He refused to hold free elections for the people of Cuba because he did not want change. (Simkin, 2010)

## **How did Fidel Castro develop Raul to be a leader**

Fidel Castro relinquished his power in February 2008, to his brother Raul Castro and as stated earlier in this paper, the people of Cuba were not given an opportunity to vote. His brother Raul was placed in his position. Many of the people of Cuba believe that Raul has many character traits as his brother Fidel, hence the reason why Fidel handed over power to him. It is believed that Fidel and Raul have a very close relationship and that Raul will follow in his footsteps.

During Fidel's rule, Raul was the other person he would consult with whenever he would need to make a decision. Raul, like his brother Fidel is concerned about the distribution of food to individuals who face constant problems with shortages. This was also one of the factors that Fidel fought for his people. Raul under Fidel's leadership believed in the same. Raul believed in the same ideologies as his brother Fidel. He also believed that Cuba should remain a communist state, because communism would allow for the people of Cuba to have equal rights. While Raul may aim to make minor changes in Cuba, one of the factors that would remain is the animosity between Cuba and the United States of America. It can be concluded that Raul being trained as leader under Fidel, this issue may take a very long time to resolve, if it will be resolved at all. While Fidel was in power, his

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brother Raul was laying the ground work for the rebuilding of Cuba's economy. Fidel was able to suggest ideas to his brother Raul to be successful in this venture. (Roig-Franzia, 2008).

## **Conclusion**

Fidel Castro used his strategic insight to work his way into ruling Cuba, when people were dissatisfied with the ruling of Batista. Today Fidel is still not liked by many Cubans because the people do not live in a democratic society. They are not free to live the lives like many other civilians in other parts of the world. Because of his resilience he did not allow the viewpoints of others which is one of the main reasons many Cubans fled the country. His overconfidence revealed superiority in knowledge and his stubborn practices caused him to rule with an iron fist.

The paper also outlined how effective he was as a leader in terms of getting his followers to comply with his decisions and the cultural characteristics were also looked at, and how it helped him in his leadership style. The concepts of early theories were also outlined and in addition the sources of power and how he used his power to influence his followers.

Fidel showed the transformational leader he was in terms of influencing his followers and paying attention to their ethics, long term goals and standard. Despite his autocratic ruling, he was a hard worker and he demonstrated it. He also demonstrated courage in that he took risks and knowing that his way may fail. Whenever he failed, he got right back up and tried again. In terms of communication, Fidel did little communication with his subordinates. He made his decisions and executed them whether or not his followers were

pleased with them. He was determined, and had the willpower to rule Cuba and thus he fought the outsiders who tried to take over from his ruling. He was never discouraged by setbacks. He saw setbacks as part of the learning process.

Fidel had both positive and negative traits as a leader. This was exemplified by his way of ruling Cuba. He is a well known politician, and will be remembered by the people of Cuba and the world on a whole. He will be remembered for his autocratic and dictatorship leadership styles.

He will also be remembered for helping the less fortunate people of Cuba. He was an active member of the guerilla movement. This was a stepping stone to becoming political leader of his party and ruler of Cuba. Today, many believe that his brother Raul will rule Cuba the same way his brother did. Since Raul took over in 2008, there have not been many changes in the leadership style. Raul has inherited his brother's leadership qualities.

(Marques, 2010)

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