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# Cuba After Fidel: Economic Reform, Political Liberalization and Foreign Policy (2006–2014)

## Abstract

This dissertation discussed Cuba's processes of economic reform and political liberalization, and their impact on Cuba's foreign policy's adaptation to the post-Cold War. The first part of the dissertation explains economic reform and political liberalization from the perspective of partial reform equilibrium as a result of the Cuban Communist Party's focus on domestic stability and international legitimacy. The second part of the dissertation focused on Cuba's foreign policy dynamics associated to the domestic reform, the changes in the international system after the end of the Cold War and the asymmetric conflict between Cuba and the United States.

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

by  
Arturo Lopez-Levy  
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Advisor: Aaron Schneider

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Author: Arturo Lopez-Levy  
Title: Cuba after Fidel: Economic Reforms, Political Liberalization and Foreign Policy (2006-2014)  
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### **Abstract**

This dissertation discussed Cuba's processes of economic reform and political liberalization, and their impact on Cuba's foreign policy's adaptation to the post-Cold War. The first part of the dissertation explains economic reform and political liberalization from the perspective of partial reform equilibrium as a result of the Cuban Communist Party's focus on domestic stability and international legitimacy. The second part of the dissertation focused on Cuba's foreign policy dynamics associated to the domestic reform, the changes in the international system after the end of the Cold War and the asymmetric conflict between Cuba and the United States.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

“Ultimately this transfer won’t work” – Thomas Shannon, U.S. undersecretary for Hemispheric Affairs commented about Cuba’s presidential succession in the summer of 2006-

There is no political figure inside of Cuba who matches Fidel Castro... You have to understand that authoritarian regimes are like helicopters. There are single fail point mechanisms. When a rotor comes off a helicopter, it crashes. When a supreme leader, disappears from an authoritarian regime, the authoritarian regime flounders... And I think that’s what we’re seeing at this (Shannon 2006)

Undersecretary Shannon’s words expressed a conviction about post-revolution Cuba that was dominant in Washington at the time when Fidel Castro fell sick. Not only the United States Administration but other governments, even those with a close relation with the island-nation such as Spain under Aznar in Europe, and Mexico under the administration Fox-Castaneda in the Americas subscribed this point of view. The central premise of such vision was that Cuba’s political system was dependent on Fidel Castro’s charisma. According to it, the Cuban Communist Party was a simple addendum to Fidel Castro’s appeal; the ideology of the Cuban revolution and its appeals to nationalism and Leninism, a simple mantle for Castro’s interests; the command economy, one of Fidel’s caprices in his communist zealotry.

On a typical pathology of asymmetric relations, sub-attention within the great power, the United States, characterizes its approach towards the smaller side, Cuba. This

sub-attention was sporadically broken by the personalization of the conflict in the figure of Fidel Castro, a tool that help to simplify and mobilize public opinion about the issue. Rather than a policy towards Cuba, the United States have a policy towards Castro. Since Fidel Castro was- in the dominant view- the system's corner stone, Cuba's regime collapse was a matter of time. Fidel would eventually die, and as "a single fail point mechanism", the post-revolution political order would end.

It is not the first time history proved wrong those who underestimate the Cuban socialist resilience. In addition to the explanations based on Fidel Castro's centrality, different theories about why communist regimes failed in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union served to build consensus about Cuba's regime's pre-ordained replacement by a capitalist market economy and multiparty democracy (Oppenheimer 1992). A system of state socialism with a command economy and a Leninist vanguard party cannot survive- according to this logic- ninety miles off the shores of Florida in the post-Cold War age of globalization.

For reasons attributable to its historic conflict with the United States and insertion in the Cold War, before 1991, Cuba was perceived as wholly dependent on the Communist bloc led by Moscow. The idea was that revolutionary Cuba had survived U.S. hostility just because the Soviet Union has supported the Cuban revolution. After the end of the Soviet Union, when Cuba didn't collapse, the new theory about the dependence on

Castro's charisma took center of the scene. Twenty-five years later and nine years after Fidel Castro's exit from power; it is fair to say that history proved the previously described diagnostics as wrong. After Raul Castro replaced his brother, Fidel at the presidency, the Cuban regime is not only standing but also addressing some of its most important economic and political vulnerabilities.

This research answers the puzzle of why and how the Cuban Communist Party regime adapted to a post-Cold War and post-Fidel Era. How did the regime led by the Cuban Communist party adjust and change its economy, politics and foreign policy to preserve domestic stability and international legitimacy? Rather than discussing the question of post-totalitarian resilience in terms of what did not happen (a liberal democratic transition), I explain what happened: three intertwined processes of economic reform, political liberalization and foreign policy adaptation to globalization. Which were the drivers (independent variables) that explain the outcomes of partial economic reform, political liberalization without democratization and ambivalent integration to the regional and world liberal order? I explain political change (adoption of a mixed two-track (market and command) model, political liberalization and a status quo- friendlier foreign policy) in a context of continuities (preservation of the leading role and domination by the CCP).

**Table 1: Drivers of Reform and Political Outcomes**

Drivers <sup>1</sup> /Outcomes	Status quo	Partial Reform	Comprehensive Change
Unity of Party leadership	High / Discourage political debate within the ranks	Ambiguous/ depending on the specific issue and winning coalition	High/ Either supporting change as a united force or because of its divisions, the party plays a high role.
Integration of market and state tracks in economic model	low	Medium/High	High

---

<sup>1</sup>The list of five drivers and independent variables are listed on a ranking order. Notice that the two drivers directly connected to the international system are 3 and 4. Taking into account Cuba's condition as a small developing country, I don't begin my analysis from the premises of a hierarchy that favor the explanatory role of domestic variables.

Prevalence of a national security logic over economic development in decision making process	High /Reform is more a risk than an opportunity	High/Medium: Reform is an opportunity for growth but also a risk for national security depending of the context and narrative.	Low/ Reform is perceived as an opportunity.
Progress towards normalcy (Acknowledgment for Deference solution) in the Asymmetric conflict with the United States. <sup>2</sup>	Low / vicious cycle/ no homogeneity	Medium/High/ trends to homogeneity in economic reform and political liberalization	Multiple Equilibriums/ Trend to homogeneity but with uncertain outcomes in terms of political order.

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<sup>2</sup>The concept of acknowledgement for deference refers to a compromise in which the United States acknowledges Cuba's sovereignty restraining itself from interfering in Cuba's internal affairs in exchange for Cuba's deference to the U.S. states as a Great Power with a leading role in a World liberal order. The basis for this concept were presented by Brantly Womack in "Politics of Asymmetry" (Womack 2006)

Dominant logic of the State	Political Control of civil society/National Security	Multiple Equilibriums/ Developmental / political control/ predatory	Dichotomist/ Developmental or predatory
Leadership Intergenerational transition	Incompatible	Positive effect	Multiple equilibriums/ depending on specific issue and winning coalition.

The adaptation processes were more clearly stated by Raul Castro's presidency at the VI Congress of the Cuban Communist Party but they were already in motion during the nineties. In 1992, when the Cold War ended, Cuba's political system faced two important crises. First, there was a crisis of Cuba's lack of integration into a globalized world. The demise of its main ideological, economic and political alliance with the Soviet Union and the communist bloc left Cuba vulnerable to U.S. policies of sanctions, reducing the appeal and power of the Cuban party-state. For a small country with an open economy dependent on foreign trade, this was an existential threat to the international



legitimacy and the viability of the Leninist “vanguard” one- party rule. Second, it faced an economic crisis that threaten long-term domestic stability, related to the exhaustion and incapacity of the command economy model to attend in a sustainable manner the minimal needs of the Cuban people in terms of food, transportation, and housing. Cuba’s GDP shrank 30-35 % between 1989 and 1992. The task of the Cuban Communist Party was defined in its IV Congress in 1991 in terms of survival/control with only long term perspectives of development.

By the early 2000, the Cuban government had found important palliatives to its original isolation with a growing alliance with the People’s Republic of China and Venezuela. Domestically, the regime replaced the command economy model with a two tracks hybrid in which the command economy structures coexisted with walled segments of market and private property mechanisms (foreign investment and local small businesses). In support of these new economic structures, the Cuban government opened its economy to remittances from the Cuban overseas community mainly in the United States and tourism from all over the world, mainly Europe and Canada. The opening towards the Cuban American community outbalanced the increasingly hostile U.S. policy codified in the 1992 Cuba Democracy Act (also known as Torricelli law) and the 1996 Helms-Burton law (LIBERTAD Act).

But survival and sustainable development are different challenges. Cuba's new insertion in the global economy became dependent on a political relation with Venezuela. Although the command economy under a national security state helped the government to distribute scarce products, maintain political control and resist U.S. regime change policy, development requires different political stability, market incentives and rule by law-predictability. The two-track economy with the dollar as the hard currency and a growing inequality gap took a toll on the Cuban government's popularity. .

By 2006 when Fidel Castro fell ill the system has not solved the structural challenges associated with the previously mentioned crises. Two new challenges piled up on the ones of economic viability and integration. First, the crisis of leadership associated to the replacement of Fidel Castro's charismatic rule highlighted the need for a more institutional rule and second, an inter-generational transition in the upper echelons of power, still in the hands of octogenarian revolutionary veterans.

In addition there was a crisis of trust. By 2006, the so-called special period (Cuba after 1991) had drained zones of political legitimacy cultivated by the Cuban Communist party at home and abroad with its welfare and development programs sponsored with Soviet support in the 1970's and 1980's. New generations of Cubans had grown up in a country with segmented markets, more inequality and economic crisis. For the younger generation, the crisis (special period) is all the memories about the revolution they have.

More relevant than this is their vision about the future. A growing segment of the Cuban population doubted the capacity of the dominant conceptions, particularly communism, to offer a developmental path and a way out of the crisis.

There is a compounding interrelation between these two new challenges and the previously mentioned unresolved issues of the end of the Cold War. The economic, ideological and political crisis of 2006 faced by the Cuban regime when Fidel Castro couldn't continue as Cuba's president expressed not only the exhaustion of the communist model but also the consequences of almost two decades of inner contradictions in the path of gradual partial reform.

#### **Summary of the dissertation argument:**

The dissertation is a case-study of Cuba as a country in transition from a command economy to a mixed one, from a totalitarian system to a post-totalitarian one, and from a revolutionary foreign policy centered on promoting a communist world order to one focused on constructing a friendly international environment for a post-revolutionary nationalist reform project. The post Cold War resilience of the CCP is discussed in two parts showing how the processes of *partial economic reform, political liberalization and intergenerational leadership succession* have increased the chances for **domestic political stability** while openness and foreign policy adaptation have enhanced international legitimacy in the global and regional order.

In the first half, I discuss the quest for political dynamic stability as a contrasting concept with static stability<sup>3</sup>. The CCP achieved dynamic domestic stability through three processes, each of one is accounted for in each of the first three chapters: 1) partial economic reform and transition from command to mixed economy, 2) political liberalization through institutionalization and social decompression, 3) institutionalization of intra and inter-generational leadership succession mechanism as a response to the end of Fidel Castro's charismatic authority (term and age limits).

In the second half, I explain the pursuit for international legitimacy with a re-balancing of the Cuban Communist regime's foreign policy. The new strategy reinforces Cuban nationalist resistance against U.S. regime change policy by emphasizing the adaptation to the post-Cold War world order. The Cuban narrative is presented in terms of a search for an acknowledgement for deference solution to the asymmetric conflict between the two countries. This second half is also divided in three chapters; the first one discusses changes and continuity in Cuba's foreign policy identity and strategies, the second one explains U.S.-Cuba relations and the last one proposes a triangular structure of Cuba's relations with regional and great powers as balancers to Havana's conflict with the United States.

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<sup>3</sup> The concept of dynamic stability in contrast to static stability refers to the preservation of political order not by blocking necessary changes in Cuba's politics and economy but by channeling them through proper institutions and using a timing and sequence that allow the state power holders to keep control over the process.

The processes of Cuba's domestic reform and foreign policy adaptation are mediated by a national- security rationality (A supreme concern for closing security vulnerabilities to U.S. hostility), central to the CCP view of the world. In this national security rationality, **domestic political stability** and **international legitimacy** are the fundamental antidotes against U.S regime change policy. The political management of partial economic reform and the institutionalization of the one-party rule seek to produce modern arrangements and policies according to the changing structural conditions. The goal of the CCP leadership remains the same: to restrain the liberalizing political impacts of these unavoidable transitions and reduce its vulnerabilities to U.S. policy of regime change.

The rebalancing of foreign policy identities<sup>4</sup> in favor of nationalism seeks to secure a friendly environment for Cuba's reform by constructing cooperative relations

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<sup>4</sup>The concept of Cuba's foreign identities refers to the different dimensions that identify Cuba as a state actor in international society. Cuba is a communist-revolutionary, Latin-American, Caribbean, and third world state. These identities are shaped by the specific character of the Cuban state in domestic politics but also by the interactions between Cuba and other states. Foreign policy identities are expressed in specific foreign policy ideologies and principles. In the case of Cuba the two most important ideologies are communist-revolutionary (centered around the principle of "revolutionary solidarity") and nationalism (centered in the principle of national sovereignty). Specific implementations of foreign policy led to the exercise of other identities such as rival, enemy and friend, or revisionist or status quo state. Constructivist international relations theory does not take foreign policy identities as given and constant. On the contrary they "are endogenous to interaction and thus a dependent variable in process" (Wendt 1999, 336)

with actors within the U.S. and other fundamental players in the regional and global balance of power. Cooperation with global status quo forces such as international capital provides the ground for a new insertion within the current world order. However this rebalancing of functional identities does not mean the abandonment of the internationalist revolutionary impulse<sup>5</sup> but its moderation. Equally important, normalization of relations with the United States does not mean a return to these bilateral ties' past. The solution to asymmetric conflict is not domination or submission but a new compromise in which the United States acknowledges Cuba's sovereignty.

The Cuban regime elites widened the policy frontiers of their system about the role of markets, political institutions, and optimal interaction with the rest of the world but they did it in their own terms. Adaptation was done following internal power dynamics, in response but never determined by outside agendas of regime change by coercion (U.S. approach) or by inducement (Canada and the European Union). The Cuban political establishment adopted a more market friendly attitude, adjusted the CCP dominance to a less vertical relation with civil society and launched a foreign policy more

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<sup>5</sup> The concept of internationalist revolutionary impulse refers to the ideological solidarity of Cuban communists with ideological partners in the world who share their revisionist preference for an alternative, socialist oriented world order. Fred Halliday wrote extensively about the role of the internationalist impulse in the context of revolutionary foreign policies (Halliday 1999).

compatible with the liberal world order, without giving up its core project of a nationalist and Leninist state.

### **Structure and agency**

The dissertation works at the intersection of international politics and comparative politics. In coming to grips with international and domestic factors to explain the survival of Cuba's political regime, I look at structural and agency arguments. Although these camps are not easily delineated there is a reasonable hierarchy in the levels of analysis.

*The most encompassing structural level is the international system* that constrains the options of a national state like Cuba, which is not a great power. Following Alexander Wendt's social theory of international politics, states come to international interactions with elements of a defined identity but after the first encounter state's identity, roles and interests are reproduced or changed (constructed in the terminology of constructivism) socially (Wendt 1999). There is also a hierarchy in the international system. Cuba does not generally play a fundamental role in the creation of the culture of inter-states relations at the global or regional level. In the development divide, Cuba is an underdeveloped country with limited industrialization and reduced competitiveness in the world market. During the Cold War, Cuba was capable to play at times the role of a mid-size power intervening in armed conflicts in Africa, Central America and the Middle East. This was

possible because of a mixture of Fidel Castro's international initiative combined with Soviet backing.

Foreign policy identity is a function of history, geography, and relative capabilities. After the demise of European communism, the Cuban state saw its agency restrained by an adversarial international structure in which its main allies were defeated. Cuba's agency is guided in the international system by a history originated in the 1959 revolution. As result of this historical origin, the ideational paradigms that guide Cuba's foreign policy combine nationalism as the pursuit of national interests and values (first of all the preservation of sovereignty) with a revolutionary internationalist impulse<sup>6</sup>.

Such combination was at times problematic because on the one hand Cuba defended the ordinal principle of state sovereignty while on the other practiced a strategy of active solidarity at times even military support for ideological partners and insurgent groups against other sovereign states. The post-Cold War era was a period of normalization and alignment with the core of international security norms.

*The second structural level is national.* Cuba's political and economic agency at the world level is conditioned by its historic adoption of a command economy and a one-party system after the 1959 revolution. The ideological paradigms of communism and

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<sup>6</sup>For a theory about the balance between national interest and internationalist revolutionary solidarity as part of the discussion about the role of revolution in the international relations see Fred Halliday's "Revolution and World Politics. The Rise and Fall of the Sixth Great Power". (Halliday 1999)



nationalism impose structural policy frontiers to what the Cuban elites might adopt as responses to the challenges they faced domestically and internationally.

Within the national structure of Cuba's political system, the most powerful agent responsible for Cuban political elites' political education and responses to domestic and international challenges is the Cuban Communist Party. And yet, when one searches for actors and trends within Cuba's power structure, the Cuban Communist party-state appears as a political ground in which factions driven by affinities, trajectories and preferences based on functional, generational and regional interests engage in debate and internecine struggle. In terms of factions, I distinguish three functionally organized groups within the party-state: the military establishment of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR), the party apparatus officials gathered around the Organization Department, and the government officials in charge of non-security state functions. These three factions negotiate a compromise that combines their sectarian interests in a hierarchy that prioritize the defense of Cuba's sovereignty versus the U.S. regime change policy.

In principle, first explanations for causality are sought at structural levels. Agency based explanations become more important when responding questions of how something becomes possible and probable. Since structural explanations at the international and macro-level highlight adversarial conditions for Cuba's political regime survival, by

elimination, the continuity of the regime should be explained by: 1) agency variables associated to the Cuban leadership and its adaptation strategies in domestic and international affairs, 2) structural dynamics of secondary importance at the world level but conferring advantages to Cuba in asymmetrical conflicts. 3) Changes in macro-level structures that provide new opportunities for Cuba's survival after the demise of the Communist bloc in 1991.

It is not surprising that regardless of Cuba's leaders' declarations describing the process of reforms as limited to the economic realm, the central task of political liberalization has focused on limiting and managing the political effects of the economic changes. Cuba's politics and economy are a system.

We are dealing with a system when (a) a set of units or elements is interconnected so that changes in some elements or their relations produce changes in other parts of the system, and (b) the entire system exhibits properties and behaviors that are different from those of the parts" (Jervis 1997, 6)

When Cuban Communist leaders change one piece of the system everything else doesn't remain equal. That explains their use of control mechanisms but also the lifting up of prohibitions to decompress the political effects of the economic changes, insulate market mechanisms from the rest of the command economy, institutionalize new forms

of control (gatekeeper state<sup>7</sup>) and assign new roles to their core institutions (The Armed Forces as major manager of economic reform). It also explains the balancing of the ideology of the Cuban revolution more along nationalist developmental lines without abandoning the internationalist socialist impulse.

But the study of systems shows that the direct and immediate effect of a policy is not necessarily the only or the dominant one. Reforms frequently activate mechanisms that led to unintended consequences. Changes in ideas do not translate immediately in changes of policy but create intangible dynamics that remove taboos widening the scope of the frontiers within which policies are proposed and discussed. When Cuba opened to international tourism, trade and investment, the effects of these factors were not limited to the economy. Almost equally important are the impacts of integration to the international economy in cultural, educational and social ties with the rest of the world. Higher interaction between the Cubans in the island and those in the Diaspora are not limited to remittances and travel. These interactions contribute to changes in values, lifestyles, mutual perception, popular culture and last but not least political views.

Furthermore, “unintended effects” of the reform processes can become main effects in virtue of uncertainty, lack of anticipation, or delayed feedback. Illiberal

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<sup>7</sup>For a discussion of the concept of the gatekeeper state in the context of limited reforms see Javier Corrales’ article on the topic (Corrales 2004). The gatekeeper state dominates society by “fragmenting the economy” and “determining which citizens have access to each specific sector”.

reformers might not want to widen the space for political participation but the rising inequality (racial, regional, urban-rural, gender) associated to market oriented reform impose growing tensions between those who receive the benefits (not necessarily the traditional base of the revolution) and weak groups such as migrants from the Eastern provinces in Havana. Some early winners of the reform such as the new private sector are not necessarily co-opted immediately lacking effective channels for interest representation. Cuban economists, bloggers, social scientists and security officials have alerted the authorities about the risk of rising public dissatisfaction combined with pushing aggrieved people to voice their interests only in protests.

### **Why Predictions of Cuban communism's demise were greatly exaggerated**

Several theories about democratic transition, problems of communism and command economies, and realism in international relations theory forecasted the end of the Cuban communist regime based on structural reasons. Here I discuss these theories and its implications for the analysis of the Cuban case.

Realism is the most revered school of international relations theory. It sustains that relative power differentials determine the outcome of political disputes between countries. As Thucydides remembered in the Melian Dialogue: "right as the world goes, is only a question between equals in power, while the strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must" (Thucydides 1972) and "This is the safe rule- to stand up to

one's equals, to behave with deference towards one's superiors, and to treat one's inferiors with moderation" (Thucydides 1972). According to realist logic, facing American hostility, Cuban communism without Soviet Union's support was at the mercy of American diktat.

The theories about how a change in the international system helped or determined the end of communism in Eastern Europe came in different flavors. For some it was the defeat of the Soviet empire in its economic and military competition against the West (Matlock 1995). For others it was a matter of "democratic convergence" at the regional level with the European Union playing a fundamental incentive (Whitehead 2001). There are references to the diffusion effect of democratization in other parts of Eastern Europe, the positive evaluation of democracy in the Catholic thought (Weigel 1992, 67-74) and the democratic subversion of hegemony provoked by Gorbachev's perestroika and new thinking (Matlock 1995). Other authors highlight the role of human rights norms entrepreneurs, foreign policy democracy promotion programs (Carothers 2004) or international agreements such as the Helsinki Conference of European security and cooperation (Huntington 1991, 85-100). Linz and Stepan pointed the importance of *Zeitgeist*, "the spirit of the times", "when democratic ideologies have no powerful contenders" (Linz and Alfred 1996, 74-76).

All the effects described in these theories of democratization and collapse of communist regimes as caused by international change applied to Cuba: the substantive loss in military, energy and food security associated to the loss of Soviet support, the diffusion effects of the changes in the whole communist bloc community transported to Cuba by publications and the presence in many of these countries of large communities of Cuban workers and students, the pressures from Gorbachev's perestroika and new thinking, the democratization emulation effects arisen from the transitions in Latin America, and the democracy promotion programs at higher levels than those used against many of the countries in Eastern Europe (The United States had a radio and TV channel, radio-TV Marti just for Cuba, and had spent as average more than 10 million dollars every year in democracy promotion programs.). Finally sanctions with the pretext of promoting democracy and regime change have been a central tool in the American arsenal against the Cuban regime.

The fact that Cuba didn't collapse in the presence of these factors does not disprove the validity of these theories, it simply warn against a deterministic reading of them and call for an in-depth study of the Cuban case searching for omitted variables. Paradoxically some arguments about Cuban non-transition emphasize the role of the international factors, particularly the U.S. policy of embargo as feeding the Cuban narrative of nationalist resistance against imperial imposition and exiles' revenge (Dominguez Spring 1993). Cuba is located not together with Eastern Europe but with

East Asian communist countries in which communist parties were identified with nationalist causes.

There are other three main theories that explain communism collapse in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union based on domestic dynamics. The first one of these theories is modernization. Since the publication by Seymour Martin Lipset of its seminal article in 1959 (Lipset 1959), many political scientists have subscribed the view that social and economic conditions such as industrialization, urbanization, and higher levels of education create a platform that make representative democracy probable. According to this view a sustained period of market oriented economic growth is the ferment for social values such as trust, pluralism and tolerance from which democratic norms emerged.

The Cuban case is a puzzle for the modernization theory point of view because many of the social and economic conditions for democracy of Lipset's theory are present. Cuba has social standards in urbanization, health, and education that already crossed modernization thresholds indicated by scholars as entering a zone of increasing challenges to non-democratic structures in other countries<sup>8</sup>. Today, only 21 % of the Cuban population is employed in agriculture representing 5 % of GDP (2012). Cuba has the highest levels of literacy in Latin America with an 80 % of gross enrollment in

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<sup>8</sup>Minxin Pei (Pei 1994) argued that China is entering into a zone of challenges to authoritarian structures due to the growth of GDP, education, urbanization and social mobility. He argued that the Soviet Union was forced to democratize after reaching this socioeconomic modernization.

tertiary education and 90% in secondary education. ECLAC estimates Cuba's GDP per capita (in current U.S. dollars) as 6,288. Health indicators are typical of a developed country: life expectancy for women is 80 years and 76 for men with low birth rates (1.7 per couple).

Several scholars such as Carmelo Mesa-Lago and Jorge Perez-Lopez had disputed the validity of the data of the Human development index for Cuba. The main target of their questions is the GDP per capita. *Curiously their suggested adjustment for GDP per capita (3500-5500\$) would make Cuba's probability for a democratic transition higher not lower in the past two decades according to the studies of Limongi and Przeworski:*

If the theory that democracy emerges as a result of economic development is true, transitions to democracy would be more likely when authoritarian regimes reach higher levels of development. In fact, transitions are increasingly likely as per capita income of dictatorships rises but only until it reaches a level of about \$6,000. Above that, dictatorships become more stable as countries become more affluent. Dictatorships survive, or at least succeed one another, 12 almost invariably in the very poor countries, those under \$1,000. They are somewhat less stable in countries with incomes between \$1,001 and \$4,000 and even less so above \$4,000. But if they reach the level of \$6,000, transitions to democracy become less likely. As the lower panel of Table 1 (PAD column 4) shows, the probability of any dictatorship dying during any year is 0.0206; for those dictatorships with incomes over \$1,000, this probability is 0.0294, over \$5,000 it is 0.0641, over \$6,000 it is 0.0484, over \$7,000 it is 0.0333. Huntington, it seems, was correct with regard to dictatorships: they exhibit a "bell shaped pattern of instability. (Przeworski and Limongi 1997)

But the absence of liberal democratization in Cuba does not disprove modernization theory. The Cuban Communist party has been capable in significant



measure to mitigate and control the liberalizing effects of social and educational development before 1991 and the market oriented steps of its economic reform. It is difficult to identify the existence of a coherent and autonomous middle class (Lipset 1959) receptive to an agenda of political contestation. There is no industrialist class committed to the organization of an independent economic society (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006) facing the challenge of independently organized labor. The Cuban revolution ended the power of the landlord classes but installed in its place the power of the communist party.

Even after the economic reform process took traction, Cuba lacks three of the essential components modernization theory identified as sources of democratic demands: a entrepreneurial *organized* elite, a *widespread* middle class and an *autonomously organized* labor movement.

Richard Feinberg has identified a set of emerging private entrepreneurs and middle classes:

Cuban society has become increasingly heterogeneous and complex. Just as analysts have recently discerned a large and growing “middle class” in Latin America and other developing regions, it is now possible to identify emerging middle classes in Cuba. These middle classes overlap with the private sector, but as in other societies also include many public-sector employees-managers, professionals, skilled technicians-that fit the various definitions of middle class.... For example, majorities of Cubans boast characteristics typically ascribed to the middle class: high educational attainment, marked female participation in the labor force and low fertility rates, and the security of home ownership and social

security enrollment (but not the possession of many household consumer items) (Feinberg 2013, 3).

But the existence of entrepreneurs and middle classes is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the translation of social and economic modernization in a political democratization trend. Bueno de Mezquita and Downs has explained the importance of “strategic coordination” and how non democratic governments have become increasingly skilful in restraining “coordination goods, those public goods that critically affect the ability of political opponents to coordinate, but that have relatively little impact in economic growth” (Bueno de Mezquita and Downs Sept-Oct, 2005).

The experience of the Cuban economic reforms shows a clear pattern in which coordination among potential opponents of the government has been strategically blocked. That is why any political discussion of the post 2006 changes in Cuba is incomplete without the study of the agency deployed by the Cuban government in the management of the processes of economic reform and political institutionalization with the central purpose of insulating and mitigating their liberalizing effects. Rather than disproving modernization arguments, the research show how the communist party channeled political institutionalization, expansion of market structures, the social decompression associated to increasing civil rights of religion and travel. Political liberalization worked as an alternative path to deter or slowdown of a potential democratization process. An essential part of this strategy is the role of the Organization

Department of the Communist Party institutionalizing collective leadership and cohesive elites' renewal across the party-state.

One other relevant social theory to discuss not the direction of political change but how it takes place, it is Jack Goldstone's study of revolutions from the view of demographic changes<sup>9</sup> (Goldstone 1991). Cuba's median age of 38.7 years presents an aging population conditioned by the referred long life expectancy and high levels of migration, mainly but not only to the United States (The U.S. government by virtue of an agreement provides at least 20 000 visas every year to Cubans in addition to more than 10 000 who annually take advantage of the wet foot/dry foot implementation of U.S. immigration policy towards Cubans). The over-65 population accounts for 13 percent of the population while those below 14 are only 17 per cent (The rest of Latin America has 7 and 28 % respectively). These demographic patterns are not correlated to demands for revolutionary or radical changes but to preferences for gradualism and stability.

It is difficult to argue against the thesis about economic crisis as a source of regime change<sup>10</sup>. The biggest challenge to the Cuban government came associated to the

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<sup>9</sup>Goldstone claims that his model refers to revolutions in the early modern period but the logic he explains about the impact of a population predominantly young as a condition that increases the probability of drastic political change is applicable in other cases.

<sup>10</sup> There is a long list of scholars who explain the demise of communism based on issues related to economic crisis (Maravall 1997) and the underperformance of command

severity of the 1993 economic crisis when the country experienced in one year (1992 to 1993) a reduction of 35 % of its GDP. Economic hardships undermined public support for the revolution but in the 1994 summer public protests crisis the government diverted a significant part of the discontent towards migration to the United States. The regime also proved its resilience by appealing to the nationalist sentiment of the population with a discourse that recognized past economic mismanagement but blamed U.S. hostility and “Soviet betrayal” of socialism for the difficulties. The alliance with Venezuela after 2002 played an important role in alleviating the effects of the economic crisis. Chavez’ support to Cuba in the mid-2000 when the oil prices hiked, provided Cuba with a strategic energy security base.

Yet, Cuba’s communist regime resilience remains extraordinary in comparison with other non-democratic cases. In their comparative study of democratic transition and consolidation, Linz and Stepan concluded that “non-democratic regimes” are more vulnerable to economic downturns than democracies. Based on data collected by Limongi and Przeworski about South American countries’ political trajectory between 1945 and 1988, Linz and Stepan claimed that

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economies. The most quoted is Kornai (Kornai 1992) but many others deserve to be mentioned. Some emphasized the absence of private property and free markets while others point out to the problems of economics of information, lack of competition, the existence of monopolist structures and the absence of commitment not to bail out failed managers and state companies (Stiglitz 1996). Richard Pipes (Pipes 2001) highlighted the role of the constraints on private property limiting rule of law, initiative and freedom of economic agents.

they (Limongi and Przeworski) found that the probability that a non-democratic regime would survive three consecutive years of negative growth was 33 %, whereas the probability that a democratic regime would survive three years of negative growth was 73 %. More dramatically, their data show that no nondemocratic regime survived more than three years of consecutive negative growth. (Linz and Alfred 1996, 79)

After 1989, Cuba had four years of negative GDP growth (1989-1993) and 1994 achieved a meager 0.5%<sup>11</sup>. The same regime has survived without a total recovery of the 1989 output levels for more than twenty years. Such trajectory suggests looking at the Cuban regime not as a democratic one but with important stabilizing mechanisms of public consultations and socioeconomic decompression as presented by Emily Morris in her evaluation of Cuba's economic performance (Morris 2014).

Finally, there is plenty of evidence that Cuba's command economy followed the described inefficient, wasteful and uncompetitive production and distribution patterns typical of the communist countries of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union (Adam 1996). In fact, Cuba's indicators of productivity were worse than in almost all the countries integrated in the COMECON. Cuba's economic structure was in 1991 more centralized, less market oriented and with less participation of private sector industries and agriculture than the European Communist world (Mesa-Lago and Fabian, *Analogies Between East European Socialist Regimes and Cuba* 1993). After 1991, the communist government

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<sup>11</sup>These data is based on information published by the Economist Intelligence Unit and cited by Mauricio Font in "Towards a new Cuba: Legacies of a Revolution" (Centeno and Font 1997)

introduced important reforms to be discussed in the first chapter of our dissertation but still by 2004, the central structure of the economy was dominated by command mechanisms (Mesa-Lago and Perez-Lopez 2005).

The economic underperformance pattern associated to communism has been compounded in the post-Cold War era by the partial reform logic of the transition from command to market economy. This logic was dictated by the gradualist approach and the dual track structure by which Fidel Castro tried to use the opening of some areas to foreign investment and market oriented sectors as palliatives to save the command economy structures. This situation is changing in connection with the more developmental, less controlling orientation of the reform after Raul Castro's consolidation in power. From a tool to preserve the command economy under Fidel Castro in the 1990's-early 2000's period, the Raul Castro's presidency transformed the two track economic system into a vehicle of transition to a mixed economy. The economic adjustment was managed first and foremost from national security logic but in the course of the reform, it acquired a more developmental less command orientation.

In contrast to all the theories about the inevitability of communism collapse, there are few theories that explain non-democratic resilience in the Cuban context. Most explanations place the central emphasis in the charismatic role of Fidel Castro and the weight of nationalism in Cuba's political culture. Mine integrates these reasons for

survival on 1) the political dynamics of a partially market oriented economic reform guided by a national security logic, 2) the decompression associated not only to nationalism but also the implementation of a political liberalization agenda, and 3) the adaptation of Cuba's foreign policy in a way that did move to a less hostile position towards the international order, but also capitalize in past revolutionary policies in the developing world, particularly in Africa and Latin America.

**Gradualism and partial economic reform logics:**

One slogan frequently used by Raul Castro to describe the rhythm of the reform is the phrase "Sin prisapero sin pausa" (slow but steady). This Cuban elites' preference for gradualism is based on their positive reading of the Chinese experience of economic growth versus the calamitous record of the Russian big bang under Yeltsin and Gorbachev. There are also reformers within Cuba's power class, intelligentsia and the religious communities that subscribed Samuel Huntington's idea about an optimal sequence of liberalization in which the precedence of economic opening facilitates and stabilizes political liberalization and democratization.

The following table shows the matrix of expected effects of each scenario of reform/non reform on domestic stability, international legitimacy and risk of conflict. This matrix explains the context in which the political interaction of the different actors

within the government solve the issue of selecting their governing strategy in which gradualism prevailed over any shock therapy.

**Table 2: Scenarios of Reform and Expected Effects**

Scenario/Expected effects on:	Domestic Stability	International legitimacy	Risk of conflict
Status Quo	Decreasing	Decreasing	Low
Partial Reform	Increasing /Moderately	Increasing /Moderately	Medium
Comprehensive Change / Shock Therapy	High Expectation/ Uncertain Effects	High Expectation/ Uncertain Effects	High

Two determinants of the path taken by the Cuban elites in favor of partial reform were the minimization of risk and the taming of expectations of change. However these two concerns are not sufficient to contain the expansive logic of reform. Partial transformation of the command economy has path dependence effect and pressures arise in favor of complementary steps. This logic is not automatic because although partial reform is originally a compromise between factions about the need to abandon the status



quo and the evaluation of risk, it can evolve into a design when early winners of the changes realize their rent opportunities associated to their advantageous position in it. As result they try to delay more comprehensive changes because such strategy diminishes returns for them with the adoption of competition, consumer's protection, and other smart regulation policies. The conflict with the United States and national security arguments in the debate about reform contributes to keep partial reform equilibrium.

But gradualism is not exempted from risk. One of the main problems associated to gradual strategies of reform is the existence of partial reform equilibrium in which transitions get trapped. The discussion on the dissertation about this problem is informed by three main sources: Joel Helsman's article about the rent seeking behavior of early winners and the negative consequences for economic growth and inequality of a transition trapped in partial reform equilibrium (Hellman 1998). Minxin Pei's documented book about China's trapped transition (Pei, *China's trapped transition: the limits of developmental autocracy* 2006) in which he presented the alternatives of a developmental state versus the possible conversion of reform into a path to a predatory state<sup>12</sup>. My own readings of the Taiwanese experience and the positive role in it of a

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<sup>12</sup>Minxin Pei sees the paralysis of partial reform as a very likely outcome because of three main factors: "First, the initial conditions provide the ruling elites an overwhelming advantage in political organization, patronage and collective power. Second, the process of selective withdrawal creates strong incentives for the ruling elites to defend their last stronghold of economic and political privileges. Third, gradualism allows the ruling elites to co-opt new social elites and form an exclusionary network that divides the opposition,

national security establishment leaded by Chan ChingKuo, an enlightened autocrat, pushing against corruption, for a coherent economic reform and political liberalization as a way to preserve some social equality, political stability and minimal international legitimacy.

Although I am not constantly citing these sources in the text, since I have done my own reading of them and study the Cuban experience on its own merits; these references informed my fundamental understanding of the issue. I don't attribute the logic of partial reform in the Cuban case to the mere defense of privileges and rent by the early winners although this is a major factor in its reproduction. In Cuba, partial reform equilibrium has a political origin. Rent seeking bureaucrats couldn't shift the balance in favor of partiality and gradualism and against comprehensive reform without Fidel Castro's defense of the command economy and the one-party system and the demands of political control and unity associated to the pervasive national security logic of the asymmetrical conflict with the United States. As expressed by Cuban nationalist and communist intellectuals, there is a belief that an integrated to the world economy, unregulated market oriented sector in the island would necessarily gravitate towards the world's largest market, only ninety miles north. Although this market logic could ease up

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while creating an incentive structure that reward cooperation with the anti-reform elements and penalizes opposition to those elements" (Pei, China's trapped transition: the limits of developmental autocracy 2006).

the economic constraints to development, it will undoubtedly make Cuba's security and self-determination dangerously vulnerable.

Gradualism and partial reform equilibrium in Cuba arise as political consequences of the disparity of power between the United States and the Cuban state, and between the Cuban state and its Cuban opponents in the exile and in the island. The pro-economic reform coalition emerged in Cuba from within the state rather than from an alliance between factions within the state and organized groups in civil society. There are groups in civil society such as the Roman Catholic Church and the National Council of Churches that supported the gradual reforms route but they are not major drivers or deciders of the changes. These and other organizations of civil society together with the think tank intellectuals raised awareness about the need for reform and suggested specific measures to change the status quo for decades. But they never have the capacity to implement it or were called, with some exceptions<sup>13</sup>, to lead and implement it. The Armed Forces and the CCP cadres had been and are in control of the reform.

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<sup>13</sup>Examples of exceptions that confirms the rule are Osvaldo Martinez, who was the Director of the Center for the study of the World Economy who was appointed minister of the Economy in 1994 -and resigned shortly after because of health issues. Jose Luis Rodriguez, who was vice-director of the same think tank and served as minister of finances and prices and later as minister of the economy, and Alfonso Casanova, who served as vice-minister of economic planning after his tenure as Director of the Center for the Study of the Cuban economy of the University of Havana.

Three factors explain why gradualism and partial reform logic became dominant in Cuba's reform trajectory. First, the political initial conditions are overwhelmingly favorable to the elites of the CCP. Although they faced a terrible economic crisis this never translated in a challenge to their rule. The CCP kept the high nationalist moral ground against American coercive policy of the embargo, and its advantageous disparity of power in terms of organization, repressive power and state patronage in relation to all political alternatives. Second, gradualism and partial reform allows the CCP to create a gatekeeper state increasing the possibilities of co-optation of the new elites, rewarding those who cooperate with their political position and punishing deviant or opposition behavior. Third, it provides national security rationality to more cynical and mundane interests focused on defending economic and political privileges. As Hellman (Hellman 1998) explained for the cases in Eastern Europe these interests are not necessarily connected to the old command economy but might be connected to the early winners of the reform process.

But this research explores also the risk, challenges and uncertainties posed by partial reform and gradualism to the survival of the system. The logic of partial reform and gradualism is not friendly to the creation of coalitions between reformers from the state and civil society mobilization. This situation left pro-reform officials and intellectuals within the system in an unfavorable position. Unless the reform crossed some important thresholds in the creation of autonomous constituencies in favor of it,

they would continue to be at the mercy of conservative and national security officials that embrace market oriented steps only as a mechanism of last resort.

Due to such a balance of political power, which favors the status quo, reform is very uncertain and dependent on the will of an enlightened autocrat (Raul Castro has played at times this role but he is not Lee Kuan Yew or Chiang ChingKuo) or on accompanying political institutionalization of elites' renewal. Chapters II and III study the process of institutionalization of collective leadership and the renewal and presidential succession mechanism. I highlight the progresses in institutionalizing term limits and renewal at the lower and intermediate levels of CCP power while pointing out the lack of age limits and the uncertainties of the inter-generational transition at the cusp.

### **Political Liberalization as a process in its own merits:**

The democratic revolutions that ended the Cold War in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union represented the end of the economic, military and ideological competition between communism and capitalism. Yet Fidel Castro and the Cuban communist leaders did not accept the defeat of communism as definitive and insisted on presenting an alternative at least in the Latin American scenario to the neoliberal dominant trends of the time. To the point that Cuba is still ruled by a regime heir of the 1959 revolution and an anti-neoliberal left raised to power in Latin America, Fidel Castro succeeded.

Of central relevance for this outcome is Cuban nationalism as the main ideology of the post-revolutionary regime and the symbolism of its resistance to the U.S. policy of embargo. There were other issues of cardinal importance in Cuban politics such as the creation and sustenance of a welfare system and the achievement of some minimal economic sustainability. That said, the success or failure of the revolution was defined early in the sixties as surviving and persuading the United States as a great power of the convenience of not invading sovereign Cuba.

Once the Soviet Union disappeared, the achievement of this accommodation was inconceivable without the strategic adaptation developed by the Cuban elites through the processes of economic reform and political liberalization. These processes were conceived as a departure from the old model of communism that failed in Eastern Europe and as alternative to liberal democracy. Although these processes have accelerated after the retirement of Fidel Castro from active public life in 2006, there are important lines of continuity focusing on the issues of domestic stability and international legitimacy that began with the IV Congress of the Cuban Communist Party in 1991 and last until today implementation of the Economic and Social guidelines adopted by the 2011 VI Congress.

These lines of continuity are: a) Institutionalizing collective decision making at the elite level without giving up the one party system but increasing participation, expertise and accountability, b) The adoption of as much market and private property

orientation as necessary to return to a developmental path without renouncing to the predominant role of state property as the economic base of the Cuban Communist Party political monopoly, c) A less vertical new state-society relation based on social and political decompression to mitigate the most oppressive and controlling policies of the totalitarian phase incompatible with the economic transformation, the new communication technologies and the opening to tourism and foreign investment and trade, d) A soft landing transition from the founding revolutionary veteran generation to a successor group of the elites.

For the purpose of this research, liberalization means the relaxation of social, economic and political controls of Cuba's post-totalitarian system with the intention of making more sustainable the core of the Leninist one party rule. Marketization, new spaces for private property, a foreign policy that lean more towards national interests and less to internationalist revolutionary impulse, new individual and group rights of travel and religion are brought by the underlying goal of the CCP connected elites to enhance its political legitimacy and public support. The fact that the goal is not a liberal democratic transition doesn't make the process less deliberate and consequential.

Liberalization is best explained as originating within the regime not as imposed to it. Obviously the balance of forces within the regime is not completely disconnected of the Cuban society at large or the international context. However the central logic that

guides the liberalization process is internal to the party-state. That is why the nature of the change is gradual, incremental and partial. Political change is conceived in function of preserving stability understood not as the status quo but as orderly adaptations.

Many Cuba observers have pointed out that changes are occurring and the Cuban elites are not static in their defense of their system of interests, values and privileges<sup>14</sup>. Yet most of them highlight the reluctance (Perez-Stable 1999) to adopt comprehensive economic reform and the limited magnitude of political changes as an attempt to sustain the old totalitarian system. One exception is Jorge Dominguez who wrote about a change of the political system towards authoritarianism after the reforms of 1992 (Dominguez, *The Cuban Political System in the 1990's* 2000).

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<sup>14</sup>For arguments in American political science about changes within a context of regime stability see Jorge Dominguez' "The Secrets of Castro's Staying Power" (Dominguez Spring 1993), Marifeli Perez-Stable's "Caught in a Contradiction: Cuban Socialism between Mobilization and Normalization" (Perez-Stable 1999), EusebioMujal and Joshua Bushby, "Much ado about something: Regime Change in Cuba" (Mujal and Bushby 2001 Nov-Dec), EusebioMujal and Jorge Saavedra, "El post-totalitarismocarismatico y el cambio de regimen :Cuba y Espanaenperspectivacomparada" (Mujal and Saavedra, *El post-totalitarismo carismatico y el cambio de regimen: Cuba y Espana en perspectiva comparada* 2009 nov).



The process of liberalization seeks the consolidation of a post-totalitarian system based on the Leninist character<sup>15</sup> of the Cuban communist party. The 1992 ideological re-balancing between nationalism and communism is centrally important in the adoption of political reform and the management of economic reform and foreign policy. Regardless of the role played by Fidel Castro's charisma, the CCP is today a mature and consolidated Leninist party in terms of organization and program to govern. It conceives itself as a vanguard party with a Cuban reading and interpretation of Marxist Leninism. The more favorable attitude towards markets, private property, foreign investment and globalization happened as result of the widening of policy frontiers within the ideological balance adopted by the party-state after 1992 not as result of its abandonment.

The changes in intra-party ideological and factional balance are setting the limits of economic and political reform. The project of partially market oriented reform with political decompression within the limits of one-party rule serves the interests of the dominant factions within the party state. What imposed the partiality and apparent incoherence to the reforms process is not the resistance of the associates to the old

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<sup>15</sup>The Leninist character of the Cuban Communist Party is determined by its role as a "vanguard party". This role is defined by a proclaimed commitment to a historical "mission" of realizing the goals of the working class, and the Cuban nation. The vanguard group of enlightened political cadres establishes in virtue of its superior class conscience a vertical relation with the Cuban people since it supposed to know better how to promote their interests. As explained by Ferenc Feher, Gyorgy Markus and Agnes Heller (Feher, Markus and Heller 1986) in Leninist regimes, people's sovereignty is replaced by the sovereignty of the party.

command economy system but the preferences of the factions that prevailed first in post-Cold War Cuba and later in the post-Fidel era.

Cuba's transformation highlights the relevance of illiberal reformers within the system in contrast to opposition activists. The language of liberalization is essentially different to the one used in democratization. It is not that Cuban conversations ignore the discourse about international human rights but the convincing logics in the arguments are essentially instrumental. The more powerful arguments for more freedom to travel or more freedom to own private property or develop market activities were not based on a contrast to the Universal declaration of human rights model but on the effects they produce in economic development, political stability, or international legitimacy.

The structure of the process of liberalization and its actors warn us against the rosy assumption that partial reform, liberalization and a more nationalist foreign policy are the preamble to comprehensive adoption of a market economy, democratization and the total abandonment of the internationalist revolutionary impulse. In fact the deliberate purpose of "just enough but not too much" reform is to avoid such outcomes. The uncertainty of the changes rather than a conservative attitude is the central explanation for policy reversals and totalitarian crackdowns for a number of months or years.

Partial reform dynamics are also expressed by attempts to insulate the economic, social and political arenas. Although economic, political and civil societies are

interconnected, illiberal reformers design their policies with the purpose of controlling the liberalizing expansion from one zone to the other. Political society is clearly separated between forces of security and order, passive and active supporters of the system and the rest.

### **Liberalization, Foreign Policy and Asymmetric Relations:**

In the second section of the dissertation, I discuss Cuba's foreign policy adaptation, the change on narratives and perceptions in Cuba and the United States as well as the strategic triangular dynamics that made possible the outcome of December 17, 2014. The explanations are based on the theories of asymmetric relations and strategic triangles.

Partial economic reform and political liberalization are central to the rebalancing of Cuba's foreign policy's two main components since the triumph of the revolution in 1959: the nationalist criteria and the revolutionary internationalist impulse. As long as the regime claims the revolutionary origin and ideology in its DNA, the internationalist drive would never be zero. Political liberalization and economic reform demand a friendlier world for those processes but Cuba's foreign policy would still be defined by revisionist attitudes towards a liberal world order. There are changes in the policy frontiers not on the political ideology.

But Cuban revolutionaries are not- in the words of Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, one of Cuba's foreign policy gurus- "Joan of Arc hearing voices". Economic reform and political liberalization bolstered the possibility of a compromise with the United States of acknowledgement of Cuban sovereignty in exchange for deference towards the U.S. great power status. Such compromise will always be dynamic and Cuban nationalism would try to minimize dependence from the United States and diversify its ties with other great powers and allies.

I also conclude that Cuba has overcome the international isolation phase brought upon its system by the end of the Cold War. Cuban Foreign policy have complemented the processes of economic reform and political liberalization with initiatives of rapprochement with different segments of the United States establishment and society (including the Cuban American community) together with improvements of its position in strategic triangles that include the regional scenario and other great powers. Implicit in the discussion in this dissertation about Cuba's foreign relations is a chronology that talks about the lack of synchronization between Havana and Washington in terms of possibilities of an asymmetric compromise:

- 1) Before the end of the Cold War, revolutionary Cuba insisted on policies, domestic and international, that reinforces its revisionist identity clashing with United States' grand strategy in the Cold War. Simultaneously the United

States' policies and grand narratives of anti-communism containment were directly at odds with Cuban sovereignty<sup>16</sup>.

2) After 1991 Cuba began a process of partial reform with a significant adjustment of its foreign policy in ways compatible to an AFD solution of its asymmetric conflict with the United States. Due to pathologies of under attention, insensibility and domestic politics prevalence over foreign policy rationality, American strategy towards Cuba institutionalized hostility with the Torricelli and Helms-Burton laws, locking itself in an imperial coercive policy. Cuba's over attention to the bilateral ties and comprehensive diplomacy with other great powers and international actors allowed Fidel Castro's government to defeat American policy of isolation achieving an asymmetric stalemate.

3) By 2006-09, Cuba reached a new phase of its process of partial economic reform and political liberalization. It benefitted also from a new political juncture in Latin America and renewed ties with U.S. great powers rivals, China and the United States, as well as improved status with American allies, Canada and the European Union. In this juncture, President Barack Obama's shift to a more multilateral U.S grand strategy empowered a new policy

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<sup>16</sup>This does not mean that there were not chances and missed opportunities for better relations. Leogrande and Kornbluh have demonstrated that many good opportunities of rapprochement were lost (Leogrande, William & Kornbluh, Peter 2014). What I claim is that the structure of Cuba and the United States foreign policies grand strategies were set in a course of collision, at odds with the paradigmatic solution of AFD.

towards Cuba of a persuasive-hegemonic character. On its side Cuba progressed on a new balancing of its foreign policy in favor of nationalism, making its revolutionary impulse more compatible with a liberal world order. This situation increased the probability of an AFD compromise, leading to the events of December 17, 2014, with the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

### **Organization and Methods:**

The dissertation is a case study of the dual transition from a command economy to a market oriented one, from a charismatic-half institutionalized post totalitarian system to a liberalized institutionalized one and from a revolutionary foreign policy stance to a nationalist and AFD relationship with the U.S. The research is divided in two parts, one dedicated to the study of the domestic politics and economy of the change and the second one focused on Cuba's foreign policy adaptation.

The first part uses a comparative politics methodology by tracing the evolution of Cuba's economy and political system and contrasting its fundamental features across time. Occasionally I also compare Cuba with other communist cases that either collapsed (Eastern Europe) or adapted into a more market oriented, international society friendlier form (East Asian communist party ruled countries except North Korea). This approach follows the logic of most similar systems comparison in order to detect similarities and

variations among them. Describing the trajectory of Cuba's change in economy, politics and leadership illuminates the sources of adaptation of the CCP rule and the strengths and challenges of the new context.

International comparisons of Cuba with other socialist experiences serve to identify different responses to the withdrawal of Soviet support. Such a procedure shed light about important differences such as their starting position for reform (presence of a revolutionary first generation charismatic leader, predominance of urban population, relevance of a conflict with the United States as the first great power in the post-Cold War world, etc). It also serves to identify common paths of reforms, time and sequence with possible and probable evolutions in Cuba's trajectory.

The section is divided in three chapters. Chapter one studies the process of economic reform, chapter two political liberalization and chapter three, leadership renewal. The sources for these chapters are mainly analysis about the Cuban revolution, and the phases of reform after 1992 in relation to the role of the two track system (1992-2000, 2000-2006, and 2006-2009) , as well as studies about democratization, economic transition from plan to market, liberalization and development. I relied heavily on my observations and interviews with Cuban and other countries' scholars who had followed the country for decades. I personally have travelled to Cuba at least twice every year since 2006. Before moving to Israel and then to the United States I lived in Cuba for

thirty two years of my life and lived some of the described processes from within the revolutionary camp, first, and later from a more skeptical civil society and academic point of view.

The second part covers Cuba's foreign relations and therefore it is guided by foreign policy and international relations theory. I discussed this issue from the centrality in Cuba's foreign policy of its asymmetric conflict with the United States. The research uses Brantly Womack's theory of asymmetric relations to study the possible variants and possible trajectories to an arrangement of Acknowledgment of sovereignty for deference to great power status between the United States and Cuba.

Chapter IV studies the fundamental connections between the domestic process of political change and economic reforms and the demands and challenges of Cuba's foreign policy. Chapter V centers on Cuba's foreign policy adaptation strategies to a post-Cold War world. When discussing Cuba's foreign policy adaptation strategies I engage in a dialogue with general theories that present bandwagoning or balancing as the most probable foreign policy responses to disadvantageous balance of power situations.

Chapter VI studies the conflict between Cuba and the United States. I emphasize the role of narratives and institutions of hostility reproducing and expanding dynamics of conflict beyond the root causes. Using the asymmetric relations perspective I discuss the concepts of reestablishment of diplomatic relations, normalization and normalcy. Chapter



VII discussed the strategic triangular dynamics of U.S.-Cuba relations in connection to the regional scenario and other great powers. There I complement the asymmetric relations analysis with Lowell Dittmer's theory of strategic triangles. I contrast Cuba's position in strategic triangles of interactions including the United States in contraposition to its strategic rivals, Russia and China; and its allies, Canada, and the European Union. I look also at the variations of Cuba's position in the regional contexts of Latin America and the Western Hemisphere.

In discussing Cuba's position in the international system, the research emphasized in historical trajectories, the creation of anti-Cuba or pro-Cuba lobbies in foreign capitals, and the impact of the process of political change and economic reform in the island-nation's foreign ties. The sources are mainly books that cover Cuba's foreign relations, primary documents, speeches of leaders from Cuba, the United States and other parts of the world.

## Chapter Two: Economic Reform

### 2.1 Introduction

The end of the Cold War affected Cuba's position in the world system with a drastic fall of 35 % of its Gross Domestic Product between 1989 and 1994 and a major disruption of its insertion in the world economy (Perez, 2004, p. 49). This crisis of epic proportions sparked the beginning of a process of partial economic reform. After 1992, the Cuban Communist Party implemented waves of measures that partially altered the tenets of the classical command economy installed in Cuba after 1961 and consolidated with the abolition of most non agricultural private property in 1968. By 2006 when Raul Castro ascended to Cuba's presidency, the Cuban economy was already a command economy with a big segment of its most dynamic sectors operating with a market orientation. Although those sectors were not comprehensively integrated to the rest of the economy and some of them were managed by a heavy visible hand of the CCP and the Armed Forces, a new pattern of growth and integration to the world economy was already established.

This chapter discusses the economic reform in two major ways: 1) as the **project** of the Cuban communist party (CCP) to revive its legitimacy<sup>17</sup> by showing a positive

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<sup>17</sup>Raul Castro couldn't say it more clearly when he said that "the economic battle is today, more than ever the main task and the center of the cadres' ideological work, because the sustainability and preservation of our social system depends on it" (Castro, 2010)

economic performance, adapting to the new conditions, 2) as a **concrete implementation** of policies to reform the economy (market transformation) and refurbishing the CCP's institutional capacity to manage it.

**The guiding hypothesis of the chapter is that Raul Castro's reforms have transformed the dual track system<sup>18</sup> adopted as part of the reform in the 1990's, from a tool of survival to a mechanism of transition to mixed economy.** This transition is signed by the logic of partial reform equilibrium in which the pace and scope of change is determined by the interests of early winners, and dynamics of national security and political control, not by dynamics of complementarities, interdependence and social gains. Partial reform equilibrium reinforces trends to inequality, lack of transparency and corruption as well as opportunities of arbitrage by the most powerful in society.

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<sup>18</sup>My discussion of this issue is fundamentally informed by Roland, Gerard (2000), *Transition and Economics*, MIT Press, Cambridge and Naughton, Barry (1995) *Growing Out the Plan*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

In contrast to the experiences of China and Vietnam<sup>19</sup>, the Cuban case demonstrated that good economic performance is not necessarily the main source of post-totalitarian<sup>20</sup> resilience<sup>21</sup>. The next chapter will discuss political liberalization<sup>22</sup> as another main zone of legitimacy developed by the CCP in the post-Fidel era. The order of the

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<sup>19</sup>For a comparative analysis of the experiences of reform in Cuba during the 1990's and the transformation of other socialist economies, see Burki, ShahidJaved, and Erikson, Daniel P. (2005) *Transforming Socialist Economies*, Palgrave macmillan, New York. Particularly the chapter "Cuba's Economic Transition: Successes, Deficiencies and Challenges" by Jorge Dominguez (Dominguez, 2005).

<sup>20</sup>I here use the term "post-totalitarian" because I believe that the Cuban, Vietnamese and Chinese regimes fits better on this definition than the frequently used ones of totalitarian or authoritarian. I think the same about China but would like to use Nathan's discussion about the resilience of non-democratic regimes under post-totalitarian conditions. I follow the definitions of non-democratic regimes used by Linz and Stepan. (Linz, Juan and Stepan, Alfred, 1996)

<sup>21</sup>Andrew Nathan (Nathan, 2003) was a pioneer questioning the assumption that non-democratic regimes couldn't survive under conditions of "advanced modernization and integration with the global economy" (p.16). On the contrary, Nathan discussed how the Chinese communist party made authoritarianism a "viable regime form" despite the significant economic and political changes that took place in the Asian giant. Lately, Nathan has revised some of his original theses. In a second article, Nathan (Nathan, *Authoritarian Impermanence*, 2009)described how the challenges to the PRC's leadership- he compared it to "a team of acrobats on a high wire"- are becoming more difficult by day.

<sup>22</sup>Political liberalization implies the consolidation of pluralism in the social, economic, ideological and cultural arenas without institutionalizing political contestation through competitive election between freely organized political parties. Liberalization is a central feature in the transition from totalitarianism to post-totalitarianism.

chapters is not random. It reflects the priorities and *segmentation* strategy<sup>23</sup>, between economic and political reform adopted by the CCP under Raul Castro's rule in continuation of what was a very visible Fidel Castro's hand in the previous period. Under Raul Castro, there is a friendlier attitude towards market mechanisms and non-state forms of property but the segmentation strategy to reform, a driving force for the partiality of the approach remained dominant.

The trajectory of the Human Development Index is indicative of some Cuban historical continuity before and after 1959. Cuba has combined a relatively high performance in the Health and Education indicators with a sustained increasing divergence with the industrialized countries in terms of the GDP per capita growth since the 1920's. As Ocampo and Bertola showed, Cuba moved in Latin America "from its ranking as the economy with the fourth highest per capita income level in the region in 1913 to one of the lowest ranking countries in this respect now. *This trend has been in evidence both before and after the Cuban revolution*" (Bertola & Ocampo, 2013, p. 16).

The growth slowdown was not reversed by improvements in education and health indicators. Still, Cuba's improvement under Castro's revolution in terms of education, health, and public security standards represents zones of legitimacy for the regime.

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<sup>23</sup>A central consequence of the role of the Revolutionary Armed Forces in the partial economic reform is the strategy of segmentation by which the non-liberal democratic reformers have attempted to contain the liberalizing political effects of the pro-market steps on the economic realm.

Simultaneously, the lack of economic growth and the low income of most of the population represent a source of discontent and relative deprivation feeding desires for political change and emigration particularly among the youth.

Economic reform-in the Cuban context<sup>24</sup>-means the transformation from a command economy into a mixed one<sup>25</sup>. The core of this transformation is essentially the replacement of the plan as the fundamental coordination mechanism by market prices, preserving a significant regulatory and distributive capacity in government's hands. The central symbol of Cuba's command economy is the ration card. This system of subsidized

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<sup>24</sup>This is an important precision because the term "economic reform" is generally associated with the Washington Consensus (Williamson, 2003) or the formula of Washington Consensus plus institutions and good governance model. Reform in Cuba was justly defined as a transition from a command economy but also an alternative to the Washington Consensus and its use as a paradigm of adjustment in many transitional post-communist economies.

<sup>25</sup>Here it is important to distinguish between market economies as a general concept, and free market economies as one variant of the general set. Cuba is not discussing nor planning a transition to a free market economy. In fact, the CCP has reiterated in every major document a rejection to any adoption of it in the IV, the V, and the VI Congresses. The distinction is also relevant for the use in this dissertation of the literature of transitional economics. Given the Cuban context political constraints imposed on the transition to market economy by the socialist and nationalist paradigms, there is little use for the Hayek-Friedman school discussion about the liberating role of markets. In contrast, comparative studies with a less biased view about the role of the state in the economy might offer important insights about the dynamic of transition and viability of transition to a market oriented state led economy. One particularly useful book to have a general reference of comparison and theory was *Transition and Economics: Politics, Markets and Firms* by Gerard Roland (Roland, 2000)

food distribution is paired by a strict government control of most official salaries in Cuban pesos in its different versions of CUP and CUC<sup>26</sup>.

It is symptomatic that the CCP reform program proposes the replacement of the ration card for a more market friendly system of subsidizing people in need not a basket of products for everyone. This will be a market friendly solution to the issue of poverty alleviation. In the past two decades, Cuba's transformation from the command economy to a mixed one became a trend. The CCP has shown the necessary ideological flexibility and technical capacity to accomplish it.

As Emily Morris (Morris, 2014) of The Economist Intelligence Unit demonstrated, the Cuban economy performed around the median standards in the set of post-communist economies, remaining in the upper quintile in terms of social indicators of health and education. Morris emphasized that Cuba's adaptation took place under severe financial restraint due to the U.S. embargo while most of the post-communist economies had a friendlier international economic environment. Morris went as far as suggesting that Cuba's experience "has shown that, despite contradictions, and difficulties, it is possible to incorporate market mechanisms within a state-led

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<sup>26</sup>Cuba has two currencies, the CUP or Cuban Peso and the CUC or Cuban Convertible Peso. The CUC was used for the dollar stores markets. One of the most important agreements of the VI Party Congress was to eliminate the currency duality.

development model with relatively positive results in terms of economic performance and social outcomes” (Morris, 2014, p. 44).

Although I agree with Morris in her positive assessment of Cuba’s partial reform’s performance under the constraints of the U.S. embargo, I differ significantly with the terms of her conceptual framework. The Cuban economy is not a **state-led development model** within the universe of market economics as one might qualify the cases of “socialist market economies” of Vietnam and China. On the contrary, the dual track model is one of a command economy with a parallel creation of a market track.

From this very different conceptual reading I look at the partial reform’s trajectory of the Cuban economy as proving exactly the contrary of what Morris affirmed: The impossibility of successfully incorporating market mechanisms to a command economy in the long run and the perverse incentives embedded in partial reform equilibrium. The Cuban government avoided the worst case scenario of a big bang approach but it is still facing the dilemma of either to adopt a state led development model of market economy or succumb to the corruption, lack of transparency and rent seeking behavior of partial reform winners. These partial reform winners had accumulated sufficient power to transform the post revolutionary command economy into a monopolistic predatory state.



The dual track survival strategy adopted by Fidel Castro in the 1990's unintentionally planted seeds for a gradual ideological reformation within the CCP that led to a more market friendly attitude in the 2011 VI congress. This process is traceable in the documents and discussion of the IV Congress (Cuban Communist Party, 1991), and the V Congress of the CCP (Partido Comunista de Cuba , 1997) in 1991 and 1997. The changes in the 1990's opened a discussion about the proper role of private property, decentralization, cooperatives, employment in private businesses, rejection of igualitarianism and acceptance of inequalities, the new role of remittances, and the opening to foreign investment.

The processes of partial privatization and decentralization of Cuba's economy dismantled important CCP's control mechanisms over the population and a re-balanced its ideology and attitude towards markets. For decades, the power of the party-state over careers, jobs and wealth restrained the autonomy of Cubans who dissented from the policies and rule of the Communist party. There was always a black market, but illegality does not amount to a pluralistic well institutionalized economic society. Since the early 1990's, the CCP faced the challenge of dismantling and replacing an ideological platform that dismissed foreign investment, competition and private property as features of exploitation, waste and capitalist domination.

A central part of the CCP's process of strategic adaptation consisted in the search for a new economic model viable without losing power over the state. Such reform entails the rise of significant economic plurality and a new culture of negotiation, bargaining, contracts and persuasion that is germane to the totalitarian nature of the typical command economy.

### **2.1.1 The starting intellectual and political point of the economic reform**

The discussion about a transition to a market oriented economy in Cuba begins from a set of institutions, behaviors and expectations associated to the command system. CCP policymakers have serious biases against markets and private property due to the revolution rejection of Cuba's capitalist past. There is also a Cuban national security logic that looks at command economy mechanisms as optimal to resist, from the conditions of a developing country under a U.S. embargo, the overwhelming impact of the globalization of politics, economics and culture. Arguments in favor of state controls against the absorbing hegemony of international markets shape the views of the CCP policymakers and their socialist and nationalist bases.

The transformation from central plan distribution to market prices is inconceivable without the development of new institutions, culture and relations between economic actors. This set of institutions that stabilize the functioning of an economy is

what Linz and Stepan called an “economic society” (Linz, 1996). Cuba’s economic society was until the early 1990’s, one of scarce pluralism and no market culture. In addition, despite its victory in the Cold War, capitalism has not worked successful everywhere, particularly in many developing countries. Therefore Cuban officials and intellectuals are conscious of the importance to carefully distinguish successful examples from failed ones of market economies.

Price liberalization (the quintessential feature of a market economy) requires four important interrelated policy goals, essential for the institutional architecture of a mixed economy. There are important differences in the way Raul Castro’s team and the CCP have assumed these policy goals. Here I discuss briefly the policy goals in terms of differences and continuities between Raul and Fidel Castro’s administrations:

- 1) Macroeconomic stabilization and management of transitional costs.** Cuba has been a relatively quiet and politically stable country with low crime rate for the last sixty years. Cuba’s unemployment is low (3.8% in 2012). This is in part due to the fact that government employs close to 80 % of the labor force at very depressed wages. The island has also an extensive network of health and education that although it has deteriorated in recent years, it still enrolls the overwhelming majority of the population in school age.

One lesson frequently reiterated in the analysis of the CCP about the disastrous record in terms of economic and social indicators for most former Soviet Republics was the importance of preserving political stability. This is a reiterated thought by many Cuban intellectuals, and civil society actors such as the Catholic Church<sup>27</sup>. Cubans and Cubans observers such as Jon Lee Anderson from the New Yorker look at problems in their immediate neighborhood and pointed out the importance of preserving the revolution's social achievement (Zuluaga, 2015) not only due to their intrinsic value but also because economic growth would be difficult in situations of explosive unemployment, inflation, disseminated corruption and organized crime.

Raul Castro's team had followed this same discourse about political stability and the importance of gradualism but it has expressed a higher conscience of the urgency of some important changes. Cuba is also in the middle of a drastic demographic transition with an aging population that challenges the viability of its already precarious social security system.

**2) A new structure of incentives and corporate governance to make firms respond efficiently to market signals and competition.** In the Cuban context, this means to develop a new entrepreneurial and regulatory culture. Since the

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<sup>27</sup>One clear example of this concern for political stability is the pastoral letter "Love expects everything" ("El amor todo lo espera") of Cuba's Conference of Bishops in 1993 (Crahan, 2003). The same message was promoted by the three Popes John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis I on their visits to the island.

CCP is not interested on allowing the displaced pre-revolutionary capitalist elites to recover their power in Cuba, it has to encourage the creation of market-trained local and foreign firms and managers.

Between 1961 and 1992, Cuba dismantled most of the institutions and educational capabilities of a market economy that existed before 1959. For three decades, managers operated in a context in which skills and connections for a successful career were different from those required in market economies. After 1992, the Cuban people had witnessed the partial introduction of market mechanisms in the country's economy.

This introduction of market mechanism has been gradual and in a two track system in which the command economy survived as the favorite one. New mechanisms such as dual currency system useful at a time for monetary stability ended creating important distortions and disincentives (Recio, 2014). Raul Castro's team had expressed a vision less reluctant to the adoption of market incentives and proclaimed an open interest on correcting the distortions associated to the dual economy accepting that such correction would necessarily imply an expansion of the role of markets<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup>For instance, Minister of the economy Marino Murillo stated that the purpose of currency unification and reform of the state owned enterprises is to align the system of prices paid for their products domestically with those of the world market..(Murillo, 2014)

**3) Opening space for new sectors (foreign investors, cooperatives and private firms) while developing proper government institutions to protect their legal rights and integrate them as a whole economic system.**

One of the main differences between the type of reform announced in the VI Congress of the CCP and the 1990's reform refers to the question of the integration between public and private sectors. Cuba's changes in the 1990's were closer in practice and goals to the experiments of command economy reform implemented by the Eastern European communist countries (Poland, Hungary and the German Democratic Republic) in the 1970's and 1980's. The Cuban vision exhibited a clear aversion to private property and a bias in favor of the state owned companies.

For almost the first two decades after 1991 the party-state did not attempt to integrate the private sector to the general economy. Cuba's partial reform approach inserted segments of markets within a general command economy despite the fact that this were already proven to be a failure in Eastern Europe to make sustainable communist party rule. From a strictly economic perspective, partial reform prevented a faster economic takeoff by obstructing positive synergies and complementary measures, but Fidel Castro opposed any mixed economy approach as it had been implemented in China

and Vietnam<sup>29</sup>. In his views, foreign investment, and small private ownership carry capitalist seeds to be contained. Such policy implied the stigmatization of the non-state sector, bounding it to a mere response to crisis.

Raul Castro's seek for economic growth and improvement of living standards as a source of political legitimacy made necessary an institutional and legal framework in which the government integrates private and public sectors to the central focus on economic growth. Policies of infant industry, promotion of exports, loans to the private sector need institutions trained and regulated for such endeavors *in a market setting*.

**4) The decentralization of authority necessary for the autonomy and regulation of new economic agents growing out of the plan.**

One great difference between Cuba and the socialist experiences of East Asia refers to the starting institutional point of decentralization. In China and Vietnam the central unit of the Command Economy was the province, while Cuba was closer to the

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<sup>29</sup>There is a consensus among most economists of development and plan to market transition about the disadvantages of partial reform. In the study of Cuba's economy one exception is Emily Morris who claimed that partial reform and critical views of markets "picking winners" were important components of Cuba's successful survival and updating strategies in the 1990-2000 period (Morris, 2014). Morris developed a strong argument that for the specific conditions Cuba faced in the studied period and the bounded rationality of the CCP, partial reform was a qualified success.

East European Soviet model<sup>30</sup>, in which ministries organized economic activities vertically from up to bottom. In China and Vietnam, economic and political decentralization produced immediate efficiency gains by unleashing the initiative of town owned companies, and by promoting competition and emulation of good practices from one province or village to another<sup>31</sup>.

Raul Castro at the time of his ascent to power in 2006 had to deal not only with the flaws of a command economy and the exhaustion of the charismatic leadership but also with the growing presence of significant plurality of economic actors and the dissemination of ideas of openness and marketization in Cuban society, including within the ranks of the CCP and the military.

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<sup>30</sup>There are comparison about decentralization between China and Vietnam and Eastern European communist experiences. One of the most comprehensive discussion is done by Gerard Roland in *Transition and Economics* (Roland, 2000). Another discussion of this topic is provided by Barry Naughton in “Growing out of the Plan: China’s Economic Reform 1978-1993, (Naughton, 1995). Naughton describes the dual track system in ways that are quite similar to the characteristics of the economic reform in Cuba with the central difference that under Fidel Castro’s leadership, the Cuban government did not accepted the idea of ending in a market economy and imposed strict constraints of the market track. In the new phase of the reforms, Raul Castro had indicated a friendlier attitude towards market mechanisms and private property.

<sup>31</sup>Here it is convenient to remember that provinces in Vietnam and China might be larger than the entire Cuba. Such idea however does not deny the importance of different starting institutional point because within provinces, China and Vietnam had larger decentralization and autonomous administrative rule than in the traditional Soviet model that Cuba adopted since the 1960s.



### **2.1.2 The Dual track System**

At the center of Cuba's gradualism is the dual track system<sup>32</sup>. Raul's position about markets and the interaction between the state and the non-state sectors of the economy is not path-breaking in political terms but it is a path changing shift in economic terms. The end of political stigmatization of markets and private property does not weaken the power of the CCP in the short term but forces a more pluralistic framework than the current economic society in the long run.

A process-tracing explanation of the transformation of the cultural and institutional nature of the two tracks system reveals the scope of the economic change that is taking place. The two-track system has its origins in the survival strategy enunciated at the IV Congress of the CCP in 1992. There, Fidel Castro announced painful measures to attract hard currency to Cuba in response to the collapse of the country's foreign trade in the previous year. The strategy took shape with the legalization of the dollar as a currency for domestic market transactions in parallel to the use of the Cuban peso for all plan based activities.

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<sup>32</sup>For a discussion of the dual track system as a transitional device see Roland, Gerard (2000) *Transition and Economics. Politics, Markets and Firms*. MIT Press (Roland, Transition and Economics: Politics, Markets and Firms, 2000). For a discussion of the dual track system strategy of transition in China, see, Naughton, Barry (1995), *Growing Out of the Plan* (Naughton, Growing out of the Plan, 1995). Naughton identified this feature as the core concept of China's strategy of transition to a market economy.

Choosing gradualism<sup>33</sup>, not a big bang approach<sup>34</sup>, was a relative easy choice for the Cuban leadership. Gradualism was the Cuban leadership's consensus because of two main reasons: 1) on conditions of uncertainty, gradualism has lower reversal costs than a big bang approach if reform brings a loss of political control or a failed economic policy. 2) The implementation of a reform in one sector or region can provide information to the CCP about the expected outcome of the program if implemented in other areas, identifying complementarities of changes and strengthening the capacity of the system to adapt without surrendering its political controls.

Gradualism provides also a venue for Fidel Castro's anti-market bias. It implied a will not to privatize unless it was strictly necessary (as it was the case with the attraction of foreign investment to get technology, markets and fresh capital). It also minimizes the expansion of new private actors since they were antithetical to the command economy, a central pillar of the CCP rule. The focus then was on improving the performance of state sector firms and use foreign investment to acquire capital, markets and experience to

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<sup>33</sup>A gradual strategy of transition from command economies to market ones emphasizes the cultural and institutional challenges of building a well founded market economy. Advocates of this strategy point out to the importance of a given sequence of reforms to reduce transition and reversal costs in conditions of uncertainty.

<sup>34</sup>The big bang approach of transition from command economies to market ones implies a simultaneous and quick adoption of market and private property principles and mechanisms. In the case of Cuba this option was openly rejected first of all because the CCP, the central policymaker body was a reticent reformer not even desiring the adoption of market principles.

reactivate the state sectors throughout the creation of joint ventures. Gradualism was also a way to minimize great uncertainties, and defend government controls over the economic life of society. Counting on Fidel Castro's charisma and Venezuelan support after 2003 with oil prices over one hundred twenty dollars a barrel, the CCP could afford taking time for savaging the command economy system.

Fidel's idea of the two track system consisted on the combination of a command economy track, based on the old structure and a new track integrated to the world economy, with a different set of regulations and a gradual liberalization of prices. The clearest manifestations of the dual track system are the existence of different prices for the same product or service, and the parallel functioning of two and at times three different currencies (To change "convertible" pesos into hard currency, companies needs an approval of the Central Bank). This official two tier price regulation system should not be confused with a large black market in which many products of the official economy were also traded at higher prices than those of the subsidized through the ration card<sup>35</sup> using any of the three currencies.

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<sup>35</sup>Obviously the existence of the dual track system offered additional rent opportunities for black market agents who profit from the arbitrage opportunities offered by the inconsistencies of official policies but this is a different issue. Something that I discussed later i show the adoption of a market orientation by the reforms under Raul Castro reduces the size of the black market precisely because it allow prices to regulate supply and demand.

At the moment of its adoption, the dual track system served stabilization: the fiscal deficit was out of control at 24.3 % average of the GDP between 1990 and 1993. Facing major disorganization and massive inefficiencies in the command system, dollarization was originally a spontaneous response of part of the population and later a governmental directive to insulate the sectors that could drive growth from the rest of the economic mess. The government began to change the economic structure of some areas (tourism, bio-technology, Grupo de Administracion Empresarial (GAE) of the Armed Forces) of the economy while trying to keep the old command principles in the rest of the economy.

The V Congress of the CCP in 1997 expressed clearly in its economic resolution the purpose of the changes: it was to restore macroeconomic equilibrium without renouncing to the “socialist” (command) economy. The importance of the state owned companies and the emergency plans as the main economic structures were reiterated while the non-state sector and the opening to tourism and foreign investment were presented as mechanisms of last resort to weather the economic crisis (Castro F. , Informe al V Congreso del Partido Comunista de Cuba, 1997).

The creation of the dual track system impacted Cuba’s power structure at the technical and political levels. The necessary opening to the outside world and the demonstrative effect of successful implementation of new forms of private property and

regulation sparked new debates within Cuban economists, politicians, the military and the population in general. To implement the opening to foreign investment and keep it under control, Fidel and Raul Castro moved powerful actors in terms of reputation, loyalty and political networks to the new sector. These new or recycled elites from the state economy or the Armed Forces began to develop their own visions and interests in deepening the reforms. Simultaneously, those who remained in the old structures began to see possibilities of improving their standing by changing lanes to the market oriented track.

Fidel Castro and his most ardent followers committed to the defense of the communist ideas were also “caught in a contradiction”. “Rooted in Castro’s charismatic leadership,”-Perez-Stable wrote in 1999-

the ideological cannon of sovereignty and equality, and some level of mass mobilization, this mode of governing prevents the interactions of state, markets, and society-“the master process”- from fully taking hold and transforming Cuban state socialism in ways similar to eastern Europe, China and Vietnam. The Cuban regime has yet to embrace a program of economic transformations that fully sustain these interactions (Perez-Stable, Oct. 1999).

For showing a light at the end of the tunnel, the CCP had to highlight the successes of the new market oriented sectors. For restraining the impact of the new structures they had to lower its relevance with anticapitalist mobilization and propaganda. Politically, Fidel insisted on reducing the profit opportunities for the new managers in terms of corruption, assets stripping and rent-seeking behavior. At the same time he

avored command structure, low competition and monopolistic structures in the market oriented track, precisely the type of partial reform equilibrium in which corrupt practices and rent seeking found fertile ground.

The positive feedback about the performance of market-oriented structures brought to the political system a heated debate about market opening in the national development strategy. Equally important was the negative feedback coming from the managers of the state owned companies interested on strengthening the public sector. The lack of congruity of the two tracks system generated predatory practices and distortions that reduced the possibility of measuring properly the efficiency of the public sector. Productivity of government employees was affected by salaries in a lower value currency. Development institutions providing public goods like health, and education became underappreciated because their value was assessed in Cuban pesos, the weakest currency.

The retirement of Fidel Castro presented a new reality to the CCP that forced it to rethink not only an economic policy but also the economic model in which its political rule was based. Until he fell sick, the adjustment of the two tracks system was subjected to Fidel's veto powers. But the debate about the function of the two tracks was taking place. Should the two tracks serve to keep alive the hope of a return to the old command

economy system or be the platform to launch a new CCP rule with a market oriented economic model integrating the two sectors in a mixed economy?

The two track system has different meanings when it was used as an **instrument for stabilization** under Fidel's leadership, as an attempt to rationalize the command economy; and when it turns a **tool for economic transition** to a mixed economy, as it became after the VI Congress of the CCP. Raul Castro's program is not path breaking (it preserves communist party rule and the dominant role of the state in the economy) but it is path changing because it implies: a) the overcoming of the two-track system throughout currency unification and open channels for integration between the private and the public sector, b) In the field of ideas, it ends the stigmatization of private property and markets, c) it accompanies the economic reform with an erosion of the boundaries between the foreign owned segment of the economy and the one under strict Cuban government control.

## **2.2 Tracing economic reform as a political option for the Cuban Communist Party (CCP)**

### **2.2.1. Fidel Castro's two tracks strategy in defense of the Command Economy**

The dual track strategy was not- in Fidel Castro's purpose- the beginning of the road to a market economy but its end. In the 1990's, no major actor within the CCP ever expressed a desire for a transition to a comprehensive market economy. To stimulate the economy, the CCP changed:

1) The employment policy, allowing several categories of self-employment with a limited opportunity for hiring family members.

2) The agricultural policy, transforming many state owned companies in cooperative units and beginning a land-leasing program.

3) The policy towards remittances and foreign investment opening the country to *private* hard currency inflows.

These openings existed in parallel to a dominant command economy in control of everything else. As Emily Morris said: "This implies a more flexible policy framework that the rigid, ideologically driven rejection of reform depicted by the Cubanologists.



Economists and policymakers alike expressed these parameters in terms of principios<sup>36</sup>, rather than Marxist-Leninist dogma or a ‘party line’(Morris, 2014, p. 12). These principles were essentially the two central ideological pillars of the revolution, nationalism and communism, two ideas that are not necessary at conflict but are not the same<sup>37</sup>.

The nationalist impulse drives towards expanding the reforms and centering public policy on the idea of economic development. The communists were interested primarily in the survival of their one-party system and therefore the totalitarian structures in which control of society is based.

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<sup>36</sup>Morris described how “These principles invariably included upholding national sovereignty, preserving los logros de la revolucion- the gains or achievements in health, education, social equality and full employment; often referred to simply as los logros- and maintaining ‘revolutionary ethics’, which has involved a strong official stand against corruption and disapproval of ostentatious display” (Morris, 2014, p. 12)

<sup>37</sup>The importance of communism and nationalism as the ideational parameters within which the economic policy is decided is one of the most underestimated factors by the traditional analysis about Cuba in the United States. Scholars such as Carmelo Mesa Lago (Mesa-Lago, 2004), and others do not seem to recognize the fact that Cuba’s economic decisions are taken from a bounded policy frontier in which pragmatism or ideological rigidities do not exist in abstract. Mesa-Lago has developed a theory of cycles associated- according to him- to periods of pragmatism versus those signed by idealistic rigidities. As I discuss here the issue is not of pragmatism versus idealistic goals but about ideological balances between nationalism and communism, development or state control as dominant goal.

As a leader, Fidel Castro balanced different nationalist and communist approaches<sup>38</sup> within the CCP. But his speeches at the IV and V Congress of the Cuban Communist Party revealed his preferences for preserving state socialism, even when “painful concessions” were necessary. The central goal under his aegis consisted on preserving state control over the economy while reluctantly tolerating some compartmentalized pockets of markets in search for more efficient technology, management and capital.

Both factions (nationalists and communists) concurred on the great importance of food security, a sustainable agricultural policy that reduces Cuba’s excessive dependence on food imports; and energy security that was precarious at the beginning of the 1990’s due to the end of the special relations with the Soviet Union<sup>39</sup>. In these two issues, the

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<sup>38</sup> The Cuban Communist Party contains different factions in a spectrum of opinions, regions, and functional groups. In terms of ideology, I emphasized here the two recognized pillars of the CCP in this field: nationalism and communism as two currents that overlaps but at times are contradictory. The central category of nationalism in this context is the national interests defined as sovereignty and development. The central category of communism is the party as a proletarian vanguard defined by the goals of totalitarian controls and promotion of social equality. This is obviously a methodological simplification difficult to verify with surveys because the CCP principle of “democratic centralism” does not recognize even the existence of factions.

<sup>39</sup> Although Cuba assured its energy supply in the 2000’s with the special relationship with Venezuela, and the agreement of oil for medical and educational services, food security is still a mere aspiration. According to former minister of the Economy Jose Luis Rodriguez, Cuba’s food imports increased 2.4 times mainly in value due to the increase

Cuban military endorsed policies of opening due to their relevance for national security. In 1994, Raul Castro toured the country's three armies, meeting provincial party leaders and advocating an agriculture markets reform. The move was symbolic because three years earlier, Fidel Castro has rejected these same policies in his concluding remarks at the IV Congress of the CCP<sup>40</sup>.

The reform measures in the 1990 (mostly between 1993 and 1996, although there were some reforms in the financial sector later in the decade) fit a pattern of rationalization within the command economy. Even the dollarization and the dual currency system were part of a strategy of survival not of systemic transformation. It includes the expansion of a minuscule non-state sector, some partial liberalization of prices, the de-collectivization of part of the agricultural state owned companies that were transformed into heavily regulated cooperatives, and a new law of foreign investment in

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of the prices of the products, not in volume. This is one of the most important vulnerabilities of Cuba's economy. (Rodriguez, 2014)

<sup>40</sup>Gail Reed presented a friendly but essentially objective narrative about the IV Congress of the CCP and the debate associated with it in "Island in the Storm: The Cuba Communist Party's Fourth Congress" (Reed, 1992). For a more pessimistic narrative about the Congress see Eva Anduiza's "El IV Congreso del Partido Comunista de Cuba" (Anduiza, 1992)

1995<sup>41</sup>. The changes represented also a reorientation of the development strategy from the priority on some industries that served Cuba's integration to the extinguished COMECON such as the sugar industry to tourism and services, with emphasis on biopharmaceutical technologies and products.

As soon as some market oriented measures produced positive results, the appetites for more changes were expressed at the intellectual<sup>42</sup> and street level where new small businesses began to mushroom. But Fidel Castro's political authority and Hugo Chavez's Venezuela's economic support after 2003 cooled off these pro-market impulses. Between

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<sup>41</sup>Here I don't have the space to discuss the specificities of the changes in the Cuban economy during the 1990's. For an exhaustive discussion of these processes, the reader might follow the annual research compendium of the Center for the Study of the Cuban Economy (Centro de Estudios de la Economía Cubana (CEEC), and the books by Carmelo Mesa Lago (2012), *Cuba en la Era de Raul Castro*, Ed. Colibri, Madrid. Mesa Lago discussed the changes and some reversal in the late 1990's, early 2000 as part of his theory about pragmatic (pro-market) and idealistic (statist) cycles in the post 1959 history of the Cuban economy. A great edited volume with important insights from Cuban economists from the island and Cuba scholars in the outside world is Dominguez, Jorge and Perez-Villanueva, Omar (200.), *TITLE*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 2003?????. For comparisons between the Cuban changes and the reforms in Russia, Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Vietnam and China, see Burki and Erikson, *Transforming Socialist Economy: Lessons for Cuba and beyond*.

<sup>42</sup>The most prominent advocacy group for more market oriented changes but committed to the socialist values of the system was the Center for the Study of the Americas (CEA), a CCP- affiliated think tank that was restructured in 1996 as result of a purge initiated by Raul Castro's speech to the VI Plenum of the Central Committee of the CCP (Giuliano, 1998).

1996 and 2006, the most communist sectors<sup>43</sup> of the Cuban elites slowed down the market oriented changes. Rather than promoting a state led modernization within a market friendly mixed economy, the 1997 V Congress of the CCP prioritized political control over economic dynamism.

A pause was imposed to bridle the political liberalizing effects of the previously adopted economic changes. Between 1996 and 2005, the CCP strengthened the case by case approach to new licenses for self-employed businesses. Inspectors raided the existing ones, not to enforce the law with penalties but to close many of them. The number of licenses decreased dramatically because the regulators eventually ceased to issue them almost completely.

One of the worst command economy feature reinforced by the backsliding was the state aversion to competition when it affected state owned companies. The first targets of economic repression were those businesses that competed with state owned companies, including small restaurants near inefficient hotels. Fidel Castro was particularly adamant against any integration between the public sector and its private counterparts.

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<sup>43</sup>Here I take the ideological position of leaders within the CCP as expressed by them. There are cases of communist hardliners who are among the most corrupt in the party ranks. That was the case of the group of the Battle of ideas, integrated predominantly by young defenders of austerity and sacrifice. After Fidel Castro fell sick government investigators found that several defenders of the radical view were involved in corruption and traffic of influences.

One unexpected help to the communist faction after 2001 came from George W Bush's presidency. As soon as the Cuban American pro-embargo sector in Florida criticized the republican president for his inaction about Cuba, Bush intensified his surveillance and sanctions against financial institutions that used dollars in their transactions with Cuba, increasing the penalties imposed to Cuba and its partners for this concept. Bush's economic war reinforced the national security logic that feed anti-market bias and partial reform equilibrium. In 2004, the Cuban government withdrew the U.S. dollar from circulation, receiving a onetime rainfall of dollars by changing those already in the island to a currency called CUC, or Cuban Convertible Peso. The government imposed a 10 percent tax in the use of dollars, affecting remittances and incentivizing travelers to change their hard currency to Euros or Canadian dollars.

But the drive for a transition to a market economy was never put to rest. The changes of the 1990's<sup>44</sup> and the debate about deeper reforms expanded the policy frontier for a more comprehensive adoption of a coherent mixed economy. Market oriented changes were strong enough to feed up the spirits of foreign investors and new Cuban entrepreneurs. Every time the government opened channels for people to ventilate their

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<sup>44</sup>The transition from a command economy to a mixed economy is primarily an institutional change. Cuba needs to replace the implicit taxation of a command economy over all state owned companies by a normal system of explicit government revenues and public expenditures.

policy preferences, the consultation revealed support for a gradual but consistent opening to market oriented structures.

Expressions of well-known revolutionary intellectuals and artists and publications associated to think tanks and civil society groups such as the Churches revealed a wider spectrum of nationalist ideas<sup>45</sup>. The urgency of changes in food and energy security carried on an acceptance of more pluralistic visions about the economy that was not instantly transferred to politics. As result, Cuban economists working for the government began to flout alternative economic proposals that were not associated and did not form part of the political opposition. Some market oriented proposals passed the official filter of nationalist and socialist ideologies.

The market oriented sectors expanded. The gradual emergence of institutions, culture and education began to make viable a market economy. The self-employed workers and the sectors opened for foreign investment, particularly tourism and nickel mining became the most dynamic ones of the Cuban economy. The creation of the ONAT (the National Office of Fiscal Administration) had a demonstrative effect about

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<sup>45</sup>Different more pro-market positions are traceable in publications such as *Economía Cubana*, the bulletins of the Center for the Study of the Cuban Economy, the Center for the Study of the Americas's journal "Cuadernos de Nuestra América". From the churches, there was magazine "Caminos" associated to the leftist Protestantism in the Martin Luther King Center, and *Palabra Nueva*, *Espacio* (later *Espacio Laical*) and *Vital* of the Catholic Church.

the possibilities of collecting government's revenues and preserve social services in a market oriented context. The Schools of economics, accounting and business administration began to prepare managers and economists in market economics courses. Spain, Canada and Mexico offered fellowships programs to prepare Cuban scholars, officials and managers for performing functions associated to a market economy.

By the mid 2000's, there was conscience in the Cuban elites and population against a return to the old command economy and the need of second reform wave. The successes of China and Vietnam in which economic growth together with minimal political liberalization enhanced the legitimacy for Communist parties to remain in power gained sympathy among non liberal reformers and changed the views of some of the most doctrinarian party apparatchiks. Several of the most internationally connected Cuban economists and CCP intellectuals called for an analysis of the lessons of the East Asian communist experience.

Cuba's national security establishment saw the impact on the debate of U.S. policy towards Cuba of the opening of a food trade loophole in the U.S. Trade embargo in 2000. American farmers became an unbeatable force for the Cuban American pro-embargo lobby. Cuba's Foreign Policy establishment also saw how foreign investors from Europe and Canada operated as promoters of economic reform in Cuba while defending the relations of their states with Cuba from U.S. pressures. The rise of the left



in Latin America provided an atmosphere of opportunities for deepening the economic reform, because of the presence of a friendly government to a reform driven Cuba in Lula's Brazil.

### **2.2.2 The economy under Raul Castro before the VI Congress of the CCP in 2011**

Fidel Castro's retirement was of primordial importance because it unlocked some of the political bottlenecks stopping the reform. Fidel has been a bulwark of the strategy based on permanent mobilization. The absence of his charisma as a source of political legitimacy propelled a new discussion within Cuba's upper echelons about the need for the comprehensive adoption of a mixed economy. Fidel's ultimate goal, as the supreme agenda setter<sup>46</sup>, was not economic growth or development, even under the CCP rule as it was the case with its Chinese and Vietnamese homologue, but the preservation of

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<sup>46</sup>The concept of agenda setter is more adequate to Fidel Castro's role in the Cuban political system than the one of "veto player". Fidel Castro had not only the capacity to veto any proposal but he settled the agenda with "take it or leave it" proposals. He typically had the "first mover" capacity that constitutionally was in the hands of the State Council but in the end he had the last word. See Tsebelis George (2002), *Veto Players: How Political Institutions Work*, Princeton University Press. Princeton, NJ. "Veto Players are individual or collective actors whose agreement is necessary for a change of the status quo" (p. 36). I am conscious about the fact that Tsebelis presented his argument in the context of democratic political system. That said, there are process of public policy deliberations and decision making in post-totalitarian settings in which some of his concepts- I believe- might be applied.

“communism”. This totalitarian pattern is shaped more by ideology than by economic or political demands.

Harvard University professor Jorge Dominguez synthesized the state of the Cuban economy just before Raul Castro took power in the following way:

Cuba’s economic reforms introduced in the first half of the 1990s were successful. The government responded pragmatically and effectively to the economic crisis. The reforms stopped the crisis, set the basis for economic recovery, stabilized both fiscal accounts and the political system, and retained, albeit frayed, a social safety net. The political regime persevered and changed little, remaining highly centralized and dependent on a key leader. It continued to invest in health and education and it made significant movements towards energy self-sufficiency. These results gained political support at a time of great peril for the regime....

Yet Cuba suffered an economic debacle from which it has yet to recover. It may not reach the 1985 GDP per capita levels until this century’s second decade. The economy is populated by industrial dinosaurs, and Cuba remains an ineffective exporter of agricultural products. Its balance of payments is unsustainable because it is financed through the non-payment of international financial obligations. Its fiscal situation is out of balance because inflation is repressed and partly hidden through illegal markets and dualistic markets. There is no sustainable equilibrium in its domestic and international accounts (Dominguez, 2005).

This unsustainable combination determined the starting point for Raul’s reform in 2006. The Cuban economy was not anymore a classical command economy but still had the essential features of its coordination mechanisms. It had some limited market driven

sectors and institutions in which private property and isolated market structures were not an anomaly but market prices were rejected as the central coordination mechanisms.

Fidel Castro left an ideological legacy in which the use of market was only an instrument of last resort. Given the secrecy with which his sickness was managed, and the fact that he distributed his functions to several leaders, of which Raul Castro was a *primus inter pares*, there was apprehension to launch a process of changes that he could condemn if he has returned to his presidential functions. Fidel Castro's "Battle of Ideas" Campaign stigmatized market and private property as a "Trojan horse" capable of destroying socialism. Non-state economic actors existed but they lived under a permanent fear of policy reversal and predatory taxation that can put them out of business.

Fidel Castro's revolutionary authority was also important in forming an intellectual tradition within Cuba's policy circles that rejected copying from the experience of other communist countries. He shaped the nature of the economic opening not only with his anti-market biases but also by rightly warning about the political, cultural and economic differences between Cuba and the China/Vietnam experiences. Some of the options available to China/Vietnam are not available to Cuba for structural reasons of market size and structure of the labor force. Human capital and rural/urban

distribution differences, and the U.S. embargo make the adoption of the low wage manufacturing export-platform model inadequate for Cuba.

Fidel Castro was also important in changing the attitude to foreign investment at least at the level of discourse to a more instrumental approach. As Richard Feinberg explained:

For revolutionary Cuba, foreign investment has been about more than dollars and cents. It's about cultural identity and national sovereignty. It's also about a model of socialist planning, a hybrid of Marxism-leninism and Fidelismo, which has jealously guarded its domination over all aspects of the economy. During its five decades of rule, the regime's political and social goals always dominated economic policy; security of the revolution trumped productivity (Feinberg, 2012, p. 1).

In the 1990's, journalists bombarded Fidel Castro in almost every tour with questions about his opening to foreign investment combined with his fiery nationalist rhetoric. He provided many answers that although were not satisfying for Western audiences, gave important guiding spaces for Cuban officials and intellectuals who viewed direct foreign investment as a tool for development.

But the partial reform trajectory had also created by 2006 its own legacy. The dollar and later the CUC were used as domestic currencies. There were some experience and state institutions that have already worked with the emerging non-state sectors. Using the possibilities of arbitrage between the different currencies and sectors, a growing black

market economy had consolidated. In interaction with the foreign investors, a new entrepreneurial class of managers, accountants, other workers and even military officers were acting as a constituency less averse to markets. There was also an economic class of winners of the partial reform strategy, taking credit and profiting from arbitrage opportunities and non-competitive structures.

Foreign investment was critical in the reanimation of tourism, energy, communications and mining. Tourism became the first source of hard currency for several years. From receiving over 600 000 international visitors every year in 1994, Cuba jumped to receive more than two million after 2008. Most of the new hotel capacities were developed with some type of association with foreign partners. Mining, particularly nickel in the Eastern province of Holguin, was rescued from a depressed situation by the creation of a major joint venture with Sherritt International from Canada. From \$ 201 millions, foreign investment deals lifted Cuba's mining exports to \$599 million in 2000.

The shift on the official attitude towards foreign investment opened an important door for further discussion of the issue. The Cuban Ministry of Basic Industries under reform oriented minister Marcos Portal (who was removed from power in 2002) invested most of the profits from the mining business in expanding its energy sources from domestic heavy crude petroleum and natural gas. Portal led his ministry to invest heavily

in the association with Sherritt and the development of a generation of efficient managers trained in modern market oriented skills<sup>47</sup>. Cuba produced 671000 tons of oil in 1990 and 3.6 million tons in 2002. It produced less than 20 million cubic meters of gas in 1996 and 585 million in 2002.

The Cuban Diaspora became an integral part of the survival of the Cuban economy<sup>48</sup>. A central paradox of the Cuban situation is that the same community that includes the most rabid defenders of the U.S. embargo is also in virtue of its remittances, family support, travel and phone bills an essential support of the Cuban economy. Before 1993, having dollars was illegal in Cuba. After the emigration of several hundreds of thousands Cubans after 1994, including more than 200 000 in the last five years, the flow of remittances is calculated between \$ 800 million and a billion at least (some people talk

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<sup>47</sup>In 2003-, after a dispute with Fidel Castro and Carlos Lage, then vice premier, and some major electricity blackout, the Politburo accorded Marcos Portal's removal from his position as minister of the Basic Industries. In 2009, Raul Castro removed Carlos Lage from his position as vice premier and member of the Politburo.

<sup>48</sup>This is an area in which it there were significant changes beginning in the late 1970's but particularly after the 1990's. To have an idea of the issue, it is worth to remember that Overseas living Cubans were not allowed to visit their country of origin even for a visit between 1959 and 1978. Then the government imposed a quota of 100 per month with compulsory conditions about paying hotel rooms, etc. This quota was expanded and in the 1990s the government relaxed all the number limitations (Some exiles are still excluded). In October 2012, the government approved new decrees that changed the migratory law allowing far more flexibility for travelling, including the end of the exit visa. Cuban migrants sending remittances, helping their relatives or traveling to the island are a major source of income.

about even two billion). After the government legalized the possession of dollars, it created a monopoly network of three hard currency stores (TRD) chains to collect revenues associated to the mentioned flow. By 2004, the Cuban government made the so called “convertible peso” (It is not always convertible) or CUC (It is pronounced “cook”) into the only currency to use in the hard currency stores.

There are also demographic considerations that explain Cuban aversion to drastic economic reforms. Cuba has a relatively high human capital endowment (for a developing country) in terms of life expectancy and education<sup>49</sup> combined with low wage rates. But in the absence of a market culture and structure, many of the human capital assets have been wasted. Entrepreneurship has been limited and the attraction of the U.S. proximity and social ties had attracted many to immigrate to the United States in relative advantageous conditions in regard to other immigrants due to the 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act<sup>50</sup>.

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<sup>49</sup>Life expectancy at birth was in 2012 79.1 years with 99.8 % of adult literacy rate. Primary school enrollment rate is 98.4 and secondary school enrollment rate is 86.6. (UNICEF, 2012)

<sup>50</sup>Cubans who enter legally to the U.S. territory are allowed a path to legal residency after one year. The law has been questioned by the Cuban government several as a teaser for all type of emigration from Cuba. Simultaneously, the Cuban hard line right has promoted a change on the law as part of its rejection of new emigrants who tend to oppose the embargo once they become citizens and return to Cuba and send remittances to their relatives there.

The age structure<sup>51</sup> is becoming already a problem to the healthcare and social security system because the population is relatively old. Demographers predict that Cuba is approaching a second transition of population decrease since 2006. It has the characteristics of a developed country without the levels of industrialization and income per capita of it. Compare to the cases of East Asia, the labor force is older and less responsive to reform induced changes. 75 % of the population lives in the urban areas and is currently depending on the food rationing system. They are reticent to move back to the countryside or the Eastern provinces even if the conditions and incentives in these areas were more propitious for growth.

Two critical obstacles to rapid growth, never solved by the limited changes of the 1990's and the relative improvement of the general situation in the mid 2000's, were the poor performances in agriculture and sugar industry (it used to be Cuba's first industry<sup>52</sup>). After 1993, the government instituted a conversion from state owned agricultural

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<sup>51</sup>According to data of ECLAC, Cuba's population is in the road to be the oldest of the whole region. Life expectancy is 7- for women and 7- for men. In 2010. The percentage of population older than 60 was in 2010 17.8 % and it is forecasted to be 26.1%. See Mesa-Lago, Carmelo (2012) Table 25, p. 198

<sup>52</sup>A brief but substantive discussion about the situation of the Sugar Industry in the previous years to the beginning of the reform is provided by Mesa-Lago, Carmelo (2012) Cuba en la era de Raul Castro. Editorial Colibri, Madrid. Pp-75-82 (Mesa-Lago, Cuban en la Era De Raul Castro, 2012).



enterprises into Basic Units of Cooperatives Production (UBPC). The new units had a better property definition structure but failed to change a hostile environment in which the state procurement system (acopio) distorted the prices of agricultural products and limited the incentives for profits. A political decision by Fidel Castro of dismantling half of the Sugar industry of the country and dedicate the rest of the land to new agricultural activities caused fatidic disruption in uncultivated land, de-capitalization of the industrial base of the country<sup>53</sup>.

“While the Cuban economy as a whole has surpassed the production level of 1989, - Cuban economist Anicia Miranda wrote- the agriculture sector has failed to produce at more than 60 % of 1989 levels” (Miranda, 2010)Such disastrous performance had significant consequences for Cuba’s external sector and it is the worst threat to the survival of the regime. Rather than provide exports earnings as it was the case in the whole Cuban history, the debacle in Agriculture forced an unsustainable trend to growing food imports just to guarantee minimal levels of nutrition to the population. Without a drastic reversal of this tendency, it is impossible to conceive any rational strategy of economic growth or development. As Miranda explains, “It is no accident, therefore, that agriculture has been chosen as the battlefield on which reform of the Cuban economic model will begin” (Miranda, 2010, p. 156).

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<sup>53</sup>For a discussion of the situation of the Cuban Agriculture before and after the 1990’s reform see Nova, Armando (2010), “Cuban Agriculture in the “Special Period” and Necessary Transformations” (Nova, 2010, pp. 59-74).

By the mid 2000's another important external factor entered into Cuba's economic equation: Cuba's position got strengthened with the alliance with Venezuela's charismatic president Hugo Chavez and its favorable position in the oil market. By 2006, Cuba began to enjoy a surplus in its current account balance as result of the trade of doctors and teachers services for oil with the South American nation. This trade was expanded after the creation of the ALBA (The Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas) along the Havana-Caracas Axis but incorporating other countries (Bolivia, Nicaragua and Ecuador) that elected leftist leaders or depended on Venezuela's oil (Several islands in the Caribbean).

By the summer of 2006, when Raul Castro assumed the presidency, Latin America was showing historical growth rates, in part because of a commodities boom. Most hemisphere elites looked at Cuba as a country in an economic transition. Cuba couldn't take full advantage of these favorable developments because of its own inefficient economic system.

### **2.2.3 The FAR: an army for Raul Castro's reform**

Facing the 1990's crisis, the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) were the best prepared institution to deal with the hardening of the budget<sup>54</sup>. This peculiar situation of the military promoting a specific type of adjustment has path dependence implications for the accompanying debate about economic reform within the current one party system. No other institutional actor is more constitutive of the logic adopted since the 1990's: one that is partial, driven by national security and domestic stability needs, with strong monopolistic structures, and ambiguous in terms of adapting Cuba to the world order.

This is particularly relevant for several reasons: 1) because of its military organization, the FAR is what Gerard Roland has called "a fast moving institution", it does not necessarily change often but can change quickly"(Roland, *Understanding Institutional Change: Fast Moving and Slow Moving Institutions*, 2004), 2) The FAR is a core institution designed as a bulwark of the one party system. As long as the Castros, their supreme commanders, are in charge; their national security mission would be indistinguishable from their loyalty to the party, 3) Since national security is their priority, economic development is in their agenda because it is instrumental to serve such supreme goal. This instrumental logic creates a balance in policymaking in which partial

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<sup>54</sup>Hal Klepak explained how the FAR budget was cut down drastically as part of the survival strategy of the 1990's while at the same time, the institution gained new functions and autonomy from the CCP (Klepak, *Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces: Last Bulwark of the State! Last bulwark of the Revolution!*, 2008)

reform is the most probable outcome. 4) The FAR and its minor partner, the Ministry of Interior, operate in a context of monopoly and opacity. They have the monopoly of the use of force in Cuba's territory and classify most of its organic life as state secrets, subject fundamentally to the supervision of its own control organizations, like the military counterintelligence (CIM).

The primordial role of the military in the design and implementation of the economic reform has its origins in Fidel Castro's response to the budget cuts associated to the end of the Soviet Union. Despite the infamous Cause 1 and Cause 2 of the 1989, Fidel Castro trusted the Armed Forces as his favorite cadres. As part of the government reshuffling of leaders and unification of ministries to cope with the Special period, military officers were appointed as ministers or vice-ministers in key civilian government and political posts.

As the longest minister of defense in world history, Raul Castro implemented new policies within the military and developed a set of industries and activities to release the national budget from the burden of providing most supplies to the Armed Forces. Logistics was a central concern. Cuba's high command developed its own set of companies to deal with the need for its own officers, food, resting facilities and military supplies. Facing some of economic difficulties of the 1980's due to instability in the Soviet Union, FAR also began a process of "enterprise optimization"

(“perfeccionamiento empresarial” in Spanish) with the purpose of a) aligning its practices with greater incentives for productivity and international accounting, b) educating managers and giving them more autonomy in decision-making.

In the context of the crisis of the 1990’s, the military expanded its role in the economy to areas such as hotel management for international tourists, tourists’ transportation, airports and marinas, and recently port administration. The army provided at times the labor force to deal with critical situations in agriculture, when some harvests were at risk because of efficiency flaws or after the passing of hurricanes. The Civil Defense, a military organization included in the FAR system in charge of response to natural disaster proved to be an efficient body despite the economic difficulties of the country. This is important because of the frequency with which hurricanes and tropical storms hit Cuba has increased.

The FAR began the 1990’s with the prestige associated with the triumph of the Cuban military forces in Southern Africa over the regime of the Apartheid but the economic crisis and the collapse of communism was politically more challenging than any of its previous tasks . The almost fifteen years of a large presence of Cuban troops in Angola allowed the military to create corporations to alleviate the economic burden of having up to 30 000 troops thousands of miles from the Cuban shores. These corporations

in association with the Angolan state or private sector were already working with little transparency but oriented to the world market.

The return of the troops shifted FAR priorities from its previous participation in the African wars to the domestic arena. In 1992, the FAR created the National Defense College as an educational center in which members of the high command and career officers discuss national strategic issues together with rising politicians and bureaucrats from the CCP and the government. The College gave special emphasis in its classes to the discussion of the economic problems of the country and the interaction between new provincial party czars (first secretaries) and the then mid rank officers in charge of regiments and brigades.

Hal Klepak described how the Special Period was at its core a challenge to the institution as it was designed by the system. Without the political system originated in the revolution of 1959, FAR couldn't continue its central role in Cuban politics.

The FAR is a great institution. And like all human institutions its members are prone to error. But they have an enormous amount, as a military and a national institution without pair, of which to be proud. And much of their role in the Special Period falls into that category. There continue to be errors, but it is my view that they are small compared to the challenges of the tasks at hand. Few indeed are the institutions that can claim to be without members who are not up to the dignity of their charges, and the often horrendous conditions of the Special Period have sorely tested the armed forces' code of honor, loyalty and professionalism. But they have not yet found it wanting as an institution even if individuals within it have been discovered to lack that sense of honor and professionalism for which the FAR have become famous (Klepak, *Cuba's Military 1990-2005: Revolutionary Soldiers in Counterrevolutionary Times.*, 2005, p. 14).

The FAR was not a promoter of the reform in the sense of political advocacy. What it did was to show a different way to run its economy, more market oriented but not market driven. Just by showing the chances of moving the country in a less ideological drive without losing its essences, FAR's performance provided ammunition to those inside the regime advocating for a reform course. Given the totalitarian constraints placed upon the Cuban elite by its Marxist-Leninist ideology, the national security establishment played an ambiguous role in the impulse for more economic reform. On one hand, the military were among the most ardent advocates of changes in agriculture and the adoption of market oriented management techniques because of the implications for food security and its impact on domestic stability. Although the general orientation was to prevent market practices from taking control over the politics of the country, the adoption of market routines reduces the general aversion to them.

On the other hand, preferences for partial economic reforms and the gradualist approach were justified in terms of Cuba's resistance to U.S. economic aggression and the need to digest changes with social stability, step by step. The military elites behaved as classical partial reform winners promoting reforms for themselves but cooperating in the crackdown against marketization under other ministries: **First**, the military economic elites did not object and even support the restraints imposed by Fidel Castro to the reform in other areas without objecting the controls imposed by their commander in chief.

**Second**, when in the late nineties the domestic political situation improved and Fidel Castro slowed down the changes, the military did not stop its internal reforms but cooperated from the ministry of interior in the partial dismantlement of the established small business sector. **Third**, the FAR-MININT complex cut out an economic space for themselves in which they had an advantageous insertion in the global economy and tourism.

The military leadership supported and expanded command economy controls and monopolistic structures in the form of state capitalism. Military actors who had benefitted from their loyalty credentials profited in political and economic terms from their advantages as early comers in partial reform equilibrium. The FAR has also institutional design advantages to deal with the two track system; the rising of market structures and the persistence of command ones. Given their insulation from the inadequacies of the general command economy, the managers of the FAR economic system could deal through military instructions with the institutional incongruence of the two track system. For instance, for incentives to their workers, the military opened parallel distribution channel, in a clear discrimination to the rest of the economy.

When Raul Castro acknowledged that a Fidel in command model was unsustainable without Fidel Castro at the helm of the state. all the FAR high command aligned behind his leadership for the new mission. There are not separate documents from



those of the CCP to show how the FAR high command reached the conclusion that the CCP needed an adaptation strategy in which it can rely less on totalitarian political mobilization if it was able to show an efficient economic performance. It is not necessary because the whole high command of the FAR was already present in the Politburo of the CCP.

*The FAR and the CCP upper echelons coincide not only in policies but also in personalities.* It is not difficult to see the FAR national security logic behind the explanations of Raul Castro and his minister of Economy Marino Murillo about how economic growth might compensate the political losses associated to the passing of the revolutionary generation. The deepening of the economic reform was a demand by the CCP cadres and FAR regional and units' commanders because they saw synergies between political stability, national security and economic growth. The military is keenly aware of the positive experience of the provinces with higher foreign investment and more market oriented sectors.

Politically, economic growth- their thinking is- might help to redesign the CCP bases for domination in a more pluralistic political system as well. That is why the new instrumental attitude towards markets and private property doesn't imply an embrace of

its virtues, but represents a major watershed<sup>55</sup>. The question of the economic system to adopt became essentially a political not an ideological question. The two tracks strategy that began as a temporary act of survival for the command economy began to be seen by military policymakers as a stage in the consolidation of a new model, more market oriented.

### **2.3 The VI Congress of the CCP: A change of strategy within the dual track system**

In 2008 Fidel Castro retired explicitly from power marking the end of charismatic rule. The CCP political position deteriorated radically in the second half of the 2000's as a combination of endogenous and exogenous factors. The special relation with Venezuela reached its limits. The years in crisis had affected the credibility of the organization as a capable actor to put back the country in a path of economic growth with equality.

In a memorable session of the National Assembly in August 2010, Raul Castro said that if the CCP does not put the economy in order, "the revolution" will sink ("noshundimos") in the abyss. The 2000's had shown signals of recovery but compared to the magnitude of the 1992 debacle, a 3 % average growth of Cuban GDP was far from

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<sup>55</sup>In a discussion at the magazine Temas of the Cuban ministry of Culture, former Cuban Ambassador to Brussels Carlos Alzugaray criticized Che Guevara's quote about "the impossibility of building socialism and development using capitalist tools". Alzugaray declared that the country has paid a heavy price for not questioning this "official truth". See <http://unguajiroilustrado.com/2013/03/21/valentia-intelectual/> accessed June 3, 2013.

the minimum discussed by economists and officials around 5-7 %. The government was also victim of its own successes avoiding a shock therapy “big bang” scenario. Cuban economists Omar Everleny and Pavel Vidal described the situation: “the cost of the crisis was thus distributed among all the state employees as an alternative to massive unemployment and sending thousands to abject poverty”(Everleny, 2013). This partial reform diffusion of the losers across the economic spectrum made demands for deeper changes to pile up.

The VI Congress of the CCP took place in 2011, fourteen years after the fifth in 1997(The party supposed to have a congress every five years) and was divided in two sessions: the first main part to discuss a plan for economic reform, and elect a new leadership, mainly at the Central Committee, not so much at the Politburo, and a second conference to discuss the adjustment the reform and new circumstances bring to the party life.

Economic reform was a central theme of the congress that insisted on preserving the one party system. The party declared the end of egalitarianism, as a deviation from the socialist search for equality, and criticized its previous stigmatization of market and private property. Yet, it insisted that state property was the central bulwark of socialism, and the spine of the economy the CCP aspired to build. This ideological shift was

explicitly expressed in the “Economic and Social Guidelines” of the VI Congress of the CCP.

From a leadership point of view, Raul Castro was in a privileged position to launch a new phase of the economic reform. He was the leader of the military. His loyalists, Jose Machado Ventura in the first place, had the organization department and provincial party czars under their control. No one in the Cuban nomenclature could outflank him from the left, given his revolutionary credentials. He counted also with FAR, the organization he has been for almost five decades the supreme commander.

Raul Castro led the CCP to change its conception of the dual track system from a temporary tool to sustain the command economy to a strategy of transition to a mixed economy. In the new vision, market related efficiency gains increases the chances of the CCP to remain in power. The new economic model was presented as an adaptation of socialism and planning to the new circumstances but it implies substantive change to the political treatment of market oriented structures. It is worth to quote the ten general bases for the new model approved by VI Congress of the CCP (the italics are mine):

1. The socialist planning system will continue to be the main national management tool of the national economy. Its methodology and organization and control must be modified. *Economic planning will influence on the market and take into account its characteristics.*
2. The management model recognizes and *encourages* socialist State-owned companies – the main national economic modality - *as well as the foreign investment forms described in the law (e.g., joint ventures and international*

*association contracts), cooperatives, small farming, usufruct, franchisement, self-employment and other economic forms that may altogether contribute to increased efficiency.*

3. In the forms of non-State management, *the concentration of property* in the hands of any natural or legal person shall not be allowed.

4. The structural, functional, organizational and economic changes in the business sector, State-funded entities and the entire State administrative apparatus will be introduced *on the basis of a schedule, in an orderly and disciplined way and in compliance with the policy that has been approved.* Workers shall be informed of the process and their recommendations shall be listened to, all of which will require training at every level to facilitate their implementation.

5. Planning shall include State-owned companies; the Government funded entities, the international economic associations, and *also regulate other applicable forms of non-State management.* Planning shall be more objective at all levels. The new planning methods will modify economic control methods. Territorial planning shall take into consideration these transformations.

6. *The separation between State and business functions shall be a gradual and orderly process.* The definition of standards is key to the satisfaction of the proposed targets.

7. It is necessary that the country's business system be made up of efficient, effective and well organized firms and new oversight business management organizations be established. Intercompany cooperation shall be promoted for higher efficiency and better quality. Legal instruments shall be defined to regulate the above.

8. The increase in the powers vested upon entity managers shall be associated with their higher responsibility for efficiency, effectiveness and for their control of labor utilization, financial and material resources, coupled with the requirement on the executives to account for their decisions, actions and omissions that lead to economic damages.

9. Markets shall be created for the wholesale provision and lease of equipment, supplies and implements *without subsidies to enterprises, State-funded entities and non-State organizations.*

10. *The business relations between companies, State-funded entities and non-State organizations shall be formalized in economic contracts.* The quality of the negotiation, drafting, execution and operation of these contracts, as well as the

claims arising from their terms and the oversight of their compliance shall be a requirement and an essential tool for economic management (Cuban Communist Party, 2011).

The logic of partial reform continued together with gradualism as the approach for an orderly change concerned first with domestic stability. The CCP proclaimed its opposition to concentration of property and reiterated the primordial value of “socialist-state owned companies”. But the trend became also clear: A combination of a state-led development with a growing role for contracts, and commitment to higher market discipline (elimination of subsidies, separation of state and managerial functions in the State owned companies, integration of the non-state and state sectors.

Even the issue of resistance to concentration of property operated more as a declaration than a reality. The promotion of the non-state sector, and the liberalization of prices and salaries create space for capitalist accumulation by segments of the elites disenchanted with communism and released from Fidel Castro’s ideological discipline. The CCP might not endorse these trends and fight them but it will have to confront segments of its own base empowered by the economic reform adopted policies.

One unresolved political problem for the CCP was how to develop a coherent policy towards a growing economic pluralism, typical of a post-totalitarian society. In addition to the command economy legacies of inefficiencies and hyper centralization, Cuba’s economic system was suffering from the growing contradictions associated to the

two-track system. The most important one was the dual currency. The salaries for most government employees allowed them just to attend their minimal needs and many goods and services were not even available for those in possession of the official currency of the country.

By 2013, Granma, the CCCP official newspaper announced the beginning of the process for reunifying the different currencies in one. The goal of currency reunification figured prominently in the Economic and Social Guidelines approved by the Cuban Communist Party in its VI Congress. The Guideline 55 says:

Progress will be made toward the establishment of a single currency on the basis of the labor productivity and effective distribution and redistribution mechanisms. The complexity of this goal will require rigorous preparation and implementation, both objectively and subjectively (Cuban Communist Party, 2011)

The reunification of the currency included a partial liberalization of prices for a large group of state owned companies (Murillo, 2014). It could represent a major step in the transition to a comprehensive mixed economy. The official note in Granma subtly highlighted the need to give back to the currency functions that are typical of a market economy. “It is imperative to re-establish the Cuban peso’s value and its role as money, which is as a unit of accounting, means of payment, and savings” (Granma, 2013).

The Guidelines do not constitute a precise reform plan or a coherent design of changes. They are at best a list of principles to transform the economy. But Cuba’s

economic changes under Raul Castro were not the outcome of an improvisation or launched on an accidental or unsystematic way. All the major decisions taken had in common a more market friendly orientation than the previous situation under Fidel, but without abandoning the partial reform logic of control. The promotion or declaration of purpose of integrating non-state and state sectors, unleashing rather than limiting the expansion of the non-state sector, have been a consistent response to bottlenecks and crisis in the implementation of the reforms.

The move to a mixed economy was accompanied by vertical mechanisms of political deliberation and consultation with the population. In Fritz Scharpf's terminology<sup>56</sup>, the CCP procured to combine "output legitimacy" (by performance, preserving social stability and achieving economic growth<sup>57</sup>) with an "input legitimacy"

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<sup>56</sup>It is important to clarify that I am using Fritz Scharpf's concepts (Scharpf, 1999) out of the democratic contexts for which they were conceived. This might appear as a heresy for some researchers of non-democratic regimes because they don't acknowledge any legitimacy to them. In my view input legitimacy (political equality for instance, deliberation, and accountability) is a matter of degree, not a dichotomy.

<sup>57</sup>Bruce Gilley (Gilley, 2009) argues that performance legitimacy is an "oxymoron" or a "redundant concept" because legitimacy is "a particular type of political support that is grounded in common good or shared moral evaluations". As I presented in the introductory chapter, the CCP was at the same time a communist and a totalitarian nationalist party. Nationalism as a matrix of values represents a notion of common good that serve as stamp of legitimacy when goals such as political order, social peace, economic development and preservation of sovereign rights, connected to it, are achieved. This line of thought connects with Samuel Huntington's idea that while "in the past, tradition, religion, the divine right of kings and social deference provided



(based on consultation and deliberation within the boundaries of the dominant ideologies of socialism and nationalism). These consultations serve to channel demands that the CCP tries to transform in outcomes and also to gain support by providing a nationalist space. (In Easton's terms (Easton, 1965), the strengthening of the feeling of belonging to a common political community, , and the belief on the capacity of the one-party system to cope with the polity problems.)

Ideologically, the CCP guided debate gives a positive twist-although not without due regulation- to small and medium private property, market competition, and foreign investment. This trilogy was considered in the old system at least "remnants of capitalism" destined to disappear and at worst counterrevolutionary<sup>58</sup>. The consultation served also as a feedback mechanism to plan the time and sequence of the changes aligning the specific conditions of the regional and sectorial elites tied to the party.

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legitimation for non-democratic rule... In modern times authoritarianism has been justified by nationalism and by ideology" (Huntington (1991) *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, University of Oklahoma Press. P. 46).

<sup>58</sup>One interesting sample of the tensions in the debate about these issues was the roundtable in the Cuban magazine *Temas*(Chiappi, 2014)about the 1968 as a decisive year in the history of the revolution and particularly the conversation about the "revolutionary offensive" when Fidel Castro in March 13 of that year (Castro F. , 1968) launched a campaign to nationalize most small and medium size businesses labelling them seeds and remnants of capitalist exploitation and gatherings of anti-socialist elements. The panelist, economist Rogelio Torras concluded that the "offensive" was a mistake of "idealism" in which the revolutionary leadership took control of the small businesses and proved to be incapable of managing them efficiently.

Raul Castro criticized past stigmatization of markets and non-state economic actors but without punishing anyone responsible of the previous policies since they were the party line. Many of the cadres responsible for the old policies were rewarded with the responsibility for the new ones, not only because of their loyalty but also due to their vigilance against the political consequences of adopting market structures. Terms such as marketization, economic reform, private property, competition are frequently avoided with the use of more obscure concepts such as actualization (updating) for reform, non-state sector for private and cooperative companies, self-employed (cuentapropistas) for small entrepreneurs.

One major problem of the silence about market economics is the almost absence of a discussion about competition. Monopolistic governmental structures controlled by the state consolidated in the form of companies associated to the military like GAESA or corporations controlled by the Council of State. Cuba's government apparatus and CCP bureaucrats have received the impact of the programmatic statements of the VI Party Congress and the subsequent legislation to expand private business, attract foreign investment, create the Special Economic Zone of Mariel, privatize cafeterias and restaurants in the form of cooperative and stop stigmatizing private owners and markets. At the same time, they "muddled through" (Lindblom, 1979), solving problems incrementally without engaging in a massive rationalization change of the business-labor structures in which they work and live.

Between 2011 and 2015 the economic transformation crossed a point of no return: a) it lifted limits to the hiring of workers by private entrepreneurs, b) it expanded the land leasing programs and the amount of land to be assigned to peasants (by October 2013 1 588 000 hectares were already leased under Law-Decrees 259 and 300),c) In January 2013, the authorities implemented law 113 providing some coherence and organization to the incipient tax system created in the 1990's with the law-decree308 about norms and procedures for tax payments. d) In May 2013, the Council of Ministers adopted resolution 7 387 creating financial incentives to private activities, including house repairing, agriculture and constructions, e) Between 2011 and 2014, the government proposed and designed a legal system for the creation of second degree cooperatives, a type of associations that small owners and simple cooperatives can use to expand their production. f) In 2013 the government announced a plan to end the dual currency system and began to implement a sliding system of exchange rates with the declared purpose of ending the distortions to *market efficiency and assessments* associated with the use of the CUC. g) In January 2014 with Brazilian cooperation, the government inaugurated the Special Economic Zone of Mariel with the expressed purpose contained in Law-decree 313 (2013) of attracting foreign capitalist investors with incentives that reduces or avoid the level of regulation, taxing and red tape bottlenecks associated to the legacy of a command economy.

The continuation of the logic of partial reform is reflected in Richard Feinberg's diagnosis about the Cuban government's attitude towards foreign investment in 2012:

Since assuming the presidency in 2008, Raul Castro has sent contradictory signals regarding foreign investment. In principle, Cuba's foreign investment laws offer favorable conditions and- as the case studies reveal- some JVs are successfully navigating the Cuban economic system. But the government has been keeping many suitors waiting for the final green light. The owners of the prime commercial office space in Havana have been unable to secure authorization for next-phase construction. An international hotel chain that offered to refurbish the shabby downtown Havana Libre hotel was refused an equity share. Brazilian negotiators have been urging Cuba to allow large investment in sugar mills and associated ethanol plants, only to be frustrated by "political symbolism"- lingering fears of compromising the sacred gains of the revolution and endangering national security. (Feinberg, 2012, p. 5)

Government's response to those concerns about Cuba's commitment to opening the economy to foreign investment was the approval in March 2014 by the National Assembly of law 118. The law provides property rights guarantees for foreign investors against undue nationalization (only for public interest) and requires due compensation. Government officials explained to potential foreign investors how the law attempts to align Cuban regulations with international best practices of approving and implementing new investment projects together with a friendly environment for business actors in terms of low taxation of profits, the use of the labor force, etc (On Cuba Magazine, 2014).

The choice for a mixed economy is expressed as a transition to a more integrated relationship between the non-state sector and the government owned companies. Even in the financial sector where reforms have been slow, a segment of credits has been oriented towards private actors. Between 2011 and 2013, state banks gave 218 400 credits to private citizens mainly for house reparations. The loans were very insufficient but indicated a decision of the government to get out of some business and subsidies allowing citizens to contract services and pay for them directly.

### **2.3.1 Towards the end of the dual track system: a mixed market oriented economy**

The dual track system is not limited to the state/non state ownership divide. The most important duality is not of ownership but of coordination mechanism (plan/market). Both tracks have operated within most sectors of the industry, agriculture and services<sup>59</sup>. Farmers and companies are assigned by the government some planned production- as it was the case in the classical command economy- to sell at controlled prices but once they

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<sup>59</sup>I will exclude partially most of the foreign investments particularly in tourism because these companies operated fundamentally in the market with the exception of the salary fund that is also dual. The foreign investors paid to the government for the workers' labor and the government pays the Cuban labor force. The foreign investor also pays some extra salary or bonus to the Cuban worker to guarantee its efficiency. As I said, a technical and exhaustive discussion of the Cuban economy is beyond the goal and capacity of this study.

produce it, the reforms have allowed flexibility to sell their above plan production at higher prices in different markets with a declining scale of regulation and state intervention.

The 1990's reform idea under Fidel Castro was that firms would sell their above plan production at higher prices still regulated by the government, not at market prices. The goal seemed to be to provide incentives for higher production but limit market incentives, autonomy of the actors, competition and inequality. But with the new conception, there is a qualitative difference; the goal is to guarantee a production under control and regulation of the government to assure a minimal plateau of resources and services for government and social obligation. Beyond that, market is becoming dominant in the margin, potentially changing the structure of incentives for the behavior of the economic agents.

From been a survival tool for macroeconomic stabilization, the dual track system was shifted to be a transitional mechanism in which the Cuban economy would eventually "grow out of the plan"<sup>60</sup>. Now the policy discussion leans towards allowing farmers, cooperatives and state companies to sell at market prices once a minimal assigned production is achieved. This is a qualitative change with the expected effects (it

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<sup>60</sup>This is the title of Barry Naughton's book about China that discussed the issue in China in details. In Cuba, the dual track system did begin as a mere stabilizing and survival tool but eventually is already conceived as "a transitional device" (Naughton, *Growing out of the Plan: China's Economic Reform 1978-1993*, 1995).

is already happening) of a reduction of the black market since prices in the official economy align in the margin with market equilibrium.

The current reform under Raul Castro introduces four major new adaptations with far reaching implications for the character of the economy:

**First**, the government reduced the size of the plan by withdrawing state owned companies from vast segments of the services (cafeterias, taxis and other transportation, restaurants, etc).The consequence of this withdrawal is marketization of social relations.

**Second**; the government allowed state firms to trade and cooperate with non-state firms, allowing them autonomy to set their wages and contracts. The interactions between the two types of firms goes beyond previous mere coexistence and affect the behavior of both.

**Third**, the new law of cooperatives of 2011 provides non state firms with a legal venue to increase their output levels and coordination. Self-employed actors (small private owners) can create market driven cooperatives, and cooperatives can create second degree cooperatives (A cooperative of cooperatives).

**Fourth**, as the adopted guidelines by the CCP in its VI Congress indicated, the institutional framework for the new relations between economic actors is not the plan but *contracts* between autonomous state owned firms, cooperatives and private agents.

The implicit political silences are as important as what it is explicitly said by Raul Castro and the leaders of the “updating” process. The VI Congress of the CCP proclaimed as a goal the eventual ending of monetary duality and the integration of the different sectors of the economy. Nobody believes that this can happen as result of a policy reversal to the old command system. The political discourse of the reform includes multiple criticisms against egalitarianism, announcing the end the ration card and already allowing the sale of houses and automobiles. In this situation, all of the potential destinies are along the spectrum of a mixed economy (The question is how much competitive versus monopolistic the market driven coordination system will be).

Change is not unidirectional and there are statements and actions that express the push-pull dynamic of the reform. For instance, the CCP guidelines declared that stigmatization of private property in socialism is a mistake but oppose property concentration, a natural trend of market reproduction. Legally, the issue is now how much property concentration is unacceptable but politically the question is who is going to decide that. The balance of forces is changing in favor of managers, military and party leaders associated to the economic opening. These are the same people who profits from the new partial reform structures and in some cases accumulated wealth unequally in comparison with the rest of the population.



The effects of the new strategy on the dual track system, originally of survival, now of a transition, are essential to understand the institutional transformation. Here it is important to notice how policy frontiers are changed by the new politics, not charismatic but institutional, and the demands of economic factors that are in power. Many of these actors as the Commission for Implementation and Development and the ministry of Economy are nominally in charge of preserving the communist system but their measurable responsibility is to achieve economic growth as a cushion of domestic political stability and international legitimacy. Accordingly, the political discussion shifts from whether the economy would be more market oriented to the technical questions about speed, sequence, timing and cohesiveness to do it.

The political dilemmas of the economic transformation have to do less with CCP ideological rigidities or cycles- as it has been wrongly argued by Carmelo Mesa-Lago(Mesa-Lago, Cuba en la Era De Raul Castro, 2012)- or the opposition of the losers (workers and managers from inefficient state owned firms, party and central government bureaucrats). The new political choice is defined by the alternatives of partial reform equilibrium defended by the early winners of the reform versus the advocates of a comprehensive transformation. The dangers of entrapping the economic transformation in partial reform equilibrium are associated to the political leverage and collective action capacity developed by the winners of arbitrage and monopoly rents in the course of the current reforms.

A central arena of confrontation between the advocates of comprehensive transformation and the winners of partial reform is the question of the rule of law in the new economic situation. This is a discussion to distinguish from the demand by opposition forces about a political transition to a multiparty system. Here the actors are competing for the character of the one-party system not for its abandonment. The dilemma is not about whether the Cuban state would be democratic or not, but whether the transition to a market economic society produces a predatory or a developmental state<sup>61</sup>. Issues such as corruption, competition policy, consumers' protection and other good governance related themes are at center.

Supporters of comprehensive reform share the preference for gradualism but they understand the complementarities and interdependence of reform measures. Since they perceive economic reform from a developmental perspective, their view about political control is instrumental: it serves to preserve social stability and might help to mobilize the population for development. But political control should not become a straitjacket

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<sup>61</sup>Supporters of comprehensive reform desire a developmental state, not necessary liberal or democratic, but with important level of rule by law or consultative rule of law. This concept developed by Chinese scholar Pam Wei (Pam, 2003) is defined by the existence of zones in which the law is the central mechanism to solve conflict of interests. There are differences between rule of law and rule by law. Rule by law serves to constrain corruption and the prevalence of partial interests within the elites over the general interests of the CCP. Rule of law includes the adherence to written or common laws but also implies competitive political participation in writing and deciding the legal norms. Although rule by law represents progress in terms of predictability and might be emulated in areas outside the economy, there is no evidence to guarantee that its is a step towards rule of law.

against productivity gains associated to entrepreneurial initiative and access to information (internet for instance).

In contrast, partial reform equilibriums have empowered a set of different supporters. **First**, it created a class of winners with a predatory behavior that pursue not the general interests of the system and the CCP but their own. Some believe that the CCP is in its way out and therefore they should take advantage of their power position to accumulate wealth and influence. If the comprehensive reformers look at China and East Asia as their central reference to emulate, the partial reform winners have their eyes in after communism Russia. **Second**, there are defenders of the partial reform because of their preference for the totalitarian system and the type of social control it brings. This segment of the CCP has a conservative agenda based on nostalgia for the “good old days” when capitalism was shut out of the system.

In addition, there are segments of the military establishment that look at the economic reform as a security challenge because of its vulnerability to foreign influences and the centrifugal effects markets cause in terms of inequality. Although not profiting from partial reform equilibrium they are politically sympathetic to suspicious arguments about market structures. Internationally, the preferences of these groups are to keep special ties with those great powers that have a strategic rivalry with the United States.

Russia and China are the suppliers of Cuba's armament and the closer allies of its military.

Upon consolidating presidential power, President Raul Castro, has assembled a coalition of military leaders, technocrats from the emerging corporations, and party bureaucrats to form the political stronghold of his rule. As important as those who gathered around Raul Castro and his Vice-president Jose R. Machado Ventura it was those who were excluded or expressed dissatisfaction with it.

The pro-market reforms gained momentum after the purge of formerly high-ranking officials, Carlos Lage and Felipe Perez Roque and subsequent consolidation of a new Cabinet of Ministers<sup>62</sup>. Lage and Perez-Roque were not known for opposing reform but they had their own turf within the Cuban elites, never part of the inner circle around Raul. As later was revealed they both had the political aspiration to place Lage in the succession line after Raul (Frank, Cuban Revelations: Behind the Scenes in Havana), and tried to achieve so by cultivating Fidel's favor.

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<sup>62</sup>Given Carlos Lage's role in the 1990's reforms as the economy czar and his younger age than Raul's, many observers saw his demise as the closing of chances of market oriented changes. Life proved them wrong. The consolidation of power around the high command of the FAR and a group of party bureaucrats provided the winners with confidence for launching unprecedented market oriented changes in Cuba's post 1959 history. Of course any normative evaluation of these events cannot ignore that the new wave of economic reforms were launched by leaders with hard-line ideological credentials and a declared commitment to maintain the undemocratic rule of the CCP.

The removal of these two young politicians who had been instrumental in the promotion of the two-track system under Fidel unlocked the debate about reforms because it strengthened the unity and political confidence of the dominant block. The CCP and the FAR consolidated their union and feel assured that their political rule was not at risk. As result the coalition adopted a pragmatic approach to economic policy, openly stealing (obviously without acknowledging it) ideas proclaimed by past reformers, and even opponents to the regime, such as opening spaces for private property and releasing the state from the burden of managing small businesses.

These intra-party politics gradually defined a new course in which ideological discussion is downplayed while economic modernization becomes central to all government functions. In contrast to its response to the limited reforms of the 1990's, the party press is echoing these talking points and doing so largely with unanimity. The CCP propaganda machine from the provincial newspapers to publications such as "Juventud Rebelde" of the Young Communist League or "Trabajadores", from the Trade Union Central, even the Cuban Communist Party's main newspaper, "Granma" are now endorsing the reforms<sup>63</sup>. Self-employment as "a tool to increase efficiency and

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<sup>63</sup>Even Fidel Castro has come out of his retirement to say in several of his columns that the old concepts of socialism need to be reassessed. In Cuban intellectual discourse, found in publications like the Ministry of Culture's journal, *Temas*, or even in letters to the editor in *Granma*, the emerging consensus is much the same- that the main problem with the economy is how to reform it.

productivity”, and repudiating “those views that condemned self-employment almost to extinction and stigmatized those who participated legally in this activity” (Granma, 2010)<sup>64</sup>. A central part of the discussion is the need to decentralize economic decisions and enable managers to make the most important decisions with respect to production plans and hiring and firing of workers.

The policy frontiers changed as result of a coordinated ideological shift and a wider space for technocratic discussion. The Center for the Study of the Cuban Economy, Cuba’s primary economic research institute, produced several books about the potential role of cooperatives and private contracts for small and medium-size companies. Several of his researchers are part of different task forces of the Commission for the development and implementation of the Economic Updating. Every paper produced by the Center advocated for a more pro-active and open attitude towards foreign investment than the current one<sup>65</sup>.

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<sup>64</sup>The direct quotes in Spanish are: “una alternativa para incrementar niveles de productividad y eficiencia” and Granma repudiation goes against: “aquellas concepciones que condenaron el trabajo por cuenta propia casi a la extinción y estigmatizaron a quienes decidieron sumarse legalmente a él en la década de los noventa”. Granma, Sept 24, 2010.

<sup>65</sup>For examples of these papers see “Cambios Estructurales para Desarrollar la economía de Cuba” de Miguel A. Figueras (Figueras, 2014), and “Relanzamiento de la inversión extranjera en Cuba: necesidad para el desarrollo económico” de Omar Everleny Perez

Market oriented practices such as hiring workers part-time or temporarily and ownership and rent of means of production are now defined as politically correct. Marino Murillo, Minister of Economy and Planning, now a Vice-President of a Council of State and the member of the Cabinet in charge of the economic reform, told the National Assembly that the country must prepare its institutions to absorb at least 250,000 new workers into the private sector, and another 215,000 in cooperatives during the first half of 2011. For the first time since 1968, the party endorsed the private sector as a legitimate employment and development alternative.

Raul Castro and the members of his economic team have also begun criticizing traditional political rhetoric of the not-so-distant past, such as blaming the American embargo for most of the country's problems, and discussing social policy separated from economic sustainability. The "Guidelines"<sup>66</sup> made clear the government was planning to end many of the so-called "paternalistic" policies. The document announces the end of "unnecessary subsidies and gratuities" and anticipates "the orderly elimination of the

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(Perez, *Relanzamiento de la inversion extranjera en Cuba: necesidad para el desarrollo economico*, 2014)

<sup>66</sup>The Guidelines or "Lineamientos" are the program of economic and social reform adopted at the VI Congress of the CCP.

ration card”.<sup>67</sup> By the end of 2014 about 600 000 state employees were dismissed or relocated to non-state jobs (cooperatives and small private business). Although these plans to fire workers were later paused, the issue of ending the high level of sub-employment in the state sector typical of the command economy has been reiterated by Raul Castro, Marino Murillo, and others.

One of the proposals contained in the Lineamientos document is “a review of current prohibitions that limit internal trade”. This referred mainly to the restrictions on the purchase and sale of computers, hotel services, cell phones, cars and houses. More flexible rules governing areas such as these were openly welcome by ordinary Cubans. Reformists also believe such measures could help a collateral market for loans, easing the road to a much-needed bankruptcy law. These measures are seen as minor by some foreign observers but they fit in the logic of developing early support for more complicated reforms.

At the core of the emerging system is the use of contracts and the end of wage ceiling limitations. One instance that demonstrates the government’s changing response to criticism from the population is its reaction to the frequently expressed need for wholesale markets and credit to development private-sector activities. As opposed to what happened in the 1990’s, the authorities declared the idea worthy of implementation.

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<sup>67</sup>Point 44 and Point 162 of the “Social and Economic Guidelines of the VI Congress of the CCP” (Cuban Communist Party, 2011).



Economic priorities have been reordered, with agriculture at the top. Before the revolution, although with great inequality and some malnutrition, Cuba produced 80 % of its food consumption. Today, only 25 % of the Cuban population lives in the countryside and the country imports 80 % of its food according to the World Food Program (Program, 2015). Agricultural inefficiency costs the government \$ 2 Billion every year. Agricultural reform is an area in which the security establishment warned the leadership since the 1990's that this is a neuralgic issue that can create governance problems if it is not properly addressed. Many international observers also look at reform in agriculture and the sugar industry as the ultimate test for the capacity of the Cuban government to put in place a sustainable alternative.

One decision that seems to have already been made regarding agricultural production is to decentralize authority to the provinces, municipalities and to the units of production. The government is also encouraging greater agricultural production by raising procurement prices, and distributing private plots (through ten years leases- Decree 259 -2008) and cropping contracts. In terms of use of the land, Cuba's agriculture is not anymore statist. At the management level, there is a push to provide cooperatives and private peasants greater autonomy. In some cases, collective mechanisms are abandoned without an official statement and the land is divided among the workers who manage it. In some of the UBPC (Basic Units of Cooperative Production), farm workers have modest parcels for their own private production.

## **2.4 Uncertainties and Political Challenges of the Economic Reform**

The economic adjustment is an inextricable part of the redesign of the political model. The political determination of the economic reform is expressed in the documents of the VI Congress of the Communist Party in which the priority of preserving party leadership is explicitly declared. The party presented the economic changes as essential to accomplish political goals such as: the preservation of domestic stability, the nationalist aspirations to defeat the U.S. embargo and the need to play a role in the Latin American region.

The changes are taking place in the context of a partial reform equilibrium inherited from the previous reform wave of the 1990's. The partial reform equilibrium is clustered around three fundamental conditions: the dual track monetary situation with multiple exchange regimes, the creation of strong monopolies associated to a few state owned corporations and the centralized ministries, and the foreign investment regime in which the state exert a discretionary authority limiting access to the national market. The legacy of these three set of policies is aggravated by a political culture of the Cuban elites that positively opposed shock therapy strategies but it is insensitive to the costs of excessive gradualism.

These characteristics are reinforced by powerful actors that profits from the partial reform equilibrium situation. Although there are technical consideration of the

economic nature of the challenges the government faces; the decision-making process, and the prism under which reform policy choices are analyzed and decided, follows essentially a political logic. Economic efficiency considerations and the timing and sequencing of the changes are always filtered by the CCP's political convenience and national security calculations. This feature explain consistently not only the slowness of the reform process in certain areas but also how some complementary steps of reforms that are already in place are delayed.

Another way in which political orientation shapes the content of the economic reform is by framing the political debate about the changes. The new discourse of reform emerged from the CCP's necessity of restoring confidence on its capacity to lead the country after the disastrous years of the "special period". The post-revolutionary Cuban elites admit that the heroic narrative of past struggles or the nationalist narrative alone cannot keep the Communist Party in power without addressing the issue of economic sustainability and food security.

The 1990's reforms proved the importance of taking more market oriented changes, not less. The gap between this social consensus and the anti-market rhetoric of the official discourse was undermining the CCP's political base little by little. But this popular enthusiasm for market liberalization runs counterintuitive to important long trends of Cuban past. Even before Fidel Castro took power in 1959, Cuba had a culture of

heavy state interventionism in the economy. Sugar, the main Cuban product then, was a commodity heavily managed by U.S government quotas and international agreements. In response to that situation, the Cuban government intervened frequently to promote corporatist pact between the different producers and between them and the labor movement.

The pro-state intervention bias was strengthened during the years of communist rule in which official stigmatization of market mechanisms became an act of faith. The adoption of market oriented reforms by the leaders of the most radical pro-state intervention political party in Cuban history has path breaking dimensions but it includes also elements of continuity. The path continuity is determined by the dominance of a state centered approach to development, the path departure happened in reference to a trend to reinforce state interventionism since the mid-thirties. For the first time since then, there is a general a consensus that sees market and integration to the world economy as a central engine not an obstacle for development.

A major flaw in comparison with the experiences of China and Vietnam is the failure of the reforms in agriculture to produce a food production recovery. Despite all of the priority assigned to the sector, and the measures taken to expand the flexibility of the law-Decreets 259 and 300, the production of grain, milk, vegetables and meat was stagnant and in some cases even decreased between 2018 and 2013. This situation is

particularly delicate because of the world market trends to higher food prices and the heavy dependence on the ration cards by the poorest sectors of the population.

The reforms are obviously generating winners and losers and it is difficult to determine what kinds of policies the government will use to compensate the latter. Workers in Cuba's social services such as education and health have already been disadvantaged by the development of Cuban tourism and other industries with access to hard currency or CUC. There is no evidence that in the coming years, even if the economy prospers, health and education professionals will share in rising wages or improvements to living standards in the same proportion of those in the favored sectors of tourism and foreign investment

Fears that market changes could lead to high levels of poverty and unemployment runs especially high among Cuba's most vulnerable groups. Unemployment in the absence of a cushion structure of assistance can have dramatic consequences if an economic recovery doesn't happen and poverty overlaps with racial and regional identities. Civil society groups, particularly within Cuba's black population, have mobilized quickly to warn about the risk of forcing blacks and the poor to bear the burden of the adjustment.

The creation of a more business friendly environment as part of the transition from the two track system to a mixed one has increased the structural inequality that the revolution mitigated for decades. In the absence of a deep financial system most capital to start up new businesses come from remittances sent by the Cuban American community that is overwhelmingly white and connected to relatives in Havana and the urban centers. Here, as it was the case in the former communist countries in Eastern Europe, partial reform equilibrium had paralyzed institutional changes that might empower the state with resources to counter the negative impact of the reform in the inequality gap (Hellman, 1998).

The absence of certain concepts from the “Guidelines” as a reform plan is particularly worrisome because there are problems associated with gradual transitions to mixed economies that the CCP could alert its base about and didn’t. Together, a delayed reform and a hybrid system create ample opportunities for corruption and monopolist practices, in which officials exploit rent seeking opportunities due to the disjuncture between the different economic tracks and currencies. In its original version, the “Lineamientos” does not discuss competition policy, consumer protection or a

corruption-minimizing-strategy<sup>68</sup>. For a Communist Congress, it is also curious that the word “trade unions” was blatantly absent from the document<sup>69</sup>.

Some of the discussion of the reforms is based primarily on criticizing the current system, but there is little reflection about challenges that the implementation of new policies will bring. The experiences of gradualism in East Asia emphasize the role of proper timing and sequence. Cuba’s process of decentralization might cause the central government to reduce its capacity to manage reforms or worse, decentralize corruption.

Finally there is the issue of certain categories of human capital that are vital for the reforms but Cuba has a serious deficit of them. In the discussion of the economic transition from plan to market, the issue of a good assignation of property rights is particularly important. It is cardinal also not to underestimate the significance of market institutions, particularly those associated with the creation of a competitive framework and a commitment to let bad firms fail.

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<sup>68</sup>The concepts were vaguely incorporated after the document was discussed by the population and the membership.

<sup>69</sup>In May 2013 the Congress of the CCP controlled CTC (Confederation of Cuban workers) was postponed because of lack of definition about some of the reforms and the role of the trade unions in the new economic model.

Transition economics found important to underline the different relevance of property rights in the context of small and medium firms in which there is no principal-agent problem because owner and manager are the same person and the situations in which they are different actors, making more important the nature of contracts and how complete they are. Cuba will need some time and international assistance to develop lawyers, auditors, accountants and managers aware of how these institutions and norms work. It will have to do it without any significant support of the major international economic organizations because of the U.S. embargo, at least in the short term.

Although the current phase of intra-party debate is focused on the economic and social dimensions of reform, and while the CCP attempts to insulate the economic changes from producing pressure for a transition to multi-party democracy, these economic changes will have profound political implications. It is true that the Cuban opposition is today exiguous but the economic reform could foster political resentment on which even disorganized and divided actors could capitalize. Workers in state sectors, particularly health and education, would not remain passive if their salaries remain stagnant while others prosper.



## Chapter Three: Cuba's Political liberalization

### 3.1 Introduction

The Cuban Communist Party (CCP) has demonstrated a noteworthy capacity of survival to important external and internal shocks. After the demise of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, Cuba adapted to a post-Cold War world. After Fidel Castro's retirement, the organization embarked on the route of economic reform but without any interest in adopting liberal democracy. Even those in the dominant elite who recognized the possibility of a potential path to a multi-party system- such as Mariela Castro<sup>70</sup>- pointed out that such change will only be conceivable after the end of the U.S. embargo.

The discussion in this chapter is guided by the literature about political development and democratization theory. In terms of typology it follows the view presented by Alfred Stepan and Juan Linz about four different types of non-democratic regimes (totalitarian, post-totalitarian, sultanistic and authoritarian.)(Linz, Juan & Stepan,

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<sup>70</sup>Mariela Castro is the second daughter of Raul Castro and VilmaEspin. She is a prominent advocate of LGBTQ rights in Cuba and the Director of the CENESEX, the Center for Sexual Education, a government institution associated with the Cuban Women Federation. CENESEX is considered an amphibious institution (a concept to discuss later) because it is a state institution but it has played an important role in the articulation of societal demands against gender and sexual orientation based discrimination. Mariela Castro's declarations about the pertinence of multiparty democracy in Cuba once the embargo ends were made in interview for CNN with ChristianneAmampour. CNN, June 4, 2012.

Alfred 1996). Regimes change along four central dimensions: leadership, pluralism, ideology and mobilization associated to five arenas of democratization: institutionalized economic society, autonomous political society, rule of law, development of a capable state and free civil society (Linz, Juan & Stepan, Alfred 1996).

The fact that the Cuban party-state doesn't intent to adopt a multi-party system in the short term does not diminish the relevance of significant political changes taken just to avoid such scenario. There are political *intra-regime changes* associated to personnel, generations, interpretations of central ideology, etc. There are also changes from one regime to a different one.

In this chapter, I discuss the political liberalization process that has taken place in Cuba and its effects on two variables, *domestic stability* and *international legitimacy*. The Cuban political system is distinct in its origins, experiences and institutional structure from any other case in Latin America. It is the result of a nationalist revolution but also of a consolidated totalitarian party-state rooted in class mobilization with the ultimate goal of communism rather than market development. Political liberalization in the Cuban context implies an attempt to preserve the political order created by this regime by opening and modernizing it.

A key concept to understand political liberalization is post-totalitarian resilience because it defines political change within continuity. Post-totalitarianism has its origins in the dynamic pressures for liberalization and adaptation faced by the party-state in terms of economic, social, and cultural pluralism as result of the exhaustion of its massive mobilization mechanism of legitimacy. "In a post-totalitarian society, the historical reference, both for the power holders of the regime and the opposition is the previous totalitarian regime"- explained Linz and Stepan(Linz, Juan & Stepan, Alfred 1996, 43). "By definition,- these authors added- the existence of a previous totalitarian regime means that most of the pre-existing sources of responsible and organized pluralism have been eliminated or repressed and a totalitarian order has been established" (Linz, Juan & Stepan, Alfred 1996, 43).

Political liberalization in the Cuban context is signed by the concept of "detotalitarianization"<sup>71</sup>. The prevailing detotalitarianization under Fidel Castro followed the path of "post-totalitarianism by decay". The Cuban party-state reluctantly acquiesced to dismantle part of its social and economic control as result of the degeneration of mass mobilization and the bankruptcy of the command economy model. Trends of "detotalitarianization by societal conquest" took place when different organizations from

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<sup>71</sup>Linz and Stepan described a cycle that encompasses forms of post-totalitarianism based on varying degrees of distance from the totalitarian paradigm: early post-totalitarianism, frozen post-totalitarianism and mature post-totalitarianism. Detotalitarianization is the process by which the regimes becomes more pluralistic, less ideology driven, less charismatic in its leadership and depends less on mass mobilization.

civil society develop areas of autonomy taking advantage of the vacuum left behind by the economic and political withdrawal of the party-state after the 1990's .

There were also important dynamics of “detotalitarianization by choice”. Cuba’s post-revolutionary elites realized after the collapse of the Soviet Union that success against American regime change design would require a less vertical relation with some non-governmental actors. Raul Castro’s presidency has completed a political transition from totalitarianism to post-totalitarianism. This political liberalization is an essential part of the CCP adaptation to the new globalized, more market oriented, post-Fidel context. The adoption of a mixed economy structure made political reform unavoidable as a way to cope with the softening of the state-party complex’s control over the population and the release of tensions associated to disparities of economic growth, income and wealth distribution by the abandonment of the command economy model.

Liberalization does not entail a transition to democracy but it is significantly consequential in terms of improvement of some human rights, changes in the state-civil society relations and the character of the post-revolutionary state. As Charles Tilly demonstrated in his book “Democracy”, democratization and de-democratization are long term social processes of contentious politics that include economic, political and social

dimension<sup>72</sup>. Even if Cuba were shifting towards a more democratic polity in institutional or ideological terms, this does not mean the end of the socialist or nationalist cultural hegemony or a transition to liberal democracy.

The lines that separate change and reconfiguration of post-revolutionary regimes are more diffuse than what those who emphasize rupture claim. There is a lot of arbitrariness in defining when a political regime is born or collapses. It is debatable to claim that the elites who dominated the Soviet Union are out of power in today Russia. Most of the Russian leaders, in the government and the main opposition were connected with the communist party and the state before 1989. Yet whoever claim that the Soviet System survived in Putin's Russia ignore the significant transformation that took place. Another example of this ambivalent transformation, now from Latin America, happened in 1990 with the end of Sandinista rule in Nicaragua. Was the 1990-2006 period a reconfiguration with new institutional bases of Sandinista hegemony?

The three crises described in the introduction (economic crisis, end of charismatic rule, and distrust in the Marxist ideology as capable to propose viable solutions to the current problems) expressed the exhaustion of the development possibilities of the

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<sup>72</sup>Tilly proposed the concepts of democratization as a long term process based on three major components, first, the integration of trust networks to public politics, second, the insulation of politics from categorical inequalities, and third, the end of autonomous centers of coercion and control outside the control of democratic public politics. In contrast to democratization, there is de-democratization a process that operates in the same dimensions but in opposite direction (Tilly 2007)

command economy and the incapacity to reproduce a charismatic leadership without Fidel Castro. Ideologically the reform represents a rebalancing of the central ideas of the Cuban revolution, a search for new sources of legitimacy beyond the mantle of a revolutionary history, highlighting the role of nationalism and opening a flexible discussion about the role of markets in production and distribution of goods and services. Politically it implies the transition to a type of mobilization that does not demand participation from everyone, but procures to neutralize potential opponents with mechanisms of selective repression.

### **3.1.1 The political and institutional balance of power behind Raul Castro's rise to the presidency**

By the time when Raul Castro became the president of the country, the transition to a post-totalitarian regime was well advanced. Some important remnants of totalitarian mobilization and charismatic leadership remained but the new wave of institutionalization of the CCP rule leaded by Raul Castro after 2006 was not totally new in post-Cold War Cuba. The move is better understood as a change within significant cycles of institutionalization progress and retrenchment that took place between 1959 and 1989. Raul Castro's reforms were also a response to the dismantlement of institutional

rules that the post 1992 special period brought on the hand of Fidel's charismatic projection until 2006.

When Fidel Castro left power as result of a gastrointestinal disease, he was at the apex of a pyramidal system but Cuba was not under a sultanistic regime (Linz, Juan & Stepan, Alfred 1996). Cuba was not governed by a family but by a communist party with strong ideological allegiance to socialism and nationalism. Fidel was a charismatic leader and a minimum winning coalition at the top of the system but below, the regime was in an advanced phase of the transition from totalitarianism to post-totalitarianism. In fact with the exception of the role of Fidel's charismatic leadership, the system was already post-totalitarian.

Since the constitution of the Central Committee of the CCP in 1965, and particularly since the approval of the communist constitution in 1976, Cuba developed a vast network of state and party institutions according to the Leninist paradigm but with Cuban characteristics. Just below Fidel's authority there were two important institutions with their respective leadership under Raul Castro: The Cuban Armed Forces (FAR) and the CCP.

This figure of a clear second in command was not typical of communist countries in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. In China, it was always difficult and even dangerous to be Mao's second<sup>73</sup>. In Eastern Europe, communist leaders feared to name a second in command afraid that he could be promoted by the Soviets in case of a disagreement. But in Cuba's guerrilla style politics, the second in command position seemed natural. Given his charisma, Fidel's life was the target of many attempts against the revolutionary process. Since early in the revolution, after 1959, Fidel declared his brother Raul his successor (Leonov 2015).

Raul not only was the main organizer of the Armed Forces but Fidel's right hand in the institutionalization of the CCP and other state institutions. Fidel frequently tapped on Raul's military subordinates and assigned military commander as ministers or other responsibilities. It is not inaccurate to say that Cuba was governed by a duo because the party-state was more than the two brothers, but the Castros were essentially a team. They complemented each other's main skills. While Fidel at times opted for charismatic rule

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<sup>73</sup>In China, Zhou Enlai was a kind of manager or assistant leader to Mao and he survived many of the intra-party disputes but his case can be contrasted with those of Liu Shaoqi, president of the PRC between the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, and Lin Biao, Mao's anointed successor who died in an air accident in Mongolia, after a series of conflict with Mao.



and totalitarian mobilization, Raul Castro emphasized a more institutionalized Leninist party type of domination<sup>74</sup>.

Raul Castro's role as second in command also shaped the balance between the different institutions in Cuba's power structure. This situation partially explains his speedy consolidation at the helm of the Cuban state once Fidel retired. As Minister of the Cuban Armed Forces, Raul developed the officer corps as his permanent political base. The officers were promoted in the ranks according to political loyalty but also following professional institutional well written rules, educational routines, and constantly under the surveillance of the military counterintelligence, a powerful security service subordinated directly to his command.

Raul Castro's central role in Cuba's institutionalization was heavily influential in shaping another Cuba's difference from the typical Communist state: The FAR was not the junior partner in the association with the CCP, particularly at the level of its top echelons. Fidel and Raul's military identities created a political unbalance in civil-military relations.

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<sup>74</sup>There are many wrong facts and arguments in former CIA Cuba chief analyst Brian Latell account about Cuba's political system but his explanation about Fidel and Raul Castro distribution of functions with charismatic and institutional roles as a major strength of Cuba's government is well presented (Latell 2005).

From the times of the struggle against Batista's dictatorship, political balance within the Fidelista camp tilted toward the Rebel Army under Fidel, Raul and Che Guevara. The political directorate and the bases of support for the guerrillas in the underground movement suffered heavier leadership losses and had to operate in a less centralized manner. After the triumph of the revolution, a narrative was developed inside Cuba and outside that promoted the idea that the revolution was decided almost entirely by the role of the rebel army, the skeleton of the FAR, reducing the underground movement to a mere auxiliary role<sup>75</sup>.

Fidel Castro's highest political position was his military title: "Commander in Chief of the Revolution". There were even two presidents between 1959 and 1976, the first one even dared to challenge Fidel in 1959. President Manuel Urrutia was forced to resign by massive demonstrations in support of Fidel Castro when the latter resigned in protest for Urrutia's position against communist presence in Cuba's government. The revolution was where the weapons were, and the weapons were with Fidel. No coalition within the revolutionary camp could defeat Fidel Castro's charismatic authority.

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<sup>75</sup>This narrative has been disproved by several memoirs of clandestine fighters in the underground movement published in Cuba in the last twenty years (Oltuski 2002). In English, the role of the underground movement was vindicated by Julia Sweig in her book "Inside the Cuban Revolution" (Sweig 2002).

But charisma was not enough to govern the country. In Nelson Valdes' words: "charisma needs organization" (Valdes 2008, 37) While the supreme leader engaged in massive revolutionary campaigns and deployed an international agenda that placed Cuba in the world stage, fighting apartheid or sending doctors to the most remote regions of the world, his younger brother managed the institutional base for guaranteeing a minimal plateau of order and stability. By 1974-1975, the CCP developed some political institutions (People's power) as an additional source of domestic legitimacy. Raul Castro explained then:

The establishment of the representative institutions of our state is an extremely important step forward in our revolutionary process. It completes the elements of our proletarian government. During the first few years of the struggle for survival, this was neither indispensable nor vital-and might even have proved a hindrance to the speed with which the government had to act at that time. Now in the new conditions, this has become a pressing need, a basic element of our government through which the people's participation will be given regular, real and systematic institutional form (R. Castro, Improving our democracy 2008)

At times, such as the First Congress of the CCP, Fidel Castro acknowledged distortions associated with transferring military methods to civilian institutions (F. Castro, Informe del Comité Central del PCC, Primer Congreso del Partido Comunista de Cuba 1978). In the political scheme, the CCP, not the Armed Forces, supposed to be the main organ of power, first of all, because its role was to produce political hegemony. Fidel's solution to this civil-military relationships conundrum was to have the entire high

military command in the Politburo and many members of the FAR upper echelon in the Central Committee of the CCP.

But this was a pseudo-solution in the long term. The primordial function of Armed Forces is not persuading and governing, but national defense. Military leaders don't train every day to persuade but to command. The overrepresentation of the military expresses a correlated underrepresentation of the CCP politicians in the Politburo, those who are in charge of persuading and do the political work. This situation creates a particular "cognitive dissonance" because under the Leninist design, promoted by Raul Castro himself, the Communist Party's supremacy is a constitutional principle and all institutions supposed to be subordinated to it<sup>76</sup>.

Military overrepresentation in intraparty politics got aggravated during the Special period. If an important role of the military in the Cuban State was already a feature before 1992, after, the balance of institutional power shifted even more in favor of

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<sup>76</sup>This position has been reiterated by Raul Castro himself all along his political life including his second major speech after Fidel got sick. In December 2, 2006, the day the Armed Forces celebrated their military parade for their fiftieth anniversary, Raul quoted Fidel Castro's speech at the I Congress of the CCP and reiterated the subordination of the Armed Forces as the "most modest, best disciplined and most loyal servant" to the party since the founding of it in 1965. See Castro, Raul (2006), Speech at the Political Ceremony, Military Review and March in Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Landing of the Granma Yacht, the Day of the Armed Forces and in Celebration of the 80th Birthday of the Commander in Chief Fidel Castro, given on December 2nd, 2006. Homepage: <http://www.cubaminrex.cu/English/50TH%Aniversary/50anivi.htm> (access: 26 jun, 2013).

the Armed Forces. The end of the African Wars in 1989 brought about the victorious return of the Cuban troops from Angola. In these circumstances, the Armed Forces acquired new functions beyond its military corporatist mission. The FAR stepped up to a considerable role in the economy (Casas 1990). The GAE (Grupo de Administracion Empresarial- Management Group of the Armed Forces, a holding of companies) headed by now deceased Army Corp General Julio Casas, and General Luis Alberto Rodriguez, became a super-corporation with investments in tourism, transportation, industries and agriculture<sup>77</sup>.

The 1989 summer was also a critical institutional juncture because of the “Ochoa Affair”<sup>78</sup>. On June 14 of this year, the ministry of Armed Forces announced the arrest of major general Arnaldo Ochoa, one of the revolutionary heroes of the war missions in Africa. In a Granma editorial attributed to Fidel Castro, the CCP newspaper declared: “The international traffic in drugs has dealt us a terrible blow. We can’t even say that the

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<sup>77</sup>For a discussion of this role of the FAR in the economy see my book “Raul Castro and the New Cuba: A Close-Up View of Change” (Abrahams and Lopez-Levy 2011)

<sup>78</sup> The Ochoa Affair refers to the arrest, trial and execution by firing squads of General Arnaldo Ochoa, a hero of the African Wars who got allegedly connected to drugs traffic in coordination with some officers of the Ministry of the Interior associated with Cuban operations to circumvent the U.S. embargo regulations. The Affair included two judicial causes. Under Cause 2, the Cuban authorities arrested and condemned most of the high command of the Ministry of Interior. Many officers were retired or transferred to other jobs while FAR officers were appointed in their place.

big traffickers in drugs are mainly to blame. Our own people sought them out and easily accepted their first offers. However we will put this evil out by the roots” (Granma 1989)

General Ochoa and his closest associates were shot by firing squad after they were declared guilty by several military courts. The Council of State presided by Fidel and Raul Castro ratified the sentence and decided not to pardon or commute the death penalty. The affair brought a purge of the Ministry of Interior, particularly the security services. Fidel and Raul Castro sent to retirement or prison most of the high command of the main institution in charge of preserving public order, police, firefighters, political espionage and counterespionage. The new minister Abelardo Colome Ibarra, ‘Furry’ was then the second man in command of the Armed Forces under Raul. “Furry” appointed generals and colonels from the FAR in all major positions of the police, the firefighters, the Coast Guard and the intelligence and counterintelligence services.

In contrast to the ascent trajectory of the Armed Forces during the Special Period, the relative institutional power of the party went into a free fall at the national level in the 1990’s. The permanent apparatus of the Central Committee of the CCP lost part of its luster because of Fidel Castro’s political ad hoc mobilization of a group of young cadres in the ideological campaign known as “The battle of Ideas”<sup>79</sup>. This political crusade

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<sup>79</sup>The “battle of ideas” campaign originated in the successful massive mobilization for the return to Cuba of Elian Gonzalez, a little child whose mother died attempting to reach the United States by raft. Since the boy was taken without his father’s approval, he asked

invested massive resources in political propaganda and out budget economic projects that supposed to improve the lives of the population.

In 2006 after he replaced his brother Fidel, Raul Castro expressed<sup>80</sup> that he doesn't plan to rule Cuba as his elder brother did. Part of the success of this intra-generational transition can be explained by Raul's understanding of its limitation to fit in his charismatic brother's shoes. He needs a government of the CCP and declared as his main task to strengthen the Cuban Communist Party's institutional basis to rule. "The Commander in Chief of the Cuban Revolution"- Raul Castro declared – " is solely and uniquely the Communist Party, as an institution that brings together the revolutionary vanguard and is a sure guarantee of Cuban unity in all times, can be the worthy inheritor of the confidence deposited by the people in its leader" (R. Castro 2006)

Some authors has presented Raul Castro's prevalence as Fidel Castro's presidential successor as predetermined because of their family ties. Jose Azel, from the University of Miami has been a persistent defender of this hypothesis "General Raul

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Castro for solidarity in bringing back his son from the United States. A simple legal custody case became a political battle because of the importance assigned to the kid by the Cuban right in Florida. In Cuba, the campaign inspired the most fervent young red guards to weakly rotate a high level political campaign (the "tribuna antimperialista" (anti-imperialist tribune) included artistic events, festivals, etc) to reach eventually every municipality of the country.

<sup>80</sup>Just one month before his ascendancy to the presidency, Raul Castro told the 5th Plenary of the Central Committee of the CCP: "the Commander in-Chief of the Cuban Revolution is one and only one, and only the Communist Party, (...) can be the dignified heir of the trust deposited by the people in its leader". (Raul 2006).

Castro leads Cuba not because he is president of the Council of State, but because he is first secretary of the Communist Party, head of the armed forces, and Fidel's brother" (Azel 2013). In the same issue of "World Affairs" magazine, one of the few Cuba based pro-embargo activist Antonio Rodiles (Rodiles 2013) even called Cuban elites as "Castro dynasty" while liberal journalist Ana Louise Bardach speculated about whether Raul Castro's son, Alejandro, former Raul Castro's son in law, Luis Alberto Rodriguez or even his grandson Raul Rodriguez Castro will succeed the general-president, presenting a well documented Castro family tree (Bardach 2009, XIV) as if she was writing about the descendants of Ibn Saud in Saudi Arabia or the Kim family in North Korea

This is wrong. Undoubtedly family ties played an important role between Fidel and Raul Castro but Cuban politics does not follow a sultanistic pattern. The focus on the family ties in the transfer of power hides more important dimension of factional and institutional political pluralism within Cuba's political elites. These changes are better explained as the outcome of Cuba's guerrilla style factional politics in which Raul Castro outmaneuvered others, even those who were most loyalists to Fidel's vision as the optimal choice to preserve the unity of the leadership.

Raul Castro demonstrated with his cabinet changes between 2006 and 2012 that more important than been Fidel's brother, he was the leader of the complex FAR-MININT (Ministry of Interior). A more institutionalist approach was set in place to



replace the ad hoc promotion of leaders “by helicopter”, Fidel’s style. By 2012, only three ministers of Fidel’s cabinet remained, two of them, the minister of the Armed Forces and the minister of Interior. The new appointees were personnel vetted by the Armed Forces Direction of Cadres, or the Organization Department of the Central Committee of the CCP. In contrast to those promoted by Fidel Castro from Young Communist League orators, Raul’s appointees were characterized by long step by step promotion along the ladders of the armed institutions or the party.

What balance of forces produced this outcome? There is a number of analyses<sup>81</sup> that have tried to explain the different divisions within Cuba’s power structure. Here the criteria that I present is based on a functional differentiation that look at the factional cleavages based on bounding ties associated to the type of work and career developed by leaders within the Cuban system. I also look at the proposals of reform in the debate within the system<sup>82</sup>.

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<sup>81</sup>Some of these analysis are “Back from the Future” by Susan Eckstein (Eckstein 2003, 257-258), “Island in the Storm” by Gail Reed (Reed 1992) and “Cuba: Clearing Perilous Waters” by Edward Gonzalez (Gonzalez 1996).

<sup>82</sup>Two accounts about the debate of alternatives within the revolution in the 1990’s are Maurizio Giuliano’s “El Caso CEA: Intelectuales e Inquisidores en Cuba” (Giuliano 1998) and Aurelio Alonso’s “La Economía Cubana: los desafíos de un ajuste sin desocialización” (Alonso jul-Dic, 1992).

The complete integration of the two main armed bodies (FAR and MININT) occurred in 1989. After the trials known as Causa 1 and Causa 2 the FAR high command controlled all the major position of the Ministry of interior including the minister itself. Because of its military, economic and history-based power, these two institutions were already the most powerful factions within the Cuban elites. This development was important because it nipped in the bud any possibility of a clash between military factions.

The military establishment found a natural ally in the provincial party czars. This group frequently ignored by foreign media and academia is tremendously powerful and functional to the one party system. Provincial party czars are in favor of a type of regime more predictable and institutionalized than the one under Fidel. These leaders have suffered from their intermediate position between the highest level of the party and the local authorities. Their role was not to make revolutionary harangues but to implement policies. In addition they have seen perplexed how Fidel promoted leaders from the Young Communist League or the Students Federation to his closer entourage ignoring the party leadership and the laborious work of those who climbed the party ladder step by step from the base to the provincial or central departments' levels of the organization.

During the 1990's, the FAR-MININT complex cultivated relations with the provincial party czars. After 1980, when American president Ronald Reagan and his

secretary of State Alexander Haig threatened about launching war against Cuba, FAR developed the doctrine of the all people's war inspired and advised by the Vietnamese experience. As part of this strategy, the FAR created the provincial and regional army popular defense councils of which the CCP provincial czars were presidents. Cuba's internationalist military missions in Angola, Ethiopia and Nicaragua were also a training ground for party cadres who were sent them to prove their disposition to sacrifice.

The military had also the advantages of the historical transference of commanders to civilian government and party functions since the triumph of the revolution. One of these military officers who worked for Raul Castro and was transferred to the party apparatus was Jose R. Machado. Machado served before the revolution as the chief of medical services in Raul's Second Oriental Guerrilla Front in Sierra Cristal. After the triumph, Machado served as chief of the medical services of the Armed Forces<sup>83</sup>, Minister of Health until 1967 and from there he was transferred to lead the CCP in Matanzas Province. Since the first Congress of the Communist Party Machado became a member of the Politburo and chair of the Organization Department in charge of party promotions.

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<sup>83</sup>Machado Ventura served after the triumph of the revolution as military aide of president Manuel Urrutia. Since he was a man of Fidel and Raul Castro, he reported every Urrutia's movement and meetings to the revolutionary leaders. When president Urrutia clashed with Fidel Castro, then premier, he was forced to resign by the mobilization of revolutionary followers. He was never a political match for Fidel Castro (Buch Rodriguez 2001).

Between 2009 and 2014, Machado who came from the province of Villa Clara, in the center of the country was appointed as the first vice-president and second secretary of the CCP.

Equally important, these party leaders' political education<sup>84</sup> coincided with the military high command on the importance of domestic stability in the design of the reform. In the political reading promoted by the CCP about the collapse of the Soviet Union, Gorbachev has been naïve at best and a traitor to socialism at worst<sup>85</sup>. They learned a bitter lesson from the collapse of the Soviet Union and particularly communism in Eastern Europe. The experience of China and Vietnam in which communist leaders reconfigured rather than destroying the system attracted their sympathy.

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<sup>84</sup>For an insider's look at the importance and orientation of political education for the CCP, see Jose R. Machado Ventura's "La politica de cuadros: Unatareapriorizada" (Machado-Ventura Jul-Ago 1988) Bruno Hurtado's article "Escuelasprovinciales del Partido: Preparar a los Cuadros para EnfrentarlasTareas" (Hurtado November 1988), For a view about the role of ideology in framing the economic reform, see Dario Machado's "El AspectoIdeologico del PerfeccionamientoEmpresarial" (Machado 2000)

<sup>85</sup>Two illustrative Cuban readings of critical approaches that emphasized the abandonment of the communist paradigm as the cause of the collapse, not the paradigm itself are Enrique Ubieta's "Las CienciasSociales, la Politica y la Crisis de los Paradigmas" (Ubieta 1996) and Ruben Zardoya's "Ideologia y Revolucion: Notassobre el impacto del Derrumbe de la Union Sovietica y el SocialismoEuropeosobre Cuba" (Zardoya 1997)

The third main group in Cuba's power bloc was composed by civilian technocrats of economic administration (government) or political agitation (CCP). These government officials, managers of state owned companies and corporations, and propagandists associated to the so called "Battle of ideas" during the Special period have been less important in the Cuban context than in Eastern Europe or the former Soviet Union. These leaders have two main characteristics in common: 1) they were in the interval between 30-50 years old, younger than the two first generations of the revolutionary leaders. 2) They have been promoted by Fidel Castro from the Young Communist League (UJC) using his "helicopter" method not climbing the party ladder step by step<sup>86</sup>.

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<sup>86</sup>Most of these leaders came from the National Executive Committee of the University Student Federation, an organization under the tutelage of the Young Communist League (UJC). The most prominent leaders were Otto Rivero, Carlos Valenciaga and Hassan Perez, who were presidents of the Students Federation. These three were good orators, and sharpened their skills during the mobilizations for Elian's return. Rivero and Valenciaga, as it was the case of also later purged Felipe Perez Roque, were promoted from the Young Communist League and the Students Federation to the Group of Support of the Commander in Chief, and from there to a vice-presidency of the Council of Ministry and Fidel's head of assistants respectively. About the third, Hassan popular joke among young people played with the slogan "Bring Elian" repeated incessantly in radio, TV and demonstrations. The people added a second part to the slogan and declared "Bring Elian and take Hassan". The rapid rise in the political ladder of these young leaders raised a lot of hackle within the military ranks and the party apparatchiks more respectful of routines and long term commitments.

Fidel Castro identified them as political talents of new generations and used them to break the group thinking of the historical leaders of the revolution. Their political and ideological composition was much divided according to their functions in the system's adaptation to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Some of them were more reform oriented as result of their experience in the market sector of the two tracks system. Others who had worked with Fidel Castro in the political campaigns to preserve revolutionary spirit and control were more reticent about such course.

The head of the group of managers of the civilian industry and state bureaucrats was Vice president Carlos Lage, who had developed some support among leaders of the young communist league and was promoted by Fidel. They were "Fidelistas" but not "Raulistas" (Every Raul's loyalist is a Fidel's follower, but the reverse was not true. There were cadres loyal to Fidel who developed a preference for younger leaders than Raul as Fidel's replacement). Raul Castro had cultivated relations of friendship with some of these young leaders as part of his relationship with his brother Fidel of whom Carlos Lage, Felipe Perez Roque and Carlos Valenciaga, all of them former leaders of the Students Federation, served as head of staff. Yet, he was critical of the cadres method

used by his older brother and preferred for the military and the CCP a more systematic approach<sup>87</sup>.

Structurally this third group was never a match for the coalition of the other previously described two factions led by Raul Castro. The “Battle of Ideas” group was never a rival to the institutional power of the Armed Forces or the provincial party czars. It circumvented the routines and procedures of the CCP by creating a parallel channel but it was never as cohesive or well organized as the FAR and party czars groups. Its leaders were radical careerist members of the Young Communist League (UJC) subordinated directly to Fidel as the commander in chief of the revolution, not inside the party structure.

The civilian managers of the economy were more institutionalized than the battle of ideas groups but only as part of the state. They were at disadvantage to mount their own political alternative because the whole state machinery is subordinated and under surveillance of the other two groups, the Party and the FAR-MININT Complex.

Fidel’s affinity with the civilian managers-battle of ideas “group” resulted from his focus on the economy and ideology but his historic allegiance was with the revolutionary old guard and the military who were always his closest comrades. Neither

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<sup>87</sup>This difference of style promoting state and party officials between Fidel and Raul Castro had been explained by veteran Cuba observer and journalist Marc Frank in his book “Cuban Revelations: Behind the Scenes in Havana” (Frank 2013)

the economic nor the propaganda skills of the third “group” were indispensable for Raul’s control of power. In propaganda, the party had its own department of revolutionary orientation that controlled all the newspapers, radio and TV stations. At the helm of the department was Colonel Rolando Alfonso Borges who was until 1992 the chief of FAR’s political propaganda apparatus. Raul Castro had also developed his own set of cadres in the economic realm around the Grupo de Administracion Empresarial (GAE-Enterprise Management Group) affiliated to the military high command.

Three important factors served as stabilizers of this power shift. These factors are:

- 1) The previous partial institutionalization of the political system, expressed in the anticipation of the intra-generational succession in article 94 of the Cuban Constitution<sup>88</sup>. The long transition to a post-totalitarian rule began with the institutionalization of CCP rule the 1976 constitutional process. This institutionalization was never completed because of the charismatic role played by Fidel Castro. Yet the party developed a experience celebrating five congresses (since 1975 to 1997), elections every five years and electing its central committee

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<sup>88</sup>Article 94 establishes a regular procedure for presidential succession. The constitution establishes the position of first Vice-president of the Councils of States and Ministers who replaces the president in case of death or sickness. Raul Castro was in this position for decades since 1976.



(since 1965). In all these events, Raul Castro appeared as Fidel's right hand and the head of the institutionalization drive.

- 2) Circumstances also favored Raul Castro's consolidation as Fidel's successor. Although the Cuban one-party system reproduced many elements from the soviet style communist system, its character is essentially Cuban even in its flaws. The succession politics of the party was also shaped by the experience of the anti-Batista struggle in which there was always an appointed second in command to take the leadership in case the guerrilla chief dies. Raul Castro was since 1959 in such position.
- 3) The new role Fidel Castro adopted as "elder statesman" and political commentator of international and national affairs after his retirement. Fidel Castro retired but he remained an arbiter's presence. As soon as he recovered from his most critical illness, he endorsed Raul Castro as his successor. This support helped Raul Castro to neutralize potential opposition to reform steps. Politically it is difficult to appear in Cuba and Latin America more revolutionary than Fidel Castro.

These stabilizing factors created a predictable path for the more complex coming inter-generational power transition in 2018 in which charisma would not play a major role. Nelson Valdes evaluated:

Raul Castro cannot merely replace Fidel Castro. The “successor” will not be able to replicate the founder. Raul cannot become the charismatic leader Fidel Castro was, for reasons beyond the obvious differences in their personalities. Charismatic leaders require a charismatic moment, when order has broken down, and followers who hunger for such leadership and willingly participate in the process of legitimating charismatic authority. Another reason, generally overlooked, is that there is no “equivalent Raul” for Raul Castro, someone who could do for him what he did for his brother. That means Raul will need to find others to perform numerous roles. The interlocking network of power in the hands of just two persons will become ever more dispersed (Valdes 2008, 38)

Today there is not a substitute for Fidel or for Raul Castro or for the conditions in which the two Castros operated as a team to govern Cuba for five decades. Yet, the CCP elites are not lacking institutional capabilities and routines to manage the election or designation of the new leader and problems associated to him/her such as civilian-military relations, the economic reform and decentralization.

### **3.1.2 The starting point of the political reform in 2006**

The political challenges inherited by Raul Castro were the result of the flaws of the command economy and the totalitarian period of the one party system but also of the partial reform policies adopted by the Communist party after the collapse of European communism. The rise of unemployment and sub-employment as result of the economic crisis weakened also the educational power of the party ideology apparatus.

The communist discourse about development with equality sounded hollow for segments that remained stagnant or fell in poverty condition despite the government efforts to mitigate their disgrace. The expansion of the inequality gap affected harshly social areas where the revolutionary discourse penetrated deep such as the blacks and the people from the Eastern provinces who were less connected to foreign investment and remittances from Cubans living abroad.

Alejandro de la Fuente described how even before the crisis of the 1990's, "the achievement of racial equality was largely dependent on government performance", to conclude later that "capacity to perform is precisely what the Cuban government has lacked under the special period". In this context, racial inequality expanded not as an intentional policy but as result of "measures like the legalization of dollars, self-employment, foreign investment, and "free" agricultural markets carry with them". These measures carry with them "a heavy social cost: They unavoidably provoke increasing inequality and resentment in a population which is used to living in a highly egalitarian social setting". De la Fuente concluded that "Afro Cubans should not be automatically seen as uncritical supporters of the government" (de la Fuente Spring 2001) not only as result of the lack of state action in areas such as housing, employment in the best sectors, etc., but also because "the erosion and deepening crisis of legitimacy of the current political system thus created new spaces for racist ideas and practices to operate and flourish" (de la Fuente Spring 2001).

The process of institutionalization of collective leadership had major reversals after the V Congress of the CCP took place in 1997 in conditions that diminished the relevance of the conclave as the most important political event. The Secretariat, the central body to govern and coordinate the party internal life, was dissolved and it was not restored until June 2006 in the V plenum of the Central Committee this year. The practice of having a Central Report to the Congress of the CCP was replaced by improvised speeches by Fidel Castro in the IV and the V Congresses.

This decline of the CCP role was a U-turn in a trend of institutionalization since 1975. Indeed the changes in the party rules and statutes in 1991 anticipated the beginning of an institutional adaptation to the post-Cold War world. The IV Congress of the CCP in 1991 introduced several political changes that ease some of the reforms that later happened during the 1990's such as the creation of self-employment segments and the openings to foreign investment and tourism. Politically, the IV Congress was particularly important because it opened party ranks to religious people renouncing to the previously proclaimed principle of "scientific atheism".

The post-1992 party discourses emphasized nationalist goals of sovereignty and independence, areas in which the CCP had some reservoir of legitimacy in the presence of the communist failures all over the world. Socialism was presented as a necessary tool to guarantee the unity of the nation in the struggle against the U.S. embargo preserving

sovereignty. In terms of political education and propaganda, after 1992, the CCP concentrated in patriotic themes, relegating Leninism to a second plane. This political move created a space for maneuver and plurality that later was enhanced with the rise of leftist movements in Latin America and the conception of the so-called “socialism of the XXI century”.

Ideologically, the IV CCP Congress raised nationalist ideals and Jose Marti’s thought to the same level of Leninism as its guiding ideologies.

The party statutes were amended to redefine the PCC as the party of the “Cuban nation” rather than the party of the working class, and the new statutes emphasized its ideological roots in the ideas of Jose Marti as well as Marx and Lenin. The prohibition on party membership for religious believers was lifted, and the process for choosing new party members was simplified so that more members could be drawn from work centers based on a vote of their coworkers (rather than requiring sponsorship by existing members or prior membership in the Youth Communist Union). Over the next five years, these changes produced a flood of new members as the PCC’s ranks grew from 611, 627 at the Fourth Congress to 780 000 in 1997 on the eve of the fifth Congress. By 1997, 232 000 people, one third of the PCC’s total membership had joined the party since the beginning of the Special period (Leogrande 2008, 54)

The 1992 constitutional changes amounted to a new constitution since they redefined the character of the post-revolutionary state and its legitimacy<sup>89</sup>. The Cuban state stopped its atheistic practice to proclaim a lay separation between state and religion. Discrimination for religious beliefs was prohibited. New forms of property, including private one were explicitly added redefining the character of the economy and its rejection of foreign investment. It was a clear move from totalitarian to post-totalitarian features (Linz, Juan & Stepan, Alfred 1996). Margaret E. Crahan explained the new type of state-civil society relations that emerged:

In 1992, a constitutional amendment transformed Cuba from officially an atheistic state to a lay state. There has been a concurrent ceding of public space by the government, the assumption of greater autonomy by some official organizations, and the mild revitalization of of some historical organizations, including religious ones. The result is obviously increased ferment as such groups very tentatively attempt to exert more influence over politics and society. Few are questioning the socialist nature of the government, although a fair number are challenging the government to deliver more enjoyment not only of socioeconomic, but also of civil/political rights (Crahan 2008, 333).

During the nineties, three major processes served as the springboard for the political reform after 2006. Theoretically, it is not difficult to use the concept of detotalitarianism by societal conquest, used by Linz and Stepan(Linz, Juan & Stepan,

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<sup>89</sup>Hugo Azcuy discussed the magnitude of the constitutional changes from a revolutionary perspective (Azcuy 1995). Julio Cesar Guancho and Julio A. Fernandez presented a critical view about deviation and lack of implementation of the constitution in recent years from a perspective that recognizes its legitimacy (Fernandez and Guancho Jul-Sept 2008).

Alfred 1996) as part of their description of the political liberalization leading from totalitarianism to post-totalitarian systems.

The first process was the expansion of pluralism by the acceptance of new complementary and competitive identities. The country experienced a process of religious revival with massive increases in the number of baptism, creation of new churches, and expansion of the catholic and evangelical communities. There was a revival of some legal associations that survived outside the control of the CCP after 1959 with reduced organic life such as the masonic lodges. Groups such as associations of immigrants from specific regions of Spain, Afro-Cuban societies, and masonry were re-activated. The government allowed them contacts with their international homologues that provided relief and support for Cubans of the same affiliation.

A second process happened within some of the organizations under the control of the CCP that played earlier the typical role of transmission belts of the party policy for specific social sector. As in many post-totalitarian situations, some of these groups began acting as “amphibious” associations (Ding 1994), as surrogates of the state but also as representatives of specific sectors, defending the CCP’s hegemony but negotiating liberties and spaces for the social sectors represented by them within it<sup>90</sup>.

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<sup>90</sup>One important case that set an example that other groups would try to emulate later was the Union of Writers and Artists (UNEAC) and its defense of the right and need of its members to travel abroad. Under Fidel Castro’s guidance, the government conceded a

A third trend in civil society that also changed the balance of its relations with the state was the expansion of the social networks of religious groups after the changes in the constitution and the CCP statutes prohibiting discrimination for religious reasons. The rise of religious communities has mitigation effects on political polarization because people of different positions converge in the same communities in faith. In terms of values, and discussion of social issues such as abortion, education, public security, inequality, corruption, poverty and social solidarity, churches and groups such as masonry promote alternative values, different, not necessarily in conflict with the CCP.

Rather than engaging in a total confrontation with the communist state, most religious organizations, particularly the Roman Catholic Church, opted for recognizing achievements of the Cuban revolution in terms of national sovereignty, elimination of extreme poverty, access to health and education while at the same time questioning the

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series of privileges to ease the conditions under which the members of the Union travel abroad. As long as they didn't get involved in anti-government politics, they were allowed to travel and remain outside the country for long terms. Another example discussed in chapter III was the case of the National Union of Small Peasants which became very vocal defending the claims of its members to some government's debt for previous deliveries of food. The case also set an example for another major practice of the amphibious association a demand for the respect of the law by the authorities. In this way, the CCP get some feedback from the implementation of its policies, finding reasons and information that flows from below to upgrade and monitor the state bureaucracy. In the cases in which central policies conflict with interests of local authorities, some of these amphibious groups provide the CCP with a wide array of mechanisms such as petitions, media coverage, hotlines, and even protests to increase the efficiency and adaptation of the system.



totalitarian features of the regime. As methods of political advocacy, religious groups have promoted non heroic forms of resistance, dialogue with the authorities and gradual reforms. In a context of international confrontation in which Cubans from the opposition are immediately welcome in the United States, the Churches have called Cubans to remain in the island and fight for a different future in their country of origin. Just by its example defeating “scientific atheism”, a previously declared central pillar of the totalitarian system, religious groups show a path to change.

From a narrow vision of freedom of religion limited to the liberty to practice their creed in the temple, communities of faith stretched out their role in society, first as a practice, then as a right. Religious groups began to organize sports championships, cultural activities, fraternal groups, educational programs, poverty alleviation initiatives and charities. As in the previous two trends, the expansion of the social networks and roles of religious groups did provide a support net for dissidents and opponents to the regime who advocated compromise and dialogue. Yet its main function was not partisan. In the context of totalitarianism, the demand for respect of difference was a not so subtle political claim. In the post-totalitarian phase, the emphasis on respect for non-political difference provides the sprouts for improving governance and a more responsive non-democratic regime.

By 2006, the openly discussed ideas and aspirations of new generations of Cubans, inside and outside the party, were different from those that prevail within the historic revolutionary generation. By 2006-2009, the revolution of January 1959 and the struggle against dictator Bastista were not more than a distant reference. Cuban civil society was better connected to the outside world, more plural and more unequal than at any previous moment of the post-revolution period.

The Cuban case is a call to take serious the phases of the revolutionary cycle as described by Crane Brinton in chapters VII and VIII of “Anatomy of Revolution”(Brinton 1965). By 2006 the Cuban political process was already in a well-entrenched Thermidor phase. Communism is for the post-revolutionary elite more a justification for remaining in power than an ideology. Without formally denying their old credo, many former revolutionaries do not behave like revolutionaries anymore but follow the logic of the market whether openly as new businessmen (former ministries, party cadres, government officials, and sport glories have opened private restaurants or bed and breakfasts) or silently by using their contacts in the government to promote their relatives, friends or their own economic position.

Here it is identifiable a trend towards what Linz and Stepan describe as de-totalitarianism by decay. The gap between daily life, where official Marxist ideology is irrelevant for policy making and the official discourse about sacrifice for revolution is

growing. This gap is particularly expressed in terms of the privileges enjoyed by the leaders and the conditions in which the majority of the population increasingly lives.

Similar to what happened in other communist experiences, the creed of the nomenclature is that “The business of revolution is business”. The party and the communist ideology is a tool to keep their material and political privileges rather than a mechanism to advance a real revolutionary agenda. One indicator of the new orientation of the elites is the fact that the princes and princesses of the system, the sons and daughters of the first revolutionaries, had moved to business oriented jobs. If in the past many of these young members of the elites would prefer to work for the military or the ministry of interior, under the new circumstances, most of them seek jobs in the emerging business sectors of tourism and hard currency related activities. There, they can use the state for capitalist accumulation through rent seeking activities or traffic of influences.

Emigration is another source of this attitudinal change. Well-connected children of members of the government found ways to live outside the country during the worst years of the crisis. Some of them did it as part of educational programs in Mexico and Spain and others simply took advantages of the 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act to move to the U.S. in some cases using the cover justification of been artists and writers. The strengthening of this transnational space weakened the traditional division and images of

confrontation between those who remains in the island and the ones living in capitalists, market oriented countries.

A third form of political liberalization is de-totalitarianism by choice. Facing the deterioration of socialist ideology, and anticipating the passing of the revolutionary generation, responsible bureaucrats emphasize the role of patriotic values, aspirations for economic integration with Latin America and a soft landing transition from revolutionary or charismatic forms of legitimating to procedural commitment and regime performance. A big impulse for institutionalization comes from the nationalist desire for a developmental state, capable to guarantee a better position for the country in the international system. Those who are more patriotic aspire to develop an efficient civil service and preserve autonomy of the state from economically dominant groups and international actors but national interests; neither democracy nor revolutionary ideology is their main concern.

The new post-revolutionary elites appears more urbanized, educated and sophisticated than their parents who took power as part of the revolutionary generation, coming from the provinces or even from the rural areas in which the guerrilla struggle took place. They are also more cynical and hedonist. Educationally and professionally, many of them had developed some possibilities for autonomous professional careers outside the ideological realm of state jobs. Consequently, new corporate interests groups

began to develop. Part of the bureaucracy or Cubans in business positions associated to foreign investors began to have their own agendas about economic reform with interests that might or might not coincide with those in favor of preserving the heavy presence and regulation of the communist state. These “capitalist roaders” are not members of the old classes displaced by the revolution but the sons of daughters of the post-revolutionary elites.

These shifts in the behavior and convictions of the elite are also present in the society at large. After two decades of limitations and scarcity, the new generations are particularly prone to more market experimentation than their predecessors. The Cuban society has also become more plural in terms of citizens affiliated to different non-political groups, contacts with the outside world and the level of education of a significant number of its citizens. There have been also attitudinal changes in issues such as gender equality, respect for sexual orientation and a more respectful attitude by the government and the population towards the choice of emigration or remaining in the country.

One development of the nineties was the consolidation of a segment of permanent political opposition to the government. The most dramatic event that happened in this regard was the 2003 Black Spring. In a sudden stroke the communist state arrested 75 members of the opposition mainly tied to the illegal “Varela Project”. This initiative led

by engineer Oswaldo Paya collected more than twenty thousand signatures to petition a constitutional change ending one party rule and the restitution of some human rights such as the right to travel, the right to own private property and the right to free expression and association.

Paya was originally a prominent lay leader in the Catholic Church who radicalized his projection in conflict with government repression. For a while until later in the 2000's, Paya avoided the endorsement of the radical exiles and was repudiated by them enhancing temporarily his international and domestic status. But by 2006, the opposition in the island was disarticulated and heavily dependent on the exiles and the support of the U.S. government. Yet, it has achieved some important presence in the international media and survived.

The arrest of the 75 led to the creation of the movement of the ladies in White, the most prominent opposition group in the island<sup>91</sup>. The group originally gathered wives and mothers of those arrested in the 2003 Black Spring. After the indult and exile of most of the prisoners in 2010, and the death of their founder Laura Pollan, the group became a typical opposition party with her most prominent leader Berta Soler involved in multiple scandals related to U.S. financing of them. Soler became a vocal defender of the

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<sup>91</sup>For a study of the Ladies in White see the article by Lorraine Bayard de Volo "Heroines with Friends in High Places" (Bayard de Volo Sep-Oct. 2011)

embargo and even spoke gratefully about the Batista dictatorship in line with the dominant discourse of the most right wing exiles.

### **3.2 Defining political liberalization in the Cuban context**

#### **3.2.1 Challenges of Cuba's political liberalization**

The 1992 Constitutional reform created the institutional framework in which most of political liberalization took place after 2006 once Raul Castro took the presidency and launched the economic reforms plan. The crisis that followed the end of the communist world increased the autonomy of non-confrontational actors within the one party system. Social, cultural and economic pluralism represented different identities with political preferences that were reflected by expression or omission<sup>92</sup>.

This growing social pluralism pushed demands for political change that forced the CCP to adapt and respond with the VI Congress of the CCP in 2011. Conceptually,

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<sup>92</sup>Cubans who have differences with the state could join civil society groups that have different agendas from the CCP-state but do not confront it directly. These ways of mobilizing collective action may have political consequences in the long term but none of these groups expressed a partisan agenda. That said the social networks developed autonomously are fungible to political organizations. It will not be surprising if in a different context; leaders and members of civil society organizations begin to use their skills and social capital with a more open political purpose. For a discussion of the process of “pluralizacion social”. One of the best analysis about the expansion of civil society during the Special period was written by Velia Cecilia Boves(Boves Winter 2013)

liberalization represents not a design for a transition to a new political system but the adaptation of the one that dominated Cuba since 1976 that once resembled totalitarianism. As Linz and Stepan explained: “Post-totalitarianism (unlike democracy, totalitarianism, authoritarianism or sultanism) is not a genetic type but an evolutionary type”(Linz, Juan & Stepan, Alfred 1996, 293).

Fidel’s retirement ended a long transition from totalitarianism to post-totalitarianism<sup>93</sup>. At the center of this transition in Cuba, it is a process of political liberalization. Alfred Stepan and Juan Linz distinguish this type of political change from democratization

Liberalization may entail a mix of policy and social changes, such as less censorship of the media, somewhat greater space for the organization of autonomous working class activities, the introduction of some legal safeguards for individuals such as *habeas corpus*, the releasing of most political prisoners, the return of exiles, perhaps measures for improving the distribution of income, and most important the toleration of opposition (Linz, Juan & Stepan, Alfred 1996, 3).

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<sup>93</sup>This classification of regime type follows the seminal work of Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan (1996), *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press. According to Linz and Stepan, totalitarian and post-totalitarian regimes differentiate in terms of pluralism, leadership, mobilization and ideology. In opposition to classical totalitarianism, the post-totalitarian regime includes more economic and social pluralism, a non-charismatic leadership based on bureaucratic politics, a reduction of political mobilization and more pragmatic, welfare oriented less ideological policies (Linz, Juan & Stepan, Alfred 1996)



The reader should underline the phrase “liberalization may entail”. It is not a package but a list of political measures that liberalization might or might not include. In contrast, democratization includes most of the above mentioned liberalization measures as a whole plus the celebration of free and fair elections in which the right to win control of the government is openly contested. Using this conceptual framework, one can deduce that political liberalization carries a possibility of democratization but the probability of such outcome is not guaranteed. This distinction is a central theme of this chapter.

The challenges that Raul Castro encountered in 2009 after consolidating the unity of the Cuban elites around his presidency were of four types. CCP responses to those challenges increasingly reinforce each other from the economy to culture to social and political life:

1) **The social and cultural consequences of the economic reform.**

A lot of the resilience of the one-party regime depends on its capacity to produce economic growth and manage the consequences in terms of inequality, corruption, regional disequilibrium, and rise of autonomy and pluralism of some economic actors. The transition to a mixed economy is empowering new actors such as the cooperatives workers and the new private property owners while reducing the party controls over significant segments of the population. Decentralization of taxation and economic decisions is essentially a political process that implies

transferences of responsibilities and prerogatives from the center to the lower echelons of the political system. Marketization implies also a challenge to traditional egalitarian values associated to the communist official ideology. The widening of the market role in the economy had brought to the surface regional, gender and racial inequalities and discriminations.

2) **The opening of the country to foreign influences as part of the economic reform and the role of globalization in general.** The new context is associated to the development of tourism and foreign investment, a more active relationship with the Cuban Diasporas, and a new migratory law that ended the odious exit visa in October 2012. As result of the combination of these elements, the possibilities of education and working abroad multiplied together with a circular migration that travel abroad and return. The number of Cubans exposed to foreign influences since 2013 has exponentially increased, creating a multidirectional influence between Cuba, its diaspora and the world.

3) **The anticipated inter-generational presidential transition in 2018.** , Fidel Castro once told Sandinista Commander Tomas Borge that: “eighty years old is too much an age to be a head of state”(Borge 1992). In February 2018, when the current National Assembly legislature ends, Raul Castro will be 86 years old (He will be 87 years old in June 3) and Fidel Castro 91. The institutionalization of a collective party rule to replace Fidel Castro’s charismatic

leadership and Raul Castro's aura of historic leader of the revolution and its armed forces couldn't be postponed.

4) **Political disaffection and apathy for the CCP official ideology (Marxism-Leninism) is open and blatant.** Cuba's political system enjoyed for decades high levels of revolutionary enthusiasm. After the end of the communist bloc allies, the CCP tapped its political narrative into the importance of preserving achievements of the revolution of education and health. The population would like to see some post-revolutionary normalcy. The official ideology has been incapable to offer a coherent alternative beyond the merits of the previous command economy system. After twenty years of meager economic growth the CCP needs to show capacity to manage economic growth and international insertion.

5) **The political burden of a nationalist victory in the struggle to preserve independence and sovereignty versus American imperial policy.** As defenestrated politician Carlos Lage told the congress of Cuban writers and artists in 2008 "the double ethics, the prohibitions, the undesired inequality, and our deteriorated infrastructure are the wounds of the war we have fought, of a war we have won" (Lage 2008). The revolutionary-state has the dilemma of claiming the credit for the nationalist victory against the embargo while mitigating expectations for a better life once this victory is achieved.

In response to these challenges, Political liberalization in Cuba has developed along **six principal dimensions**:

1) **A less vertical state-society relation focused in more tolerance, acknowledgement of social diversity and dialogue with the nonpolitical elements of civil society**<sup>94</sup>, particularly the religious communities, and amphibious associations<sup>95</sup>. This new state-society relation includes a substantial expansion of civil liberties such as right to travel and freedom of religion as well as the economic right to own private property.

2) **The institutionalization of collective leadership within the party-state**, including the regulation of intra-party politics and the transition to a more meritocratic collective system of ruling based on term limits and age limits for all party and government positions. Institutionalization also implied a preference to rule by law regardless if the law is democratically adopted or not. Reformists emphasized the role of

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<sup>94</sup>This element emphasizes the methodological importance of the separation in our theoretical framework of civil society and political society as different arenas of democratization that are interdependent but not equivalent. For a discussion about the interdependence and complementarities of civil society and political society, see Linz and Stepan (1996) (Linz, Juan & Stepan, Alfred 1996).

<sup>95</sup>For a discussion of the concept of amphibious institutions in the context of a transition from communism, see Ding, Xuelian, “Institutional Amphibiousness and the transition from Communism: The Case of China” (Ding 1994)

order in opposition to revolutionaries that place justice achieved in any possible way at the top of their scale.

3) **A phased political decentralization** with emphasis in separation of functions between the central government, the provinces and the municipalities, the CCP and the government and the CCP and the economic managers,

4) **the co-optation of the new emerging sectors** through the expansion of some rights: religious liberties, right to own private property and right to travel, and the creation of a system of rule by law.

5) **A process of rapprochement between the Cuban state and society in the island and moderate groups within the Cuban Diaspora,**

6) **A new policy towards the political opposition** less focused on long detention of its members and more oriented to separate its active components from the rest of the population, particularly the middle segments of passive supporters and opponents of the regime.

These six dimensions complement each other and interconnect. The process of political liberalization can be divided in pro-active actions to improve the governance capacity of the state and the adoption of new patterns of relationships between the party-state and the society in general. In the first camp, the central motivation is the adoption of

more flexible and pragmatic approach to government, bringing more technocratic oriented bureaucrats to the state apparatus and institutionalizing the one party rule. Here I called this process, **institutionalization**. In the second area, the CCP engaged in a process of **social decompression** in which some civil liberties such as freedom of religion and travel were expanded. The multiplying effects of these rights produce a **less vertical state-society relation**. This new situation combines tolerance to pluralism in the economic, cultural and social arena with the reinforcement of the CCP political monopoly of power<sup>96</sup>.

Part of the challenges of political reform for the CCP is to synchronize the complementarities and interdependence of the reform of state capacity and the new relation state-society. Political liberalization is not an event but a dynamic process. Implemented reforms become catalysts for new changes of more consequential character. A transition to a market economy matters not only at the material level but also at the contestation of narratives. Rejection of market mechanisms as “the dull instruments left by capitalism” (Guevara 1965) has been a central ideological pillar of the Cuban revolution. Furthermore, Che Guevara developed in the 1960’s a whole theory about how the use of the law of Value, private property and individual incentives take the revolutionaries to a “blind alley” from which it will be impossible to march towards

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<sup>96</sup>This combination of economic, social and cultural pluralism with political monopoly is a central feature of the post-totalitarian regime. See Linz, Juan and Stepan Alfred (1996).

socialism. It is impossible that people educated on the validity of such paradigm would remain unchanged by the adoption of another that it is so different if not diametrically opposed.

Cuba's revolution developed also a conception of the economic and political system averse to decentralization and centered on the merits of a permanent mobilization for development and to promote revolution in Latin America. It is not coincidence that Che Guevara's image for the party is a guerrilla column:

Thus we march on. At the head of the immense column — we are neither ashamed nor afraid to say it — is Fidel. After him come the best cadres of the party, and immediately behind them, so close that we feel its tremendous force, comes the people in its entirety, a solid structure of individual beings moving toward a common goal, men and women who have attained consciousness of what must be done, people who fight to escape from the realm of necessity and to enter that of freedom (Guevara 1965).

### **3.2.2 Institutionalization**

In "Political Order and Changing Societies" Samuel P. Huntington proposed a positive relation between institutionalization and legitimate government. "Institutions are stable, valued, recurring patterns of behavior" and "Institutionalization is the process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability" (Huntington, 1968, p. 12). Throughout institutionalization, a political system develops four important characteristics for its permanence: "adaptability, complexity, autonomy and coherence".

When these features were acquired successfully by a political system, one can speak of a “political community” (Huntington, 1968, p. 2), a necessary condition to achieve a government “effective, authoritative, (and) legitimate” (Huntington, 1968, p. 12).

Huntington addressed a primary level of normative coherence from which the effectiveness of government to rule depends; an understanding among the regime insiders of the moral purpose of the state from the perspective of a political community. Given the scope of penetration of the Cuban state in society, it is hard to dispute that the system under Fidel Castro achieved -by consent and coercion- a high level of political community, at least among the followers of the regime. These followers of the regime were in 1959 a majority of the Cuban society<sup>97</sup>.

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<sup>97</sup>After this original political honeymoon, Cuba went throughout a civil war in which the Armed forces loyal to the CCP defeated the anti-Castro forces that opted for violent resistance. Victory in the civil conflict and nationalist resistance against U.S. embargo policy provides the communist regime with zones of legitimacy enhanced by some important progress in health, education. The adoption of communist ideology by the revolutionary government provoked the disappointment of the upper classes and a significant segment of the middle strata. That said, the party got the support of many who received the benefits mentioned above. In 1969, the members of the CCP were around 0.6 % (55 000) of the Cuban population at the time (less than 8 million). By 1975, the CCP had 202 807 members when it celebrated its first Congress. By the moment of the II Congress in 1980 and the III Congress in 1986, the number of militants had jumped to 434,143 and 523, 639. By 1992 when the CCP had its fourth congress, the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe was interpreted by Fidel Castro as the result of the over-burocratization of the communist party and its cadres. As part of the adjustment to the new situation, the CCP reduced the number of its departments from 19 to 9, and its Central Committee staff in 50%.



Some of Raul Castro's political liberalization steps respond to the discontent in the society at large, but most of his institutionalization of CCP rule is targeted to enhance and ease the "adaptability, complexity, autonomy, and coherence" of the institutions that coordinate and serve the action and interests of the regime insiders. Raul Castro is not beginning from zero. CCP rule is modern and institutionalized. The party and the concentric circles of organizations under its control represent a regulated political community within the Cuban polity, self identified as "the revolution" ("la revolution"). But to speak about a rule of law in a country in which Fidel Castro acted as the minimal winning coalition and to a certain extent the party as a whole operate ultimately above the constitution is to overstretch the concept.

By comparison to the Fidel Castro's era, Raul Castro's project with the Economic and Social Guidelines of the VI CCP Congress is to leave a significantly more institutionalized state to his successor in 2018. As Cuban sociologist Juan Valdes points out:

after Cuba was hit by the crisis of the nineties, Fidel showed himself more conservative, less in favor of changes, accepting these grudgingly. He was looking or hoping for a more favorable international situation. Raul is more rational, he aims for order and organization, for the creation of functional institutions. He believes such an order will provide the needed answers. Fidel improvises. He creates institutions on the basis of the policies he establishes (Morin, 2013).

Just after taking the interim presidency, while waiting for a decision about Fidel's fate, Raul Castro called a discussion within the party and the trade unions to vent not only the frustrations of the population but also to grasp urgency of the problems the people faced<sup>98</sup>. It was the first tool in a new repertoire of mechanisms to allow for more open social space. Part of the goal in the debate was to activate a discussion about the role of the CCP and the best way to organize the reform.

Raul Castro insisted that the party was not only a subject in the process of change but also an object of the discussion about how to improve the country. With the purpose of making the one party rule more accepted, the CCP and its associated social organization opened discussion against non-ideological types of discrimination of race, gender, provincial origin, sexual orientation, etc. Particularly in the area of racial relations, the new leadership became open to criticism against the increase of poverty, inequality and the relative deterioration of the social conditions of the black Cubans in comparison with their lighter skin compatriots.

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<sup>98</sup>Several scholars and journalists denounced the maneuver as merely gaining time to preserve power until Fidel and Raul die. Among the few analysts in the United States who rejected such interpretation were Phil Peters from the Lexington Institute and I. In a discussion at the Inter-American Dialogue in early 2009, we both were criticized harshly when we said that calling for the expression of this discontent didn't gain time to the leaders but reduce it by confirming the popularity of the complaints.

A new venue for this within the system criticism repertoire is the opening of the political system for those advocating against gender and sexual orientation discrimination. In Villa Clara province, Mr. Diaz-Canel built a positive relationship and co-opted the leaders of the LGBT community by engaging in a regular dialogue with them and acquiescing to many of their anti-discrimination claims. Another channel for this agenda is the CENESEX (Center for Sexual Education), an “amphibious” organization under the leadership of Mariela Castro Espin, Raul Castro’s daughter, advocating for legislation and policies to guarantee citizen equality for the LGBT community. Although CENESEX’s public demonstrations do not qualify as protests, it creates an atmosphere in which complaints of discrimination are brought to the eyes of the authorities and the political space for friendly legislation to their demands might be adopted.

One of the earliest indicators of the new approach was the creation of the Contraloria General to deal with the rise of corruption. Raul Castro initially designated Gladys Bejarano, a woman with a reputation of fierce defense of the laws. When Mrs. Bejarano clashed with some officials, ministers in some areas of the government, Castro elevated her to the condition of Vice-president of the Council of Ministers and later of the Council of States. With this solution he put her above her potential contenders although naturally bellow him and at the same level of the real “untouchables”.

This institution oriented approach was used also to deal with some of the internal party problems. In his speech at the end of the VI Congress of the CCP, Raul Castro proposed the creation of a commission of the Secretariat under Jose Ramon Machado and Abelardo Alvarez Gil, the new chief the Organization Department with the goal of establishing predictable and stable mechanism to find and speedily promote cadres around the age of 40-50 based on party loyalty but also on administrative skills, educational background, race, gender and technical knowledge (R. Castro, Discurso de Clausura del VI Congreso del PCC 2011). The implementation of this policy led to significant turnover of provincial CCP secretaries and the rejuvenation of the Politburo and the Secretariat throughout the gradual addition of new members. A period of two-three months transition was established as a routine to manage the succession of CCP leaders in the provinces (Hernandez 2/2014).

The VI Congress' adoption of term limits for all the top positions in the party and the government is a historical shift in Cuban post-revolutionary politics. It opens a significant space for institutional pluralism within the party in ways that: 1) create a predictable path for political succession from one generation to another, 2) promote negotiation between the factions of the PCC (among region, generation, section of the government), removing the most extreme leaders from the list of potential successors<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup>That has been the case in the People's Republic of China and Vietnam. Most likely, Raul Castro and Jose Machado Ventura would select in the next five years, not only a

and 3) increase the upward mobility chances for the lower ranks, ushering a new generation of leaders to key positions in the next years.

It is recognizable also a pattern of professionalization of the party leadership in the intermediate and upper intermediate CCP levels. This is a sudden but important transformation. Historically, Cubans would associate rising cadres to personal loyalty or direct work with Fidel, Raul or some senior member of the Politburo. While to be good at guessing the leadership view is a necessary skill in communist cadres, their rise is now less identifiable with been part of a faction or a repeater of slogans than with work results in the economy or policy implementation. Work for the party, rather than for a particular leader or department seems to be more important in a leader's promotion.

One curious demonstration of the promotion of this institutional rather than personal loyalty to the CCP logic happened in connection to the removal of most ministers from their positions. Different from the old practices, in which the removal of a minister led frequently to the rooting out of personnel associated to him/her, the new nominations or removals did not bring a massive change of personnel at the CCP

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new first secretary but also his second-in-command and future successor. Since the designated first secretary will have to obey the term limit rule, he would probably promote a leader whom he trusts to be second secretary once he is retired. The idea is to create some "teamwork" to continue defending the power of the party as a tool of the current government. Promotion based on merits and education would also provide the PCC with a minimal common base from which leaders might engage in reason-based rather than ideological arguments.

departments or State offices. Rather than encouraging the taking of factional sides, the new system of regularized promotion based in results, encourages loyalty to the CCP (not to specific leaders) and staff neutrality.

The VI Congress of the CCP proclaimed the goal of separation of functions between the Party, the government and management of state owned companies (R. Castro, Informe Central al VI Congreso del PCC 2011). Raul Castro, and the economic reforms czar Marino Murillo are insisting in the separation of responsibilities in ways that allow to reward or punish company managers, government officials and party leaders according to performance. The CCP is entering into this political reform at large with some previous experience from the 1990's at a much smaller scale. The separation between political and managerial functions is already in place in the case of joint ventures with foreign investors. The CCP is inserted in the new foreign partially owned hotels but the enterprise managers are selected and act according to a fundamentally economic logic, not ideology.

It is not clear how successful Raul Castro would be implementing a sharper institutional differentiation within the regime but it helps the analysis to recognize the intention to do it. In the case of the economic reforms, the institution controlling decision making is the Commission for Implementation and Development created in 2009. The Commission is directly subordinated to the State Council and gathers a group of

specialists, economists, managers, government officials and academics from different areas and regions.

In parallel, the Secretariat of the CCP has its own commissions with specialists in propaganda, ideology, and mobilization. The remnants of the Battle of Ideas groups work under the control of the Revolutionary Orientation Department (DOR). The last two years after the VI Congress of the CCP have shown how the party kept a heavy hand in the government strategic decisions but within an atmosphere in which excessive interference is repudiated. Economic policy makers take their own decisions and recommend them to the leadership. Ideology and mobilization specialists are forced to plan their job without the authority to interfere in advance. This separation between party and economic management seems to be one of the most important adaptations to the transition towards a mixed economy.

The CCP leadership is dominant in Cuba's economy and politics. But the system is growingly ceding space for managerial discretion, institutional predictability and personal freedom. In practice most decisions of large state corporations, particularly those associated with the FAR economic emporium, are guided by economic urgency and criteria, not communist ideology or the battle of ideas political discourse. The institutionalization of separation of economic functions and party apparatus has a positive side for the CCP. It allows the party to channel the blame for economic problems, such as

growing unemployment, to the managers and local officials. After some experimentation and failures, the party has the chance to intervene correcting abuses and collecting sympathies.

### **3.2.3 A less vertical State-Society relationship: Social decompression and expansion of civil rights**

Accompanying the institutionalization of the state and the CCP, the other side of political liberalization is a social decompression that softens the control of civil society by the state. Linz and Stepan have described this process as detotalitarianism by societal conquest (Linz, Juan & Stepan, Alfred, 1996). The social decompression has two major components: 1) the opening of regular and institutionalized consultations between the state and civil society groups and 2) An expansion of civil, social and economic rights.

#### **3.2.3.1 Regular and institutionalized consultation between the state and civil society organizations**

The formalization of a dialogue between the CCP party-state and organizations of Cuban civil society allows the leaders of these civil society organizations to expand their social outreach within the limits of the one-party system. For the CCP the opening of



these periodic dialogues has several advantages. First, it recognizes a change in the balance of power within society. From the time of religious inhibition in the 1960's to the time of the constitutional reform of 1992 ending official atheistic practices, the religious communities have rolled back the state hostile attitudes against their communities. Communist propaganda used to say that "religion was a remnant of the old society" but the "remnant" not only survived but expanded.

Second; the conversations between the CCP and leaders of religious, fraternal and other non-political associations serve as a give-and-take informal negotiation space that provide feedback to the authorities and help to measure the appeal of some demands within the society. The talks are in themselves sources of information and a powerful training for a different politics. The conversations are a feedback tool and a channel of information between the government and some actors (political opposition, for instance) with which the government doesn't want to talk officially. This give-and-take negotiation prepares the party for contradictions with social groups that accumulate mobilization power even if they could not sustain a clash with the state. At best, it allows political leaders to co-opt reformist impulses from society and connect with them. By talking to civil society and giving up to some of their sectarian demands of these groups, the CCP

provides them with stakes on the system. Dialogue with the civil society is also a tool to dry the pool in which the political opposition swims<sup>100</sup>.

Third, the government's dialogue with well recognized social groups, such as the religious communities, is a mechanism to reinforce the CCP's and these groups' nationalist credentials. It provides common values to appeal. Since 1992, the CCP had emphasized its nationalist identity, lowering although not abandoning the relevance of the communist one (it is in the name). In the last two decades, Religious communities have been particularly active developing a second patriotic culture space. Nationalism is allowed by the authorities but the different versions of other actors diverge from proclaimed communist orientation.

There are areas in which nationalism clashes with Marxism but there others, such as the opposition to the U.S embargo, in which coincidences prevail. Nationalist dialogues create a more fluid discussion in which communists to persuade use nationalist themes such as economic development and preservation of sovereignty lowering the importance of political control. One symbolic case has been the issue of internet connectivity. While the political opposition has criticized the government from a civil rights perspective, the most important internal critique has come with nationalist tones: it

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<sup>100</sup>As I said before, I follow Linz and Stepan on their idea of the convenience of a methodological separation in the study of political and civil society.

is an instrumental vehicle for development that should be available to the whole citizenry<sup>101</sup>.

The constitutional reforms of 1992 fostered a significant expansion of freedom of religion. Using a policy of negotiation, dialogue, and non-heroic resistance against former PCC atheistic policies, communities of faith have carved out significant space in Cuban society.<sup>102</sup> When it comes to regular publications, education networks, assistance to the poor, and entertainment and youth activities, Cuban religious communities provide a space in which discussions about models of reform for the Cuban economy, politics and society can take place (Crahan 2008).

The relations between the CCP and the Catholic Church improved significantly after the constitutional reform of 1992 but there was a fundamental disagreement between the government and the Church about the proper content of the dialogue. For years, particularly in response to the pastoral “El amortodo lo espera” (“Love expects

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<sup>101</sup>See for instance the debates about internet access in publications such as *Espacio Laical* of the Catholic Church or the films “Off line” by Yaima Pardo (Yaima 2015) and “Blog Bang Cuba” by Claudio PelaezSordo (Pelaez Sordo 2014).

<sup>102</sup>Despite official atheistic policies, Cubans of religious faith began to return to churches, temples and synagogues by the late 1970s and early 80s. Neither the clergy nor community leaders encourage their followers to engage in confrontational acts to challenge Communist atheistic policies. Followers were generally satisfied with having invoked their constitutional right to convene and worship. Doing so was a small step taken by many rather than a heroic act of a few.

everything”) in 1993 (Cuba's Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1993), the CCP insisted on a narrow definition of freedom of religion limited to a liberty of credo. The Church, on its side expressed a wider view in which freedom of religion was a right, not a government concession. The right to freedom of religion included the liberties of the believer and his/her organization to act socially in the promotion of their beliefs.

The most recent important round of these dialogues began with the Roman Catholic Church in May 19 2010 (Equipo editorial Espacio Laical 2010). The dialogue with the Bishops was partially a continuation of a conversation that began between the CCP and the Church during Fidel’s era, particularly in the period of John Paul II’s visit to Cuba in 1998. But the 2010 Dialogue of Raul Castro with the Bishops departed from the government’s previous narrow vision. Cardinal Jaime Ortega became a facilitator in the process of the release of 116 prisoners for political activities, violent and non violent (including the 54 from the 2003 Black Spring, who remained in jail by 2010).

For the first time, the government accepted to discuss with the Bishops issues that were not strictly related to the religious practices but to the presence of the religious communities in areas such as education, social values, economic changes, political stability and international affairs (Espacio Laical 2010). The dialogue with the Catholic Cardinal Jaime Ortega recognized the increasing role of the Church in areas such as ethics education, poverty alleviation (CARITAS), support to the health system, and other

activities. During the dialogue about the prisoners' release, Ortega was recognized as a valid interlocutor by the Spanish government that received the released who want to emigrate. Ortega also traveled several times to Washington to explain the importance of accompanying Cuba's process to the U.S. governments and moderate sectors of the Cuban exile. Ortega played also a facilitator role in promoting the facilitating role of the Vatican in Cuba-U.S. contacts (W. & Leogrande 2014).

In most of Cuba's religious communities there are leaders committed to a gradualist strategy, of fomenting change in the state by creating pressure from the bottom up. The legal status enjoyed by religious groups also allows them to serve as a point of convergence for various non-confrontational agendas of reform. Religious publications such as *Espacio Laical*, *Caminos*, *Cuba Posible* and *Palabra Nueva* air the views of pro-reform government economists and scholars such as Omar Everleny Villanueva, Carlos Alzugaray, Rafael Hernandez and Aurelio Alonso together with the opinions of moderate exiles and intellectuals from the Church.

Religious groups also serve as contacts with international actors such as universities or non-government assistance groups with interests on preparing the Cuban population for a mixed economy in terms of managerial techniques, consumer protection, environmental monitoring, etc. The liberalization of public debate under the umbrella of the Church is something observers outside of Cuba find difficult to understand because

the intangible gain is on the acceptance of differences rather than on a confrontational approach. Particularly the more radical elements of the Cuban exile community see confrontation (rather than dialogue) between Cuban civil society and the state as necessary, desirable and inevitable. But conflict and anti-government mobilization per se are clearly not a goal shared by most non-partisan actors in Cuba.

#### **3.2.4 The expansion of some civil, economic, social and cultural rights**

Earlier in his mandate, Raul Castro recognized that the CCP needs new zones of legitimacy to compensate for the losses associated with the transition from charismatic authority and the passing of the historical generation. The party launched a process of limited *detotalitarianism by choice* in which the transition to a post-totalitarian system happened more by design of the elites in power. In addition of giving voice to the new generation of Cuban leaders within the CCP, these policy choices are associated to provide a escape valve for some of the inherent tensions of a serious economic adjustment.

One source of these policy decisions is the need to create synergies and complementarities to the economic reform. Almost immediately after he took power, Raul Castro eliminated some of the government's most restrictive policies such as Cubans being prohibited on staying in hotels or buying computers and cell phones. In

addition to providing a source of hard currency for the Cuban government, the end of the prohibition on Cubans staying in hotels normalized interactions between nationals and foreigners, broadening the possibilities for reciprocal influence, opportunities for migration, education, business, communications, etc.

The legalization of activities that were previously in the black market reduced the population subjected to criminal prosecution, including the most draconian cases, such as those classified under the subjective labels of “dangerousness” and “vagrancy”. The new sphere of private and cooperative property expands the right to own private property and reduces the degree of dependence and exposure to the arbitrariness of state power.

Facing a more plural society, the government has being compelled to respond to the emergence of citizen advocacy groups rather than simply rely on confrontation. There is undoubtedly a totalitarian policy of confrontation employed against openly political opposition; however, in the last few years, a gray area has emerged where intellectuals, independent bloggers and groups that promote citizen interests without directly challenging the state’s survival are tolerated.

These efforts include movements in favor of women rights, in opposition to racial discrimination, consumers’ rights advocates, gay rights activists, environmentalists, anti-abortion groups, death penalty abolitionists, the right to freedom of movement, among many other non-overtly political groups that do not challenge the monopoly of power of

the PCC but demand policies that address their concerns. In December 2010, a group of Cuban gay rights activists led by Francisco Rodriguez, an AIDS and gay rights advocate who is also a member of the CCP protested against the Cuban government's vote against a United Nations resolution repudiating acts of violence associated with an individual's sexual orientation. As a result, Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez recognized that in this instance, Cuban foreign policy could not ignore the concerns and opinions of its citizens (Diaz, 2011).

#### **3.2.4.1 The Migration Reform: A short case study**

In addition the advancement on the right to own private property and the freedom of religion, the most important progress in human rights terms was the migration reform. On October 16 2013, Raul Castro's government repealed law 989, which was instated in December 1961 and allowed Cuban authorities to confiscate the "property, rights and shares" of those who "are definitively absent from the national territory," and made substantial changes to the migration law of September 1976. The unpopular exit permits, which had saddled any Cuban travelers with burdensome fees (more than 300 dollars tax to travel) and prevented many Cubans, including dissidents from traveling in the past, were eliminated as of January 14.



The changes are positive steps that bring Cuba closer to compliance with international standards of freedom of movement. The dynamics that have driven changes in Cuba's migratory policy are related to internal legitimacy, the economic reforms, and the politics of emigration within the Cuban context where nationalists prioritize development while communists' priorities is the control of the population. The greatest empowerment of Cuban civil society is associated mainly with the religious communities, independent intellectuals and amphibious groups that operate independently but within legal organizations such as the Union of Writers and Artists (UNEAC). These organizations and non-liberal modernizers within the regime were the main forces pushing for a migration reform in the last twenty years.

The political logic of Cuba's new migration policy is evident: 1) it opens doors to the definitive emigration of those most irritated by official policies; 2) it increases the possibility of circular migration by reducing the costs of and barriers to travel in both directions; 3) it synchronizes Cuba's migration policy with economic reforms elaborated in the guidelines of the VI Congress of the Communist Party.

The expansion of the right to travel has a multiplier effect in terms on other rights such as the right to education, right to work, right to seek information and others. People who can own some small or medium size business can save money and travel abroad. People who travel abroad can do what other emigrants from other countries do: save

money and send remittances to their country of origin. They can also save money and eventually return to Cuba and open new business there. The opportunity to travel abroad also gave the travelers chances to connect globally with international trends and acquire opportunities for the Cuban development in arts, business, education, etc.

### **3.3 Liberalization and Democratization: Is one the road to the other?**

The CCP leadership does not see economic reform and political strategic adaptation as early steps of a transition to a multiparty democracy<sup>103</sup>. On the opposite, liberalization is an effort to reshape the relations between state and society in ways that sharpen a responsive CCP monopoly of the political franchise.

The documents of the VI Congress of the CCP illustrate how Raul Castro's CCP recognized the existence of structural governance problems within the one party rule blocking information from flowing up to the political hierarchies. One reiterated goal

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<sup>103</sup>In Cuba, economy czar Marino Murillo and minister of Foreign Trade Rodrigo Malmierca had said several times that there is no interest on changing Cuba's political system but only on updating the economy. Paradoxically, the same position is promoted from the Institute of Cuban and Cuban American Studies of the University of Miami. Most of its affiliates repeat frequently a diagnostics that takes such separation between economy and politics as valid. The view in this dissertation is just the opposite. Given the indivisibility of communist politics and economics, changes in the latter have transformational effects in the former. For a discussion about System effects in political and social life from a non-Marxist perspective, see Robert Jervis' "System Effects. Complexity in Political and Social life" (Jervis 1997).

across all the assemblies and resolutions was the need to separate “definitively” the management functions of government and state from the monitoring and leading responsibilities of the CCP (Cuban Communist Party 2012). Corruption, indiscipline, and illegalities are identified by the CCP as scourges that “put the revolution in peril” (Cuban Communist Party 2012)

The I National Conference of the CCP in 2012 centered on the importance of opening the system to upward information flows to check and improve governance and “one-party democracy”. The discussion about political and ideological work emphasized how Information is a central part of a government’s capacity to implement its policies and to manage efficiently the adjustment to a new context. Raul Castro condemned the proliferation of “formalism”, false unanimity” and “useless secrecy” (R. Castro, *El rumbo ya ha sido trazado* 2012). A less evident dimension includes the reinvigoration of the Poder Popular Assemblies. At the national level, the CCP is activating the National Assembly, particularly its commissions, as the cardinal points for the discussion of new legislation to adapt the country to the new context of economic reform and openness.

The National Conference of the CCP in 2012 adopted the practice of term limits (two terms of five years for all the main positions in the government and the party) (R. Castro, *El rumbo ya ha sido trazado* 2012). In February 24, 2014, Raul Castro announced that he would set an example by retiring from the presidency by the end of his second

term in 2018. Castro spoke about the need for a constitutional reform to catch up with the changes that had already taken place and others to implement as part of the 2011 VI Congress program.

At the local level, the CCP new policy guidelines call for a higher participation of people unaffiliated to it, anticipating more tolerance for competition and the encouragement of participation not directly controlled by the cadres<sup>104</sup>. The strengthening of feedback mechanisms and post-totalitarian responsiveness to population's demands goes to the core of the governance dilemmas associated to the liberalization process. Liberalization differs from democratization but both processes frequently overlap. Democratization includes the celebration of competitive free and fair elections as the supreme vertical accountability mechanism of a political system. It is the most drastic feedback for an incumbent: reelection or defeat.

The search for efficient feedback mechanisms short of multiparty elections shows the tensions between liberalization and democratization. The Cuban government hopes to decompress the social discontent and appease and co-opt the reformist elements within it.

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<sup>104</sup>An example of this case happened in the city of Caibarien where a transgender male, Adela Hernandez, who was imprisoned two years for his "improper conduct" run in the local elections to city council against the vice-president of the municipal assembly. Since the nomination of candidates for the local assemblies(not for the provincial or national levels) is free. Adela was promoted by the neighbors and won. <http://www.ctvnews.ca/world/cuban-transgender-woman-becomes-1st-to-hold-elected-office-1.1041446>

The liberalization's irony is expressed in the fact that the expansion of some rights and the rationalization of the state can produce a more adaptable post-totalitarian regime, in part out of effective responses to the economic and political demands of the population.

Under some less probable scenarios, the implementation of the political reform might speed up processes of democratization. The most likely scenario is that, the state, society and the ruling elites would be transformed by liberalization into a more flexible type of non democratic rule. If under these conditions, the opposition remains as disconnected from the day to day problems of the population as it is today, the democratic impulse might dissipate at least in the short term.

Yet the absence of plans for multiparty elections doesn't justify dismissing the liberalization steps taken by the CCP as cosmetic. The experiences of Mexico, Taiwan, Hungary, Poland, Spain and other transitions show how important some institutions created during the liberalization process were later for the consolidation of democracy. Even if democratization doesn't occur, the consolidation of feedback institutions might encourage the CCP to allow more openings if the leaders are confident that they will be able to control it. As Catharin Dalpino concludes: "History has shown (..)that the end result of liberalization may take many forms, often unforeseen by the reformers themselves" (Dalpino, 2000, p. 24).

The nature of the challenges and the characteristics of the CCP response set another major difference between the frequently studied processes of democratization and political liberalization in the Cuban context: the relevance of the different actors. If in the case of the democratization many analysis of agency focused on the relationship between the government and the political opposition, in liberalization the more important developments happen within the more opaque ranks of the non-democratic reformers in the government and their relations with less prone to reform bureaucrats.

Particularly important is the role of those actors who operate within the grayer areas of the amphibious associations and the nonpolitical organizations of civil society. Here it is important to recognize the double direction of the state-society penetration in totalitarian systems and how its balance is contingent to specific historical moments. The CCP has penetrated the society with its control and ideological mechanisms but the pluralism within society penetrates also to the party structure fomenting pluralism within the regime.

Once reform starts, new actors and logics began to play. The expansion of private and cooperative sectors since Raul launched the reforms undermine the classic vision of communist utopia in terms of the state distributing and deciding all type of legal upward social mobility. The 1990's opened the door to processes that gained momentum after 2009 such as the end of the state controls over real estate and automobiles market. The

end of the prohibition to buy cellphones and computers in 2008 had increased massively access to information by millions. The low connectivity to internet has not stopped Cubans to inform themselves through something called “El Paquete (The Package)”, a black market service of distribution of movies, tv programs and news in floppies and flash drives.

The new social networks and elite connections to foreign investment, the remittances and the growing private sector provide a cushion and opportunities for the nomenclature. Those better connected and in higher position have been the first to take advantage of the situation of partial reform in which they are able to capture rents associated to lack of competition, minimal consumer protection, and asymmetries of information. The open launching of the economic reform in the VI Party Congress in 2011 was a turning point because it has not been sufficient to stabilize the economy but strengthened the vision that the way out of the crisis is on the adoption of more market oriented policy. The property rights granted to new entrepreneurs, houses owners and land leasers have acted as a platform for pressures to broaden market structures. Private restaurants began with a limit of only twelve chairs in 1994 but the regulation was eventually changed to 60 in 2011.

One important element of liberalization is the Cuban population's growing access to the internet. Although the government will regulate the flow of information, curbing potential use by opposition forces, greater access to the internet will increase the general population's exposure to alternative sources of information. Cubans with greater access to the internet won't necessarily rush to read the internationally acclaimed Yoani Sanchez' vignettes so much as they will be eager to use the web for educational, social, and business pursuits. Cubans already know how wide the web is - the government will ignore the pent-up demand for it at his own peril.

The discussion about state-society relations would be incomplete without some reference to the changes in state's policy towards the political opposition. Raul Castro's CCP is as hostile towards opposition group as Fidel was. Still there are some changes due to the difference of circumstances:

**First**, the government has adopted some of the most attractive issues in the agenda of the opposition (right to own private property, and right to travel) and implement its own version of them.

**Second**, the opposition is still very fragmented and divided without a positive program about how to deal with the central problems of the country. Worse, it has not adapted to the current reforms landscape. It denies that real reforms are happening or



appear disoriented criticizing the Cuban government and the Obama administration for opening diplomatic relations with Cuba.

**Third;** in order to guarantee a friendly international environment for the reforms in the relation with the European Union and Canada, and recently with the United States, the government is not arresting or punishing dissidents to long time jail sentences. Instead, the new tactic is not to bother prominent dissidents, concentrating in short term arrests of less known ones. Many times, members of the political opposition are arrested and released hours later or after a week or two without charges. That “catch and release” combination explains why there was in 2014 a record number of arrests but at the same time the number of prisoners of conscience was the lowest in twenty years<sup>105</sup>.

**Fourth,** massive mobilization in support for the party has been replaced by a demand of neutrality or acquiescence to the CCP rule. Repression is targeted to active members of the opposition, particularly those who enter into political cooperation with foreign powers, the United States in the first place. Law 88-1999<sup>106</sup> (Cuba’s antidote to the Helms-Burton law ) penalized dissident behavior that would be legal in most countries such as sending articles or public information to radio or TV stations connected

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<sup>105</sup>This is according to Amnesty International. (Amnesty International, 2015)

<sup>106</sup>Cuba’s National Assembly (1999) Law 88 of Defense of the Sovereignty and Independence of Cuba, <http://www.cubanet.org/ref/dis/021699.htm>

to the U.S. policy towards Cuba (Radio and TV Marti). At the same time, it is obvious that the United States' embargo policy states goals is rejected by the majority of the Cuban population and considered intrusive and antithetical to democracy promotion by most human rights organizations.

### **3.4 International models and promoters of political liberalization**

Post-totalitarian liberalization is also favored by the influence of important international factors<sup>107</sup>. The actors of Cuba's political reform are not passive recipients of foreign influences but active actors adapting international trends, selecting information, and applying their respective lessons. There are experiences from the collapse of communism in Europe and some relatively successful foreign models attractive to Cuban post-revolutionary elites in which marketization combined with political liberalization have modernized the one-party rule.

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<sup>107</sup>The topic of foreign relations is discussed in the second part of the dissertation. This mention is necessary because international precedents shape and condition the thoughts of those who already are set on a course of marketization and political liberalization without renouncing to CCP political monopoly.

Cuban elites, particularly the dominant segment of non-democratic reformers, look with interest to the experiences of Communist parties in East Asia<sup>108</sup>. In China and Vietnam, the institutionalization of collective leadership has produced far better economic growth and more political stability than the charismatic rule of the founders of the regimes. The readings of Cuban political leaders is not a vision of rupture between the radical period (Maoism or Ho Chi Minh's rule) and the later adoption of reforms under their successors. Although Cuban leaders criticize abuses in the performance of the Chinese communist party under Mao, for instance, the Cuban official narrative about East Asian communism believes in continuity (Castro 2009) between "Mao's invisible hand"<sup>109</sup> and later market reforms, not a radical political rupture.

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<sup>108</sup>The references to the experiences of reforms in East Asian Communism in Vietnam and China are frequent in the discussions about the reforms in Cuba. In addition, the frequency of CCP leaders' visits to China, Vietnam and Japan, a model of capitalist development under the guidance of the state have increased in the last five years. See reports about the visit of Miguel Diaz-Canel, Cuban first Vicepresident to China, Vietnam and Laos. Luckily, this interest in East Asian communism does not include the NorthKorean dynastic model despite the excellent relations between Havana and Pyongyang. <http://www.oncubamagazine.com/economy-business/looking-to-asia/>

<sup>109</sup>This is a reference to the book edited by Sebastian Heilmann and Elizabeth Perry about the particular contribution of the specific style of governing of the Chinese Communist Party and its contribution to the transition to the market economy through traditions such as local experimentation, national campaigns, and other adaptive revolutionary methods (Perry and Heilmann 2011). Cuban reading of the continuity between radical politics and reform under the revolutionary state has significant similarities with the view of the author in the sense that it looks at the reform in its own merits, within the continuity of the Communist party rule not as the beginning of a democratization phase.

It is not a surprise that the East Asian market transitions under communist rule provoke desires of emulation within members of the Cuban elites and also in the base of the CCP. East Asia Communist party rulers have successfully managed more than one power inter-generational transition preserving political order and the continuity of the Communist party rule. Last but not least, the princess and princesses of the dominant factions have found a way to renew their dominance by participating actively in the market economies and inserting in the global circuits of education and work.

**Chapter Four: Cuba's change of leadership: Sources, Actors and challenges  
of a transition from hybrid domination (Charismatic-institutional) to an  
institutionalized Leninist rule.**

**4.1 Introduction**

One of the three important challenges for the Cuban Communist party is the intergenerational transition of leadership. The Cuban post-revolutionary regime faced between 2006 and 2009 the first intra-generational succession and managed it successfully. By 2015, a decade later, Raul Castro had established a chronogram to leave the presidency in 2018 to a new generation educated and trained within the system.

Samuel Huntington distinguished between chronological age and generational age of social institutions.

The more often the organization has surmounted the problem of peaceful succession and replaced one set of leaders by another, the more highly institutionalized it is. In considerable measure, of course, generational age is a function of chronological age. But political parties and government may continue for decades under the leadership of one generation. The founders of organizations-whether parties, governments, or business corporations-are often young. Hence the gap between chronological age and generational age is apt to be greater in the early history of an organization than later in its career. This gap produces tensions between the first leaders of the organization and the next generation immediately behind them, which can look forward to a lifetime in the shadow of the first generation (Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, 1968)

A change of leadership and the way it happens tend to affect the stability, political legitimacy and character of any regime. Leadership in Cuba has a broader scope than Fidel and Raul Castro or even the whole octogenarian group who sit at the top position in the executive commission of the Politburo. Cuba is not a sultanistic system; it is ruled by a party with well-defined institutional features and a human capital system managed by the Organization Department of the CCP.

Fidel Castro's charismatic rule has played a significant role in Cuban politics. His retirement is a consequential factor but not the dominant one in the redesign of the system. The professionalization and plural composition of the elites has broadened in the last five decades. Change in leadership in this chapter means not only the end of the charismatic presidency but the effect of institutionalization of cadres' policies across the system. The biggest challenge for Cuba's one-party system is how to rule a more pluralized society and bureaucracy with a less cohesive leadership than the one gathered around Fidel Castro's charisma.

The survival of the regime has disproved many analyses that predicted the end of the post-revolution regime in the absence of its supreme revolutionary leader. The evidence is a clarion call to seek alternative characterization and explanations about the legitimacy, resilience and mechanisms of Cuba's political system. It is also an alert about

the flaws of personalization of great powers' policies towards smaller neighbors in the context of asymmetric relations<sup>110</sup>.

There are many opinion articles about the question of how post-Fidel succession is taking place but few of academic character<sup>111</sup>. The explanation that I present here is based on the combination of two types of leadership incubated within the system in the last five decades, one of charismatic domination around Fidel Castro, and the second one, of a Leninist-institutional character around the Cuban Armed Forces and the Department of Organization of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party. The existence of the second system of leadership selection was key to the post-totalitarian adaptation that allowed the regime to survive and recover. Supported by resources, ideological and training schools and monitoring skills, the Leninist branch of the Cuban leadership is designed to nip any trend to open political contestation outside the party in the bud.

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<sup>110</sup>This last topic is discussed in the chapter about U.S.-Cuba relations as part of what it is called the politics of inattention of Great Power politics. Inattention is frequently replaced by alarmism and personalization of the policy towards a country as a policy towards its specific leader, two tools in the repertoire of special interests groups.

<sup>111</sup>One exception is the article by Bert Hoffman's "Charismatic Authority and Leadership Change: Lessons from Cuba's Post-Fidel Succession (Hoffmann, 2009). Hoffman's narrative is compelling but lacks an important explanatory variable, factional politics. Factional politics within Cuba's political regime is very opaque but this fact should not restrain scholars from advancing hypothesis as well informed as possible about their dynamics. Here I propose a view that looks at Cuba's factional politics in its interaction with the institutional and charismatic tracks.

That is why it is important to look at the factional politics that exist within the system structures. The factional politics presented here emphasize three differentiating criteria: a) functional affinities (what functions groups have in the party-state apparatus), b) generational formative experiences, and c) relation to the two legitimacy tracks. The type of pluralist competition that emerges from this dynamics is non-democratic and lacks transparency but there are important data that inform the educated reader about the potential for cooperation/conflict relations between the leaders of the political system. To begin, there is important public information in the speeches and practices of the Cuban leaders showing on civil military relations, the interactions between economics and politics, and the adequate way to promote cadres within the system structure. In addition, it is possible to trace the biographies of party, military and state leaders in ways that make reasonable to assume affinities with those who has risen in similar trajectories. Finally, it is possible to observe and compare the robustness and cohesiveness of the different institutions and the capacity of command and mobilization associated to the elites that rule them.

Although the partial adoption of a market orientation and the implementation of a political liberalization undermine the initial totalitarian character of the Cuban regime, it is important to notice how the institutionalization and routines of the CCP remains committed to a Leninist centralized structure. The work of the organization department of the Central Committee in Cuba's political leadership management and the large presence



of members of the FAR-MININT complex in the politburo show a reform process controlled by the communist party. In a continuation with a political tradition of secrecy, the Cuban leadership keeps an important part of the management of the leadership selection hidden from the public eye. This is Fidel's legacy to the reform, the guerrilla methods and the Leninist playbook for designing and implementing any policy, conservative or reformist, focusing in the asymmetry of the relations with the United States.

The chapter is divided in the following parts: first, I discuss the two types of leadership that preceded the presidential succession between 2006 and 2009, adding elements that explain the factional politics within the upper echelons of the Cuban elites. Second, I present a short description of the importance of the Department of organization of the central Committee of the Communist Party in shaping leaders selection in the provinces and the state machinery. There I notice how an intergenerational transition did already take place at every level of the CCP except the Politburo. Third, I list briefly a set of strategic decision that arises from the winning coalition associated to the presidency of Raul Castro.

#### **4.1.1 A hybrid regime with two types of leadership.**

Since the consolidation of the Cuban revolution, decision making, and cadres' promotion occurred within two different tracks along a continuum from charisma to institutionalization. The first track, the charismatic<sup>112</sup> one was centralized around Fidel Castro. The second track, named Leninist for its emphasis on the "vanguard party", was promoted by Raul Castro from his position as second secretary of the Cuban Communist Party and minister of the Armed Forces. These two tracks had separate trajectories; at times they were at odds but fundamentally complemented each other.

**The charismatic track around Fidel** was innovative and non-formalized. It was flexible because Fidel's authority allows the system to experiment and circumvent institutional bottlenecks of the command economy and avoid the group thinking traps associated to rigid institutional routines. Important tools of this type of leadership were social compulsion, invocation of revolutionary ideals, and mass mobilization campaigns. Such practices were not the result of collective or institutional processing of information

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<sup>112</sup>The term charismatic refers to an unusual type of legitimate authority. Max Weber defined charisma as "a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary" (Weber, 1978, p. 241). Weber said that "in a revolutionary and sovereign manner, charismatic domination transform all values and breaks all traditional and rational norms" (Weber, 1978, p. 1115).

and decision making but centered on Fidel Castro's use of revolutionary impulses. In this sense, the track could become rigid once Fidel Castro locked himself in a position<sup>113</sup>.

**The second track operated under Raul's command of the Armed Forces and the Organization Department of the CCP<sup>114</sup>.** This Leninist track was grounded on institutional mechanisms developed in a long process of communist institutionalization between 1962 when the Secretariat of the Integrated Revolutionary Organizations (ORI) was created, and 1997, when the V Congress of the CCP took place. Different from the charismatic track in which Fidel promoted its leadership staff "by helicopter" according

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<sup>113</sup>There is a lot of partisan literature about the successes and failures of Fidel Castro's leadership. His followers would point out his early warnings about the potential destruction of the Soviet Union in 1988 and his emphasis on the development of Cuba's advanced bio-technological industries and health sector. His opponents will look at the failure of the 1970 Ten Millions Harvest, the Food Plan in the early 1990's and the waste of the Battle of Ideas. For my discussion of Fidel Castro's role in Cuban history before and after his retirement, see Lopez-Levy, Arturo (2012) Cuba and Fidel Castro: Beyond his 86th Birthday.

[http://thehavananote.com/2012/08/cuba\\_and\\_fidel\\_castro\\_beyond\\_his\\_86th\\_birthday](http://thehavananote.com/2012/08/cuba_and_fidel_castro_beyond_his_86th_birthday) and Lopez-Levy, Arturo (2011) No man is an island (Fidel Castro turned 85), [http://thehavananote.com/2011/08/no\\_man\\_island\\_fidel\\_castro\\_turned\\_85](http://thehavananote.com/2011/08/no_man_island_fidel_castro_turned_85)

<sup>114</sup>The member of the Politburo Jose Ramon Machado Ventura was the most important supervisor of the Organization Department. Machado Ventura is the only member of the Politburo who had been in it from the first Congress of the CCP in 1975 together with Fidel and Raul Castro. After Raul Castro took the presidency, he became the first Vice-president of the Council of State and the Council of Ministers. In February 2013 when he was already 82 years old, he was replaced by Miguel Diaz-Canel, 51, who was anointed as the second in command and the person in line to replace Raul Castro in 2018 at the helm of the Cuban State. Machado Ventura kept the important post of Second Secretary of the CCP.

to the demands of his political campaigns, military and party officials were promoted step by step and systematically.

Control and surveillance were part of the second track. The counterintelligence apparatus submitted military and party leaders to periodic evaluation and surveillance. These reports implied recommendations from bottom-up that played a role in their promotion. In principle, the Leninist track had biases in favor of institutional stability and against sudden changes of policies and leaders. It cultivates the replacement of military officers, party bosses and state managers by their second in command.

These practices were not followed in the charismatic track where Fidel Castro incited to think constantly with a revolutionary impulse although within the margins of the communist policy frontier. In relation to his staff, Fidel superseded any security or ideological concern about a cadre with his authority. He will promote or remove a manager, a party leader or a ministry if this person failed or opposed to his own plans, not those of any party document. Several times, he reacted against the institutional bottlenecks of the Leninist track successfully mitigating their slowdown of revolutionary plans with the expediency of the command-and-obey up-down guerrilla approach. The charismatic track also unleashed processes of revision and extraordinary feedback mechanisms as venues for reducing the power of bureaucracies.

Conflict between institutional structures and charisma-propelled campaigns only happened at specific critical junctures. Different from Mao or Stalin, Fidel never embarked in a full war of attrition against the party or the Armed Forces. He generally acted as a individualist charismatic leader but of a Leninist kind not a Stalinist. At occasions when his charisma could make a difference to bolster the appeal of the system he didn't hesitate to jump over regular routines and institutions. One area where Fidel Castro used his charisma and history as a revolutionary leader was foreign policy and the relations with other leftist forces but there he had to depend more on the foreign policy and party apparatus<sup>115</sup>.

Fidel Castro was the minimum winning coalition in Cuban politics in virtue of his charisma, and historical role. Every "raulista" was by default a "fidelista" since institutional organization was predicated on the premise of providing the revolution and its supreme leader with an effective tool to implement his program. Fidel's personal power and ideological prism prevailed over institutional norms.

One difference between the two tracks was their view about the autonomy of lower structures in the communist system. In the charismatic track, Fidel and the leaders

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<sup>115</sup>Jorge Castaneda's "Utopia Unarmed" discusses the role of the Americas Department of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party in Cuba's relations with the Latin American radical left. Although some of the facts and evidences presented by Castaneda are in question, he made a good case about the existence of this parallel apparatus subordinated directly to Fidel Castro through one of his most charismatic subalterns Commander Manuel PineiroLozada. (Castaneda, 1993)

avored a direct communication with the masses without the intermediation of the cadres. Fidel was suspicious and skeptical about bureaucratic routines because of its negative impact on revolutionary enthusiasm. Intermediate structures were also a convenient scapegoat for policy failures. At times he would develop his own assessment of social or economic situation exposing bureaucratic neglect and corruption as the main reason for the flaws of communism.

Economic and political institutionalization was- in Fidel's vision- a double edge sword. In several speeches he strengthened the importance of organization but in many others, he alerted about how bureaucratic rule and institutionalization created distance of the leadership from the masses. According to Fidel Castro's view, intermediate structures and division of labor among the cadres in specialized functions of the economy, representation might led to capitalist tendencies<sup>116</sup>, technocratic expertise without a revolutionary soul, accommodation to power structures and privileges ("acomodamiento") as well as traffic of influences. He insisted in the importance of revolutionary guidance in the economy planning system to prevent a move to capitalism

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<sup>116</sup>For examples of Fidel Castro's explanation about the bureaucratic deviations in socialism and the abandonment of the revolutionary methods see his speeches during the so-called "rectification period" (Castro, 1986). This is totally compatible with Max Weber's theory about charisma and its relations with bureaucratic appointments or dismissals: "In radical contrast to bureaucratic organization, charisma knows no formal and regulated appointment or dismissal, no career, advancement or salary, no supervisory or appeals body, no local or purely technical jurisdiction, and no permanent institutions in the manner of bureaucratic agencies" (Weber, 1978)

(Castro F. , Hay que rectificar los errores que cometamos en la rectificacion de los errores, 1987). This vision was frequently reinforced by campaigns to purify and renew the revolutionary spirit. This campaigns such as Che Guevara's speeches in the 1960's or the rectification process in the late 1980's when Fidel Castro frequently blamed the bureaucrats for falling prisoners of routines without listening to the people's voice in revolutionary ways (Castro F. , Un Encuentro con Fidel (Interview by Gianni Mina, 1988).

In the Leninist track, decentralization and professionalization of the cadres was part of the party-state building task. Division of labor, specialization, delegation of decision and policy implementation was a way to release upper echelons from the heat of daily minutiae allowing the party to concentrate in strategic leadership, control and supervision. Rather than a space for sectarian tendencies conducive to a deterioration of communist values, decentralization could provide flexibility to party rule and national dictated policies. In this view, economic and political decentralization also encourage some competition between leaders of the party and the economy in representation of different regions. This competition rather than create sectarian tendencies might encourage a healthy emulation of best practices.

On balance, these two tracks survived in parallel for five decades since the establishment of the revolutionary party-state apparatus. Each track of leadership evolved into an accommodation between the two styles. The general trend was to the stabilization of institutional rule with sporadic moments in which Fidel reaffirmed his charismatic and veto power. Fidel did use his personal appeal and charisma to build ad hoc groups or institutions tailored for his command and massive mobilization and propaganda campaigns. The two most important ones were the Group of Coordination and Support of the Commander in chief<sup>117</sup> and in the nineties the Battle of Ideas group with Otto Rivero as the Vice-president of the Council of Ministers in charge of this front.

Fidel's charisma was a reservoir of legitimacy for the revolutionary regime. In front of the evidence of bureaucratic accommodation and neglect, Fidel could always launch a mobilization campaign and appeal to revolutionary ethics and sacrifices. In terms of personnel Fidel Castro rightly or wrongly unceremoniously removed specific leaders and excluded them from the National Assembly, the Central Committee and even the Politburo. But nothing in Cuba has the characteristics of the Chinese Cultural

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<sup>117</sup>In Spanish, Grupo de Coordinación y Apoyo al Comandante en Jefe. This was the platform for the projection of Luis Orlando Dominguez, Carlos Lage, Felipe Perez Roque, Otto Rivero, and Carlos Valenciaga. All of them were defenestrated in the Official Note of the Council of State on March 2, 2009 (Consejo de Estado de la Republica de Cuba, 2009)



Revolution or Stalin's purges<sup>118</sup>. The most seasoned leaders of the CCP learnt earlier to get out of the way whenever Fidel launched a major campaign. For some time they will tune to the mobilization campaign of the moment, for instance military troops were used in agricultural, construction or propaganda efforts for a while, but in the long-term, institutions would guarantee the continuity of the post-revolutionary order.

The Leninist track also acted as stabilizer when Fidel's charismatic campaigns put the country in disarray. When Fidel Castro' was deeply committed to a failed policy, Raul Castro used the power of the institutions to shape a political adjustment. A typical case was the reopening of farmers' market in 1993 announced by Raul Castro in a meeting with regional commanders of the Armed Forces and provincial party secretaries. This happened almost a year and a half after Fidel Castro had explained to the IV Congress of the Communist Party in 1991 why he opposed any marketization associated to Agriculture. Fidel did not support the farmers' market opening but he kept silent when Raul provided space not only for the private farmers but also for agricultural cooperatives.

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<sup>118</sup>Most victims of Fidel's campaign and revolutionary abuses of human rights were opponents of the regime and people defined as of "deviant behavior" such as religious believers, homosexuals, hippies, etc. Fidel never destroyed the party as Mao did during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution", nor he ever conducted a military purge of the kind Stalin used against the Soviet generals before the Second World War.

In the model of “Fidel-in-command” that prevailed until 2006, denunciation of market flaws was central. Fidel was a man of his anti-market principles. He and Che Guevara presented themselves as champions for the downtrodden of the world against the growing inequality created by capitalist market, particularly in its neoliberal version. Fidel Castro endorsed Che’s dream about a “new man” “liberated” from the slavery of material incentives. This mantra was reiterated speech after speech in different cycles in which Fidel Castro launched sporadic campaigns against any endorsement of capitalism.

Fidel also was above all the factions in the party since he is the founder and historic leader of the Cuban revolution. Because his leadership was undisputable, he historically provided space and assign functions to loyalists from all venues: veterans of different pre-1959 revolutionary organizations, civilians and military, young and old, raulistas and the rest. Fidel seemed to straddle the line between the pragmatic and anti-market factions within the PCC, but at decisive moments he supported anti-market ideologues. He believed- as Che Guevara- that socialism cannot be built with the “tools” of capitalism.

Fidel’s vision was structurally biased to the revolutionary left. A subordinate who supported a radical policy was considered by Fidel Castro with the proper principles, even if life didn’t allow him or her to implement its grand vision. Those who advocated policies in favor of market mechanisms could be labeled under a more menacing label,

“supporters of capitalism”. In November 1997, just after Raul Castro embarked on a major trip to the PRC and expressed positive views about the strength of socialism in the Asian giant, Cuban communist party’s newspaper Gramma published an article by then director of its National School, Raul Valdes Vivo. In what seemed to be an allusion to Fidel Castro’s anti-market legacy, Valdes Vivo warned that private investors could eventually grow into capitalists, a danger to socialism like “piranhas capable in a minimum time of devouring a horse down to the bones”<sup>119</sup>.

Good chances for a better phased reform of Cuban political and economic system were lost in 1997 by the V Congress of the CCP. In the face of suggestions that Cuba could emulate the successful economic experiences of the Communist party-ruled countries in East Asia, Fidel emphasized that Cuba’s conditions, including its geographical location, were significantly different from those of Vietnam and the PRC. It was not a matter of political cost benefit-analysis, Fidel Castro’s rejection of the pro-market models of East Asian communism was a matter of his identity<sup>120</sup> as an

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<sup>119</sup>For a discussion about the beginning of Raul Castro’s consolidation as Fidel’s successor in the V Congress of the Communist Party and the pressures from ideological zealots against economic reform, see Larry Rother’s “As Heir to Fidel, Raul Castro assumes bigger role in Cuba” (Rother, 1998). The reference to a horse was interpreted as placing private investors against Fidel Castro’s socialism because Cubans called Fidel with the nickname “El Caballo” (The Horse).

<sup>120</sup>Fidel’s charismatic inspiration grows from his followers’ belief that he won’t compromise with his principles. They believe he doesn’t follow an instrumental logic.

intransigent revolutionary. If he were a less protagonist figure, perhaps the system could have moved earlier in the path of reform.

The historical exhaustion of Fidel Castro's charismatic authority explains not only a cause that pushed Raul Castro to adopt a new course of reforms but also the stagnation of the economic transformation in the 1990's (Gonzalez & McCarthy, 2004). With his charisma, Fidel Castro locked Cuban political system adaptation into an aversion to market typical of partial reform equilibrium. Cuba reluctantly accepted some market segments in its economy but refused to adopt complementary steps that could have helped the country to deal comprehensively with issues of poverty, inequality and transitional adjustment.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba had to concede a space to market mechanisms but Fidel Castro did not accommodate more than what was strictly necessary (Eckstein, 1994). His stand against market was a necessary condition for the partial reform equilibrium that emerged. Fidel provided Cuban radicals with a barricade against market transformation they would have never afforded without his altruistic revolutionary credentials. In favor of gradualism and partial reform equilibrium was also

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For them, Fidel remained always the landowner's son, who left aside privilege to take side with the market losers. Charisma is a relational category. People follow the charismatic leader for expressing some beliefs, not simply for a personal characteristic. Fidel made his reputation as someone who doesn't compromise, an intransigent, a word with positive meanings in Cuba's political culture.

a Cuba's national security rationality based on the difficulties of endorsing deep market oriented reforms in the middle of U.S pressures for regime change.

In contrast, the institutional track was less adverse to the introduction of market mechanisms. The Armed Forces have their own economic branch. As the longest serving minister of defense in the history of the world (47 years), Raul understood Napoleon's dictum about military expertise "amateurs speak strategy, generals speak logistics". After 1970 when Fidel Castro mobilized the army for the Ten million sugar ton campaign, Raul began to develop an economic apparatus at the service of the Armed Forces (FAR). In 1973, FAR created the Working Youth Army (Ejercito Juvenil del Trabajo) in which young recruits from the military service worked as agricultural and construction labor. The Armed Forces developed their own conglomerate of military industries and a chain of hotels, originally for their own officers but later for international tourism.

The military introduced some market-oriented management practices during Fidel's reign. To prevent an excessive dependence on Soviet military support, in the 1980's the FAR high command created the Military Industries Union (Union de industrias militares), a holding of companies that after 1990 became the launching pad for the GAE (Grupo de Administracion Empresarial (Entrepreneurial Management Group, also known as GAESA). The GAE is the mother company for several of the largest

companies in Cuba today. Hotel chain “Gaviota” is one of the major tourism companies in Latin America. Another company of the GAE “Almacenes Universales” is in charge of the development of the Special Economic zone of the port of Mariel.

Cuba’s security hawks endorsed institutionally the gradual approach to reform and the partial equilibrium for their own reasons. They found useful allies in the early winners of the partial reform among the bureaucrats, investors and entrepreneurs. These well placed actors profited from the monopoly and arbitrage rents associated to prices liberalization without competition. Politically this equilibrium favored the discretion of beneficiaries of the partial reform since they had to behave without ostentation because no position was safe enough in front of Fidel’s anti-corruption revolutionary attitude.

Then, it is not surprising how once this type of relationship between leader and followers diminish due to Fidel’s sickness, the political system shifted rapidly to a thermidorean (Brinton, *Anatomy of Revolution*, 1965) stage in which common people are essentially motivated by well grounded desires for a better daily life in terms of transportation, housing, food, etc. Elites focused on preserving their interests and privileges. The upper echelons also became less afraid of expressing preferences for normalcy than they would in the presence of Fidel charismatic revolutionary fervor. Since the approval of the Social and Economic Guidelines at the VI Congress of the CCP, the need for changes became dominant in the public. The regime needed a program of

reform for surviving and serving to the dominant interests of the nomenclature. There was an interdependent synergy between the processes of reform and political succession.

## **4.2 Change of leadership, intra-generational and intergenerational transition**

### **4.2.1 A unique intra-generational power transition<sup>121</sup>**

In July 31 2006, the Fidel-in-command model ended with the retirement of the charismatic leader. As Max Weber (Weber, 1978, pp. 243-247) has explained the charismatic track is unsustainable in the long run and “becomes either traditionalized or rationalized, or a combination of both”. It depends on the “extraordinary” circumstances not only of personality but also of a charismatic *moment*. Without Fidel Castro’s charisma at the helm of the state, Cuba completed a transition to a bureaucratic-rational type of authority, from totalitarianism to post-totalitarianism (Linz, Juan & Stepan, Alfred, 1996).

The July 31 2006 power transition condensed the charismatic-institutional double track described above into one. A succession institutional channel was already established in the article 94 of the 1976 Cuban constitution: “In case of the absence,

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<sup>121</sup>Here I use indistinctively the concepts of power transition and succession but I understand that presidential succession is just a central element of a more comprehensive process of power transition. Power transition invokes transference of power from a generation to another, from one party to another, from one group or faction to another.

illness or death of the President of the Council of State, his duties will be assumed by the First Vice President”<sup>122</sup>. This institutional channel was reinforced by Fidel’s charismatic anointment of Raul as his second in command since May 1959.

Raul was Fidel’s successor in virtue of a combination of law, historical role as second in command in the revolution, and charismatic anointment. In July 31 2006, Cubans not only received the news about Fidel’s inability to rule but also a “proclama” (proclamation), in fact a handwritten proclama (Castro F. , Proclama del Comandante en Jefe al Pueblo de Cuba, 2006), in which the commander in chief Fidel announced the temporary transference of power as president of the Council of State, Ministers and First Secretary of the CCP to his first Vice-president (No reference to brother relationship since Fidel has always insisted in the non-dynastical character of the regime).

The “proclama” served two purposes: 1) Fidel reconfirmed the validity of the institutional channel with clear references to the Central Committee of the CCP and the distribution of functions in the post-revolutionary state. 2) At the same time, Fidel chose a team<sup>123</sup> to rule as a collective commission accompanying Raul Castro in his leadership.

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<sup>122</sup>Article 94, Constitución de la Republica de Cuba (Republic of Cuba, 2002). See Chapter IX Principles and Organization of State Organs.

<sup>123</sup>In the July 31 2006 Proclama, Fidel Castro appointed Raul as his “provisional” successor in the leadership of the Armed Forces, the Council of State, the Council of Ministers and the CCP but mentioned some programs about health, education, and



In this way, he reiterated his relevance by limiting Raul's capacity to choose his Cabinet immediately<sup>124</sup>.

Following Fidel's sickness on July 31, 2006, there was a two year period in which power was shared by six leaders according to the area of their command: the economy, health, foreign policy and defense, the battle of ideas, etc with Raul Castro at the top. The years between 2006 and 2009 served to adjust the tensions contained in the "Proclama". After a hard convalescence, Fidel Castro reappeared in public but it was evident he didn't have the physical capacity to rule the country. In the new scenario, the older Castro used his presence to back his younger brother. Fidel began to write some press commentaries mainly about international events such as nuclear proliferation, climate change, the use of ethanol, Marx's birthday, and other topics. Slowly he began to receive distinguished foreign visitors including some head of state but his relevance for daily policymaking waned.

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Energy that Fidel placed in the hands of other leaders: Esteban Lazo, Jose R. Balaguer, Jose R. Machado, Felipe Perez, and Carlos Lage. See Proclama del Comandante en Jefe Fidel Castro, 2006, Juventud Rebelde, July 31. Accesible at <http://cubajournal.blogspot.com/2006/07/proclama-del-comandante-en-jefe-fidel.html>

<sup>124</sup>In Fidel Castro's temporary distribution of functions, Raul Castro got the most powerful responsibilities followed by Carlos Lage who was placed as responsible of the appropriation of funds and the supervision of two of the three main programs of health, education and energy.

An area in which Fidel Castro used his charismatic authority was Cuba's relations with the Latin American left. Fidel anointed Hugo Chavez as his political heir in Latin America. Chavez reciprocated Fidel's gesture and claimed to be Fidel's political son. He frequently travelled to Havana helping Fidel's return (as if he ever left) the international stage as a kind of patriarch of the Latin American radical left.

By February 2008 when the economic and political situation was stabilized and after new elections to the National Assembly, Fidel Castro formally resigned to be nominated for a new term. Raul Castro was elected as the president of the Council of State and the Council of Minister as it is established in article 74 of Cuban constitution. Raul's ascendance to the presidency vacated two positions to fill up indicating the route the regime would take. The Council of State elected Jose Ramon Machado, a veteran of the FAR and the main leader in charge of the organization department of the CCP<sup>125</sup>. For

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<sup>125</sup>Machado Ventura has not always been the formal leader of the Organization and Cadres Department of the Central Committee but he has been in charge of this CCP portfolio since the First Congress of the party in 1975. The Department has been a critical piece in the management of the leadership in the party and the government. Machado Ventura represented the institutionalization and consolidation of its work. Historically, the secretary of organization had a strategic importance in the political contestation of factions within the CCP. It was the base of Anibal Escalante, the former leader of the old Communist party (PSP) in the formation of the Integrated Revolutionary Organizations (ORI). Later the responsibility was managed by two fidelistas without faction, loyal mainly to Fidel, Armando Hart (1965-1970) and Jesus Montane Oropesa (1970-75). After the first Congress, Machado Ventura became the Organization Department chief and the "raulistas" consolidated its control over the human resources management of the whole regime. After the VI Congress of the CCP, the Secretary and

the position of minister of the Armed Forces, the system followed the established rule. Julio Casas Regueiro, the first vice-minister replaced Raul Castro in the position.

According to his own account, Fidel Castro played a substantive role in selecting the composition of the candidates for the State Council (Castro F. , *I hope I Never Have a Reason to be Ashamed. Reflections.*, 2008), that in the Cuban system is equivalent to choose them:

In the world of nebulous speculation and protocol, what counts is the State leadership and the party organization is considered a meddlesome intruder, an internal principle. In the specific case of Cuba, thus, it should suffice to know that Raul has all of the legal and constitutional faculties and prerogatives he needs to govern our country. As he himself explained-wrote Fidel referring to his Brother Raul's speech in the National Assembly-, I was consulted during the process of putting together a list of candidates for the position of First Vice-president that he held, and of which no one was stripped. I did not demand to be consulted. It was Raul and the country's top leaders who decided to consult me. Similarly, it was my decision to ask the Candidacy Commission to include Leopoldo Cintra Frias and Alvaro Lopez Miera, who joined the Rebel Army combatants when they were only 15, on the list of Council of State candidates.

There were several implicit arguments in Fidel Castro's statement that showed his support for a softlanding. First, there was an agreement on keeping the CCP and state leadership position together. Raul Castro concentrated all the powers, First Secretary of the CCP, President of the Council of State, and President of the Council of Ministers. Second, Fidel Castro stamped with this piece the actions and appointments made by his

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chief of the organization department is Abelardo Alvarez Gil who worked under Machado's leadership since the early seventies.

brother, emphasizing the power of the party apparatchiks and the military high command. Third, he personally asked the addition of two military leaders among the youngest of the 1959 revolution generation to the candidacy for the Council of State. Cintra Frias and Lopez Miera were both prominent generals of the revolution and the Angola war. Cintra Frias would become minister of Armed Forces after the decease of General Casas in 2013.

Seeing the factional composition of the Council of State with hindsight, it is evident that Raul proposed a continuity and loyalty coalition of the Armed Forces high command and the party apparatchiks as the custodian of the reforms he wanted to launch. Unity of the leadership and proven service to the CCP was more important than reformist conviction. The National Assembly session of February 24, 2008 represented the end of the plurality of the fidelista coalition left in charge by the commander in chief of the revolution in the proclamation of July 31, 2006. From then on, Raul installed his own power coalition.

Marc Frank, a veteran observer of Cuba politics for Reuters wrote about the election of the Council of State in February 24, 2008:

Cuba's 'new' Council of State signaled to governments and Cubans that there would be no radical veering from the course Fidel Castro had set over the decades. The powers that be saw the next five years as critical and no time to test young cadre, whose time would presumably come with the new government. With Fidel fading, they had circled the wagons-12 of the 31 members had participated in the Revolution, and all active Comandantes of the Revolution were

now members. The average age of the top eight positions was over seventy, with just three members under that age. At the same time the new government was though because the Communist Party planned to radically downsize the government and bureaucracy and lift some onerous restrictions on people's lives. It was conservative and tough to manage the changes within the system that were coming. Thirteen of the members were on the party politburo, including all the top seven (Frank, 2013, pp. 108-109)

The choice of Machado Ventura was not a surprise for those who knew the implications of Raul Castro's consolidation of presidential power for the system. The experience of Mikhail Gorbachev's Soviet Union marked the views of the military and communist party czars with suspicion towards leaders who had reform agendas incubated outside the party apparatus. For some of them the last soviet leader was a traitor<sup>126</sup>. Others agreed with Deng Xiaoping that Gorbachev "looked smart but was very stupid" (Pantsov, 2015) because he launched a reform that dislodged him and the Communist party from power. Based on this perception, Raul Castro and a cohort of leaders who fought the revolution with the Castros set on a course to choose their second man and successor without accepting the younger generation leaders promoted by Fidel Castro in a non institutional manner.

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<sup>126</sup>The official support for the version that presents the fall of communism as rooted in a betrayal by the Soviet elites, has been evident in the CCP support for the printing and sale at cheap prices of books written by foreign scholars that agree with this view. Delegates to the VII Congress of the CCP in the province of Camaguey received the book "Betrayed Socialism" of American professors Roger Keeran and Thomas Kenny as a recommended reading. (Un libro para los de izquierda, 2016)

In addition to the election of Machado as first Vice-president and second secretary, new actions by the CCP structure showed that Raul Castro meant business when he declared that “Institutionalization is ... one of the pillars of the Revolution’s invulnerability in the political field”(Castro R. , 2008). The leaders of the executive commission of the politburo appeared also as the vice-presidents of the Council of State. More conspicuous than his brother Fidel, Raul began to appear in the press surrounded by party leaders and military chiefs, calling for criticism of the government’s dismal economic performance and opening the door to “structural and conceptual changes”.

Once established at the cusp of power, Raul Castro expressed his preference for cadres who climbed the bureaucratic and party ladder step by step. In 2007, the Young Communist League adopted the policy of requiring members of the National Committee to work in the profession they have studied for before assuming again a national responsibility. In the meeting that adopted this policy, Raul joked exactly about the career of the two leaders mentioned frequently as representatives of the new generations and promoted by his brother Fidel: Carlos Lage<sup>127</sup> and Felipe Perez. He criticized that both of them have not good experience working in their professions as doctor and engineer

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<sup>127</sup>Carlos Lage had a meteoric leadership career in Cuba until he fell on disgrace in March 2008. He was in the early eighties the leader of the students’ federation and the young communist league. From there he went to work for Fidel Castro’s support group and eventually became the economic czar in charge of the economic opening of the 1990’s to foreign investment. Outside Cuba he was presented as a reformer but his political projection never went beyond his support for Fidel Castro’s command economy with segmented market areas of restricted small private property and foreign investment.

respectively. He asked, “What do they know? How to give speeches? It is our duty to open up room for new generations...but not for test tube leaders... rather, for those brought up on their own efforts”(Garcia, 2007).

In March 2009, Raul replaced nine ministers and fired Carlos Lage, Felipe Perez-Roque<sup>128</sup> and Carlos Valenciaga who had functioned as virtual prime minister, minister of foreign relations and Fidel’s chief of staff<sup>129</sup>. Fidel stamped the move by writing a column in Granma repudiating those who Raul expelled from the politburo because of their “ambition” and infatuation with the “nectar of power” (Castro F. , Healthy Changes in the Council of Ministers, 2009). This soft purge of Fidel’s appointments era concluded the presidential succession and determined a new balance of forces in which Raul Castro and Second Secretary of the CCP, Jose Ramon Machado decided in 2013 the ascent of

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<sup>128</sup> Felipe Perez is a defenestrated Cuban politician. He was a leader of the students’ federation and later Fidel Castro’s chief of staff. When Fidel Castro appointed him as minister of foreign relations, Perez-Roque was only 34 years old and was presented as someone familiar as few with the thoughts and strategic views of Fidel Castro.

<sup>129</sup>Valenciaga, Lage and Perez-Roque were part of a whole group of defenestrated leaders in their fifties, forties and thirties. In addition to them, there were the cases of Otto Rivero who was Vice-president of the Government for the Battle of Ideas, and Fernando Remirez de Estenoz, chairman of the Department of International Relations in the Central Committee of the Communist Party and former Chief of Cuba’s Interests Section in Washington. All of them were accused of illegal and immoral relations with Conrado Hernandez, a Cuban who was identified as agent of Spanish intelligence in secret videos only showed to members of the CCP. Marc Frank explained the whole episode in “Cuban revelations” (Frank, 2013)

Miguel Diaz-Canel to the condition of first Vice president and also are set to decide who will receive the first vice-presidential positions in 2018.

Raul Castro proclaimed on several occasions that no one in the current leadership would be capable of reproducing Fidel's leadership. Hence, the CCP began transitioning to a more collective and pragmatic approach to government with fewer speeches<sup>130</sup>. Under Raul's presidency, the Council of Ministers changed most of its members, and adopted a new structure less centered in the presidency. The new ministers came from the ranks of the Armed Forces, the party leadership in the provinces and civilians in good term with the military establishment. By 2012 after the VI Congress of the CCP a reform program was approved, only three of Fidel's appointed ministers remained in office, one of them, Abelardo Colome, appointed by Fidel as minister of interior after he was a loyal member of Raul's high command.

The reform program of the VI Congress in 2011 was born out of this new balance of factional politics. It was oriented and defined by members of its most conservative factions. The guidelines agenda was defined from above with the central goal of preserving the post-revolutionary system. Once the new policy frontiers were defined, the

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<sup>130</sup>Raul Castro described this feature of his rule with an implicit distinction from Fidel's style: "I am not used to making frequent appearances in public, except at times when it is required (..) Moreover, I have always been discreet, that is my way, and in passing I will clarify that I am thinking in continuing in that way". (Barredo, 2006).



CCP sought convenient feedback from the bottom, to pick and choose initiatives at the service of its Leninist agenda.

The discussion of the 2011 Guidelines followed the script of “Llamamiento” of the IV Congress of the CCP in 1991. The base document called to debate the record of the revolution. At the helm of the organizing commission for the IV and the VI congresses were Jose R. Machado Ventura and Jose R. Balaguer-Cabrera with clear loyalist credentials and ties to the organization department of the CCP. In their report to both Congresses, this leadership recognized the different opinions collected in the assemblies, from those in favor of adopting a market oriented economy to the demands for the rights to travel, own private businesses and freedom of religion including a minority who questioned the leadership role of the party. The CCP leadership behind these political maneuvers is very well trained in the use of its agenda setting powers avoiding divisive issues for the elite and advancing specific policy priorities. For instance, the party leaders rejected demands about ending one-party rule as simply nonsense, while economic and social liberalization demands had received a positive attention.

#### **4.2.2 The inter-generational transition that already took place: The role of the Organization Department of the CCP**

In terms of leadership, the VI Congress of the CCP produced a systemic promotion of younger cadres to low and intermediate positions combined with the election of the oldest Politburo in history. This contrast gives a good picture of the transitional situation in Cuba: An inter-generational leadership transition well advanced at the municipal, provincial and Central Committee levels (cadres in the interval mid forties-mid fifties) supported an intra-generational transition at the national helm (leaders in their late seventies and eighties). The Politburo expressed a balance of forces clearly in favor of the old generation of “historicos” who reluctantly support a market oriented reform accompanied by the strictly necessary steps of political liberalization. Another aspect of the changes in the leadership composition is the synchronization of the CCP with global trends of improving gender, and race representation.

The picture that I am going to present here shows a CCP with a serious challenge in terms of inter-generational leadership transition at the highest organ, the politburo, but well advanced in other level, even if it is not free of problems or criticism.

The changes at the municipal, provincial and central committee level were not done in a rush. Evidences point out how the second half of the 2000's witnessed the speeding up of the leadership renewal at the different institutions of the government, the

Armed Forces and the CCP intermediate and lower levels. Between 2007 and 2009, the FAR renewed all the chiefs of the major branches and the regional armies. Generals who were in their late forties and early fifties took the highest positions in the regional armies. All this was the expression of a well organized chain of command. In the three regional armies, the new supreme commanders served previously as chiefs of the Army's head staff for several years<sup>131</sup>. Every one of these generals was a career officer with several tours in Cuba's African wars in Ethiopia and Angola.

The strengthening of the institutionalization of THE CCP began in the 2006 VI Plenary of the CCP, when the Politburo decided to revive the Secretariat as the organ to coordinate party effort to implement its policies with the militants<sup>132</sup>. The

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<sup>131</sup>The three generals who became leaders of the three regional armies in October 2008 were 1) Division General Lucio Morales Abad who replaced Corps General Leopoldo Cintra as Supreme Commander of the Western Army who became first vice-minister of the Armed Forces. 2) Division General Raul Rodriguez replaced Division General Joaquin Quinta Solas, who became vice-minister of the Armed Forces, 3) Division General Onelio Aguilera Bermudez replaced Ramon Espinosa Martin who became also vice-minister of the Armed Forces.

<sup>132</sup>The Party Secretariat has been strengthened in the phases of higher institutionalization and weakened when Fidel's charismatic authority prevailed. In the early sixties, the Cuban leaders emphasized the organizational dimension of the integration of the different revolutionary groups that opposed the Batista dictatorship. The process ran into difficulties due to the sectarianism of old communists gathered around Anibal Escalante who functioned as Secretary of Organization of the Integrated Revolutionary Organizations (Organizaciones Revolucionarias Integradas (ORI). The difficulties were partially corrected with the creation of the Central Committee and the designation of Armando Hart, a veteran from the underground struggle as the Secretary of Organization of the CCP. But in the late sixties, the principle of collective leadership didn't work well.

institutionalization gained traction in the CCP during the preparation for the VI Congress of the party and the National Conference in 2011 and 2012. In the previous months, under the guidance of Jose R. Machado Ventura's CCP organization department, most provincial top positions were renewed in ways that the posts fell in the hands of cadres in their forties, incorporating a new composition in terms of gender, race and education.

In my work as a Cuba coder for the Global leadership project of Boston University (Gerring, Oncel, Morrison, & Keefer, *The Global Leadership Project: A comprehensive Database of Political Elites*, 2014), I information about the most prominent 712 members of Cuban elites in terms of their education, age, gender, race, profession and languages they speak. The organizations that I surveyed were from Communist Party: the Politburo, the Central Committee, the Secretariat and the provincial leaders in 2011, from the state, the Councils of State and Ministers, and the

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Fidel Castro assigned leaders of the Politburo and the Secretariat to multiple functions in the provinces or as ministers.

The politics of the 1970's brought the first Congress of the CCP in which Fidel Castro declared: "The party is the soul of the Cuban revolution" (Castro F. , Report of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party to the I Congress, 1975, p. 236) . The Congress launched a long interval until 1992 in which Raul Castro and other functionaries such as Jesus Montane and Jose Ramon Machado Ventura bolstered the institutional structures of the party, such as the Politburo and its executive commission, the Secretariat and the Departments of the Central Committee. In 1997, the Secretariat was seen as doubling functions and was dissolved until June 2006. After the VI Party Congress in 2011, Raul delegated the management of the Secretariat in Jose R. Machado Ventura.

National Assembly. The available data at the website of the study<sup>133</sup> shows important elements that align current Cuban elites with the general demographic trends of the Cuban population except in the case of the Politburo<sup>134</sup>.

In 2012, the members of the CCP (769 318) and the UJC (405 830) were together (1 175 148) more than one fifth of the Cuban Labor Force (5.3 millions)(Hernandez, 2/2014). Compare to the median age of the Cuban population (38.7 years in 2011), the median age of the Cuban elites was over 48.9 years old<sup>135</sup>. The Central Committee average age is 57 years. The Secretariat's is 63.8. A similar situation exists in the Councils of Ministers (58 years old).

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<sup>133</sup>See the database of the final report of the study: "The Global Leadership Project: A Comprehensive Database of Political Elites" (Gerring, Oncel, Morrison, & Keefer, 2014).

<sup>134</sup>. Later I benefitted of consulting the data collected by Cuban scholar Rafael Hernandez in 2014 (Hernandez, 2/2014) that included also a survey of the Young Communist League (UJC and the provincial party secretaries).

<sup>135</sup>I am using the data I collected as a coder for the Global Leadership project (Gerring, Oncel, Morrison, & Keefer, 2014) and the data collected by Rafael Hernandez (Hernandez, 2/2014). My sample included the leaders of the Politburo, the Central Committee, the first secretary of the party in the provinces, the CCP Secretariat, the Councils of State, and the Council of Ministers, the members of the National Assembly and the presidents of the Provincial Assemblies.

In terms of gender and race participation, the Cuban political elite's structures had problems of underrepresentation. The data of race is not alarming in the party membership, the Central Committee, and the National Assembly. In terms of gender, women are systematically underrepresented in all the institutions but compared with other nations, Cuba trends towards some important correction.

**Table 3: Race and gender representation in leadership institutions**

	General Population	Members of the CCP	Members of the Central Committee of the CCP	Members of the National Assembly	Members of the Politburo
Blacks and Mulatos	35%	35%	31.2%	35.67%	26%
Women	49.9%	39%	42%	45.25%	7%

The situation is different when one looks at the upper echelons of power: the Politburo. In 2013 the average age of the Politburo was 68.7 with both the first and second secretary above 80. There were two blacks and two mulatos representing 26.66 % of the fourteen members. Only one member of the politburo, Lazara Mercedes Lopez

Acea was a woman (7%). Only one of the eight members of the Secretariat was a woman (Olga Lidia Tapia).

In terms of professional trajectory, there are a high number of primary and middle school teachers working as provincial cadres of the CCP and the social organizations under party control. At the highest level, the Politburo, and the Council of Ministers the dominant profession is engineers, some of them civilian and other from the military. The military presence is at its highest in the Politburo, seven of fourteen. Of the eight members of the secretariat, only Raul Castro is an active member of the military but other three (Jose Machado Ventura, Jose Balaguer and Victor Gaute are former members of the military).

One important distinction is between new and old members because this could indicate trends in the higher structure of the party. The four younger and newest members of the Secretariat were provincial party czars. Of the four members of the Politburo under 60 years old, two has been provincial party czars, each of them in two important provinces, Diaz-Canel in Villa Clara and Holguin, Lopez-Acea in Cienfuegos and Havana City. The other two are the economic czar Marino Murillo and the minister of foreign relations, Bruno Rodriguez.

For the modernization of the CCP, the Politburo organized the I National Conference in which delegates to the VI Congress and a selection of cadres from the

provinces and the central apparatus of the party discussed topics such as the role of the Young Communist League and the ideological work in the new circumstances, and a new party officials promotion policy. The new CCP goals declared the necessity of having a systematic policy to promote young members of the party, women and blacks. As part of this effort, the Conference insisted in revitalizing the system of provincial party school adding the teaching of economics (including market economics) to the cadres. No provincial or municipal leader can assume its position without passing first the respective political and management courses<sup>136</sup>.

By the time of the VI Congress of the CCP in 2011, Raul Castro proposed for the first time in more than fifty years the adoption of term limits for all the major positions in the state and the party. The timing was particularly convenient for the historical generation since most of those who fought in the struggle against Batista were becoming octogenarians and will not serve the two terms. The rule partially aligned the experience of the CCP with those of the East Asian Communist Parties that have carried on economic and political reforms.

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<sup>136</sup>The conclusions of the CCP I National Conference discussed these topics and Granma, the official newspaper of the CCP published a coverage of the discussion. <http://www.granma.cubaweb.cu/secciones/1ra-conferencia-pcc/objetivos.html>



The institutionalization of the term limits rule for leadership renewal advanced an increasingly norm-bound style of succession politics. It takes some historical perspective to understand the importance of the adoption of terms limits as a practice of the CCP and the Cuban State. During Fidel Castro's rule, only once the issue was openly discussed after the IV Congress and the mere idea of limits to the supreme leader seemed as laughable.

The adoption proves the diffusion effect by which non-liberal democratic reformers with developmental purposes learn from the Chinese and Vietnamese systems. In Cuba, the rule has already been enforced at the provinces during the years 2012 and 2013. The party line about leadership promotion has eliminated Fidel's practice of "helicoptering" young leaders in their twenties and early thirties to prime positions. Machado Ventura and the Department of Organization of the CCP had implemented a policy of step by step promotion of cadres, under the tutelage and supervision of party elders.

One major difference between the CCP and the Vietnamese and Chinese Communist Party is the absence of age limits in the Cuban case. The CCP have not adopted the 70 years-age limit already in place in Vietnam and China. This difference explains the old average age of the Cuban Politburo with nine of fourteen members above 70 with three of them above eighty. It is noticeable however that this is not the case at the

levels of the Central Committee, the National Assembly, the provincial party leaders, and the regional high command of the military. Median age is not particularly old in the Secretariat in which all members are under 70 with the exception of Raul Castro, Machado Ventura and Jose R. Balaguer.

Another important element of the leadership succession was the increase in the use of meritocratic criteria in opposition to previous factional considerations in the promotion of the elites. For decades, the Cuban Central committee included non-explicitly stated quotas for historical leaders of the organizations that fought against Batista and later founded the new CCP in 1965. This practice is in decline. Furthermore, in July 2013, Raul Castro announced a new practice in party politics: the replacement of members of the Central Committee and the Politburo when they leave their position as leaders of other organizations or government institutions. “This door leads out without constituting any demerit”- Raul Castro affirmed, emphasizing that the political system must accustom to the practice of leaders’ resignation and retirement ( Associated Press, 2013). To demonstrate in practice what he meant he announced the retirement of Ricardo Alarcon, the former president of the National Assembly, and Jose Millar Barruecos, who was for many years Fidel Castro’s chief of staff.

Institutionalization of the party rule represents the ultimate acceptance of the primordial role of the Secretary/Department of Organization and Cadres of the Central Committee of the CCP. The Department is the result of the CCP's historical experience organizing a policy for the promotion of leadership. The Department that has been under the leadership or supervision of Machado Ventura (his current chief is Abelardo Alvarez Gil) is the right hand of the Politburo and the government for almost all the major appointments in the country. The absolute victory of the coalition of the Armed Forces High Command and provincial party czars in the factional dynamics that surrounded Fidel's succession by Raul bolstered the influence of the Department as a decisive maker of Cuba's political balance.

Some international observers had described the organization department as the human resources section of the CCP but this description falls short of its real role. The Department either approves or submits to the consideration of the Politburo and provincial party structures the appointments of the leaders of the party and government from municipalities to the nation. It has also a primordial role in the selection of those who manage the economic life of the nation and the social organizations affiliated to the CCP such as the Union of Writers and Artists (UNEAC), the Association of Small Peasants (ANAP), the trade unions (CTC), the Women's Federation (FMC) and the neighbors 'revolutionary committees (CDR).

With the exception of the ministries of the Armed Forces and the ministry of interior in which any grade higher than Colonel was approved by Fidel and Raul, the CCP organization structure do the vetting for most of the positions at the levels of ministers, vice-ministers and directors of state owned enterprises and the private corporations in name, registered in other countries to avoid the U.S. embargo but owned by the Cuban state.

Three areas in which the role of the organization department is critical are international relations, education and revolutionary orientation (propaganda). Inside the party, the organization department is in charge of the Higher School of the CCP “Nico Lopez” and its provincial subsidiaries<sup>137</sup>. In the general system of education, the organization department approves in addition to the ministries and vice-ministers in education and higher education ministries, the designation of all the presidents of universities (rectors) and technological and pedagogical institutes.

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<sup>137</sup>In the early 1990's, there was a rumor that Carlos Aldana, who appeared to be a powerful member of the Politburo after Fidel and Raul Castro, and was in charge of the Secretary of Ideology tried to peel off the Central Party School from the Organization Department. Machado Ventura rejected the attempt and made clear that education of cadres fell under his turf. Aldana was later removed from the Politburo under some accusations of bad judgment and corruption despite his trajectory of working under Raul Castro in the office of the Second Secretary.

The policy is also applicable to foreign affairs apparatus of the party and the state. The department approves the director of the research centers affiliated to the CCP such as the Center for the Study of the Americas (CEA), the Center for the Study of Asia and Oceania (CEAO), and the Center for the Study of Africa and the Middle East (CEAMO). All the cadres of the ministry of foreign relations from the level of director and ambassadors up are passed and monitored by the filters of the department. In terms of propaganda, the organization department vets and approves the appointment of all the directors-editors of the national and provincial newspapers, TV and radio stations.

Indirectly, under the leadership of Machado Ventura, the organization department had a say in almost every area of Cuba's political life. The organization department doesn't appoint directly all intermediate new cadres in provinces, municipalities or state companies but it approves the committees and chief of human resources departments in charge of doing so. One of the successes of the team lead by Machado Ventura was the creation of a culture of norms and procedures to institutionalize appointments and information processings about the cadres of the party-state apparatus. By the time someone is a manager of a major state company or a member of the provincial committee of the Communist Party, the organization department has a thick file about their life, friends, family, personal biographies with moments of self-criticism about their past mistakes or their explanations about why they did oppose to certain party policies.

It is not that the Organization Department is in control of all decisions, it is not. The Department monitors and play a role in the appointment of cadres but ministers, party leaders in the Secretariat, the other departments of the Central Committee and the provinces have more influence over appointments in the area they rule. There is a system of patronage in which members of the politburo, ministers, members of the Secretariat, provincial party czars and others promote individuals affiliated to their areas or factions. But as a whole, the department is one of the best organized and institutionalized veto players of the system, with strong influence across functional sectors, and regions. At the end of the process, only Fidel and Raul Castro can bypass the organization department's filters.

The Department cadres have also important informational advantages about other leaders and policy feedback. They are present at critical junctures in the functioning of the CCP rule, such as every provincial assembly of the CCP, or the commissions for the organization of the congresses, the evaluation of ministries and other institutions. Equally important, all the vetting process for appointments operates behind closed doors. In most cases, when someone is appointed or rejected for a position, this is done without any accompanying public explanation beyond those who were directly involved about the

qualifying criteria for the job<sup>138</sup> or the reasons the party took the decision to reject somebody.

The rank of the former leaders of the Organization Secretary expressed its status in the hierarchy: Armando Hart in the sixties, Jesus Montane in the early seventies and Machado Ventura after the first Congress of the party, every one of them was members of the Politburo and the Secretariat during their tenure. Today, Abelardo Alvarez, the current chief of the Department is a member of the Secretariat. He is the first one to come from outside the historic veterans of the revolution but was a party cadre since 1969.

The Organization department of the CCP is a major denial to those who hypothesize about the collapse of the system at the death of the Castros, conceiving Communist Cuba as a sultanistic or patrimonial system (Saxonberg, 2013). In terms of human resources management the department employs sophisticated techniques of administration as any of the major corporative institutions in the world. The Department rotates cadres of the party-state to different regions and functions, promotes loyalty to the CCP as a whole and not to the parts, has a system of cadres' promotion and education to

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<sup>138</sup>In the few cases in which after 1975, some young leaders from outside the party system were appointed to important responsibilities either as ministers of foreign affairs or directors of scientific centers, Fidel Castro took himself the task of explaining the rationality behind the process. Raul Castro has only done so once when he explained Marino Murillo's return to be minister of the Economy without abandoning the Commission on Development and Implementation of the "actualizacion" (updating of the economic model).

guarantee knowledge and preparation of policy implementers. It has written rules and statutes codifying appointments and promotions according to the length of service, education level and periodic performance evaluation. It has a system to assure a combination of training, education and loyalty to the CCP rule and its two main ideological sources: socialism and nationalism<sup>139</sup>.

The system headhunters identify talented people to serve party rule and monitors their career from teaching jobs to party instructors to local and provincial leaders. The high levels of the Department collect information about the official in question from different venues: from homologues, from subordinates, from their passing throughout the educational system, from psychological tests, etc. The Department has learned from the experiences of transition and non transition from communism in other countries. The department is immersed in most of the leadership experiment to improve the efficiency and efficacy of the party-state.

The power of the department explains not only the successes of the CCP in conducting an intergenerational transition in the provincial, municipal and central committee levels but also in its limitations and incapacity up to the VI congress to

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<sup>139</sup>For a good study of the CCP educational and cadres promotion system see Salomon Berman's dissertation at Georgetown University (Berman, 2008). I benefited from my conversations with Salomon Berman in Washington, NYC and Mexico. He published the discussion about the education of the cadres in his article "Bound to outlast: Education for Socialism" (Berman, Bound to Outlast: Education for Socialism, 2008).



institutionalize one at the level of the Politburo and its executive commission. The Politburo has been excluded from the rotation and renewal rules and procedures instituted by the department at the lower levels. Factional loyalty and trust by high offices holders still prevail over more institutional interest rationality. Leaders with a dismal record in the management in their strategic portfolios such as Ulises Rosales del Toro, and Jose Ramon Balaguer have remained at the upper echelons of the party-state. Commanders of the Revolution such as Ramiro Valdes and octogenarians from the revolutionary veteran generation continue to play a decision making role far more important than the powers of the office they had.

Above the Central Committee level, power is still very personalized and associated to the dominant revolutionary generation military group. Performance evaluation seems to have today even less meaning than at the times of Fidel's charismatic authority. He could fire anyone, open a brainstorm about a new political path, and make a radical policy shift reducing or increasing the power of the functionaries in charge of his political priorities. He never put this power in favor of a reform course, but had he done so, it could have been a formidable bypass for many of the current system bottlenecks waiting for the passing of the historical revolutionary generation.

### **4.3 The preparation for an intergenerational transition at the top**

The Cuban political system under the CCP is 56 years old chronologically but it is very young in generational terms. At the top of system, in the Politburo, it is seated the same generation that took power in 1959. The renewal of the Cuban leadership has had different cycles. From the Politburo of the first Congress of the CCP in 1975 to the one in the VI Congress, only Raul Castro and Jose Machado Ventura have been members without interruption (Of the current members, Ramiro Valdes was a member of the Politburo elected in 1975 but was purged out from it at the third Congress, returning in the VI). The apex (meaning the # 1 and #2 positions) were the same for almost five decades.

By April 2011 when the VI Congress of the CCP took place, the new government has showed a clear record of a stable intra-generational transition at the top and began to discuss the challenge of an intergenerational one from the so called “historicos” (the generation that overthrew Batista’s dictatorship with the revolution) to those who were born in the sixties<sup>140</sup>. The top echelon of the party and the state was integrated by people in their seventies and eighties (born in the interval from the late twenties to the mid forties of the XX century). As Rafael Hernandez demonstrated those who were born in

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<sup>140</sup>In the distinction between intra-generational and intergenerational transitions and their respective challenges I follow the discussion presented by Samuel Huntington in his “Political Order and Changing Societies” (Huntington, 1968)

the late forties and the fifties, the second generation of the revolution, an intermediate group between those who made the revolution and those who were born under the new regime, had worked at the Council of Ministers and played important executive functions (Hernandez, 2/2014) in the central government and the provinces. These were the generations who- if one accept Crane Brinton's theory of revolutionary cycles- had endorsed most enthusiastically the ideals of socialism and nationalism(Brinton, 1965).

These generations however did never have the chance to exert Cuba's supreme authority since by 2018 they would be in their seventies. They were trained by the historic revolutionary leadership and worked side by side with them in the most difficult missions and sacrifices in Cuba and overseas. But their promotion to the top was frozen by the absence of a retirement mechanism of the "historicos" generation either with age or term limits. That is why the political turnover implied a dose of strategic trust on the new generations because Fidel and Raul Castro had remained in their top positions for five decades.

There are some ideas that emerge from this brief discussion of the first power succession<sup>141</sup> at the top of the state after 1959. A list of them can bring some light about the challenges for the 2018 transition from Raul Castro to his eventual successor:

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<sup>141</sup>Technically it is not the first presidential transition because in June 1959 there was a presidential transition from President Manuel Urrutia to President Osvaldo Dorticos who in turn passed the position to Fidel Castro in 1976 after a new constitutional order was

**First**, the transition was institutional but reinforced by a charismatic logic. Fidel Castro's undeniable charisma played a part in appointing his brother Raul Castro as his successor. Yet the system did fundamentally follow its institutional route: Article 94 of the constitution, the dominance of the Council of State and the Politburo.

**Second**, the transition stability benefitted from aligning charisma and institutional design but also from counting with a consolidated second in command as the head of the most powerful institutional and political faction: the Armed Forces. Raul's unique condition as first Vice-president, second secretary of the CCP, ministry of the Armed Forces, and Fidel Castro's anointed successor for almost fifty years eased the transition by bridging any gap between the institutional route and the charismatic anointment in one side and the political balance of forces on the other. Future transitions beyond 2018 will not have a Castro (Fidel or Raul) to serve as a final arbiter; therefore the elites would have to learn to solve their ideological differences at the risk of sparking an open and therefore more vigorous policy discussion among the society at large.

**Third**, semi retired Fidel Castro played a stabilizing role at the succession. He confirmed his support for every decision of the new government and backed the removal of those who supposed to be next in line in the political succession: Carlos Lage and

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established. Politically, the transference of power was the first one Fidel Castro stop being the supreme leader of the Cuban state.

Felipe Perez. He stood by his brother at all times and never antagonized any of Raul's decisions.

**Fourth**, given his important international stature, Fidel Castro kept playing an important role in foreign relations, anointing Hugo Chavez as his international successor channeling through Chavez his radical projection while allowing his brother Raul to pursue a reformist, more moderate road at home.

These observations are important to confirm the importance of Huntington's distinction between intra-generational and intergenerational successions. Future transitions are not expected to replicate most of the characteristics of this first intra-generational succession. Some of the discussion about the Cuban political system has insisted on the issue that Fidel Castro's charisma is not reproducible but only a few (Nelson Valdes is an exception (Valdes, 2004)) had called attention to the fact that there is "no another Raul" to play his historical role and enjoy the condition of undisputable Fidel's potential successor.

The institutional framework that smoothed the intra-generational succession is also incomplete for the consolidation of a stable one-party system. As I demonstrated above, there was no transition from charismatic authority to institutional rule in 2006 but a staged succession from a dual track leadership system that combined charismatic and a institutionalized sector to one that leans more to the latter. Learning from the Chinese and

Vietnamese experiences, Raul Castro had proposed the adoption of limits of two five years term for all top government and party jobs.

The most salient event of the process of leadership succession was the designation of Miguel Diaz-Canel as Raul Castro's successor for 2018 as first Vice-president of the council of State and Ministers. Diaz-Canel is 53 years old electronic engineer from the central province of Villa Clara who served as provincial secretary there and later in Holguin province in the Eastern part of the country. Mr. Diaz-Canel was a professor at the Central University of Las Villas, where he became the leader of the young communist league (UJC) before becoming the Ideology Secretary of the league at the national level. He was an "internationalist collaborator" in Sandinistas' Nicaragua.

Mr. Diaz-Canel ascent has all the characteristics of an institutional arrangement managed by the Organization Department of the CCP. If one considers the CCP as a corporation- an analogy that should not be overstretched- Diaz-Canel has worked in the entire production ladder. His service as provincial party czar in Holguin and Villa Clara are no minor achievements. These are two of the most strategic provinces in term of the economy and the implementation of the reforms of the 1990's such as the opening to foreign investment and tourism. His short service since 2008 to 2011 as Minister of Higher Education placed him in contact with the conflicts and challenges of political life in the universities, a central scenario and a stress-test of the political and ideological

discussions the regime would face after the passing of the revolutionary veterans' generation.

In terms of factions within the CCP, Diaz-Canel is not only part of the group of provincial czars but he also has a significant political and social capital in the networks of the Cuban state. First, during his successful work in the provinces he developed close connections to intermediate elites of increasing power due to the economic reform and the coming process of decentralization. In addition, his service in the central provinces and the east of the country helped him to develop a close connection with the military commands of the Central and the Eastern Army, the latter, the biggest one of all the regimen military regional organizations.

Another important topic of Diaz-Canel's rise to the first vice-presidency is the difference between Fidel's and Raul's military background and his civilian one. If he becomes President in virtue of a rule in 2018, it will be the first time Cuba has a civilian at the helm of the state since 1952 when General Batista overthrew Carlos Prio in a coup. This possibility looms as two other factors influence the civil-military relations in post-revolutionary Cuba. First, the completion of the retirement of Cuba's most senior military officers since all the high command of FAR above the regional armies would be above seventy five or eighty years old by 2018. Second, the military has a widespread presence in Cuba's economy and politics beyond narrow national security issues.

Since Raul Castro will remain the main decider in the CCP for the next five years, Diaz-Canel could be also the first post-revolutionary Cuban leader not able to appoint his successor. This new situation anticipates certain complexities in terms of the relations between the post-2018 leaders with three important groups: the generation that follows Diaz-Canel, the elders and the military.

One major difference between the management of the inter-generational transition in China and Vietnam and in Cuba is that East Asian communism had adopted age limits together with term limits by the time of their second presidential succession. The absence of this adoption is the result of factional politics and the dominance of the military group with ages in the seventies and eighties, not of a rational decision with the interests of the CCP in mind as a whole. Age limits were suggested by Fidel Castro at several moments of his political life, ironically in the context of criticizing Mao Zedong's alleged senility.

One well kept secret is that liberalization is desired by Cuba's elites. In the last twenty years, the dual economy has served the interests of the post-revolutionary elites in allowing them to acquire advantageous positions from which to promote their interests and privileges through eventual marketization. Without formally rejecting their old ideology, many revolutionaries of older generations, and particularly their children, the princes and princesses of the system, have engaged in conspicuous consumption. A new stratum of entrepreneurs, often with links to the government and party elite, is



accumulating wealth in the hope that Fidel Castro's death will also mark the end of anti-rich sentiments within Cuban society. The idea of expanding rights such as the right to own private property and the right to travel is part of a self-serving agenda of the emerging elites. To them, the business of revolution is business.

One of the most important reasons for political liberalization is the need to institutionalize single-party rule. Without the decisive authority provided by Fidel's charisma and Raul's concentration of power, the CCP will need rules to solve political conflicts in a de-personalized way. Factions need to manage leadership promotion from one generation to another and policy disputes in ways that compromise of different interests is formalized and explicit<sup>142</sup>. To rule in an institutionalized way, the CCP will

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<sup>142</sup>Evidences from the presidential succession of 2006-2009 suggest that there was a lot of personalization. In one of the secret videos about the demise of Carlos Lage and Felipe Perez Roque, the latter who was a member of the Politburo expressed resentment against the designation of Machado Ventura as first Vicepresident and stated that "Machado Ventura would ruin the country". Raul Castro criticized Lage for informing Perez-Roque and others of decisions that were taken by a group smaller than the Politburo that it is not specified, presumably the executive commission of it. One member of Lage's faction, his cousin medical doctor Raul Castellanos Lage regretted not to have killed Machado Ventura when the then seventy eight years old leader went into a heart surgery. Machado and others were called by the younger leaders "fossils" and "dinosaurs" (Frank, 2013, pp. 150-151). All references to the videos are based on Marc Frank's "Cuban revelations" and the report by Dalia Acosta "Video Sheds light on Cuba's sacking" (Acosta, 2009). While visiting Cuba I crossed information with several friends and relatives about the content of the secret videos and confirmed the accuracy of the events I quoted. The videos were showed only to members of the CCP. They were told to use the information for their persuasive tasks with the rest of the population. Therefore, I was not revealed a secret but for some reason the party didn't want to show the information publicly that

have to normalize its intra-party political discussion, creating formal spaces for pluralism within its ranks. Power must remain the office and exercised according to written rules, without personalization. It will also have to differentiate the roles of government organizations from those of the party and allow space for allowing the population to vent its frustrations with local authorities. It will also need to professionalize internal party governance through a collective division of labor in the Secretariat.

The organization department of the CCP has proven to be a formidable machinery to modernize and institutionalize one party rule but its functioning has the stamp of guerrilla improvisation and personal ties of the revolutionary veterans' generation. The system is partially institutionalized and does not depend on charisma but neither power nor policymaking at the upper hierarchies follows impersonal rules. Three areas of leadership in which partial institutionalization reform is hurtful are:

- 1) The informality of ties and traffic of influences between political and economic leaders of the party-state and the market oriented corporations. Corruption opportunities are bigger together with its political damaging effect for the CCP rule<sup>143</sup>,

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included an open reference to the open presence of Spanish intelligence agents in the island.

<sup>143</sup>In the secret videos of Raul Castro's speeches about the removal from power of Carlos Lage, Felipe Perez Roque, and other leaders from the Battle of Ideas and Fidel's economic team groups, Raul denounced their actions in favor of Alfonso Lavarello, an

2) Civil-military relations. The CCP has its origins in the Rebel Army and the military has intervened in Cuban politics as a major reservoir of loyal leaders for Fidel and Raul Castro in the last fifty years. Miguel Diaz-Canel or any other leader who succeeds Raul Castro would lack the military credentials and the power base that the Castros has had in the Armed Forces. Only the retirement of the high command and legislation of military subordination to the civilian authorities can confer the party leadership effective control over the huge economic and political apparatus of the Armed Forces. It is not logical that in the absence of war, the military holds so many seats in the Politburo and the Councils of State and Ministers. The military also might want to have a less partisan role and insulate its high command from the day by day political discussion and management of the country

3) The indetermination of divisions of functions, checks and balances between local, provincial and national levels of government. Economic reform and political liberalization require some level of decentralization allowing more competition between local authorities and social decompression by contestation between different local elites. The solution to this political challenge goes beyond questions of policy implementation by the Organization Department of the CCP; it requires a new political design creating a

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Italian businessman who operated in Cuba and Conrado Hernandez, the Cuban representative of Basque government's business in Cuba. Foreign investment minister Martha Lomas explained how she allowed Lavarello significant space for operations because Lage told her that Lavarello was "one of us". (Frank, 2013, pp. 148-149)

viable distribution of functions between the local, the provincial and the national level. Such design can take the burden of managing every single local issue off the back of the party, allowing it to focus on control and national development tasks.

The last four years have demonstrated how difficult it has been for Raul Castro, and those interested on gradual reforms, to move the party forward in the absence of the “order and obey” system typical of the past. The party has begun to do politics in the traditional sense of persuading and developing consensus at least within insiders but also in its relation with a wide network of civil society groups<sup>144</sup>.

To implement the reforms and cope with their collateral consequences, the party will need to define policies regarding how the cadres’ performance would be measured. To generate political initiative in its cadres, some institutional guidelines would have to differentiate a fatal mistake from an excusable one, how much latitude local officials have to make policy adjustments, and the point at which such adjustments are rendered unacceptable political deviations from the party line. Up to now, Fidel Castro had defined the party line while the CCP and the Armed Forces organized under Raul’s guidance

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<sup>144</sup>The CCP formulated guidelines in 1975, 1980 and after the III Party Congress in 1986. In all those cases, there was a written Central Report that defines policies for the five years after the conclave, and documents such as the PlataformaProgramatica or the PCC program to establish long term goals. In the IV and V congresses, Castro spoke without preparing a written balance of the party’s achievements and flaws. The theme of his speeches was mainly a strategy of survival and an encouraging Cubans to endure difficulties.

have tried to implement it. But in the middle of so much economic and political change, the party line itself becomes an arena of contestation.

Raul's ascent also represented a transition to a new leadership style. Fidel's typical approach would be to design a policy and then ask for advice on what was an already settled-upon course of action. Raul's Castro's style is different. Since taking power he has initiated not one, but two processes of popular participation (of course, constrained by the limits of the communist system) in which public input were solicited before a government proposal was offered. This new debate also allows officials, academics and intellectuals to have more influence on such processes as long as they operated within the policy frontier(Golob, 5 2003).

**Chapter Five: A world safe for reform: How domestic process of economic and political liberalization shapes Cuba's insertion in the post-Cold War world and viceversa**

**5.1 Introduction**

The second part of the dissertation discussed the foreign relations dynamics that accompanied the process of economic reform and political liberalization in Cuba. These last four chapters propose a framework in which change and continuity at the state-state foreign relations level is increasingly connected to openness in foreign actors' access to Cuba's economic and civil society.

Other transitions from command economy and communist party political monopoly show how foreign influences tended to bolster market oriented and liberalizing forces. Explaining the positive influence of international factors in economic reform and political liberalization in China, Minxin Pei listed:

- 1) the diversity of external actors over whom the old regime has little control. 2) Their capacity to mobilize externally available resources, 3) the speed with which these resources can be introduced into the transition process, and 4) the multiplicity of means and channels through which external influences may be applied (Pei 1994)

Cuba is a smaller actor than China in international society, it is not a great power and therefore its exposure and vulnerability to international factors tend to be greater. In addition, Cuba is a western society with significant synchrony with the cultural flows of the West, the springboard of the current liberal world order.

Cuba's economic and political transformations were initiated by a non-liberal reformist segment of the post-revolutionary Cuban elites interested on repositioning their interests in the post-Cold War world, not on dismantling the one party system. To advance the reforms these elites clash with other groups within the system with entrenched privileges, interests, conceptions and values about decisive issues such as the validity of the old command economy and traditional Marxist political ideology. Part of the discussion about the old and new structures in the context of the transition is about Cuban state capabilities to face the challenges and opportunities of the new international environment offer. This is particularly true in the case of the changing environment of Cuba-U.S. relations.

This second part of the dissertation lay out the principal features of Cuba's international interactions in the post-Cold War era. Its **first purpose** is to present how the domestic drivers of change within Cuba interact with the dominant trends in the international system. The inability to design a sustainable path for Cuba's command economy became a fundamental motivation for the CCP reform agenda. International factors such as the end of Soviet support and the effects of the U.S. embargo on the island

are at the causal core of Cuba's economic reform and political reform. At the same time, these domestic processes altered ultimately the nature and priorities of Cuba's foreign policy.

The promotion of a friendly world for the processes of economic reform and political liberalization is essential for the survival strategy of the CCP. The confluence of domestic and foreign demands shapes Cuba's identity in global society<sup>145</sup>. The task is particularly difficult because reform makes political regimes more vulnerable not only to domestic challengers but also to foreign pressures.

New access to foreign sources of information, funds and markets provides structural chances for empowerment of non-state actors by raising their international contacts and profile. Not all of these actors pursue a confrontational agenda towards the communist-nationalist state but some of them do. Marketization and the expansion of the right to travel make economic resources, organizational knowledge and social networks

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<sup>145</sup>This dissertation theoretical approach is based on a pluralist conception of international and global societies, generally associated with the English School of International Relations and supported by the contribution of constructivism to the discipline. The normative structure of these approaches is built around the mutual recognition of sovereignty and legal equality by the states. International society is conceived as an "anarchic society" of states. These states rely on self-help logic but this logic is constrained by norms, rules and set of institutions at the core of their society: International law, the balance of power, Great Powers, diplomacy and war. Global society includes not only the international society (states) but also other important factors such as international organizations, international civil society groups, transnational companies and others.



available to civil and political societies groups. They can add new tools to their repertoire increasing their leverage versus other factors. These reforms, legitimated by official stamp, do not present an easy target to control as the minuscule political opposition does. The political cost of policy reversions in areas such as travel rights and market reform affects millions of travelers, private entrepreneurs and consumers. Any potential reversion of these structural changes has important foreign policy consequences since it direct signals to foreign actors.

The **second goal** is to highlight how the conflict between United States' hegemonic presumption towards the Western hemisphere and Cuban radical nationalist narrative shapes Cuba's foreign policy grand strategy in the age of reform. The clash with the United States intertwined decisively with Cuba's internal dynamics imposing a foreign policy and security rationale on Cuba's strategic calculation. Cuba's conflict with the closest and most developed market of the world decreases the possibilities of integration in economic liberal international regimes, raising the appeal of a pre-existent revolutionary identity to the strategic calculation and the construction of Cuban national interest.

Disconnection and economic conflict with the United States makes difficult for Cuba to develop a market economy. The premise that U.S-Cuba relations after 1992 are a remnant of the Cold War is patently false. The Torricelli and later the Helms-Burton laws

clarified the primordially anti-nationalist, not anti-communist, content of U.S. policy towards the Cuban revolution. Both legislations of the U.S. congress do not target communism but accommodation between a U.S led world market economy and CCP rule. Both legislations pursued to limit the expansion of foreign capitalist investment in Cuba by punishing transactions not with communist countries but with liberal allies of the United States in Canada and Europe. The goal is to block a transition to market economy under any leadership different from Miami right wing exile or their allies in the island.

The end of the Castros' era brought also foreign policy imperatives for the Cuban establishment. In the absence of Fidel Castro's international profile, the symbolism of Cuba's challenging position to the United States decreases. The gratitude and commitment of Angola, South Africa, China, Russia, Vietnam, Algeria and others to the CCP ameliorates with the arrival of a less prominent leadership to the global revolutionary scene. Leadership in those countries is also going through their own inter-generational transition. Cuba's integration to the world market is essential to safeguard the revolution because luring foreign investment, trade and aid is the expedite way to make the U.S. embargo irrelevant.

A post-Fidel Castro's world allows a Cuban foreign policy less personality centered. Economic reform procures to enroll important segments of American society in the anti-embargo coalition and undermine American regime change policy. Cuban needs to find reliable economic partners in other countries of the world, and the hemisphere. Although Fidel Castro enjoys the sympathy of some important segments of Western society, he is perceived negatively by many in the business world and the Cuban diasporas in the United States and Europe. His retirement lowers the antipathy levels towards the CCP of governments and societies at large in North America and the west.

Cuba's economic foreign policy seeks to open the entrepreneurial appetites of critical business groups in the world economy. American business community is one of its most important targets. Since the partial reforms of the 1990's the embargo began to experiment some cracks in the case of the cash only agricultural American sales. The discussion about the pertinence of the embargo has been also increased by the interests of American oil companies on risk exploration at the Cuban waters of the Gulf of Mexico and the challenges of cooperation against an oil spill in the Gulf. The increase in the tourists' flows and the profits made in the island by European and Canadian companies have a demonstration effect for some American travel and hotel companies. The opening to small and medium private business and the changes in Cuba's migration policies are having a direct impact in the Cuban American community, its composition, perception and interests about the system in the island.

These trends reflect in the political balance in which U.S. policy towards Cuba is decided. “The business of America is business”- President Calvin Coolidge used to say. Agricultural trade with Cuba even expanded during the republican highly ideological George W. Bush’s administration. As it is the question of a growing contact between Miami and Havana in terms of remittances, travel and now support for the opening of family private businesses.

**The third goal** is to show how Cuba’s identity in the world system has changed- and so has the perception of the island held by most international actors, particularly those at the top of the international hierarchy: the great powers. Cuba’s economic reform and political liberalization soften strategic and ideological differences with great powers and regional actors in the Western Hemisphere. The combination of a market oriented reform with Communist party rule receives support of Russia and China, non-democratic powers with historic ties with Cuba since the Cold War era. The reforms also attract a friendlier position from U.S. allies in Latin America, Canada and the European Union. These capitalist democratic countries have developed an incremental approach to the promotion of economic development and human rights in Cuba. Rapprochement between Cuba and these actors place the United States in a less favorable position towards Havana as part of a triangular strategic logic.

### **5.1.1 Cuba's foreign relations and the dynamics of partial reform.**

A time of economic reform and political liberalization is a critical juncture in the definition of Cuba's international identities for three main reasons: 1) because these reforms change the nature of the Cuban state, and State-society relations, 2) because economic reform and political liberalization might change the nature of the relations between Cuba and other states and specific expectations about each other, 3) because by interacting in manners associated to economic reform and political liberalization, Cuba and other states evaluate the expected utility of their ties and what proper behavior to follow in their interactions.

An important distinction in the analysis of the international influences on the processes of reform and political liberalization is between causality and conditionality. Cuba's response to the economic crisis, the leadership succession, and the crisis of trust is fundamentally driven by domestic politics. At the same time, Cuba's international position bounds the policy making rationality within specific constraints. First among those constraints are the tense relations with the United States. These difficult relations create national security dynamics in the background of any major decision about Cuba's economic and political model. For instance, one of the fundamental official arguments during the nineties against the expansion of the private sector and the creation of more

than one political party refers to the possible emergence of a fifth column at the service of U.S. regime change strategy<sup>146</sup>.

Cuba's foreign policy grand strategy, a set of policies to promote national interests and state values beyond its borders, is not merely a reaction to foreign stimuli but a design mediated by Cuban leaders' perception, analysis and will. The formulation of the national interest is primarily determined by the demands of the ruling elites on the international arena. Cuba's foreign policy supreme goal consists of promoting a friendly environment for the regime's political stability and international legitimacy. This goal is conditioned by the determination of the CCP to manage economic and political transformation preserving regime continuity. Regime continuity is inextricably linked to the nature and origin of the regime itself: the Cuban revolution is inherently international<sup>147</sup>. It is almost impossible to separate the domestic and international spheres in Cuban revolution and counterrevolution.

Marketization, state owned companies' reform, and political liberalization were initiated by the ascendance of non-liberal modernizers within Cuba's post-revolutionary elites. This ascendance is an event of domestic nature but in no way disconnected from

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<sup>146</sup>See Fidel Castro's discourse to the IV Congress of the CCP in 1991 (Castro 1991)

<sup>147</sup>Fred Halliday claims that revolutions are "always in some degree international events and need to be seen in this context" (Halliday, *Revolution and World Politics: The Rise of the Sixth Great Power* 1999, 6).

international challenges. Raul Castro and its minions are modernizers as result of the opportunities and challenges imposed to them by the international balance of forces, including their alliances and those of their counterrevolutionary opponents. Cuba's foreign policy is guided by a decision to provide the Cuban state with what Edmund Burke called "the means for some change as essential means for self-preservation" (Burke 1984, 106).

As discussed in previous chapters, the Cuban process follows patterns of partial reform (Hellman 1998) in which winners insist on combining some degree of stability with changes that provide them with opportunities for rent seeking and capital accumulation. Relations with other countries provide post-revolutionary elites with advantageous opportunities for arbitrage and access to technology and capital (managerial, material, or social) in a manner that preserves the domestic balance of power. Simultaneously international relations give civil society organizations and opposition forces windows to interact with homologues or potential supporters from abroad.

A Cuba in transition creates uncertainty for international actors. Not all of them understand the political game in place. For some of them the pursuit of stability by the CCP is just a masquerade for maintaining the status quo. Others look at the process of liberalization through the eyes of democratization and have problems to grasp the net

gain for political pluralism, protection of rights and economic sustainability of economic reform and political liberalization. Others look at reforms as an opportunity for using instability for regime change while others, including this author, prefer to look at economic reform and political liberalization as an increase on the power of civil society and economic society without necessarily leading to political democracy.

Since Cuba's transformation is happening after multiple transitions from plan to market and from one party system to democracy or other forms of non-democratic regimes, there is a temptation to look at Cuba through the lenses of other experiences. Knowing transition experiences from other countries can be positive because many problems in Cuba have significant similarities with other countries. Yet there is a further analytic issue related to the timing of Cuba's reform: the learning by Cuban actors from past experiences of democratization, transition to the market and opening in other countries. This is easier to identify in abstract than to figure out what Cuban actors concretely learned and what they made of this knowledge.

Fidel Castro's predisposition against adopting market mechanisms stamped his approach to domestic transition but also to Cuba's foreign policy projection. Partial reform is part of the desires and options of winners of early stages of the reform but also encouraged by the cautious approach of Fidel Castro to any dismantlement of the totalitarian machinery and the command economy. Castro's signals of caution send a



message to states and non-state actors in the international arena who adjust their expectations for the long haul.

The different evaluation of the possibilities and limits of changes in Cuba conditions the attitude of international actors towards the Caribbean nation. Here it is important to differentiate the areas of the reform, the economy as the primary sphere of interest, and politics. The CCP has never expressed an interest on a transition to liberal democracy raising important suspicion and reservation among international actors committed to this agenda. The ambiguity of economic reform and liberalization without democratization raise doubts among international democrats and non-democrats. The former don't want to contribute to the consolidation of a non-liberal democratic regime. The latter might fear investing in a political and economic alliance that might evaporate in a democratic transition.

But this is not the main source of cautiousness towards Cuba by other international actors. The ambiguity of partial reform towards market economics creates anxiety among international business actors, who look at Cuba as a high risk market. This vision of Cuba as having a high risk business environment was based on the history of the island nation. Fidel Castro did never commit to a transition to a market economy. This indecision about the transformation from-plan-to-market combined with the chilling

effects of U.S policy of isolation and punishment of third country actors explain Cuban government's difficulties for boosting its opening to foreign investment.

Foreign investment is particularly important for marketization. First, given the severity of the economic crisis, foreign investment and international aid provide critical funds for some minimal macroeconomic stabilization. This is essential because of the cushioning role a minimal economic stability provides for reform experimentation. This is consistent with the international experience. Without European, American and Japanese support to the former Soviet Union, Eastern European countries, and China and Vietnam in smaller measure, these nations could never embarked on some of the drastic adjustment programs of privatization and marketization they had (Pei 1994).

In addition to offer capital, foreign economic relations represent the expansion of social linkages between Cuba and other nations. Those ties vary from country to country but play a positive role in pushing reforms ahead. Foreign economic associations with Cuban state owned companies prey on the closed nature of the command economy system but most of these joint ventures expose Cuban companies to the international markets. This is clearly the case in the tourism industry where intensive competition from other Caribbean destination forced Cuban hotels to introduce new technologies, and accelerate changes in the incentives of the labor force.

Foreign investment and technical assistance have helped the growth of the non-state sector in Cuba despite the regulations and obstacles imposed to state-non-state sector ties. For instance, pressures from foreign actors in the touristic industry were critical in the demand for direct sales from the agricultural private sector to the hotels and other state companies. Foreign companies in Cuba helped also to train the personnel and adopting state of the art management standards. This experience is consistent with the discussion about the role of external actors in other transitions in Eastern Europe, former Soviet Union, China and Vietnam. In addition to the economic direct benefits, contact with foreign actors increased the flow of educational and cultural exchanges with the outside world. Internet, for instance, was introduced first on hotels as an essential need for clients.

Despite the desirability of foreign participation to break up the logic of partial reform, other countries foreign policy towards Cuba is not exclusively based on perceptions about the transition process. Other states weight multiple issues such as the history of bilateral and multilateral cooperation with Cuba and the triangular implications that relations with Cuba have for respective ties with the United States. There is also the question of values of the international actors and the dynamics of their own domestic and bureaucratic politics. States are not unitary actors. The Cuban government has also its preferences and priorities about whom to attract as foreign investors and how to engage them. A match of interests and conditions is not always possible.

Some difficulties arise from the design of policies towards Cuba's economic reform and political liberalization by international actors. There are tensions between human rights promoters and the democracy promotion community. In Brussels, Washington, Ottawa, and the rest of the capitals of democratic countries in Europe and the Americas; decisions about investing or connecting with a humanitarian project in the island are taken independently of the merits of the concrete project, and conditioned by the political debate there. Foreign influences in Cuba's economic reform and political liberalization are divided according to their effects on those processes. While some international actors promote structural changes, others would retard or prevent them.

Retarding factors are not equivalent to pro-government or opposition. More foreign trade and investment can bolster economic reform but whether it helps or weakens political liberalization depends on the contexts. In some circumstances, it can strengthen the government's control of society while in others it might unleash a societal takeover of state areas throughout marketization or new civil society organization. Human rights promoters such as Amnesty International tend to have a more comprehensive analysis and comparative perspective on Cuba's human development.

Since they look at human rights in the context of international law, they reject heavy hand- democracy promotion activities because they raise nationalist hackles<sup>148</sup>.

In addition, there are influential external forces centered on provoking a regime collapse. Although these forces talk the same language of democracy and human rights, they naturally oppose any soft landing on a market economy or even a multiparty democracy if current elites remain in power. Their conflict with Cuba is not about government behavior or observance of human rights standards; they want to get rid of any CCP government or even legalize the CCP and lustrate Cuba from its historical legacy<sup>149</sup>. Such logic exacerbates the security arguments within the Cuban government against comprehensive reform.

The nature of the changes (economic reform, political liberalization without democratization) combined with the challenges associated to U.S. regime change policy determined the preferences of Cuba's elites' foreign alliances. During the nineties, Cuba

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<sup>148</sup>USAID programs under the Helms-Burton Act exemplify covert, illegal, unethical and ineffective interference in Cuba's internal affairs (Armstrong, Damn Yanquis 2014). For the contradictions and complementarities between the human rights and the democracy promotion approaches see Jack Donnelly's article "Human Rights, Democracy and Development" (Donnelly, Human Rights, Democracy and Development 1999)

<sup>149</sup>Some exile groups in the United States have studied the experience of lustration in the Czech Republic, Iraq and other places. This experience was mentioned as relevant at the second report of the U.S. Commission of Assistance to a Free Cuba prepared by the Bush Administration in 2006 particularly in relation to the Armed Forces and Security Services. (Commission of Assistance to a Free Cuba 2006).

had little alternatives but to deal with Canada and the European Union as its main trade and investment partners. Europe and Canada were the main origin of tourists traveling to Cuba. But the Cuban government is aware of the special ties that bound Europe and Canada with the United States. These two actors opposed the embargo but they are always reticent to get into a conflict with Washington because of Cuba. Europe and Canada have also important values conflict with the one-party system the CCP hope to keep in place in the island.

These reasons explains why Cuba has prioritized strategic projects with rising powers from the developing world which tend to have a vision on sovereignty and non-interference in domestic affairs closer to the one of the Cuban party-state. Brazil and Venezuela are the top two examples but Raul Castro and his diplomats have embarked on a significant effort to attract other countries in this category such as Malaysia, Iran, and India. Havana has particularly tried to lure big national state companies from these countries to its main development projects, particularly in its search for energy security.

China and Russia are for historical reasons and the nature of their political systems, Cuba's favorite strategic allies among great powers. Cuba's military is completely armed and trained with Russian technology. This armament is compatible today with Chinese industry standards. Both powers share Cuba's desire for a multipolar

balance of power. Neither China nor Russia accepts the validity of American secondary sanctions because of their trade or investment with Cuba.

Russia, China, Vietnam, and other countries such as Angola and Algeria have together with Cuba a history of difficult relations with the United States. Although these countries vary on their degree of normalization of relations with Washington, their ties are not free of conflict. Although generational change moderates some of the anti-American resentment after some level of contacts and engagement with Washington, there are patterns of suspicion that persist on those countries and are not confined to old guard revolutionaries. Memories and articles by Vietnamese, Russian, Chinese and Iranian third and fourth generation leaders show a connection with Cuba's leaders that can be only understood from the perspective of revolutionary camaraderie and admiration for his resistance to U.S. hegemony.

### **5.1.2 Ideas and policy frontiers of Cuba's foreign policy elites**

Cuba's foreign policy identities and definition of its national interest are endogenous to social interaction. They are not given and constant but variables dependent on Cuba's domestic politics and the culture of the ties the country establishes with other nations. These international interactions are not predetermined by a rationalist calculation of the participants. Relations reproduce or change the identities and roles of the actors.

When Cuba and the United States interact as adversaries, the interaction reinforces this identity. When Cuba and the United States cooperate about an issue of shared interest or against a common threat, the possibility of friendship emerges. That is why it is so important to look at the images and ideas the actors have about each other and the nature of the international system and their relations.

In Cuba's post-totalitarian scenario, the most influential ideas in foreign policy are those of the military and CCP elites: The Politburo, the Council of the State and the Council of Ministers. But such ideas are influenced by the opinions of Cuba's civil society or professional levels in diplomacy and national security such as the ministry of Foreign Relations or the directorate of intelligence. As result of economic reform and political liberalization, the plurality and importance of societal voices in the discussion of foreign policy are increasing. At the same time, the professionalization (institutionalization) of the state in the last twenty years has produced a well-educated, professional and influential diplomatic service.

The professionalization of a specific foreign policy oriented epistemic community creates a fertile ground for a realistic processing of Cuba's role in world affairs and the existence of important asymmetries in the international system. This is an under-studied dimension of the institutionalization process that tends to reinforce the importance of the



national interest as driver of Cuba's foreign policy in relation to the internationalist revolutionary impulse.

The leaders who managed Cuba's foreign policy until the mid 1990's traced their origin to the radicalization of the Cuban nationalist and communist left in the 1950's or even earlier<sup>150</sup>. The group is known as the centenario generation in reference to the centennial celebration of the birth of Cuban national hero Jose Marti in 1953. The centenario generation anticipated the emerging of the new left in the 1960's and the project of third world socialism that found support in the theory of dependency (Valenzuela, Samuel & Valenzuela, Arturo 1978). The road to development- according to this view- needs a separation from the international structure of the world capitalist system promoting socialism in the periphery. This view represented a rupture with several tenets of the traditional Marxist vision and found some important support in what was then known as the new left. Cuba became a pilgrimage place for anti-colonial

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<sup>150</sup>All the ministers of foreign relations in the revolutionary government until 1992 were politicians before 1959: 1) Roberto Agramonte, a university professor of moderate positions who was sacked by Castro in mid 1959 and later abandoned Cuba for exile. 2) Raul Roa Garcia, a revolutionary of the 1930's until 1976, Isidoro Malmierca, a member of the Communist Party until 1992, and Ricardo Alarcon de Quesada, a member of the July 26 movement. After 1992, two of the ministers were former leaders of the Students Federation, Roberto Robaina and Felipe Perez. Both lost their position due to political conflicts with Raul Castro and the security establishment dominated by the generation known as the "historicos" who were involved in the anti-Batista struggle.

revolutionaries in Asia and Africa, and radical participants in the movement for gender and racial equality in the capitalist developed world.

The centenario generation's project shook out the old left dogmas<sup>151</sup> of the social-democratic and communist movement by emphasizing the need to defeat imperialism in the Third World. At the highest point of the Cold War, the Cuban Missile Crisis, Castro boosted his revolutionary credentials by criticizing not only Washington but also Moscow. During the years of the Vietnam War, revolutionary Havana became a center of reunion, coordination and even military training for radicalized breakaways groups originated on nationalist and communist parties. Havana aspired at a time to create a revolutionary center with autonomy if not a rival to Moscow and Beijing.

These elites believe that the national security state created by the revolution served them well during the Cold War. From a security perspective the command economy and the one-party system helped them to crash their internal rivals in spite of the massive military and political support received by them from the United States. From

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<sup>151</sup>This radicalization of the revolutionary left can be interpreted as a return to radical roots. At Karl Marx's tomb in London Highgate Cemetery it is written one of his theses on Feuerbach: "Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it". In Latin America, the Cuban revolution accused most pro-Moscow communist parties of distorting the revolutionary legacy of Marxism. Fidel Castro proclaimed in the 2nd Declaration of Havana in 1962 "the duty of a revolutionary is to make a revolution" in response to the participation of most communist parties in the political system of their capitalist countries.

a development point of view, the alliance with the Soviet Union provided important resources for raising Cuba's standards of living and human development index between the 1960's and 1989. Their vision about the communist experience that ended in 1989-1991 still is positive from a national interest point of view. Despite its many flaws, communism in Cuba allowed significant social progress in education, health, women and racial equality<sup>152</sup> supported by Soviet aid.

In terms of their role in the world, the current elites were not disappointed with the part they played in the Cold War. Under no other leader, Cuba's international reach has gone as far as with Fidel Castro. Even after his retirement, he is revered as a world patriarch of the radical left. The alliance with the Communist bloc empowered Cuba to launch mid-power actions in Africa and become a leading country in the two main international institutions of the developing world: the non-aligned movement (Cuba has been the president of the movement in two different periods (1979-1984 under Fidel Castro, and 2006-2009 under Raul Castro) and the Group of 77. The alliance with the Soviet Union was also cardinal in terms of energy and food security to survive U.S. policy of embargo and isolation for almost thirty years. From a nationalist perspective, it

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<sup>152</sup>In certain sense this view is in line with some of the calibrated evaluations about third world socialism by Fred Halliday in "Third World Socialism: 1989 and After". However Halliday concludes that Socialism "achieved a remarkable amount but was, in the end, doomed to failure" (Halliday, Third World Socialism: 1989 and After" 2010). Camila Pineiro discussed the different visions of socialism behind the current reforms in Cuba from a perspective favorable to reforms that still vindicates the communist project. (Pineiro 2012)

created a history of cooperation with Russia and China that would be useful in the fundamental aspiration of diversifying Cuba's external partners even if U.S. –Cuba relations improve.

The flaws of Cuba's communist model of development became visible with the transition from the Cold War world to globalization. The integration of the global economy together with the lessening of ideology driven relationships exposed the advantages of the developmental model applied by the countries of East Asia in which a market friendly government intervened to complement, never to substitute, the role of markets. Cuba's fundamental investment in health and education produced important progresses but it has taken decades to put all this human capital in function of an economic takeoff in the absence of a solid economic base.

The globalization world, not the Cold War has been the context in which Cuba's foreign policy establishment new generation has its formative experience. This is not the place for an in-depth comparison between Cuba's development in the last fifty years and East Asian countries or to explain why the record shows a better positive record in almost every single area for East Asia. As in the rest of the world, the most internationalized Cuban elites know how the adoption of the developmental state based on a balanced relation between state and market has been fruitful for those countries that have achieved economic development in the last decades. Of particular resonance for Cubans are the

cases of East Asian Communist countries' adoption of market oriented strategies with the exception of North Korea<sup>153</sup>.

One important component of this transformation is the promotion of economic interactions that ease up the access of underdeveloped countries to markets, technology and foreign capital flows. If the old generations of the CCP rejected the adoption of the developmental ideology that characterizes the economic policy focus in the Chinese and Vietnamese cases, the new ones tend to have a more open view to it. It is an unsaid truth in Cuba's political circles a recognition that a world friend for economic reform in the island requires a foreign policy that is necessary less adverse towards international capitalism. This doesn't mean that Cuba will abandon its revolutionary identity but that new actors would be less drastic and unilateral in its promotion.

Raul Castro didn't break away from his older brother's anti market rhetoric and practices but has marked important differences. He is not a mere Khrushchev but he also doesn't compare positively with his fellow partial reformer, Deng Xiaoping (Nathan 2012) who released China's economy from the ideological barriers imposed by Chairman

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<sup>153</sup>The clear outlier here is North Korea. There are multiple explanations about this exceptionality but the topic is outside the scope of this research. For a discussion of the possibilities of a developmental state in North Korea see the article "Can North Korea Develop? Developmental Dictatorship versus the China Reform Model" by Hilary Jan Izzat (Jan Izzat 2010 )

Mao. The question is of the highest relevance because the model of a command economy with some insulated market segments of the 1990's is exhausted.

Structurally, Cuba can twist an action here or there to preserve its revolutionary discourse but to make successful its economic reform, the CCP has to adopt a policy less in conflict with the capitalist international order. For instance, Cuba's current strategy of development and survival has an important component based on remittances from the Cuban diaspora mainly settled in the United States, having important implications for the way the government relates to a segment of the nation that supports a capitalist road for the island. Remittances and Diaspora travels were described in the past as potential sources of disunity within the revolutionary family and Trojan horses of U.S. controlled capitalist restoration. They are today officially promoted.

One element that shaped the foreign policy frontiers<sup>154</sup> of Cuba's policymakers is that of partial reform. The obstructionist role of winners who profit from the

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<sup>154</sup>The concept of policy frontiers refers to social constructions that impose limits to foreign policy options. Policy frontiers explains why "some options are considered taboo or kept off the table as necessarily unthinkable or destructive". Stephanie Golob explains how "Policy frontiers develop as certain elements of the 'national interest'- sovereignty, security and identity-become equated with the legitimation of state elites. When these leaders defend the policy frontier (ostensibly to defend the nation), they are also defending their own political power. These barriers are constructed in a path-dependent fashion, through a critical juncture that first establishes the frontier, and then are maintained over time by institutional and ideological mechanisms of reproduction. For the frontier to be transcended a critical juncture combining an exogenous shock with an

opportunities for profit and arbitrage in a non-completed market reform together with the logic of a national security driven state in which the main potential foreign market is controlled by hostile interests to the Cuban elites reduces the impact on Cuba's foreign policymakers of the attraction of joining the capitalist order to take advantage of it for development purposes. Assuming that economic development in Cuba is a desire of the post-revolutionary elites, it is impossible to ignore the realpolitik security mentality of the core command of the Cuban establishment, young or old, for whom a market logic of asymmetric interdependence is a danger, even if not as serious as a U.S. military invasion.

### **5.1.3 Cultures<sup>155</sup> of interaction: The prevalence of Hobbesian Culture**

The cornerstone of the Cuban revolutionary state is a systemic military national security logic centered on the concept of winning the conflict with the United States by avoiding the worst case scenario of a U.S. military intervention. This logic does not prioritize opportunities of economic or political potential if they exist in combination

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internal legitimacy crisis must undermine, and then reconfigure, both mechanisms of reproduction" (Golob 2003).

<sup>155</sup>Here the discussion follows Alexander Wendt's archetypical cultures of international security: hobbesian, Lockean and Kantian (Wendt 1999).

with perceived security<sup>156</sup> threats. The views of nationalists and communists about the conflict between U.S. hegemony and Cuban sovereignty are embedded in the political culture, norms and institutions from which Cuba's foreign policy and its security strategy emerges<sup>157</sup>. These ideas creates a security driven mindset that prioritizes certain aspects (energy security, partners diversification, avoidance of dependence on U.S. political allies) while it is blinded to others (economic potential of investment by Cubans living overseas, mobilization of American business community against the embargo).

National security has been at the driver's seat of most of Cuba's decisions of most of the foreign policy adjustment to the post-Cold War world, particularly after Raul ascended to the presidency. This military mindset that has its highest expression on the centrality of Raul Castro at the helm of the Cuban state and its reform is one of the central connections between the logics of partial reform at the domestic level and its foreign policy projection. Cuba's national security culture is fundamentally Hobbesian about the U.S.-Cuba conflict. The post-revolutionary elite look at the nationalist conflict with the United States as one of existential nature.

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<sup>156</sup>Here I used the term state security challenges because national security is a concept constructed in a less transparent ideological way.

<sup>157</sup>For a theoretical discussion of the role of ideas, norms and institutions in the making of security policy, I have built on the framework proposed by Goldstein and Keohane(Goldstein, Judith & Kehoane, Robert 1993)



The historical reference to a past of humiliation and American intervention in Cuban affairs is a permanent component of Cuba's foreign policy discourse. There is a Cuban version of "remember the Maine" that is not about Spanish insult to the U.S. but centered on American self-serving intervention frustrating Cuban thirty years efforts for independence between 1868 and 1898. References to the imposition of the Platt amendment and Cuba's exclusion from the Treaty of Paris that concluded the Spanish-American War became part of the narrative taught in the public schools before 1959.

Institutional arrangement of Cuba's foreign policy expresses this security mentality<sup>158</sup>. The Armed Forces and the Ministry of Interior, particularly its Directorate of Intelligence are the main institutions for analysis and diplomacy with the United States and the Cuban community abroad. The priority of the conflict with the United States is expressed on the organizational chart of the ministry of Foreign Relations. Below the authority of the Minister and his vice-ministers, there are four general Directorates: United States, Latin America, Bilateral Relations with the rest of the world, and multilateral affairs. It is worth noticing that just relations with the United States are covered at the same hierarchical level as relations with whole Latin America (that it is

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<sup>158</sup>This paragraph builds on my own experience as political analyst for the Cuban government since 1992 to 1994. The current organizational structure of the Ministry of Foreign Relations is not available in public materials but I got the information in conversations with current and former members of the Cuban diplomatic service.

separated in two specific directorates for Central and South America respectively) and bilateral relations with the rest of the world.

Every Cuban diplomat in the world and every intelligence officer reports about the American embassy in the country as much as about the bilateral relations with the country in which it is located. In multilateral organizations, Cuban diplomats wonder permanently how every U.S. proposal can be used against Cuba. If reports from embassies discussed issues about U.S. policy or initiatives, they are addressed not only to the ministry of foreign relations but frequently to the intelligence section of analysis, the president and the ministers of the Armed Forces and interior (in charge of intelligence and counterintelligence).

This Hobbesian mentality at the core command of Cuba's foreign policy does not exhaust all the explanation of Cuba's foreign policy but it is critical to understand not only Cuban elites suspicion towards the United States but also the importance of this conflict for Cuba's projection towards the rest of the world. Once the analyst of Cuban foreign policy understand the centrality of the security logic in the relations with Washington one can add the Lockean prism through which Cuba perceived most of the rest of the international system. Cuba does not pursue autarkical goals and recognizes that rivalry and differences do not amount to enmity even in the case of American allies at

NATO (Lockean culture). Cuba also recognized the importance of international law as a tool of international order and peace.

The perception that Cuba needs to integrate itself into a globalized world explains the new priority to economic diplomacy. The specific training for Cuban diplomats at the Higher Institute for International Relations (ISRI) before their mission overseas had incorporated in the last three years more economic preparation. The role of the Ministry of Foreign Investment and Foreign Trade has grown in importance. In the farewell ceremony for new ambassadors presided by Raul Castro, Ambassador Juan Carlos Hernandez, who spoke in the name of the recently designated, said that the group began their mission at a critical juncture of national history, centered around the modernization of the economic model: “Economic diplomacy has to play a more active role if we want to achieve a prosperous and sustainable socialist society” (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Cuba 2014).

Cuban disposition to entertain any Kantian culture project is projected fundamentally to Latin America. The preferences for economic and political integration of Cuba’s national security elites are in South and Central America. Cuban diplomacy has prioritized the role of the regional organizations that either project a counter-hegemonic agenda (ALBA) or exclude the United States from regional integration (CELAC).

Cuba's projection towards international integration tends to focus on state-to-state relations with a clear contrarian view towards markets oriented mechanisms that are generally rejected as product of neoliberalism. The same can be said about nongovernmental organizations that have gained in importance at the world level. The 2014 Summit of CELAC in Havana was the first one in a long list of heads of states reunion that lacked any parallel meeting of civil society and private sector actors.

Any Kantian initiative with the United States is beyond Cuban military and party elites' nationalist policy frontiers. Their views and discourse comes from a Bolivarian and Jose Marti tradition that has only looked at Washington with suspicion: they rejected a U.S. led hemispheric integration in principle. This can change as it happened with the Mexican elites at the end of the XX century but it will take a time or a crisis<sup>159</sup> beyond the scope of this dissertation's horizons. It is symptomatic how in the discussion about Latin American integration in Cuban academy and political circles even the market of millions of latino immigrants in the United States is frequently ignored.

No pragmatic desire of economic development supersedes the national security logic that look at the United States as the principal adversary. Although the drivers of Cuba's strategic adaptation are fundamentally economic, the shapers of the policy

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<sup>159</sup>That was the case with NAFTA. Stephanie Golob explained how the Mexican elites of the Institutional Revolutionary Party's policy frontiers shifted during the government of Carlos Salinas de Gortari after the political and economic crisis of 1988 (a critical juncture) (Golob 2003).

responses are essentially political framed within policy frontiers that resulted from ideological and historical trajectories. Cuba's preference with the United States is not for integration as a solution to the sovereignty conflict but for stabilization and respectful separated coexistence. Engagement between Cuba and the United States is not conceived as a marriage but as a respectful coexistence.

## **5.2 A social perspective of change in Cuba's foreign relations**

Marketization, political liberalization and openness to the world capitalist economy change the social relations between the island nation and its main international interlocutors. Economic and political liberalization transform Cuba's foreign policy priorities but also how other states perceive Cuba's changing identity and how they adapt their foreign policy to the new Cuban realities. The perceptions of other actors about Cuba's intentions, interests and roles led to responses filtered by their ideological conceptions and interests.

Cuba's social interaction with other states creates a dynamic in which actors learn, corroborate or discard perceptions about each other. These actors are never passive receivers of information. On the contrary diplomats, strategists, and investors frequently take decisions in contexts of incomplete information. This incompleteness of information is aggravated by the partial reform situation. The CCP has never fully endorsed market

economics. Hence, other actors depend heavily on their perceptions, biases and expectations about where the process is going and its probabilities.

In addition there is the issue of attention. Cuba is not a great power or an economic powerhouse in the international system. Revolutionaries tend to get a lot of attention but reform lacks drama. Reformers like Deng Xiaoping in China, Nguyen Van Linh in Vietnam, Chiang Ching-Kuo in Taiwan or Raul Castro in Cuba have the calibrated task of reshaping a rigid and centralized economy without breaking its power structure. A reformer's ability to control change is as important as its skills to maintain support for it.

One of the most difficult dilemmas for reformers is managing the signals they send to multiple foreign and domestic constituencies controlling the pace and timing of change. "For it is not always when things are going from bad to worse that revolution break out,"- Alexis de Tocqueville wrote- "generally speaking, the most perilous moment for a bad government is one when it seeks to mend its ways" (Tocqueville 1955, 176-177). Reforms might easy become revolutions and destroy reform politicians. Cuban elites mention frequently the example of Mikhail Gorbachev, a leader who destroyed a powerful regime while trying to save it.

Cuba is adopting market economy mechanisms but it insists on calling itself a communist country. This should not be attributed only to hypocrisy or cynicism<sup>160</sup>. There is an ideological struggle within the post-revolutionary camp to define the identity of the country, and its national interests. There is an expansion of the non-state sector but delays and partial reform retard changes and plant fears about crony capitalism. Corrupt assets stripping by elites, predatory taxation or even policy reversals scare investment spirits. The battle between different projects of a post-totalitarian developmental state versus a predatory one is far from concluded.

This contradictory situation forces other countries to look at Cuba from a dynamic, not a static perspective, trying to identify dominant trends in ambiguous situations. One signal frequently misunderstood by not well informed international actors refers to the nature of the process of political liberalization. The “divide and reform” method in a post-totalitarian system works necessarily different from an authoritarian situation. Reformers in authoritarian system tend to dialogue and form coalition with loyal opposition segments of the political society. This choice is not available to reformers within the Cuban communist regime because the opposition is meager, divided and with a very low power of mobilization. It also tends to be radical and dependent on U.S. budget.

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<sup>160</sup>Without abusing Tocqueville’s quotes, another one here might be appropriate: “In a revolution as in a novel the most difficult part to invent is the end”.

Non-liberal reformers in Cuba as it happened in China and Vietnam negotiate factional alliances with society groups bolstering pluralism in social and economic society, not in the strictly political domain. Occasional observers who tend to look at Cuban politics with references from the Eastern European or Spanish experience neglect this reality. They adopt benchmark associated to the treatment of political dissidents or personalize politics too rigidly for post-totalitarian transitional situation. In political liberalization those who are playing the fundamental role in the changes are frequently members of the same elite who created the system and committed the same mistakes and abuses in the first stages of the process that they are rectifying<sup>161</sup>.

Partial economic reform makes misperception<sup>162</sup> probable for three reasons<sup>163</sup>: 1) the ambiguity of the data. The CCP elites pursue economic reform and political liberalization to remain in power not to adopt liberal democracy, but still they might

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<sup>161</sup>That is why the generational divide is an important but not a decisive factor. This was the case in China where Deng Xiaoping rectified not only Mao's anti-markets policies but many promoted by him while he was vice-premier (Vogel 2011)

<sup>162</sup>Robert Jervis has documented the existence of patterns of misperception and distortion in policymakers and analysts' work. "Policymakers tend to fit incoming information into existing theories and images. Indeed their theories and images play a large part in determining what they notice. In other words, actors tend to perceive what they expected" (Jervis 1968).

<sup>163</sup>In this paragraph I applied some ideas presented by Robert Jervis in his book "Perception and misperception in International politics" (Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics 1976)



improve significantly economic efficiency and human rights. This is a challenging context for those who think in zero sum games terms. 2) The more ambiguous the data, the more policymakers interpret them with their preconceived mindset (confirmation bias), just what an analyst needs to avoid at transition times. People who sympathize with the Cuban government would see major reforms in transformations that although significant they fall short of a complete reform. People who assume that CCP structures cannot be reformed react by ignoring the significant change the reforms represent with respect to the old model of Fidel in command. 3) Cuban reformers receive ambiguous or even negative feedback from outsiders who they expect would acknowledge and support reform despite their reservations.

This negative feedback cycle might reinforce the upper hand of status quo forces on both sides of the Strait of Florida. It also serves partial reformers because it confirms the reasons and prophecies they argued in their caution and slowness in the implementation of decentralization or societal controls. It reinforces also the narrative and strategies of alliance against liberal democratic actors. In their narrative, Cuba cannot count on the European Union or Canada's resistance to the United States in the hypothetical worst case scenario of a confrontation between Cuba and the United States.

Those countries- in Cuba's official propaganda- are at best the good cop pursuing the same goals as Washington (bad cop) by softer means<sup>164</sup>.

It is hard for foreign liberal democratic actors to accept a modernization logic in which reformers who they don't like do the right thing for the wrong reasons. Non-liberal reformers are not ideological homologues of market oriented international institutions officials, human rights activists or liberal democracy promoters. When non-liberal reformers promote actions that led to more rights and pluralism they do so to provide political stability and international legitimacy not to undermine the one party system. Cuba's partial reformers manage the political dimension of the opening precisely by sequencing and slicing the expansion of rights associated to economic reform. This causes irritation among some observers because from a normative perspective, there is also a relatively clear structure of universality, interdependency and indivisibility of international human rights (Daniel 2010).

To win the political battles in the context of liberalization, reformers have to persuade conservatives within the regime that their modernizations projects expand the rights of the elites and the general population while isolating and draining the potential appeal of the opposition. This type of evolution frequently left a bad taste in the mouth

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<sup>164</sup>A sophisticated but vitriolic locus for propaganda of the official narrative is the blog "La PupilaInsomne" of former chairman of the Cuban Institute of Publications, Iroel Sanchez (Sanchez 2015)

of foreign actors who tend to fall in love with heroic narratives about democratization and resistance.

Globalization, with the cheapening of transportation and communication costs, implies an expansion of the exposure of Cuban government and society to international trends. Slowly but surely internet and the new digital age gain ground within the political and intellectual elites helping to internationalize them. This exposure to pressures and incentives from other international actors generates interactions that are social in nature. Foreign actors began to understand better the nature of the game while domestic ones align with the codes of communication and language of global communities. Actors' identities and roles are modified by the information they share. By actors in this case I mean mainly the states with a corporate identity<sup>165</sup> but also other elements within the state-society relations such as bureaucrats, social organizations, families, intellectuals, artists, diaspora communities, etc.

In the opaque circumstances of partial reform, state identities as rivals, friends, enemies, trade partners or trade rivals, aid recipient, aid receiver or aid giver are shaky but substantial change happens when some stability is achieved. Cuban actors at the state-

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<sup>165</sup>This issue is well discussed by Alexander Wendt in the V Chapter of his "Social Theory of International Politics" (Wendt 1999)

society levels and their partners in global society<sup>166</sup> might acquire new roles, and reduce or expand old ones. The spectrum of Cuban interlocutors in international interactions is widened when political liberalization expands the access of Cuban economic, civil and political society to the international arena. Since the travel reform of October 2013, religious communities<sup>167</sup>, prominent artists and intellectuals, LGBT activists, feminists, anti-racism advocates, environmentalists and even opponents of the regime gained easier access to the international arena.

Liberal IR theory shows how economic interactions favor issue-linkage and solution of international conflicts. Opening to foreign tourism and investment, and integration of state and non-state sectors in the economy widen the diversity of actors participating in bilateral and multilateral international links. Constructivist IR theory goes further by suggesting how trade and investment across borders trigger social interactions

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<sup>166</sup>The discussion follows the distinction developed by the English School between international society centered on the relations between states and global society that includes non-state actors.

<sup>167</sup>One of the civil society actors that gained international prominence has been the Cuban Roman Catholic Church (Dominguez 1989). In 1994 Cuba got its second Cardinal in history, Jaime Lucas Ortega. Ortega hosted the visits of two Popes and became a leading figure of the Catholic Church in Latin America. His policy of constructive engagement with the Cuban government has been applauded by most Latin American and European governments including those on the right. Simultaneously his promotion of a soft transition from post-totalitarianism to a more open society has been fiercely attacked by the Cuban-American right (Kirk 1989) and at times by the U.S. government under George W. Bush or by agencies of the government under President Barack Obama (Armstrong, *A Failure to Communicate* 2012).

*of interdependence, homogeneity, the creation of communities of common fate when facing common enemies* (international crime, environmental disaster), and *self-restraint* (Wendt 1999) that have a potential to transform the identities, roles and interests of the actors.

These process-variables proposed by Wendt are not necessarily the only ones but they help to explain changes in the micro and macro culture of the international system through the creation of new collective identities. The following chapters discuss the application of these process-variables of social change on Cuba's foreign relations. The creation of communities of common fate and self-restraint are better specified in the analysis of specific bilateral relations.

In the rest of this chapter I concentrate in the role of interdependence and homogeneity as social pressures that emerge from the micro culture of bilateral relations and the macro-level of international society as a whole. This introduction would state issues of interdependence and homogeneity pressures that are specified in the following three chapters about Cuba's foreign policy grand strategy, strategic triangular relations and the bilateral conflict with the United States.

### 5.2.1 Asymmetric Interdependence

Economic reform and political liberalization increase the density of interactions between Cuban actors and foreign actors. These processes coincided with a rise of interdependence<sup>168</sup> after the end of the Cold War. During the decade of the 1990's, interactions between Cuba and the rest of the international system became more complex. In addition to the diversification of Cuba's foreign trade<sup>169</sup>, new issues of cooperation and

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<sup>168</sup>The concept of complex interdependence in International Relations theory is associated to the work of Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye (Nye, Joseph & Keohane, Robert 2001). The idea is that states and societies are becoming tied together in their economic and political destinies creating non zero sum dynamics. Balance of power politics and military affairs remain relevant but their importance is decreasing on the face of a rise of multiple channels of interactions between the political communities, economies and societies of different countries. Keohane and Nye explained how complex interdependence creates different goals and balances of power in different issues. Nye developed this idea with the notion of three main interrelated balances of power in today's world: Strategic, economic and a non-state related field characterized by power diffusion (Nye 2011). Complex interdependence have three main effects according to Keohane and Nye: a) it alters the possibilities of linkages between issues and also the linkage strategies of weak and powerful countries, b) it reinforces the role of agenda setting powers because of the lack of a clear hierarchy among multiple areas and actors, c) multiple transnational and trans-governmental interactions between different actors blurt the separation between international and domestic politics, reducing the role of traditional foreign policy mechanisms and creating political coalition and communities across borders (Nye, Joseph & Keohane, Robert 2001, 29-37).

<sup>169</sup>In the 1990's Cuba diversified its foreign trade as it has never done before. Since the colonial times, Cuba has been heavily dependent on one market. During the Spanish royal monopoly of trade, Cuba traded almost exclusively with Spain. By the end of the

new transnational, interstate and trans- governmental ties emerged. There were also new actors such as companies, international banks, churches and non-governmental groups interested on the island, its business opportunities and the fate of its people.

As liberal IR theory predicts the rise of nonmilitary agendas relax the centrality of state-to-state relations and the hierarchy of military security themes in states' foreign policy. The end of Cuba's alliance with the Soviet Union and the rise of foreign investment, tourism, and the easing of contacts with the Cuban Diaspora diminished the centrality of political military alliances and replaced it with economic cooperation and political dialogue agendas with most countries.

This development didn't pass unnoticed by the CCP and FAR elites that gradually expanded its presence in the new economy. The Armed Forces economic apparatus expanded to areas such as hotels management, marinas, passengers and tourists transportation, agriculture and industries with broad contact with the outside world. In addition Raul Castro transferred to civilian life mid and high level officers who became ministers, vice-ministers and directors in multiple areas of the economy and political life connected to foreign actors.

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colonial times, Cuba had a concentration on sugar and the U.S. market. After 1959 Cuba fall into another concentration in sugar and the Soviet Market. The 1990's crisis forced Cuba to desperately seek partners everywhere countries would dare to challenge the U.S. embargo.

Relations with the United States were the obvious exception because security logic remained dominant there. But even in this case, there was a higher interdependence because non-state social and economic interactions broadened. Two important new developments are: 1) the significant Cuban-American family travels and remittances to Cuba that has reached more than 400 000 visitors a year after a fall due to Bush administration restrictions between 2004 and 2009. 2) The food sales to Cuba under the opportunities opened under the 2000 Trade Sanctions Reform Act (TSRA). I discuss the two issues with more details in the reference of this chapter to the creation of communities of common fate and in the chapter dedicated to U.S-Cuba relations.

In security terms, the United States did not acknowledge the full sovereignty of the Cuban state and the futility of a regime change policy until December 17 of 2014. Even after, the logic of regime change still dominates U.S. legal projection towards Cuba. Yet a new security agenda emerged pulling the two countries to cooperate in issues such as anti-narcotics interdiction, migration, anti-international crime operations, coordinated response to natural disasters or oils spills in the Gulf of Mexico.

The fact that interdependence between Cuba and major international actors is asymmetric (Nye, Joseph & Keohane, Robert) explains the national security rationale that influences Cuba's partial reform. Different degrees of sensitivity and vulnerability are caused by material realities but constituted by subjective understandings. The impact of



vulnerability in policymaking depends heavily on the subjective definition of interests and roles. This is relevant in Cuba's conflict with the United States and also in Cuba's assessment of Washington's leverage over Europe and Canada.

Following the logic presented by Keohane and Nye (Nye, Joseph & Keohane, Robert 12-16) it is safe to say that openness to foreign investment, trade, tourism and other interactions increases Cuba's "sensitivity" and "vulnerability"<sup>170</sup> to foreign influences. Equally important *interdependence* gives Cuba some leverage on other countries because entrepreneurs, business groups, humanitarian agencies, government entities partners and others can become sensitive and vulnerable to Cuban influence. Travel and trade are critical components of liberal IR logics of interdependence since the two activities create opportunities for tit for tat behavioral tactics and issue linkage strategies to ease military or political conflict.

The role of this international praxis is even higher according to constructivist views that see possibilities of imitation and complex social learning by the actors. Trade is also a distinctive identity issue for international society according to the English School. Hedley Bull (Bull 1977) highlighted trade between states as the central activity of a "Groatian" dynamic in opposition to war in a Hobbesian world or ideological

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<sup>170</sup>Sensitivity measures the degree to which changes in the other actor affects one's behavior. Vulnerability measures the cost of ending the relation with the other actor. (Nye, Joseph & Keohane, Robert 2001)

transnational conflict in Kantian perspectives. As much as it is important to identify the absence of trade and travel between the two countries as a hostility reproduction mechanism, it is relevant to recognize how licensed travel and food sales introduce rapprochement in the bilateral links.

In the constructivist view, interdependence affects not only the behavior but also the identities of the states. Here it is important the distinction between causal and *constitutive effects*<sup>171</sup>. Although interdependence is rarely a causal variable of state identities, it helps to change perceptions and make possible complex social learning and cultural selection by imitation. A higher exposure to market economies, liberal democratic practices, or market oriented authoritarianism do not change Cuban political system but increases the probability that Cuban actors identify and imitate successful behavior in these respective social models of Europe, Canada, Russia or China. It also exposes them to legitimacy criteria and practices that challenges some of the Cuban government policies while validate others. Epistemic and professional communities in Cuba can identify themselves with the agendas and ethics of actors in other countries.

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<sup>171</sup>An important distinction of constructivist methodology is the one between causal logic and constitutive logic. Interdependence is a variable that answer more questions of what or how-possible than why in the reform. A higher density of trade, or investments, or security cooperation between Cuba and other countries do not cause the reform or even the deepening of the reform process. It generally makes possible processes that led to a redefinition of what cooperation, conflict and nationalist identity can be.

This development can widen Cuban elites' policy frontiers by providing new knowledge and helping to create professional and political interests<sup>172</sup>.

Higher interdependence based on cultural, economic, educational and academic exchanges help Cuba and other actors avoid misperception mistakes. This is particularly important in times of partial reform when contradictory information is common. These practices in the post-reform context are essentially different from what was typical for several decades between Cuba and the Communist bloc or currently between Cuba and Chavez's Venezuela. Identities are not independent from roles, since practices socialize elites and states by habituating them to certain behaviors and norms. Just in terms of quantity, after 2013 the overwhelming majority of Cubans who travelled abroad did so not as part of an official delegation or task but organized by themselves. The extension of the limit to stay abroad for personal motives from eleven months to two years has opened doors for a rising number of Cubans to have a transnational life of work and study abroad including in the United States.

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<sup>172</sup>Interdependence-generated-knowledge is not only technological or managerial but also social. Constructivists highlight how complex learning has constitutive effects on interests and identities in virtue of sharing knowledge between different actors. Together with trade, investments, tourism, or conflicts; interdependence means the sharing of "speech acts" (discourses and narratives) with the rest of the world. Structures and agents are codetermined by their concrete interaction. Agents and structures, their identities and interests are reproduced and changed by the practices of their interactions. They are "accomplishments of practice"(Ashley 1988).

More cultural, educational and social exchanges make possible for the states and other actors to see themselves from the perspective of their interlocutors (alter-casting<sup>173</sup>). This shared knowledge in terms of perspective-taking does not mean that parties in conflict would align their solution preferences but it opens the possibility of conflict stabilization (to be discussed on the chapter on U.S.-Cuba relations) and ease the chances for acknowledgement for deference (AFD)<sup>174</sup> dynamics. Second track exchanges can

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<sup>173</sup>The idea of alter-casting as a policy to change the collective identity in a relation is based on the constructivist view that identities and interests are learned and reinforced by the way actors respond to each other. The principle is known as reflected appraisals or “mirroring”. When leaders decide to practice the policy of alter-casting, their state treat the other or others with an identity role associated to a new type of relations, and can express clearly its intentions. The significant other has the opportunity to reciprocate by casting itself in a new role-identity in agreement or not to the proposed new relation. Since the practices of alter and ego frame the relations, a new collective identity might appear and sustained. A classic example of altercasting policy in IR was Gorbachev’s policy towards Reagan at the end of the Cold War.

<sup>174</sup>Developing the paradigm of acknowledgement for deference (AFD) as probable solution between an strong power and weaker state in its neighborhood, Brantly Womack pointed out how realist premise that “relative power decides all” contradicts multiple practices of diplomacy. In Womack’ view, hierarchies are negotiated, “structured by interaction and power” (Womack, *China Among Unequals Asymmetric Foreign Relations in Asia 2010*, 29). Interdependence between states is a fundamental process to understand how situations in which “the strong is more resourceful but less committed to bringing about [a] specific outcome in the bilateral relationship, while the weak is more vulnerable and therefore more alert to threat and committed to survival” (Womack, *China Among Unequals Asymmetric Foreign Relations in Asia 2010*, 384), there is a possibility of stabilization around a solution in which the strong acknowledge the sovereignty of the weak, while the weak recognizes and defer to the special status of the regional or global power.

provide policymakers and diplomats with inside information and themes that are decisive for diplomacy. Alter-casting might help to break partial reform equilibria by announcing new roles with expectations to be reciprocated.

Since the 1990's Cuba and Latin American countries cooperated in a process of "de-roguing"<sup>175</sup>(Onderco 2014). In nuclear nonproliferation, Havana accomplished its goals with clear Latin American support but in other areas, it faced U.S. intransigence and maximalist behaviors sustained by a mixture of American domestic politics and institutional foreign policy inertia. The classic case is Havana's presence on the list of Terrorism Sponsoring Nations of the State Department. Havana engaged in significant speech acts and practices to transmit an interest on seeing itself removed from the list but Washington did not reciprocate until it decided to restore diplomatic relations.

FAR high command and the CCP leadership are conscious of the challenges that interdependence means for the one party system they promote. That explains the expressed preferences for China, Russia, and Venezuela not only because of homogeneity but also due to cautious perceptions about Europe and Canada. The Cuban official

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<sup>175</sup>Onderco defines "de-roguing" of states as the strategic and purposeful process to reverse the rogue status. Onderco proposed a model of two phases of reintegration of the rogue state to the international community. Based on criminology literature, he presents Gadhafi's Libya case using the term of "parolee" after the North African country gave up its weapons of mass destruction program and cooperate with solution of some terrorist actions cases in which Tripoli was presumably involved. "De-roguing" could be presented as an specific policy of altercasting (Onderco 2014, 181)

coverage of Europe-United States relations for instance, frequently presents Europe subordinated to U.S. power in policies towards Russia and the Middle East. From this reading there is a natural deduction: if in the case of Russia, a great power and main supplier of energy, Europe reacts as a follower of U.S. leadership, in the case of Cuba, one must not expect anything less than subordination to U.S. mandates if a crisis were to happen.

This view of the world led Cuban elites to assume a cautious policy towards Europe and Canada from the premise that these two actors would end kowtowing to the United States if conflict arisen. Here there elements of self-fulfilling prophecy because Cuba's premises reinforce its caution and logic of partial reform. When Europe and Canada receive mixed signals of lack of commitment to marketization and liberalization, in turn, they adopt their own caution and do not embark on a course of support for Cuba's marketization and political liberalization that might create undesired conflicts with Washington even if there is a critical view about the U.S. embargo. That way Cuba confirms the original premises it helped to reproduce.

But this specific culture does not prevent the possibility that Cuba and its foreign interlocutors manage their differences and create a positive cycle altering their behavior in a tit for tat or in a conscious effort to insulate their relations from a downward spiral. Cooperation creates dynamics of absolute gains for all sides or even relative gains for Cuba or the other part that are inconsequential to the global or regional balance of power.

In the case of Cuba, accommodation by great powers to its legitimate demands might have appeasing effects on its counter-liberal hegemony fervor.

### 5.2.2 Homogeneity<sup>176</sup>

As in all revolutionary states, post 1959 Cuba's foreign policy combines the duality of support for revolution abroad and diplomatic relations with other states. In his study of revolution in world politics Fred Halliday warned against the simplicity of seeing the adoption of a diplomatic-nationalistic approach as an abandonment of the internationalist revolutionary impulse.

The record is not one of movement *from* internationalist conflict to diplomatic and/or strategic accommodation: rather it is of the maintenance- with shifting emphases- of both, of a dual commitment that it is of the overriding antinomy of the foreign policy of revolutionary states (Halliday, *Revolution and World Politics: The Rise of the Sixth Great Power* 1999, 134).

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<sup>176</sup>This discussion about homogeneity pressures and its constitutive impact on the Cuban state follows Fred Halliday's analysis of "International Society as homogeneity" (Halliday, *International society as homogeneity: Burke, Marx Fukuyama* 1994). Presenting the concept, Halliday built on the works of three thinkers of different orientation, Edmund Burke, Karl Marx and Francis Fukuyama. Homogeneity in international society "denotes a set of norms shared by different societies and which are promoted by inter-state competition. This is based neither on inter-state nor on transnational models but on the assumption of inter-societal and inter-state homology"...  
...Briefly, this approach investigates how, as a result of international pressures, states are compelled more and more to conform to each other in their internal arrangements. Unlike the realist concept, 'homogeneity' pays considerable attention to what happens within states and societies, and examines the interaction of international activity with domestic legitimacy and stability" (Halliday, *International society as homogeneity: Burke, Marx Fukuyama* 1994, 94-95)

Halliday explained, in a sharp interpretation of Edmund Burke's insight about the French revolution, how the root cause of the conflict between revolutionary states and the international status quo is not their revolutionary foreign policy but its internal order. Based on several case studies (Russia, France, Cuba, Iran, China, etc), Halliday criticized the simplicity of some international relations literature that see foreign policy accommodation of revolutionary states as associated with the "socialization" or "taming" of revolutions and marking the end of revolutionary impact. In contrast, he showed substantive evidence that "irrespective of what the conscious diplomatic priorities of the revolutionary regime may be, the ideas it generated, and the example it sets, continue to encourage people in other states" (Halliday, *Revolution and World Politics: The Rise of the Sixth Great Power* 1999, 139).

The conflict between revolutionary states and status quo powers arises from the heterogeneity of political, social and economic systems brought by revolutionary. Foreign relations are not a mechanic replication of this heterogeneity but the contradiction between antagonistic systems of political organization causes a state of conflict. "...the central question is not whether the revolutionary state is "socialized" in its external relations, but whether in the longer run the pressures of the external context lead not just to changes in foreign policy but also to an internal change, whereby the commitment to an alternative path of social development is abandoned" (Halliday, *Revolution and World Politics: The Rise of the Sixth Great Power* 1999, 135). As long as the Cuban revolution



is not terminated domestically, there are going to be pressures for homogeneity regardless of the foreign policy accommodation that Cuba can make.

The relations between Cuba's foreign strategy and the policies of the status quo powers towards Cuba is better understood as a confrontation between the structural quest for homogeneity and the revolutionary identity as a vindication of an international heterogeneity. A leadership in Havana might have reasons to accommodate its actions to the dominance of market forces in the international system but this does not prevent Cuba from taking advantages of changes in the international system that served its internationalist revolutionary impulse. Broadening the opening to foreign investment in Cuba is an accommodation step that can occur together with an internationalist revolutionary support for the leftist processes in Venezuela, Ecuador and Bolivia.

The pressure for political and socioeconomic homogeneity is structural to the international system while the internationalist impulse of Cuba's foreign policy is structural to its communist regime. The two forces interact and depending on junctures, strategies, asymmetries of power and attention, one or the other prevails. International order's pressures for homogeneity of market economies and liberal democracy impact a Cuba interested on integration with the world economy. Cuba's domestic politics and foreign policy feel this impact. In some areas, where the asymmetry of attention in its favor and the mobilization of its resources allow, Cuba's foreign policy internationalist

impulse expands the margins and capacity of revolutionary allies in the international balance of power.

The period of economic reform and political liberalization has been accompanied by a reaffirmation of revolutionary internationalist projection in three particular areas<sup>177</sup>: 1) the relationship with the Inter-American system in which president Raul Castro expressed interests in improving relations with Washington but reiterating that nothing about Cuba's sovereignty is negotiable and Cuba doesn't have any interests on returning to the OAS, an organization that Havana insists on describing as dominated by the United States, 2) the unrestricted support for Hugo Chavez's internationalist revolutionary projection in the Americas and other areas of the world, 3) the priority of ALBA as an alternative form of integration to market driven mechanisms in the Americas under the leadership of the United States (NAFTA, CAFTA-DR), or Brazil (MERCOSUR).

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<sup>177</sup>In addition to these three areas, in 2013 Cuba got involved in an incident with a North Korean Cargo ship that was carrying Cuban weapons in violation of the U.N. sanctions against the Pyongyang regime. This incident was highlighted in the United States by fierce opponents of any improvement of relations between the U.S. and Cuba. In the end a U.N report criticized Cuba but the U.N. Security Council did not impose any significant sanction (Lopez-Levy 2013)

As a trend, Cuba's economic reform and political liberalization increases homogeneity between Cuba and its regional context. Constructivist IR theory look at *homogeneity* as a cause of collective identity formation and reduction of conflicts<sup>178</sup>. Cuba's transition to a market economy even with a heavy state intervention make the Cuban state and economic system more isomorphic with other states, in line with market economy principles and some aspects of the political order such as right to travel, freedom of religion, right to own private property, and some aspects of rule by law. Another important element of homogeneity refers to Cuban foreign policy itself. Cuba's international projection is becoming also more "national" or nationalistic, framing its

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<sup>178</sup>Fred Halliday explained "the counterposing of heterogeneity and homogeneity in international relations". His work is quoted by Alexander Wendt. The realist argument for heterogeneity is that differences between states internally are not a source of conflict internationally. Homogeneity is a liberal argument enhanced by the English School and the structural constructivists. The idea is that heterogeneity of domestic orders do not prevent cooperation but it makes it more difficult. Halliday quoted Raymond Aron's work about the Cold War attributing to the different domestic systems' attitudes to markets (capitalism and communism) the root of this international conflict (Halliday, *International society as homogeneity*: Burke, Marx Fukuyama 1994). Here I build on this premise to argue that Cuba's transition to a market economy reduces conflict with other international actors with similar economic systems. Equally important, the partiality of Cuba's economic reform and its decision to remain a one party system and preserve important elements of its revolutionary counter-hegemonic identity remain a source of an ideological conflict with countries more amicable to U.S. led liberal hegemony. This conflict motivates international relations to contribute as constitutive factors to domestic change. Daniel C. Thomas in "The Helsinki Effect" provided important evidences about the role of international norms of human rights as criteria of legitimacy as a constitutive factor of domestic change in the countries of the European Cold War system (Thomas 2001). Thomas analyzed how the "Helsinki effect" highlighted incompatibilities between the adopted norms of cooperation and the one-party system.

internationalist solidarity impulse in ways that are compatible with accepted views of sovereignty, statehood, national security and non-interference.

There are three parallel process of homogenization at the international level to consider in the discussion about Cuba today: 1) the intellectual and political consensus about the importance of markets for achieving development and prosperity, 2) the growing support for liberal democracy and human rights as criteria of legitimacy in the international system. Although the endorsement of liberal democracy and human rights is less than the one of market economics, there is critical support for these criteria by states, international organizations and non-state actors. 3) At the Americas regional level, there is a convergence between Cuba's move to a mixed market economy and Latin America's rejection of its own neoliberal experience. Traditional friends of Socialist Cuba in Latin America, leftist parties won elections and promoted a social equality and anti-poverty agenda within the framework of capitalism and without been dislodged from power by non-democratic veto players mainly the military as it was the case in the past. For the first time in Cuban post-revolutionary history two of Cuba's main external allies are in the Western hemisphere (Venezuela and Brazil) and its main political alliance, the Latin American Bolivarian Alternative (ALBA) is located within the region.

There is also a dynamic relationship between foreign policy and revolutionary cycle<sup>179</sup> that pushed Cuba in the direction of higher homogeneity: The rise of nationalism vis-à-vis the internationalist impulse<sup>180</sup> within the organizing hierarchy of Cuba's foreign

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<sup>179</sup>There are several studies that discussed revolutions in the framework of a historical cycle in which nationalism and internationalism are interconnected. The concept of internationalism refers to revolutionary cosmopolitanism, a vision of the world as becoming more transnational and unified by political and economic processes of internationalization. Revolutionary cosmopolitanism, internationalism, see ideological and political alliances among revolutionaries transcending national boundaries in the struggle for the realization of human progress. This progressivism places revolutionary cosmopolitanism as a creature of humanistic enlightenment. For a vision of the revolutionary cycle see "Anatomy of Revolution by Crane Britton (Brinton 1965). The internationalist vein of revolutionaries is easy to follow through their works, speeches and pamphlets from John Milton, to Robespierre, to Lenin, to Mao, Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, and Khomeini.

<sup>180</sup>There is no space in this dissertation to discuss in depth the internationalist impulse in Revolution and particularly in Marxism. The double character of the Cuban revolution (nationalist and communist) poses important dilemmas to Cuban foreign policy from the beginning. In terms of ideology, communism as presented by Marx, Lenin, Rosa Luxembour, Trotsky and others was essentially an internationalist movement. Marx even said that proletariats are a force for progress, among other reasons, because they don't have country. The conflict between nationalism and internationalism is at the root of the rupture of the II International between parties that supported the budget for war in 1914 at their national parliament and those who followed Lenin and declared their loyalty to the international proletariat as a whole. Later, Lenin explained communist support for nationalist revolution in China and the Orient because it would contribute to bring communist revolution to the capitalist centers of power and to eliminate national oppression. The revolutionary internationalist impulse had represented in almost every case (The United States, France, Russia, China, Vietnam, Cuba, Nicaragua, Angola, etc.) a challenge to established nationalist ideas of sovereignty, statehood, security and non-interference. This is well explained by Fred Halliday (Halliday, *Revolution and World Politics: The Rise of the Sixth Great Power* 1999).

policy. This is not an exceptional Cuban characteristic but part of the well identified pattern of revolutionary foreign policy trajectories. Fred Halliday has explained:

...revolutions, when they come to power, put into practice their range of 'internationalist policies', proclamation of peace to the world, support for kindred movements abroad, provisions of citizenship to foreign nationals, sympathetic to the revolution, announcement of the brotherhood and common interests of humanity. Going beyond this, revolutionary states see practical support for other revolutionaries as the appropriate implementation of their internationalist commitment. Over time, however, it becomes clear that this simple approach of internationalist solidarity does not produce the consequences anticipated, and the policy of the revolutionary regime becomes more 'national' in character, as much in theory and practice (Halliday, *Revolution and World Politics: The Rise of the Sixth Great Power* 1999).

The resilience of Cuban internationalism has been remarkable but it cannot avoid the preponderance of structure over agency described above.

There is a distance between homogeneity as an *objective reality* and the *subjective categorization* of it. This is particularly important in Cuba's partial reform situation because government elites might present homogenization with international standard practices as a tactical move to weather periods of crisis. The logic of partial reform implies at time the reaffirmation by Cuban authorities of conflictual characteristics in clash with the homogenizing capitalist liberal order, the one party system is the more salient. Discourse here it is very relevant because it transmits signals about intentions to other actors but practices and unintended dynamics are the decisive factors because they indicate trends.

Fidel Castro presented his revolution always as part of an international cause. On the one hand he emphasized the ordinal principle of sovereignty against U.S. interference on Cuban internal affairs. On the other hand he did not apologize for training and arming revolutionary groups that tried to overthrow U.S. allies in the Western hemisphere, Africa, and the Middle East. In this double attitude towards sovereignty the Cuban revolution expressed its counter-hegemonic posture in the international system.

The central axis of conflict was ideological, national borders could not block the Cuban revolution. It was an international event, in both its causes and consequences and a challenge to the set of values about what was desirable in Latin America domestically and internationally. The revolutionary government, harassed by a policy of isolation from the hemisphere with the exception of Mexico and the Caribbean, did not hesitate to complement its alliance with the Communist bloc with support to radical groups that challenged the same governments that were cooperating with the hostile policy of the hegemon. But the conflict was not mainly of national security, it was about the role of markets and public sectors in the economy, foreign investment, rule of law, liberal democracy, sovereignty, individual liberty and economic equality, among other concepts.

In the case of Cuba's reform, homogeneity is promoted because: 1) Different from the old soviet model of command economy, the variant of market socialism that Cuba has begun to emulate now does not seek closed markets but integration to a liberal

world economy<sup>181</sup>. 2) The synchronization of the norms to solve conflicts between a market oriented Cuba and market economies in other countries become easier than in the old command economy in which party arbitrariness and rejection of private property and market competition was the ideological norm. 3) Economic reform and political liberalization require a foreign policy based on peaceful dialogue and understanding with countries of the capitalist world. To attract foreign investment, development aid or find markets for its products Cuba needs to contemporize its discourse with other states, ameliorating conflicts. This reality forces Cuba to practice its principle of internationalist solidarity in ways compatible with the liberal international order.

To paraphrase a title of Jorge Domínguez's book, Cuba's foreign policy transitioned from seeking "a world safe for revolution" to promote a world safe for the **Cuban** revolution". The movement towards higher homogeneity is expressed in changes of institutional ties with other countries but mainly in values and ideology. The supreme moral value of Cuba's revolutionary foreign policy in the 1960's was solidarity. This principle was predicated as a question of identity, a response to the international character of what was presented as capitalist oppression. Cuba supplied and demanded solidarity. The highest moment of demanded solidarity was the Cuban missile Crisis. Fidel Castro

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<sup>181</sup>This means creating a variant of Cuban nationalism and communism compatible, in conformity with attracting foreign investment, developing market institutions such as a minimum of rule of law, and ties of cooperative nature between the private sector, the government and the political process.



asked the Soviet Union to sacrifice everything for the defense of Cuban revolution while offering the island as a base and first target in a nuclear war just to shift the arms balance in favor of the communist bloc.

Solidarity with revolutionary and leftist movement was also the prevailing motive in Cuba's regional strategy during the 1960's. The Second Declaration of Havana read as a speech by Fidel Castro in February 4, 1962 synthesized his response to the expulsion of the Cuban revolutionary government from the OAS in a policy known as defense revolucionaria activa (Active Revolutionary Defense). In fact it was a policy of active revolutionary offensive around two premises: a) Cuba's destiny was connected to the destiny of Latin America because the revolution in the island was not secure as long as the United States has the support of almost every government in the region against Cuba, b) in consequence, Cuba's goal was to make revolution in Latin America.

The duty of every revolutionary is to make the revolution.-Fidel Castro said- It is known that the revolution will triumph in America and throughout the world, but it is not for revolutionaries to sit in the doorways of their houses waiting for the corpse of imperialism to pass by. The role of Job doesn't fit a revolutionary....

No nation in Latin America is weak- because each forms part of a family of 200 million brothers, who suffer the same miseries, who harbor the same sentiments, who have the same energy, who dream about the same better future and who count upon the solidarity of all honest men and women throughout the world.

Great as was the epic of Latin American Independence, heroic as was that struggle, today's generation of Latin Americans is called up to engage in an epic which is even greater and more decisive for humanity" (Castro, The Duty of a Revolutionary is To Make the Revolution: The Second Declaration of Havana 1972).

These ideas of internationalist solidarity were inscribed on many Cuban official documents. In 1976, the first post-revolutionary constitution proclaimed “proletarian internationalism” and solidarity with peoples’ liberation as principles of Cuban foreign policy in Article 12. This foreign policy projection reflected on five institutions within the Cuban party-state created with the goal of abetting revolution in the continent: a) in the cultural arena, **Casa de las Americas** (House of the Americas), a cultural center to promote Latin American art and literature, including revolutionary ideological essays, poetry, music, etc; b) in the public diplomacy arena, **Prensa Latina**, a press agency with the intention to report and analyze news from a revolutionary perspective; c) in the direct promotion and support of revolutionary movements, the **National Liberation Department** of the Ministry of Interior<sup>182</sup>, later transferred to the Central Committee of

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<sup>182</sup>The central figure in the National Liberation Department was Commander Manuel Pineiro, known as “Redbeard”. Pineiro had fought with Raul Castro in the Oriental Second Front. He was the leader of Liberation and later the Americas Department for almost twenty five years. His life expressed the institutional trajectory in Cuba’s support for revolution. The National Liberation Department was originally an intelligence agency in support of revolutionary movements within the Ministry of Interior. In 1974-75 Pineiro was transferred to the Central Committee of the CCP as chief of the then recently created Americas Department. The department became more a CCP political liaison with homologues from the region to support revolutionary movement and solidarity with the Cuban revolution. It responded to the need to accommodate the reality of governments in Latin America that established diplomatic relations with the Cuban government. Cuba did not engage in activities to support guerrillas or armed groups against these authorities. In 1993, the Department ceased to exist and became an “area” of a general department of international relations of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party. In 2010, it was eliminated as part of a structural adjustment of the CCP (Arreola 2010).

the CCP as **Americas Department**, in charge of training revolutionaries from other countries or provide them safe haven, medical treatment or general education; d) two organizations of solidarity, agitation and propaganda and coordination of political support all over the world for revolutionary movement: **OLAS** (Latin American Solidarity Organization) and **OSPAAAL** (The organization for solidarity with the peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America). Both OLAS and OSPAAAL celebrated conferences in Havana to coordinate and mobilize revolutionary support.

Fred Halliday accurately described Cuba's internationalist commitment as "designed to augment Cuba's independence vis-à-vis both the United States and the USSR". Halliday explained that the Cuba's record of more than thirty years of commitment, from 1962 to 1992, ranks as one of the most extraordinary and sustained engagements by any state to the export of revolution.

Cuba not only inspired radicals in much of the world, well beyond Latin and North America but amidst pressure from Washington and Moscow alike, it exerted itself to match that verbal, ideological commitment with actions, in the form of assistance and, in some cases, troops. **Yet not more than other states Cuba was unable, in asserting this engagement, to abstract itself from the constraints of the international system, and of the links between that system and its own internal development.** In the first place, the internationalist commitment of Cuba was a product above all of the difficulties to which the Cuban state was subjected: the launching of armed struggles in Latin America in 1962 was a response to the attempted U.S invasion of 1961. The sustained US blockade and political support for the Miami-based opposition provided a lasting motive for solidarity with those opposed to the USA elsewhere" (Halliday, *Revolution and World Politics: The Rise of the Sixth Great Power* 1999, 122).

The pressures for homogeneity at the end of the Cold War forced upon Fidel Castro and his followers an accommodation of Cuba's revolutionary identity to forms more compatible with the liberal international order. For decades, Cuba's most prominent missionary role in international affairs was played by soldiers in Africa or guerrillas in Latin America. After the 1990's this role was fundamentally played by doctors, nurses and teachers. The new "army" still provides Cuba with significant influence and prestige in the third world but this "soft power" is perfectly compatible with a liberal world order, including a U.S. led regional or global order.

The transition from the prevalence of the internationalist impulse to a more nationalist centered policy appeared more as forced upon Fidel Castro by the post-Cold War realities than a decision to moderate. In "Cuba: Back from the Future", Susan Eckstein (Eckstein 2003) dedicated a well-documented chapter "Internationalism" to explain how Fidel Castro appealed to the importance of Cuba's survival for the international revolutionary movement to justify a change of focus to domestic issues and a reduction of its internationalist solidarity. As Eckstein demonstrated there was not more political or economic space to sustain the domestic costs of Cuba's internationalism without risking political stability and survival at home or abroad (Eckstein 2003, 171-202).

The reduction on Cuban military involvement overseas was the result of a necessity. The tensions between the internationalist impulse and the nationalist drive to reform and liberalization persist. But necessities shape interests, interests shape roles, and roles make identities. Capitalist international homogenization have generated a Cuba in which the ideas of a market economy are not anathema anymore. Cuban state's interests in domestic stability generated a need for interdependence with a world in which capitalism is dominant with functions and roles that are incompatible with the classical command economy and revolutionary communist state.

In a 1992 meeting with American, Russian and Cuban experts and veterans of the 1962 Missile Crisis, Fidel Castro vindicated Cuba's revolutionary character but emphasized that although wishing social change in Latin America, his government was not on the task of overthrowing governments anymore. In a direct message to the American political class in an electoral year, Castro said to American historian and President Kennedy's advisor Arthur Schlesinger Jr.:

If you ask me if we still support revolution in Latin America, if that is Cuba's policy today, I tell you, 'no'.... Have we changed? Yes, we are more mature, more realistic. We have learned from experience. We have changed. Latin America has changed. The world has changed. The calm in Latin America today...is deceptive. The relative stability will not last. Deep social problems remain. But "if those countries become destabilized, we are not going to promote the destabilization. We are not going to take advantage of the objective conditions to promote anything. That is a policy of a different era... We wanted revolutionary change. We still do. This doesn't mean that we are going to help anybody to do it (Schlesinger Jr 1992).

In August 24, 1993, while Latin America celebrated Simon Bolivar's birthday, Fidel Castro addressed the Foro of Sao Paulo, an international coalition of socialist and revolutionary movements in Latin America that includes from the Workers Party of Brazil to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Castro reiterated his message about Cuba's peaceful adaptation to the post-Cold War world. He said, "As someone who participated in, advocated and supported armed revolutionary movements something I would not repent, I must advice you clearly against it. It is not the most promising path in the current circumstances" (Arreola 2010). From been a supporter of the guerrillas, Castro changed to criticize the FARC for its kidnappings of politicians and civilians. Today, Cuba is playing together with Norway, a U.S. NATO ally the role of mediator in the Colombian civil war promoting the demobilization of the FARC and ELN guerrillas.

Homogeneity as a trend also creates virtuous cycle by expanding positive responses to changes in Cuba by other states and vice versa. In most countries, the changes in Cuba have led to a review of Cuba's image in their foreign policy establishment. Most diplomatic missions and foreign press correspondents in Havana began to report Cuba as a country in transition, not a threat to the international order. As in the revolutionary cycle described by Halliday, Havana appears more a stakeholder in

the international order with the revolutionary state immersed in the process of accommodating at least to the economic principles of the liberal order.

These visions of Cuba as a country in transition tend to update the debate about the scope and reach of Cuban changes. Rather than discussing whether Cuba is in a process of economic reform, the policy discussion becomes how to contribute to it. The new discussion assumes sympathies for Cuba's marketization and adoption of policies and norms more compatible with the rest of Latin America. Rather than scoring ideological points about capitalism or communism, the governments of other countries and Cuba find a common ground and language about foreign investment, anti-narcotics interdiction, health and education programs, tourism and other potential areas of cooperation. All of this settled in a background of homogenization that clashed daily with those interested on erecting an anti-capitalist alternative.

## **Chapter Six: Cuba's foreign policy strategic adaptation to the Post-Cold War world: Changes in identity and interests**

### **6.1 Introduction**

Cuba's foreign policy strategic adaptation<sup>183</sup> to the post-Cold War world included several processes associated to the structural changes<sup>184</sup> in the international system but also the agency shown by the Cuban government in filtering, organizing, and prioritizing the perceived signals<sup>185</sup> and responding to the new realities. From a constructivist perspective, the central question is to what extent changes in the international system and

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<sup>183</sup>By foreign policy strategic adaptation I understand two main processes: 1) the constructivist one that implied the rebalance of old identities and the emergence of new ones as result of a change in the culture of the international system. 2) The rationalist one that implied a new calculation of benefits, costs and risks of actions according to the new realities.

<sup>184</sup>In a constructivist approach, the analysis looks at the structures of international relations as primarily cultural.

<sup>185</sup>Two central features of Fidel Castro's perception about the collapse of state socialism in Europe were its temporal and geographically located characters. Fidel Castro and Cuban foreign policy makers such as Raul Castro, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez and Carlos Aldana specified in their speeches the survival of China and Vietnam as authentic communist revolutions that remained vigorous. Fidel Castro also emphasized the "inevitable" of a new socialist revival as a necessity to save the world from capitalist excesses and contradictions. The respond to this diagnostics was one of survival and weathering the temporal storm while preserving Cuba's socialist achievements and not less important, its communist revolutionary identity. Foreign policy would be a costly but decisive dimension of this response.



Cuba's foreign relations shape the island nation's new roles, interests and identities. From a rationalist point of view, the puzzle is to identify strategies of adaptation that measure the agency of the new Cuban state, post economic reform and political liberalization for responding to a new balance in the costs, benefits, and risks of its actions.

The discussion of these two dimensions of Cuba's foreign policy adaptations intermingles in the following **four topics**:

- The legacy of the Cold War as processed by Cuban foreign policy elite in the redesign of its new roles, interests and functions within the international system.

- The transition of Cuban policy towards U.S. allies from the revolutionary formula of peaceful coexistence to the concept of respect for ideological pluralism among states, more in line with the needs of economic reform and integration to the world economy.

- The reaffirmation of revolutionary identities and connections to leftist movements.

- The strategies of adaptation to the new balance of power and normative structures of the international system (global and hemispheric).

It is a well known fact that the foreign policy of Cuba, a small country in size, population, economy and military power, allied to the loser side of the Cold War was heavily hit by the end of the Cold War. No area of Cuba's foreign policy exists in disassociation with the challenge of management of the asymmetric relations Havana has with Washington. In its most direct consequence for Cuba, the collapse of the Soviet Union led to a structurally higher exposure and vulnerability in its conflict of sovereignty with the most powerful nation in the world, the United States. In another less tangible but not less important change, the culture of global society changed from bipolar conflict to globalization with generally new criteria of international legitimacy, including the prevalence of paradigms<sup>186</sup> of liberal democracy and market economics that have existed in synchrony with a U.S. led liberal world order.

These two different factors (1) the living legacy of conflict between Cuba and the United States increased by the Cold War, and 2) the ordinal legitimacy principles of the new post-Cold War order; market economics and representative democracy) are particularly relevant for Cuba because the survival of the current government was explained by many, including Cuban protagonists as Fidel and Raul Castro, as an outcome of the Cold War system of ideological alliances. In terms of Cuban foreign

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<sup>186</sup>Here I am discussing the issue of conflict of paradigms. It is clear that United States foreign policy deviates from these paradigms in frequent cases of hegemonic paradoxes in which the hegemon undermines its own normative power by acting in an ad hoc erratic manner without accepting the rules of the order of its own creation.

policy, the new perception of vulnerability and the emerging legitimacy paradigms of global society were filtered by the perceptions of Cuban leaders and their constituencies, in front of who Cuban political elites attempt to legitimate their policy.

During the Cold War, the CCP regime defined itself as socialist and part of the third world, two concepts that were defined in relation to the Communist bloc created around the leadership of the Soviet Union and its dispute for global hegemony with the U.S. led Western camp. The identity as a non-aligned country (third world) is a reference to the importance of development in Cuba's foreign policy towards the North-South agenda. Geographically, Cuba defined itself as a Latin American and Caribbean country, in opposition to the Inter-American system that emphasizes a pan-American identity that includes the United States and Canada. The command economy and the one-party-system were inextricably part of the agenda of asymmetric resistance versus the United States imperial policy of embargo/blockade.

The central organizing principle of Cuba's foreign policy is the promotion of the national interest, if for no other reason, because most policymakers formulate their options and programs appealing to this concept. This concept, as JuttaWeldes explained, is a social construction:

Before state officials can act for the state, they need to engage in a process of interpretation in order to understand both what situation the state faces and how they should respond to it. This process of interpretation, in turn, presupposes a language shared, at least, by those state officials involved in determining state action and by the audience for whom state action must be legitimated. This shared language is that of 'national interest'. The content of 'national interest' is ...

produced in, or emerged out of, a process of representation, through which state officials (among others) make sense of their international context. The national interest, that is, is constructed, is created as a meaningful object, out of shared meanings through which the world, particularly the international system and the place of the state in it, is understood (Weldes 1996).

Due to the preponderance of the asymmetric conflict with the United States, Cuba's foreign policy organized around the centrality of this existential threat to the CCP regime. The asymmetry of U.S.-Cuba relations affects Cuba's position in the world-system for two reasons:

1) The links with the U.S state-society complex<sup>187</sup> is far more important for the majority of Cuban actors than for their interlocutors in the United States. This asymmetry gap is sharper in the key areas of security and economic exchanges but it extends to other dimensions such as persuasion capabilities (soft power).

2) Given the centrality of the U.S. in the post-Cold War international system as the sole superpower, the relations with the United States are preeminent for the majority of the international actors and have a higher place in their foreign policy priorities than its relations with Cuba.

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<sup>187</sup>In a seminal article, Robert Cox proposed to consider the state/society complex "as the basic entity of international relations" (Cox 1986). "Traditional international relations theory- Cox wrote- maintains the distinctiveness of the two spheres, with foreign policy appearing as the pure expression of state interests. Today however, state and civil society are so interpenetrated that the concepts have become almost purely analytical (referring to difficult to define aspects of a complex reality) and are only vaguely and imprecisely indicative of distinct spheres of activity" (Cox 1986, 205).

The importance of the United States in the international system (Cuba-MINREX 2014) and American maximalist habits (Sestanovich Spring 2005), generate significant spillover effects from the U.S. conflict with Cuba on Havana's relations with third countries. Generally speaking the primary focus of action of Cuba's relations with third countries is bilateral. But at critical junctures in which the burden of a conflict with the United States foreign policy and judicial system (legal extraterritoriality of the embargo) not only shape but determine the policy of a third country<sup>188</sup> towards Cuba.

The calibration of Cuban diplomacy takes place in a post-Cold War world in which the principles of market economy and representative democracy become paradigmatically dominant<sup>189</sup>. These paradigms are promoted by a concert of great

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<sup>188</sup>There is a dismissive attitude towards the role of Cuba's asymmetric conflict with the United States in strategic triangles and multilateral diplomacy by assuming that the effects of American pressures were only effective in the case of small states but that is simply not true. The combination of American attitudes towards Cuba and power have proven to be an important dissuasive against a coherent foreign policy action by great powers such as France and Germany. Multibillion dollars fines have been imposed to banks such as the German Commerzbank and French BNP Paribas for violating not an international law, a European law or a French or German law, but only an American law, the Helms-Burton law, officially condemned by the diplomacy of the two countries. In front of such violation of their sovereignties, the French and German state opted for not entering into a clash with the United States because of Cuba. The banks entered into a bargain process and negotiated the payment of fines that they declared abusive and illegal.

<sup>189</sup>The political systems of several countries were only liberal in name and their deterioration led to the emergence of populist and other alternatives by the end of the nineties. By 2001 in the summit of the Americas in Quebec City, President Hugo Chavez

powers and were adopted by all the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean with the exception of Cuba in the 1990's. In this line the changes in the balance of power operates not as a mere material distribution of capabilities but as transformation in the institutions and cultural structure of relations<sup>190</sup>. Five fundamental dimensions arise as result of these interactions between the Cuban state-society complex and other national contexts:

1) The addition of new roles, identities and interests to the Cuban state, as result of the interaction between Cuba's processes of economic reform and political liberalization and the hemispheric economic and political regimes,

2) The participation of new actors in the social construction of Cuba's national interest given the risen social, cultural and economic pluralism of Cuban society and state. Marketization and political liberalization creates a less vertical relation between the

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introduced reservations to the consensus about support for representative democracy, arguing that such system requires to be complemented by participatory and social-economic dimensions. By the mid-2000's, leaders of the left in the hemisphere took a "flexible" approach to the democratic governance norm and some like presidents Chavez of Venezuela, Ortega of Nicaragua, Correa of Ecuador, and Morales of Bolivia even talked about the Cuban "one party democracy" and elections as a legitimate variant of political legitimacy given the island-nation circumstances.

<sup>190</sup>Stefano Guzzini has demonstrated the impossibility of reducing the analysis of power in international relations either to the agent or the structure levels. Guzzini proposed a dyadic structure in which power is associated to the agent level dimension as governance is to structure. The issue is condensed on figure 3 of Guzzini's article "Structural Power: The limits of Neorealist power analysis" (Guzzini 1993).

Cuban state and its civil society but don't affect all local actors equally. Some civil society actors gained fast new prerogatives for freer contact with outside partners.

3) Cuba's openness to tourism, foreign investment and diversification of international contacts create higher exposure to persuasive actions by other countries associated to Cuba's adoption of new roles, identities and interests.

4) The role of power asymmetries between countries beyond the security realm internationally and domestically<sup>191</sup>, and

5) The Cuban state's agency adopting strategies to maximize its power position internationally and domestically.

But all these new dimensions operate in a context in which the central feature is the social construction of Cuba's national interest as a projection of the revolutionary goals of the CCP to the international arena. Piero Gleijeses (Gleijeses 2002) demonstrated how Fidel Castro meant what he said when he spoke as a revolutionary in international affairs. Although he was a fierce nationalist defending Cuban sovereignty, Castro's

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<sup>191</sup>The United States is not only the most powerful country in terms of security but also as an economic, educational and social magnet. In Cuba, even after economic reform took momentum, state capitalism remains more powerful given its many regulatory and other prerogatives than small and medium private enterprises. Within the Cuban state economy, state owned companies associated with the military are definitively in an advantageous position domestically although not necessarily internationally because of the embargo.

attitude towards the international system included a radical solidarity across state borders with little respect for the sacrosanct principle of sovereignty<sup>192</sup>.

Cuba actively engaged in subverting norms and practices of the society of states, based on power asymmetries that were unfavorable for developing countries. Havana promoted a defensive multilateralism and attempted to redefine the institutional language of international relations. Aspiring to be the voice of the global south, instead of “free trade”, “aid”, “collective security based on great powers consensus”, “freedom of press”, it promoted “fair trade”, “a new international economic order”, the end of the privilege of the veto in the Security Council, and a “new informational order”. In terms of “international peace” and “collective security”, rather than nuclear non proliferation, Cuba preferred to talk about global disarmament. The central idea was that the destiny of Cuba was inextricably linked to the rise of Latin America and the global south as independent blocs, to challenge the after Second World War distribution of power.

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<sup>192</sup>Fidel’s speeches at the first and second declaration of Havana (Castro 1975) in the 1960’s are archetypical of what Martin Wight defined as “revolutionism” (Wight 1999). This posture is not only about bargaining power among states. In Wight’s typology, the “revolutionist” tendency seeks to displace the state as the central actor in international relations. This perspective about sovereignty, state security and non-intervention conflicts with any international order, in which the goal of prevention of war prevails over notions of justice.



Gleijeses' study of Cuba's missions in Africa does not fit the realist assumption of an egoist state always maximizing power in material terms. Cuba endured impressive economic and political sacrifices and risks to promote a world safe for revolution as the title of Jorge Domínguez's book suggests. Under Fidel Castro's leadership Cuba have engaged in economic, social and even military actions overseas that are not understandable outside an ideological commitment to support revolutionary causes and allies in the world.

For decades, Cuba, with or without the support of the Soviet Union intervened in support of national liberation movements in Congo, Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, and Angola, or leftist groups in Nicaragua, Chile, El Salvador not just as a defensive strategy versus the United States but as a expression of revolutionary convictions. This revolutionary convictions showed disregard for international conventions when the possibility of radical revolution was at stake.

After 2009, the goal of creating a friendly world to Cuba's economic reform and political liberalization demanded a change of priority from the almost fifty-year role of promoting world revolution and proselytizing communism using the classical charismatic model of Fidel in command. To reach zones of legitimacy by economic performance demanded some "aggiornamento" (accommodation) with the international order where capitalism is hegemonic.

Changes in the culture of the international and hemispheric order helped the transition of Cuba's foreign policy from a primordially anti-systemic actor to a more balanced approach, part revolutionary but dominantly a stakeholder of the society of states. This melting was influenced not only by the end of Soviet aid, and the increase of American power but also by the change of policies developed from the seventies by Latin American and Caribbean countries. Openness by Latin American elites to include Cuba in the regional order and the rise of the left in the region made a policy of open promotion of revolutionary change non rational from Cuba's nationalist perspective.

The post-Cold War hemispheric context pushed an agenda of peace and national reconciliation in several countries of the continent where Cuban allies in government (Nicaragua) or the insurgency (Guatemala, El Salvador and Colombia) were protagonists. These process as well as the negotiation of peace in the Southern Cone of Africa in 1988 offered to Cuba a change of roles. From been a promoter of revolution, Havana transformed itself in a supporter of peace processes in Africa, Colombia and Central America. Together with Norway, Cuba is today a mediator of conflicts in Colombia, promoting negotiated arrangements in the region as a way to guarantee a zone of peace. While in the first declaration of Havana in 1960 (Castro, First Declaration of Havana 1960), Cuba denounced the OAS Declaration of San Jose, and announced a continental class struggle, the 2013 Cuba in reform hosted the second summit of CELAC to declare the whole region a Zone of Peace. The summit replaced the language of class struggle

and “anti-imperialist solidarity” by non-intervention, a principle that rounds coherence around Cuba’s thirst for foreign investment and the rejection of the U.S. embargo.

Yet it is still impressive the relative amount of resources spent by Cuba in solidarity with other countries despite the difficulties Cuba endured after the collapse of the Soviet Union. That is why it is a mistake to look at Cuba’s foreign policy in a trajectory in which a reformist phase in the revolutionary cycle implies a progressive abandonment of the revolutionary internationalist drive and its replacement by more nationalist realist rationality. As Halliday demonstrated in the case of the foreign policies of other revolutionary actors, the strategic adaptation of Cuba’s foreign policy is a calibration of the balance between the internationalist revolutionary impulse and the more nationalist instrumentalist one.

As John Kirk suggested- Cuba’s generosity in offering some of its human capital resources to internationalist causes has been revised under the Raul Castro’s Administration to make it more efficient and compatible with international order, and less indiscriminate. But there is no dismantlement of the principles, culture and institutional framework committed to the internationalist impulse. It might be the case that in the future, with a stronger economy or other domestic balance of force, some re- launch of the internationalist drive might occur. It must be pointed out that evaluations about Cuba’s past internationalist experience of supporting revolutionary actors do not express

remorse or regret but pride on the policies implemented and its results. As long as the CCP is in power, and frames its identity as the heir of the revolution, the tension between internationalism and nationalism would persist.

In the following discussion about Cuba's foreign policy in the post-Cold War world, I will highlight Cuba's pluralization of its identities and roles in the international system as the central transformation of its foreign policy for the last twenty years. I will look at: 1) How Cuba as an *agent* has advanced its political position within the *governance structure* of the international system. As Cuban scholar Carlos Alzugaray wrote, after 1991 Cuba made its foreign ties more diversified, pluralistic and less vulnerable to unilateral U.S. pressures. 2) How the diversification of Cuba's links had brought dynamics of identity transformation to the Cuban state-society complex associated to the balancing and integration of new and old foreign policy state and society roles. 3) How processes of interdependence, creation of communities of common fate, homogenization of social and economic practices and self-restraint policies between Cuba and its partners have undermined the American narrative that paint Cuba as a remnant of the Cold War, and an outcast and threat to the regional order in the Western hemisphere.

The ideas presented here are complemented by the discussion of specific Cuba's triangular relations with other powers and the United States in a following chapter. Here and there the task is to identify how the processes of adaptation took place and how changes in the structure of bilateral or triangular relations codetermined changes in the identity of the actors, primarily but not exclusively the Cuban state.

#### **6.1.1 The legacy of the Cold War as processed by Cuban foreign policy elite in the redesign of the national interest and roles: nationalism and internationalism.**

The Cold War was quintessentially an ideological competition between communism on one side and capitalism, in the other. Highlighting this element reduces the complexity of that history but helps noticing the legacy of ideational factors inherited by states' identities in the post –Cold War international system. The most important consequence of the end of the Cold War for Cuba was the defeat of one of the two main pillars of its state ideology: communism.

Cuba's strategic adaptation has been so difficult not because of Havana's foot-dragging to accept the security consequences of the end of its alliance with the Soviet Union but due to Cuban leadership's reluctance to accept the defeat of a central tenet of its radical identity: communism. At the darkest hour in 1993-94 when Cuban economy almost collapsed, Fidel Castro reiterated CCP's opposition to market economics and

representative democracy. Different from the experiences in Vietnam and China, a market aversion mindset bounded the rationality of the CCP responses to the crisis and after. Cuba adopted a few important market-oriented changes such as opening the country to foreign investment but this was a crisis-driven decision. Fidel Castro explained them as a temporary concession to survive. Only after Raul Castro became president, the CCP began to express a commitment to a new model, and even in this case, all changes were presented as an updating of the old.

The ideological defeat of communism in 1989-1991 was less tangible than the material effects of the fall of the Soviet empire but more consequential<sup>193</sup>. Cuban diplomats and foreign policy strategists had to change their foreign policy discourse at risk of appearing anachronistic with reference to the unity of the socialist bloc or the progress of socialism. In the 1990's Cuban officials negotiated partnerships in which Cuba communist identity will count but not as a project for the future but a remnant of the past. For the first time, since 1959, Cuba presented itself as a country in transition, less communist, not more. The lowering of the importance of Cuba's communist identity highlighted other identities such as the nationalist one, or regional ones: Caribbean, Ibero-American, and Latin-American.

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<sup>193</sup>A bias problem not only in international relations politics but in modern social sciences in general is the preference for highlighting easier- to-quantify factors based on the fake premise that everything is quantifiable and quantifying things make them more understandable and intelligible.

At Caribbean and Ibero-American summits during the nineties, Fidel Castro defended the right of Cuba to have its “own democracy”. In his speeches and answers to recommendations of market driven reforms and multiparty elections, Castro reaffirmed his commitment to communist anti-market values but stop offering them as recipes for other countries.

As Alexander Wendt (Wendt 1999) explained the fact that a structure is cultural, not material, doesn't mean that it is easier to change it. According to Fidel Castro's views, shared by many on the Cuban leadership, the Soviet Union collapsed not because of the flaws of communism but due to the abandonment of it by their leaders. Not only had the transitions in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, but also the market-oriented economic changes in China and Vietnam placed communism at peril. Episodes of the kind that happened in Tiananmen Square in June 1989 confirmed Castro that Cuba could not afford the drastic institutional, economic and ideological transformations taken place in the PRC<sup>194</sup>. In Castro's perception an incident of this kind could unleash a U.S. military intervention under the pretext of a humanitarian crisis.

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<sup>194</sup>It is worth noticing the difference between Deng Xiaoping's discussion and Fidel Castro's view about the Tiananmen episode. For Deng, the riots demonstrated the need for a more comprehensive authoritarian pro-market modernization agenda. Castro viewed the incident as a demonstration of the unbearable risks for a country like Communist Cuba of the adoption of market structures.

Recognizing the importance of the mentioned ideational factor does not underestimate the material impact of the end of the alliance with the Soviet Union. It helps to frame material deficits in the context of ideas. This is not the space for an in-depth counterfactual analysis but *ceteris paribus* there were several pro-market policy options, the Cuban government rejected in the days after the collapse of its commerce with the Soviet Union for ideological reasons. These options could have smoothed Cuba's adaptation to a post-communist world and reduce the distance between Cuba and its capitalist neighbors but Fidel Castro rejected them. He insisted on a communist path, suspicious and skeptical about market and particularly political pluralism.

Fidel Castro's responsibility for Cuba's delay in adopting elementary market oriented measures is beyond any doubt in his speeches at critical junctures such as the IV and V Congress of the CCP. But in terms of guaranteeing political stability, his personal charisma was decisive in the face of a sudden destruction of Cuba's international alliances and the collapse of one of its most fundamental ideological tenets, communism. Under Fidel Castro's leadership, the CCP survived without engaging on massive repression of the kind that could create a fracture within the elite, a popular uprising, or even an American intervention. Cuba's projection abroad was an essential part of the "ritual of power" that provided stabilizers of international legitimacy to the regime. In the middle of a major crisis, Cuba hold to some of its solidarity practices and contacts from



the Cold War guaranteeing some level of continuity between its international insertion before and after 1989.

Cuba is not a passive receiver of international norms and institutions but an active participant in its challenge and/or reproduction. The ideology, institutions and norms from which Cuba responds to the challenges and opportunities of the international system impose institutional rigidities in the making of its foreign policy. The specific interactions of the Cuban state-society complex with other international actors affect the reproduction and change of Cuba's multiple identities and interests. These specific interactions are framed by Cuban state officials in a language and concepts that were developed within a mixture of nationalism and Fidel Castro and Che Guevara's radical Marxist-Leninist third World reading of the international system<sup>195</sup>.

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<sup>195</sup>Equally important is the fact that U.S. official perception about Cuba before December 17 2014 was also frozen in the Cold War. Cuba is presented as an outcast in the hemispheric system while it is not so since the late 1980's. Havana is presented as a threat to American security, in spite of Cuba's adherence to non-nuclear proliferation treaties, and the end of its alliance with the Soviet Union. It is presented as a dangerous precedent promoting nationalization of American and foreign companies to establish a command economy despite Cuba's reform and trends towards a market oriented economy. The problem might be even worse. Lars Schoultz even wrote that U.S. image of Cuba is still inspired by old school self-serving paternalism from Washington towards Latin America (Schoultz 2012) that partially led to the Cuban revolution as a nationalist rebellion.

Fidel Castro's anti-U.S. hegemony vision serves as a central orientation from which Cuban state officials define Cuba's national interest in decisive issues such as international security, human rights, alliances, trade and cooperation. Cuban diplomats frame their narratives with appeals to Fidel's reading of Cuban history and international projection. Cuban embassies, official websites, foreign policy textbooks at the diplomatic academy are full of references to his postures at decisive moments of international politics such as the Bay of Pigs invasion aftermath, the Missile Crisis or his defiant attitude after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The language of Cuban foreign policy is, ten years after his retirement, Fidel Castro's language.

Castro's conception is based on an unyielding defense of Cuba's sovereignty and prioritizes coordination of initiatives with other Latin American countries, specifically those that have adopted a radical leftist agenda. Fidel Castro's nationalist vision drove him to manage relations with Washington with a long-term strategic perspective in which the supreme goal was that Cuba be treated as "sovereign" and "equal". To reach this goal, Castro designed not only his alliance with the Soviets, the PRC and other U.S. rivals in the world but also the domestic design of the Cuban post-revolutionary state. In Castro's view, United States are identified as Cuba's main adversary for one clear reason: Washington's commitment to remove Cuban revolutionaries from government by violent or peaceful means.

Fidel's vision was generally pragmatic in its implementation but intransigent in its principles. Cuba measures carefully the effect of its actions on U.S. vision about Cuba's own domestic economic or political opening. Yet, under no circumstances, Cuban diplomats accept officially to discuss their internal affairs in a negotiation with the United States<sup>196</sup> or any other external actor. In foreign policy grand strategy Cuba engaged in a rebalancing of its revolutionary and nationalist identities in favor of the second one, but without an abandonment of the first.

One important feature of Fidel Castro's approach to foreign policy was reciprocity. United States allies and even rivals like the Soviet Union met an intransigent response whenever they tried to pre-condition the dialogue to unilateral concessions by Cuba. In contrast, these same countries have found a Cuban receptive attitude when their diplomats framed ideas based on mutual and reciprocal acknowledgments of each other interests and values. Countries such as Canada and Brazil have established with Cuba an institutionalized annual dialogue on human rights, accepting that Cuba can bring to the table criticism of their record on equal footing.

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<sup>196</sup>This is clearly described in some of the cables dispatched from the U.S. Interests Section in Havana. American diplomats describe Cuban attitude towards any attempt to discuss issues of Cuba's internal affairs. One example is the chief of the section description of Cuban diplomat Rafael Dausa (Parmly 2006).

One element of clear Cuban criticism to the collapsed communist regimes in Europe was their abandonment of so-called “socialist principles of foreign policy”. This category included ideas such as “solidarity with the peoples of the third world”, and “proletarian internationalism”. Fidel Castro was particularly critical of Gorbachev’s idea of “deideologization” of international relations. In Castro’s vision, socialist internationalism, participation and sacrifice for peoples in other countries was a way to cultivate communist virtues as it was the case with Cuban presence in Angola.

The choice of rejecting and resisting not only the liberal democratic but also the pro-market economy impulse (this second criteria was endorsed by Communist party regimes in East Asia) became a dominant strategy<sup>197</sup> also from a foreign policy perspective. Rather than accepting the end of the Cold War as a triumph of markets and democracy, the Cuban perspective vindicated its progressive role in regional scenarios of

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<sup>197</sup>I am using here a term from game theory that explains a strategy an actor will follow as optimal regardless of what its opponents do. In this case, the defense of the one party system was clearly in the interest of the Cuban elites since the conditions were particularly adverse for them if competitive elections were called. The decision not to adopt a market economy- as China and Vietnam did- is less clear. The Cuban government adopted a strategy of partial market reforms. Later under Raul Castro the impact of the market in the reform would significantly increase. The working hypothesis here is that the Castros understood the convenience from a pure economic rationality of adopting some market oriented reforms but decided to do it only partially because, different from the context in East Asia communist countries the potential providers of foreign capital were committed to a change in the political regime and subject to Washington’s active pressures to use their position in Cuba’s economy as leverage for forcing the Cuban political system to a transition to liberal democracy.

Latin America and the African Southern Cone, where Cuba took sides with segments of the democratic opposition<sup>198</sup>.

Rejecting the adoption of a market economy was as consequential as sticking to the one party system. It undoubtedly impacted Cuba's foreign projection because it placed the island on its own set. There was a presumption in many capitals that communist Cuba was destined to collapse because Havana was simply following the road of its Soviet patron, without its previous economic aid. But the rejection of market fundamentalism provided Cuba with bona fide credentials against market fundamentalist neoliberal adjustments in Latin America, at a time when economic adjustments generated profound discontent across the region. Havana offered itself as a political space to articulate anti-neoliberal coalitions, a clear alternative to both neoliberal fundamentalist

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<sup>198</sup> From a Cuban perspective, it was easy to reject the end of the Cold War as the triumph of democracy and markets. The embargo against Cuba was a denial of both American democracy rights and the persuasive power of markets. Facing communism in Cuba, different from its policy towards Eastern Europe, the United States used an embargo (An anti-market barrier to trade and travel) and supported groups in Miami where respect for different opinions about Cuba was conspicuously absent. In Latin America, the Cold War meant until the Carter Administration little priority for the promotion of democratic principles. The Cold War competition was presented in Manichean terms between democracy and communism but as long as repressive regimes took sides with the United States against communism, Washington tolerated and promoted them. In the Southern Cone of Africa, Cubans saw themselves as fighting together with the democratic forces against the apartheid regime. Although the United States ended playing a positive mediator role, there were fresh memories of President Reagan and Senator Jesse Helms' opposition to sanctions against the apartheid regime.

pro-market ideology and the defense of liberal democracy as the only modernizing alternative.

At the IV Congress of the CCP in 1992 the party highlighted the importance of its nationalist roots, proclaiming itself as the political organization of the whole nation, not only the working class. This political transformation had an ideological corollary on the elevation of Jose Marti's thought as the first source of CCP political ideology. This rebalancing of the revolution ideological matrix had an impact in the foreign policy apparatus creating effects of restraint. The leadership declared that internationalism begins at dealing with Cuba's own problems. Solidarity actions beyond Cuban borders became essentially peaceful and in the case of anti-pandemics and natural disaster relief intervention compatible with the U.S. led liberal world order.

As a small state in conflict with a superpower, and the carrier of a radical ideology, Cuba had to balance its emphasis on improving inter-state relations to defeat American hostility with its commitment to its ideological brethren around the world. Relations with Latin American governments, most of them right of the center, acquired a priority over leftist parties that were encouraged to be defenders of good relations between their own countries and Cuba rather than agents of an ideological solidarity that could cause tensions to those ties.

No matter how Fidel Castro reaffirmed his commitment to communist doctrine, the dramatic fall of the Cuban economy and the end of the Soviet Union brought upon Cuba a decline of the revolutionary fervor that animated most of the overseas military action after 1959. Cuban foreign revolutionary projection did not disappear but had to adjust to an adverse context in which communism was not even a competitor at the global stage. Proletarian internationalism remained principles at the core of Cuba's identity but they were adapted to the new security and economic situation. Even China as a market economy was integrating to the liberal capitalist order that Fidel Castro despised.

Havana remained a major articulator of third world coalitions but not as the revolutionary opponent of governments but in virtue of its state-state diplomacy's long commitment to international development, "fair trade", and democratization of the multilateral institutions of the U.N and the Bretton Woods system. In 2000 Cuba hosted the first Global South summit as part of its leadership of the 77 Group that began to be called the 77+China group. The prevalent term was pragmatism, not generally a revolutionary one.

Cuba did attempt to remain a prominent voice for the global south by remaining at the left of any South-South cooperation. Havana continued challenging the institution of Great Powers management (Bull 1977) in international governance. Cuba insisted in every international forum on the need to end the veto in the Security Council and open

international institutions to the majorities in the South. What was new was how Castro's government adjusted to the end of the Soviet protection. Havana denounced the double standards in nuclear proliferation but realistically avoided cornering itself in a conflict with the security agenda of great powers. Cuba remained a zealous denunciator against the practices and *opiniojuris* that take unequal sovereignty (Simpson 2004) as granted. Simultaneously, Cuba did sign several treaties and conventions of non-nuclear proliferation that were written accepting the great powers management premise.

The most drastic normative challenge brought upon Cuba by the end of the Cold War was a general demand in the governance structure of the international system for the adoption of liberal democratic standards. The structural challenge was compounded by the coincidence of the collapse of communism in Europe with democratization in Latin America. Samuel Huntington has called these series of political transformation a "third wave of democratization" (Huntington 1991). The clash between Cuba rowing against the stream as one-party state and a new world liberal order seemed insurmountable if the United States had rationally adapted its policy to a post-Cold War rationality.

But it didn't happen. The United States remained committed to an imperial policy while the world and Latin America remained loyal to a narrative in which the American embargo appeared as the main obstacle for Cuba's development. With such irrational adversaries (from an international relations perspective), the Castros didn't need friends.



Given the weakness of Cuba's opposition, the historical trajectory of the discussion about Cuba's democratization in human rights international organizations as a clash between Cuba and the unilateral imposition of the United States, this ideational challenge was easily managed.

The Cold War left also a legacy for the institutional configuration of the Cuban foreign policy apparatus. Given Cuba's activism in several hot confrontations, Fidel Castro heavily relied on his brother Raul Castro and the Armed Forces for coping with several foreign policy problems. Military organizations were key factors in the relationships with Moscow, Angola, South Africa, Nicaragua and several countries where Cuba had military advisors.

Castro's trust in the Armed Forces and the Ministry of Interior created an institutional overrepresentation of these military organizations in Cuba's foreign policy decision making and implementation<sup>199</sup>. This military and security overrepresentation is reflected on the persistency of foreign policy parcels that still are under the main supervision of the Armed Forces and the ministry of interior, not under the supervision of the ministry of foreign relations. These power parcels obviously represent a challenge to

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<sup>199</sup>Hal Klepak has discussed the role of the Cuban Armed Forces not only in Cuba's traditional international security projection but also in foreign economic policy and even the building of favorable opinion among key U.S. security sectors given Cuba's cooperation in the anti-narcotics international efforts in the Caribbean (Klepak 2014).

the construction of a legal-rational institutional structure as it is the goal of the political liberalization process.

## **6.2 Two different discourses about Cuba's relations with U.S. allies during the Cold War: From Peaceful coexistence to ideological pluralism.**

From very early on after the declaration of the U.S. embargo, Cuba cultivated relations and trade with allies of the United States such as Canada, Mexico and countries of Western Europe, to diversify its foreign affairs, and create workable relations that contrast with the level of hostility in the Havana-Washington Axis.

The mutual insulation of those relations from U.S. pressures for Cuba's isolation was presented as a sign of independence from the United States and a preference for policies that promote change by rapprochement not by coercion. By the beginning of the 1990's relations with Cuba were increasingly presented as an economic opportunity for European businesses to fill the vacuum created by the end of Cuba's integration to the Soviet bloc and the absence of American companies from the Cuban market due to the embargo.

The nature of the engagement was itself a contested ground of ideas trying to define what the relationship between Communist Cuba and these countries should be. The Cuban narrative emphasized the principle of **peaceful coexistence** by which communist countries seek peaceful and cordial relationships with capitalist countries in the international arena. The idea behind the concept was to avoid unnecessary conflict with ideologically different governments while favoring contacts with ideological partners within their societies.

From the European, Canadian and Mexican side the narrative defended the principle of **ideological pluralism in international relations**<sup>200</sup>. The idea emphasized

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<sup>200</sup>The principle of respect for ideological pluralism in international relations implies that countries of different ideological orientation can work together in the promotion of common interests respecting the principle of equal sovereignty and peaceful solution of conflicts. In its most sophisticated version include a synergy between international peace and democracy. The idea is that the acceptance of pluralism as a foreign policy value creates opportunities for economic, cultural and educational exchanges. These activities supposed to incentivize an emulation of ideological pluralism at the domestic arena. Democratization at the domestic level creates different liberal checks and balances that reduce the possibility of war between nations following the classical democratic peace proposition. The principle of ideological pluralism was invoked frequently in the seventies in OAS resolutions and Foreign policy communiqués of Canada, France, Mexico, and others to explain their policies towards the People's Republic of China, Cuba and other countries. In the United States, this position permeated President John F. Kennedy's discourse at American University before his assassination and later was invoked in the Nixon-Kissinger approach to China. The causal chain about ideological pluralism-democratization-peace was argued by Western powers involved in the Helsinki process of the Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe. For a discussion about the persuasive logic of ideological pluralism in international affairs see "Ideological Pluralism in the Caribbean: Challenges and Prospects (Grant 1984) and Daniel Thomas' the Helsinki Effect by (Thomas 2001)

the convenience of highlighting common interests, engagement and dialogue to solve differences. Engaging with Cuba supposed also to have a mitigating effect on Cuba's support for radical political movement within their countries and in the international and regional theaters.

The two narratives were expressed in parallel to explain a convergence of interests and even reconciliation in the case of Latin American countries which broke up relations with Cuba in the 1960's but restored them in the 1970's and 80's. The narratives were simultaneously competitive and complementary since they help each other to face hostile narratives within their respective foreign policy establishment but try to explain the same process with different perspectives and concepts. In Canada, Mexico or Spain there were groups that proposed the image of Cuba as a Red menace and a source of regional instability. Simultaneously what for Cuba was a way to advance communism at the world stage without unnecessary conflicts was for its partners/rivals a way to use rapprochement as a rational policy to defeat it.

The content of the peaceful coexistence concept was contested in the form of answers to two formulations of the search for national security: 1) how "to make a world safe for revolution"<sup>201</sup>(internationalist version) and 2) how to make a world safe for *the*

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<sup>201</sup>This is an obvious reference to the title of Jorge Domínguez's book "To make A World Safe for Revolution" (Domínguez 1989). Domínguez explains Cuban foreign policy as a successful one for a middle power.

*Cuban* revolution (nationalist version). Sometimes, at the head of the radicals was no other than Fidel Castro himself<sup>202</sup> who saw himself- at times rightly- as having a major role at the world scene.

By the end of the 1990's, the ideological pluralism narrative became dominant when Cuba co-opted the same discourse of its rivals/partners. The ideological pluralism discourse became a platform for Cuba's buffering strategy isolating the U.S policy embargo from American allies. At multiple international forums, Cuba defended its right to decide its own internal political order by invoking democracy in international relations and respect for ideological pluralism with the same terms used by Canada, Western Europe and Latin America until then.

What follows in this section is a discussion of the trajectory of the replacement of peaceful coexistence for respect for ideological pluralism and how this strategic adaptation of Cuba's relations with U.S. allies contributed to Castro's Cuba survival in a post-Cold War world. The transition from one concept to the other expresses also the rebalancing of roles in Cuba's foreign policy in ways that favor the nationalist over the internationalist revolutionary one. I will exemplify the cases of Cuba's relations with

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<sup>202</sup>Piero Gleijeses had described how Henry Kissinger who at the time couldn't grasp Fidel Castro's revolutionary spirit behind Cuba's foreign policy in the seventies would recognize later that Castro was the most revolutionary among the communist leaders. (Glejeses 2002)

Canada, Europe and Mexico to demonstrate the features of continuity and rupture that helped a Cuba in partial reform to survive within a U.S. led world order.

In the sixties, Cuba's diplomacy pragmatically engaged in an active relation with De Gaulle's France and Franco's Spain despite CCP and Castro's ideological differences with those governments. The preferential relations with these Western Europe got even better during the governments of Will Brandt, Francois Mitterrand and Felipe Gonzalez<sup>203</sup>.

A similar situation characterized revolutionary Cuba's ties with Canada. As it is described by John M. Kirk and Peter McKenna (Kirk, John M and McKenna, Peter 2007), Canadian relationships with Cuba were configured during the government of Conservative Prime Minister John George Diefenbaker (1957-1963). Diefenbaker made clear that Canadian policy towards the "Cuban problem" would be decided in Ottawa, not Washington DC. The fact that a position in favor of active engagement with Cuba in opposition to Washington's embargo was defended by a fervent anticommunist conservative as Diefenbaker created a precedent for the dramatic improvement achieved under the successive liberal administration of Lester Pearson and Pierre Elliot Trudeau

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<sup>203</sup>This is not the space for an in-depth discussion of the relations between Cuba and the European countries. Some of the readings that inspire these interpretations are the works by Joaquin Roy (Roy 2002), Susanne Gratius(Gratius 2012), and Eduardo Perera Gomez (Perera Gomez 2012), and Francesc Bayo (Bayo 2006).

that came after him<sup>204</sup>. The Canadian consensus about an engagement policy towards Cuba was never abandoned during Brian Mulroney's conservative premiership.

After 1959, Mexico and Cuba built a "modus vivendi" based on a mutual acceptance narrative about relations between two revolutions, the Cuban and the Mexican<sup>205</sup>. Mexico was the only Latin American country that never broke up relationships with Cuba. Since the proclamation of the Estrada Doctrine<sup>206</sup> in 1924, Mexico insulated its diplomacy from U.S. pressures to pull its southern neighbor into

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<sup>204</sup>During Trudeau's premiership a personal friendship between him and Fidel Castro elevated the Cuba-Canadian bilateral relationship to the most revered one of Havana with the Western world. Fidel Castro gave Canada the highest possible priority in its foreign policy and development agenda. Cuban tourist industry targeted early the Canadian market even when Cuba avoided tourism from Western countries as a policy. Canadian development aid was also well received by Cuba in areas such as farming and fishing. Although Trudeau's government cut development aid as response to Cuba's intervention in Ethiopia in 1977, trade and tourism remained a constant component of the bilateral links.

<sup>205</sup>For a discussion about the triangle U.S.-Cuba -Mexico after 1959 see Renata Keller's book "Mexico's Cold War: Cuba, the United States and the legacy of the Mexican Revolution" (Keller 2015). For Cuba-Mexican relations after the end of the Cold War, see the articles by Ana Covarrubias (Covarrubias 1996, Vol. 26) , and my own article (Lopez-Levy, La visita de Felipe Calderon: Cuatro ejes de la relacion Mexico-Cuba 2012)

<sup>206</sup>Genaro Estrada, Secretary of Foreign Affairs proclaimed Mexico's guiding doctrine about changes in the political regime in other states. Mexico conceived relations with states, not governments. In the absence of a contrarian declaration, countries should assume that Mexico recognizes as legitimate any government in other state unless explicitly rejected otherwise, regardless of the way the government took power or the type of regime installed.

conflicts with other countries in the region or even in the world. Cuba did not support opposition groups in Mexico and Mexico did not adopt any international sanctions against Cuba or support for Cuba's opposition (Covarrubias 1996, Vol. 26).

By the mid-sixties the United States found ways to build a partnership with Mexican authorities that provide Washington with good reliable intelligence information about Cuba from Mexican sources, including the Mexican embassy in Havana. Until 1989, Cuba found on Mexican state-civil society complex an amicable partner for many of its foreign policy positions in Latin America. There were strong pockets of sympathy for Cuba's revolution in Mexico while industrial and educational sectors provide the island with partners to connect with the capitalist neighborhood.

Between 1959 and 1991, Cuba's special relations with Canada, Spain and Mexico were ties developed- according to the Cuban perspective- under the principle of peaceful coexistence between states with different socioeconomic systems. One after the other, Canadian, Mexican and most Western European governments have promoted a course of neutrality as a model for Western democracies role with respect to the U.S.-Cuba conflict. In terms of values and security, Canada and Western Europe were on the capitalist side of the Cold War, but these actors have taken clear distance from American imperial policy towards Cuba.



These workable relationships with Canada, Spain and Mexico served as a model for the type of relationship, buffered from the clashes of the Cold War, Cuba built during the 1970's and 1980's with other Latin American and Caribbean countries. Decolonization in the Caribbean was accompanied by opening of relations with Cuba. Havana's Latin America diplomatic relations were gradually restored mainly after the democratization in the Southern Cone with the end of right wing military dictatorships. Cuba maintained a privileged political relationship with the leftist parties but simultaneously build new links with state institutions and business sectors. These ties created constituencies of contacts and a zone for management of conflicts and coincidences that buffered Cuba's global connections from U.S. attempts to internationalize American sanctions against the CCP regime.

The Cuban government identified these bilateral relations as a potential balance for the loss of the Soviet partnership in 1991. One of the advantages for the weaker side in an asymmetrical conflict is the disparity of attention over the bilateral ties on its favor. By the early 1990's when the United States was concentrated on the strategic issues of German unification, Soviet Union's collapse and the Tiananmen crisis, Cuba's government was focused in building a net for survival. Havana's emphasis on nationalism as the last reservoir of ideological legitimacy was also more compatible than the previous internationalist communist identity with the ideological pluralism narrative of Mexico, Canada and Western Europe pursuing a policy of engagement towards Cuba.

The defense of sovereignty and self-determination enhanced the coincidence of Cuban foreign policy discourse with international norms.

By the early 1990's Cuba's identity as a revolutionary state faced the reality of much reduced capabilities for international activism and a dominant anti-interventionist vision that emphasized des-ideologization of international relations and respect for ideological pluralism. In Central America, an area of concentrated attention by the United States, Mexico, and the European social democracy and Christian democrats, the Esquipulas Plan brought about the withdrawal of Cuban military advisors from Nicaragua as a Sandinista goodwill gesture. By the time of the peace agreements in El Salvador and Guatemala, plus the Sandinista defeat in 1990, Cuba's military support for local actors was nonexistent.

Cuba's adoption of the language of respect for ideological pluralism was evident in its diplomatic treatment of the summits of the Ibero-American community, a forum celebrated annually under the leadership of Spain, including Portugal, Brazil and all the Latin American countries. Fidel Castro but particularly the new generation of Cuban ministers (Roberto Robaina and Felipe Perez) and diplomats dropped the language of "peaceful coexistence" that assume a trajectory to the solution of the ideological conflicts in favor of socialism, and adopted the more neutral term of respect for ideological pluralism in international relations.

This synchronization of terms favored Cuba's regional integration into the Association of Caribbean States. The language of respect for ideological pluralism serves well Cuba's relations with other countries and its demand for non interference in Cuba's domestic affairs by the United States. This narrative helped to drop Cuban support for insurrectional groups such as the FARC and the ELN in Colombia, and the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) in Peru. It was presented as a normative change in international society, not a concession to American unilateralism. Cuba remained critical of multiparty systems but Havana argued that political rule in those countries was constitutional. Cuba channeled its international activism towards a social dimension (health, education, sports and disaster relief assistance) and political contacts with leftist parties well inserted in their political systems.

### **6.3 Balancing revolutionary identity in Foreign Policy**

The processes of economic reform and political liberalization challenged the ways and content in which Cuba's different identities expressed in the international arena. Several theories about the revolutionary cycle and leadership take as given that Cuba is replacing its revolutionary identity for another identified with the current international order. I discuss the issue with a more nuanced approach:

1) Rather than a replacement of the revolutionary identity, there is a re-balancing of the revolutionary projection together with other important dimensions of economic, political and security character. This might cause the lowering of the revolutionary roles in foreign policy but this is a dynamic dimension, in which the radical projection is tuned, not irreversibly abandoned.

2) The new post-Cold War world offers opportunities of expressing the revolutionary identity in less risky ways for Cuba's national security, such as the international health diplomacy. It shouldn't be a surprise if Cuba prefers to use a less costly projection that still bring allies and reputation to its anti-status quo cause.

3) Cuba's institutional ties with parties and movements are not a burden but an asset for Cuba's diplomacy. Rather than abandoning its privileged relationship with radical and communist movements, the Cuban Communist Party had transformed these relations in function of its new priorities.

A radical third world version of Marxist-Leninist ideology was at the core of Cuba's foreign policy during the Cold War. In this view, class struggle at the world level connects nationalist resistance against imperial relations and support for political and economic self-determination against global capitalism. Cuba's grand strategy articulated around this ideological core. It emphasized a zealous view of its own sovereignty, a security alliance with the Kremlin based on communist coincidences and an active

promotion of South-South cooperation as a way to highlight Cuba's importance in the Cold War context.

It also included an active political relationship with ideological homologues, movements and parties all over the world that shared leftist ideological affinities. Since 1959 to 1990, Cuba's foreign policy counted on a special relationship with the communist movement and other leftist oriented organizations all over the world. Cuba's adherence to the international communist movement was multidimensional. It included a tight alliance at the highest level with communist bloc states, an economic integration in the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) and a non-formalized military alliance between Cuba and Moscow.

Cuba's Affiliation to the communist world provided its diplomacy with important political connections and social networks all over the world. These political tentacles included a system of academic, cultural, economic, sports, youth, women, social publications and even religious exchanges within the socialist bloc. State-state relations between communist states were complemented with a vast web of communist parties and affiliated organizations in the capitalist developed world. The importance of these ties varied from country to country but in some places like Italy, Spain or France, there were parliamentarians, local authorities, and government officials connected in one way or

another to communist affiliates. Scientists, and intellectuals affiliated to leftist parties were also a source Cuba counted on as political allies.

On its own and with the support of the Soviet Union, The PRC and Vietnam; Cuba attracted contacts within national liberation and progressive movements in the developing world. During the 1960's, Cuba didn't take a definitive course in favor of Moscow in the Soviet-Chinese dispute allowing the CCP to build relations with pro-China and Trotskyite groups resented from Soviet tutelage. Cuba opened a positive relation with these actors, independent not only from the United States but also from Moscow. At times, these ties created conflicts with traditional pro-Soviet groups but eventually Cuba learned to manage parallel relations with groups in dispute for a hegemonic position within the left.

Facing the hostility of the mighty U.S power in every capital, these communities of links represented a social defense to the permanent attempt by American embassies and anti-Castro groups to isolate Cuba. Some of these groups acted as intelligence networks; in other cases they provided leverage, influence and solidarity with Havana. Cuba benefitted from these ideological affinities by collecting important political information from groups and individuals with a close affinity with the Cuban revolution. In some cases, it also provided business contacts with members of the private sector and with executives of state owned companies.

One of Cuba's foreign policy more delicate task has been to balance the state-state contacts with its connections with radical non state actors. After the collapse of the Communist Eastern European bloc, Fidel Castro did gladly inherited a leadership role in many mechanisms of international political coordination within the radical left. In Latin America, the CCP created together with the Workers Party from Brazil, the Sandinista Front from Nicaragua, and other leftist movements and parties of the region, the Sao Paulo Forum. Cuba's position eventually improved with the rise of Chavismo and the turn to the left in several countries of the region. It also helped Havana the fact that most of the radical left in the region, with the exception of the FARC in Colombia opted for pursuing power by electoral means, rejecting armed struggle as their method to control the state.

Globally, the Cuban communist party sponsored events such as a Youth Festivals and publications of books about socialist and nationalist resistance. Cuba also became one of the main provider of educational opportunities and health care attention to leftist leaders and militants from all over the world, particularly from Latin America. Cuba's Communist reaffirmation imposed dynamics of mutual influence and intangible persuasion with leftist movements all over the world. One important example of this two ways cooperation was the creation of Telesur, an alternative television network owned by Venezuela as its main shareholder, with Argentina and Cuba as the second and third contributor.

Cuba used the thirty years of special ties with the international communist movement and a circle of organizations and individuals with socialist leanings to raise the profile of its anti-U.S. resistance. The solidarity network was particularly effective denouncing the tightening of the embargo after 1992 and pushing governments to condemn the policy in question at the United Nations. Even though in most countries these leftist groups were not in the government or a parliamentary majority they served well to raise the profile of the Cuban cause in the foreign policy agenda of countries as diverse as those in Western Europe, Latin America or Asia.

After the Soviet Union ended, solidarity groups with special relations with Cuba were important points of leverage in intraparty factions or at subnational levels in regions, provinces, and municipalities. The card of good relations with Cuba was used by politicians of different ideological persuasion to show independence from the U.S. and also as a bargaining chip with the left. In countries such as Spain, France, Italy or the Nordic countries, the solidarity groups provided spaces for Cuba's diplomacy beyond Havana's material resources. Cuba's political friends were not limited to traditional radical parties but included politicians and personalities within center-left and social Christian groups in parties of Latin America and Europe, such as the SDP in Germany, the PSOE in Spain, the Socialist Parties of France and Portugal.



Any minimal review of the report of activities of Cuban embassies at the Cuban Ministry of foreign relations website (Cuba-MINREX 2014) or in the Cuban embassies websites illustrates a series of visits, presentations and political activities showing a vast network of political contacts in countries where there is not a large community of Cubans or any important bilateral trade. These networks are coordinated institutionally by the Cuban Institute of Friendship with other peoples (ICAP) to promote Cuba's allies by connecting them with Havana but also among themselves. When needed, these ties also help to mobilize segments of public opinion around topics of Cuban interests, for instance the theme of the Cuban Five<sup>207</sup>.

Fidel Castro also didn't give up on Cuba's links with the state-society complexes of the former Soviet Union. There, Cuba was selective in investing political capital with countries Havana thought it was worth to keep a fluent relationship in place. Even in a context of economic austerity, Cuba offered Belarus, Ukraine and Russia programs to provide post-traumatic recovery to victims of the Chernobyl accident and the Afghanistan war veterans. These gestures identified Fidel Castro's insistence on inheriting the

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<sup>207</sup>The Cuban Five were five intelligence agents who were caught in Miami mainly spying inside anti-Castro groups. The trial reaches notoriety because of the argument against prosecuting them in Miami given the strong anti-Cuban government sentiment in the city. By decision of the Judge the trial remained in Miami and the U.N Group on Arbitrary detentions qualified in 2006 as arbitrary the punishment of the Five due to the absence of international guarantees of fairness of the trial(Cuba-MINREX 2014).

leadership mantle of communism. By 1994, the Russian Duma created a Cuba friendship group with Communists and nationalists from the Liberal Democratic Party as members.

Two important regions in the world with which Cuba developed strong revolutionary alliances are Africa and the Middle East. The central scenario for these relations is the non-aligned movement. There, Cuba developed a close alliance with post Apartheid South Africa and the radical Arab countries but not limited to them. These states became bridges to the business sectors, university and cultural world in these two regions.

#### **6.4 Strategies of adaptation to changes in the balance of power and normative structures of the international system.**

##### **6.4.1 Challenges to Cuba's identity in the Hemispheric System:**

By the end of the Cold War in 1989, the Western Hemisphere had experienced a major transformation in the normative structure of its international system. Three changes were fundamental: 1) The adoption across the whole hemisphere with the exception of Cuba of a consensus around the rationality of market economies as the best form of responding to the challenges of economic development, 2) By 1990 the region as adopted the paradigm of representative democracy as a criterion for political legitimacy, 3) Latin

American countries had declared the region as fully committed to avoid a nuclear weapons race.

In 1991, Cuba was an outlier of these three regional trends. It was a typical command economy ruled by a one-party system with characteristics of an early post-totalitarian phase including severe limitations to the rights to travel, freedom of religion and to own private property. In terms of human rights, Cuba was and still is outside the inter-American system as result of its forced separation from the OAS. Havana had signed neither of the two 1966 covenants of Civil and Political rights and Economic, Social and Cultural rights. In the nuclear issue, Cuba was at the time a persistent objector of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the 1967 Treaty of Tlatelolco<sup>208</sup> that established Latin America as the first heavily populated zone free of nuclear weapons.

I have already discussed in other publication the long history of conflicts between Cuba and the OAS (Lopez-Levy 2009. Vol. 52). By the 1990's, Cuba's exclusion from the inter-American system was the combined result of the separation of Havana from the Inter-American system in 1962 with an expressed rejection by the Cuban authorities of

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<sup>208</sup>The 1967 Treaty of Tlatelolco was promoted by the Mexican ministry of Foreign Relations since 1963. The Mexican government under the PRI insisted on preserving a space in Latin America outside the Cold War competition and arms race. Tlatelolco is an Aztec name of the neighborhood of Mexico city where the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Relations is located.

the principles and norms of the continental organization. Cuban official narrative describes the OAS as a “ministry of Yankee colonies”.

By 1991 most Latin American countries were governed by elites that converged around the Washington consensus and attempted to implement a neoliberal adjustment package under the tutelage and recommendations of the IMF and the World Bank. Although not all process of economic liberalization or transition to market economies were equivalent to the acceptance of neoliberal reforms, it was clear that intellectually and politically the ideas of a strong state regulating the economy were in retreat at best and already defeated at worst.

The neoliberal economic consensus has a correlate on the acceptance of representative democracy as hemispheric criteria of legitimacy. Regardless their ideological origins, most political forces of the region converged on the importance of preserving democratic guarantees and competitive elections. Within the Latin American left, the experience of the military dictatorships in the 1960’s and 1970’s motivated a re-evaluation of liberal democratic institutions that were previously described as mere bases for capitalist domination. The revolutionary narratives about other types of democracy went on retreat when the Mexican system began to open after the contested elections of 1988 and the Sandinista defeat in 1990. The Cuban Revolution was seen by many as a remnant of the Cold War destined to disappear.

Cuba's insertion in Latin America was favored by a change in the hemispheric structure of international relations and Cuba's own process of reform and openness. Beginning in 1998, Latin American experienced a turn to the left with Hugo Chavez's election in Venezuela. The trend intensified with the rise to power of the Workers' Party in Brazil. In a matter of a decade, most South American countries elected leftist candidates to presidential offices and parliament. These governments have towards Cuba a welcoming attitude and for decades have enjoyed the support by the CCP described earlier in this chapter.

The change in the structure of hemispheric relations was a constitutive factor, not a causal one of Cuba's re-insertion in Latin America. One reason that undermines the narrative presenting Cuba as a remnant of the Cold War was the early acknowledgement by most Latin American elites of the relevance of the economic reform and political liberalization processes taking place in the island. The perceptions about these processes among the governments of other states have important foreign policy and international dimensions because Latin American elites identify not only from where the Cuban changes were departing from (command economy and vertical one party system state-civil society relations) but also what dominant trends Cuba's development entails.

There were changes in Cuba's foreign policy that also explain the new attitudes of all the governments in the hemisphere, including those from the right, towards Havana. Cuba developed several strategies of adaptation that placed the island-nation in line with minimal membership criteria for the regional institutional-normative structure.

#### **6.4.2 Cuba's Post-Cold War foreign policy adaptation strategies**

The international adaptation of the Cuban state-society complex (Cox 1986) is better explained with a constructivist approach because it is primarily cultural (Wendt 1999), and fundamentally different from the formulae prescribed by the realist school<sup>209</sup> in which small powers has two fundamental choices: balancing or bandwagoning. Cuba's strategies show a prolific repertoire well beyond these two choices and others with more sophistication such as buck-passing and chain ganging included in the realist arsenal of prediction of state behavior once the specificities of the security dilemma are added (Christensen, Thomas, & Snyder, Jack 1990).

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<sup>209</sup>This is hardly a surprise since Kenneth Waltz announced in his Theory of International Politics that such subject should concentrate in explaining the actions and motivations of Great Powers as the central units of the system (Waltz 1979). This is also the case of John Mearsheimer's book that from its title "The Tragedy of Great Power Politics" assumes that it is at such level that everything important about international politics is decided. (Mearsheimer 2001)

The explanation that follows it is a call to take seriously historical context in the study of international relations. Trends that might be secondary in a particular context (such as Cuba's peaceful coexistence policy towards Spain or its policy of non-alignment during the Cold War) might become crucial to a survival strategy some years later. The available strategies and self-assigned roles of a state such as risk taking revolutionary Cuba changed dramatically in the absence of the backing of a great power as the Soviet Union was during the Cold War.

Strategies of adaptation are difficult to understand outside the agent that applies them. In this area, it is important to look not only at the distribution of capabilities- generally Cuba is a rule taker in the international system- but also at some functional differentiation and the legacy of multiple identities that explain the choices that a state takes to adapt or survive. Perception and misperception of the state's leadership are not randomly distributed but contains important biases developed through historical experiences and ideology.

In the case of Cuba's foreign policy strategy, I will highlight three elements:

- 1) Differences of power capacities create qualitative variations in the identity and function of states. A great power, a middle power or a small one are not three similar actors in a scale. Their differences of opportunity and vulnerability make them design their foreign policy projection and look at risk differently. During the post-Cold War

period, Cuba designed its foreign policy adaptation strategies from a position of high security vulnerability and limited opportunity to integrate to a U.S. led global order.

2) A revolutionary (revisionist) state designs its policy differently from a status quo one because its projection implies a disposition to challenge the consequences of the asymmetry of power. Cuba has problems with the United States and other actors more powerful than Havana not only because these great powers have engaged in practices that interfere in Cuba's sovereign affairs but also because Cuban leadership in principle does not acknowledge any legitimacy to differences of international status based on different capabilities of power.

3) Asymmetric relations are not the expression of abnormal, transitional imbalance. There are dynamics of asymmetry that trend to instability and conflict while there are others that results in stability and normalcy. Adaptation strategies are not produced by similar states that happen to have different power capabilities but by agents whose strategic calculation, perception of vulnerabilities and images differ significantly.

The relationship between Cuba and the United States is an archetypical case of asymmetry and it has characterized by conflict since 1959. The disparity in Cuba's disadvantage entails a significant risk to the island's national security. During the Cold War, Cuba counterbalanced the disparity by using ideological affinities with the Soviet Union to build a military and political alliance, not frequent between countries so



geographically distant. After the Cold War, there was not any alternative great power available to replace the supporting role the Soviet Union played before.

As result, Cuba's adaptation strategies focused in the short run on avoiding isolation from its regional context and denying pretexts for a security clash with Washington. In the long run, Cuba overwhelmed the United States with international demands against its imperial coercive embargo policy and forced Washington to rethink it.

#### **6.4.2.1 Buffering**

The first Cuba's major adaptation strategy can be described as **buffering**.

Buffering is

“the lessening of exposure to, and influence by, the more powerful by creating alternative spheres of influence or carving out neutral areas in terms of geography or function that can remove or at least significantly limit the immediate and active impact of the dominant power”<sup>210</sup>.

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<sup>210</sup>In the definition of the strategy of “buffering” I am basing my explanation on the concept provided by Chong Ja Ian in his paper “Revisiting Responses to Power Preponderance: Going Beyond the Balancing-Bandwagoning Dichotomy (Chong 2003) but applying the concept to a particular situation. In his paper Chong only presents buffering as a strategy and promotes the hypothesis that buffering would be generally preferred by states that are stronger and integrated to the international system to other options that include balancing, bandwagoning, beleaguering, bonding and binding. Although I find useful the concepts of the strategies, I don't share his views about preferences based in power and level of integration.

Cuba's buffering strategy consisted in an active defensive multilateralism preventing the creation of conditions that favored its international isolation or acquiescence to a U.S. military action against Havana. Until he got sick in 2006, Fidel Castro exercised his leadership in the global radical left in most heads of state summits and presidential inauguration he was invited. Castro took advantage of his opportunities at the podium to be a voice for the global south. In every one of these organizations, Cuba achieved early on a resolution condemning the U.S. embargo. Every new meeting the resolution gathered new adherents and the language against U.S. policy got stronger.

The rejection of U.S coercive imperial policy towards Cuba by international organizations and American allies came in the form of a compromise. Joining the organization of Iberian-American states as a founding member in 1992 brought to Cuba the inconvenience of facing constant calls to sign presidential commitments to representative democracy and international human rights. The Presidential Summits brought sporadic attacks to the non-democratic character of the Cuban regime by presidents of Uruguay, Jorge Battle, Argentina Carlos Saul Menem, Spain, Jose Maria Aznar, Salvador, Francisco Rodriguez and Mexico Ernesto Zedillo. At times, Castro engaged in diplomatic rifts with some of those countries (Uruguay broke up diplomatic relations with Cuba). But in most cases, he built up the symbolism of Havana as a bulwark of Latin American nationalism, engaging in rhetorical debates about the meaning

of democracy while pocketing diplomatic declarations that clearly condemned the U.S. embargo against Cuba.

The priority of the buffering strategy was carving out buffer regional or functional spheres of influence in which, even if there were actions and declarations against the government in Havana, the treatment received by the Castro's government was in clear opposition to any U.S. drastic military action against it. Cuba also received the benefits of participating in the programs of the Iberian American Secretary of Cooperation based in Spain and the regional dialogues between Latin America and the European Union. The Summits became forums in which Cuba also sought new opportunities for its opening to foreign investment in the 1990's.

Cuba's buffering strategy raised the profile of the Caribbean as its geographic region based on the strong commitment of the countries of the zone to traditional notions of sovereignty and non interference in the internal affairs of states. Cuba played a contributing leadership role using sensitively the asymmetry that makes it a regional power in the Caribbean context, joining the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) created in 1994.

Cuba is a Caribbean country but historically was more integrated to Latin America for cultural reasons and the fact that until the 1970's many islands remained colonies of European powers. The largest English speaking Caribbean nations Jamaica,

Guyana, Trinidad-Tobago and Barbados decided at unison to establish diplomatic links with Havana in 1972, challenging American pressures. Cuba's disposition to engage pragmatically with the Caribbean nations benefitted from its use of the principle of peaceful coexistence later transformed in respect for ideological pluralism. During the 1970's, Cuba's diplomacy presented its growing ties with the Caribbean as parts of the rise of the third world. Fidel Castro insisted on bridging differences between the third world and the Communist bloc.

This type of policy raised suspicion among the Caribbean elites deeply connected to the United States and European former colonial powers. By the 1980's Michael Manley's defeat in Jamaica, the collapse of the New Jewel Movement's Revolution in Grenada with the U.S. invasion in 1983 and Reagan's initiative for the Caribbean Basin polarized the region. Although integration was an urgent regional goal for most of the small economies of the region, Cuba was perceived by many Caribbean governments as a Soviet ally, too insistent on pushing its radical agenda in the region and a source of troubles with the United States.

The post-Cold War context opened possibilities of rapprochement between Cuba and its Caribbean neighbors. Caribbean nations couldn't ignore the free fall of the Cuban economy and the collapse of the Cuban-Soviet alliance shifted Caribbean perceptions about Cuba. For the Caribbean elites Cuba was less a political threat than a potential

problem of regional instability if the Cuban government collapses. Caribbean countries preferred also to deal systematically with Cuba's attempt to develop a competitive tourist industry, an economic activity in which the Caribbean business community had plenty of experience.

Cuba began to collaborate with other Caribbean countries in the new security agenda, highlighting the Caribbean as its region, and implementing a pro-active buffering approach against U.S. attempts to present Havana as a regional pariah. Of great impact were Cuban disaster relief programs to deal with humanitarian crises in Haiti, Belize and several Central American countries after the devastation of several hurricanes. Cuba's diplomacy also lend itself to voice regional concerns at international organizations and forums about central problems for small insular states such as drugs interdiction, control of illegal immigration, international crime, global climate change, etc. Havana, given its radical posturing and lack of relations with Washington was fitted better to *specialize* in such denunciatory role.

Although the political will to re-engage Cuba existed in the Caribbean in the 1970s, it is now perceived for the first time as the expression of *a regional consensus*- Gerardo Gonzalez wrote- that Cuba has an important role to play in future Caribbean integration. With a population exceeding 11 million and its strategic geographical location, Cuba is a geo-political and geo-economic reality that cannot be ignored. Accordingly, the appraisal made by business and political leaders of its importance for regional development stems from strategic considerations rather than the current state of affairs in the area (Gonzalez 2002).

In addition to its political value, the relations with the Caribbean played not minor role in helping Cuba's opening to foreign investment in tourism during the 1990's. Cuba's trade with the Caribbean jumped from USD 8.6 million in 1990 to 200 million in 1999 (Cuba y el Caribe. 2000). Joint ventures in tourism and multi-destination agreements were signed with several companies of the region. The region provided products for services associated to the tourist industry that were not available in Cuba due to the inefficiencies of the command economy. It also show examples of good corporate management and practices to emulate.

Another advantage of Cuba's entrance into the ACS (Association of Caribbean States) was its participation in the Caribbean group of the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific nations (ACP) that negotiated the Cottonou preferential agreements with the European Union. Cuba's inclusion among the Caribbean partners of the Cottonou agreement didn't provide the Cuban government with a preferential treatment by the European Union but expressed a regional endorsement to such aspiration. By entering into the ACP group of the Cottonou agreement, Havana attempted to find a venue for venting its own controversies with Europe in a framework that includes many developing countries. Cuba perceived a friendly forum for its reservations against democratic conditionality of aid, or what Havana describes as the imposition of western standards in issues of human rights and sovereignty to poor countries.

The European countries however, did not fall for Cuba's game. The European Union insisted on a separate agreement of Cooperation and Political dialogue. Still, Cuba's participation in the ACP group buffered Cuba from U.S. most aggressive policies.

It cannot be denied that the changes in the international arena influenced the formation of this regional consensus,-Gerardo Gonzalez explained- strengthening friendly perceptions of Cuba while moderating hostile ones. In that sense, economic imperatives have outranked shared political concerns arising from previous experience in the 1970s with regards to Cuban objectives in its relations with its Caribbean neighbors. In the current circumstances, a post-Cold War approach to Cuba is possible because it is not perceived anymore as the carrier of extra-regional interests (Gonzalez 2002).

The greatest buffer political space found by the Cuban government against U.S. policy is the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC). Created in 2011, this political consultation mechanism gathers all the countries of the Western Hemisphere except Canada and the United States. It was created by a confluence of interests across the political Latin American spectrum and by the active initiative of presidents Hugo Chavez from Venezuela, Luiz Ignacio Lula de Silva from Brazil and Felipe Calderon from Mexico.

By regional consensus Cuba was invited to the foundational meeting of the Community in Cancun, Mexico and after the first summit in Chile in 2012, Havana became part of the leading troika of the organization. In January 2014, Raul Castro welcomed in Havana all the presidents of Latin America and the Caribbean with the exception of Ricardo Martinelli from Panama. The summit provided Cuba with an

opportunity to show a country in reform. Havana got an overwhelming regional support against the U.S. embargo, including a commitment to include Cuba in the 2015 summit of the Americas in Panama.

The dominant narrative of Cuba's inclusion in CELAC was the formula of "political pluralism in international relations" and "respect for ideological differences". Another evidence of how Cuba has successfully adopted an idea rejected by its diplomats in the 1970's. The correlate of this formula is the permanent condemnation against U.S. embargo policy as illegal, immoral and counterproductive to the promotion of democracy and human rights. In this way, Castro's government has mitigated calls by different groups of states and organizations to liberalize and democratize its domestic institutions<sup>211</sup>. Cuba has played off the democracy promotion persuasive logic of European and Latin American countries against the coercive actions by the United States on the other.

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<sup>211</sup>There have been strong declarations of support for democracy and human rights in member countries at the Organization of Ibero-American States, the Association of Caribbean States, the Cuba-CARICOM cooperation agreement, and CELAC. The Cotonou agreement between the European Union and the developing countries of Africa, Asia and the Pacific includes a democratic conditionality clause by which all recipients of European aid have to show periodic improvements in their respective human rights situation.



Within this buffering framework in which the U.S embargo, not the Communist government, is perceived as the major obstacle for Cuba's integration into the hemisphere, Cuba has been able to live with pledges to adopt democratic standards and human rights principles as understood by a majority of Latin American or Ibero-American countries. The central argument of the Cuban government rests diplomatically on the premise that Cuba lives under conditions of emergency due to a U.S. policy that it is already rejected by all these organizations and the United Nations General Assembly.

#### **6.4.2.2 Beleaguering and transcending conflict**

Cuba's government's success at producing a stalemate in an unfavorable asymmetric conflict with the United States was the result also of two other important strategies: beleaguering and transcending conflict with other countries of the region.

“**Beleaguering**- Chong Jo Ian wrote- is a strategy where states aim to undermine the influence and authority of the more powerful as well as their ability to exercise power through disruption for the purposes of gaining concessions” (Chong 2003, 12). Beleaguering is a strategy that has always been in Cuba's arsenal versus the U.S. led international order.

Raul Castro frequently said about a conflict with the United States: “The best way Cuba wins a war against the United States is by avoiding it”. The end of Soviet support forced Fidel Castro to be selective on differentiating the areas in which Cuba could resist U.S. global hegemony and those of high risk for Cuban national security in which he opted for hiding or **transcending conflict** to avoid a clash that could have disastrous consequences for the CCP rule.

Beleaguering with states in conflict with the United States and transcending security issues that entailed a high security risk of a military conflict with the dominant superpower were part of a combined strategy. I will discuss them separately but both strategies act in unison. They coincide in time and one could not succeed without the other. Beleaguering provides political allies for pro-active initiatives to prevent U.S. encirclement. Transcending security conflicts by endorsing international norms and agreements mitigated the one-party-system’s conflict with democratic principles of international legitimacy.

Dealing with issues associated to anti-narcotics interdiction, nuclear proliferation and terrorism, Cuba had constantly offered guarantees to the successive U.S. Administrations of a non hostile attitude and restraint. Havana decided to transcend conflict with the United States and its allies in these high risk topics. Cuba’s foreign ministry signed up most agreements against terrorism and nuclear proliferation and

offered help to the U.S. Southern Command and Coast Guard in anti-narcotics interdiction and operations against international criminals trying to infiltrate the United States at its southern coasts. Cuba's positive attitude toward international security regimes lowered its place in the U.S. and international security agenda. Hence it provides a normative shield against any drastic military action by the United States<sup>212</sup>.

One area in which Cuba developed sustained efforts to transcend conflict with anti-terrorism. The purpose was to undermine any legitimacy of Cuba's presence in the U.S. State Department list of terrorism sponsoring nations. Cuba was added to the list on 1982. At that time the argument was that Cuba was deeply involved in providing weapons through Nicaragua to the Marxist insurgencies in Guatemala and Nicaragua. Later other elements would be added by American diplomats such as the refuge provided

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<sup>212</sup>The shutdown of the two civilian small planes belonging to the Cuban anti-Castro group Brothers to the Rescue (BTR) was the historical exception that confirmed the rule. BTR had entered several times into Cuban national airspace to throw anti-government leaflets in Havana. The government warned the United States against these actions in violation of Cuban sovereignty and international civil aviation norms. In February 24, 1996 in coincidence with a large meeting of Cuban opposition groups BTR entered Cuban airspace and in its way out two Cuban military planes Migs shoot them down in what was reported as international space. The case was taken into the United Nations Security Council and the Clinton Administration discussed the possibility of airstrikes against Cuba in the National Security Council. The Clinton Administration opted for accepting the call by the Security Council to an investigation of the International Agency for Civil Aviation and the president signed the Helms-Burton law in the heat of American condemnation to the excessive use of force by the Cuban government. Castro later sent a message to Bill Clinton saying that the shutdown of the planes was the result of "a mistake". According to Clinton the incident cancelled the possibility of a major move by him to end the embargo (Clinton 2004).

by Cuba as part of an agreement with Spain to members of the Basque separatist group Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) and the presence in Cuba of guerrillas associated to the FARC (Colombia's Revolutionary Armed Forces).

Since 1992, the United States has not presented any substantive evidence to justify Cuba's inclusion on the list. Most observers attribute the inclusion to reasons of American domestic politics related to Florida and Cold War inertia. In fact, most State Department reports about terrorism seem to present arguments not to keep Cuba on the list but to take it off (State 2014). When finally the State Department took Cuba off the list in 2015, the majority of the states, allies and rivals of the United States, and also American officials were referring to the issue as an anachronism.

Cuba followed a similar strategy towards the international regime of non nuclear proliferation, another security priority for the United States. U.S. labeled Cuba with the ideological construction of a "rogue state", a category that supposed to focus on three areas (weapons of mass destruction proliferation, gross human rights violations and terrorism), placed the island in a collective identity that Havana rejects. By collaborating with the hemispheric regime against nuclear proliferation and joining the Tlatelolco agreement, and cooperating with anti-terrorism efforts, Cuba outmaneuvered U.S. isolation strategy, leaving only the complaints about human rights violation on the table.

By the 1990's Cuba transformed most of its military cooperation and intervention in security conflicts into a civil effort to cope with issues of the new security agenda, such as pandemics and natural disasters. This transition to civilian assistance brought Cuba important acclaim from American allies in Europe (Norway sponsors part of Cuba's medical brigade in Haiti) and eventually as in the case of the Ebola pandemics in West Africa in 2014 some recognition by American officials (Secretary John Kerry and Ambassador Samantha Power). During the years of the Bush Administration, the United States tried to undermine Cuba's influence in the world throughout the medical missions by promoting a program of defection<sup>213</sup> among the Cuban doctors and nurses. Although the program achieved the defection of less than five percent of the Cuban health personnel, it essentially put Washington at odds with Cuban aid recipient countries.

If in the high security areas of nuclear non proliferation and terrorism Cuba has pursued a strategy of transcending conflicts, in areas of democratization and human rights, Havana has preferred one of beleaguering with opponents to the U.S. led liberal world order. Cuba's main coordination of strategies with these countries was at the diplomatic level, particularly in the human rights agenda and denouncing the double standards applied to them in several topics from human rights and anti-terrorism to nuclear proliferation. Early at the commission of Human Rights and later in the Council,

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<sup>213</sup> See the description of the Cuban Professional Medical Parole Program at <http://www.state.gov/p/wha/rls/fs/2009/115414.htm> (accessed January 18, 2015).

Cuba coordinated a favorable coalition that prevented a condemnation of the Cuban regime.

Combining diplomatic skills and an active effort in Global health in dozens of underdeveloped countries, Cuba managed to be elected member of the Human Rights Commission and later of the Council. By the early 2000's, Cuba was playing a leading role in attracting some third world countries to an alliance with Russia and China with the purpose of limiting the the scope for international supervision of human rights at the domestic level. By beleaguering with Russia, China, Iran and other states with an illiberal agenda, Cuba and those states disrupted the consolidation of a reading of human rights norms that tried to redefine sovereignty adding international supervision without the consent of the supervised state.

In Latin America, the creation of CELAC and a new discussion within it of the human rights issues, Cuba contributed to disrupt the hegemonic liberal consensus sponsored by the United States throughout the OAS. The greatest success of Cuban diplomacy in beleaguering was the creation of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA). This organization emanated from the alliance between Cuba and Hugo Chavez's Venezuela. The two countries used this organization to profit politically from a left turn in several Latin American countries.

The ALBA project was originally understood by its opposition to the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), a project associated to U.S. hegemony and the OAS. ALBA and other institutions serve the purpose of undermining American leadership in the region and increasing the bargaining power of the radical left bloc. Two of these other institutions are Telesur and PetroCaribe. Telesur, an international channel owned by some of the countries of the bloc, mainly Cuba, Argentina and Venezuela, imitates the successes of Al Jazeera in the Middle East. PetroCaribe is an energy based agreement for the countries of the Caribbean basin with oil rich Venezuela as its spine.

ALBA represented a launching platform for an agenda against U.S. hegemony in the hemisphere. It was proposed first by Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez at the Summit of the Association of Caribbean States in 2001 in Margarita. It was finally signed in Havana in December 2004 by Fidel Castro and Hugo Chavez who called it also the Trade treaty of the peoples of Our America (A title that comes from an essay by Cuban nationalist founding father Jose Marti). Between its creation and 2013, the organization grew from two to eight members (Bolivia, 2006, Nicaragua, 2007, Dominica, 2008, Antigua y Barbuda, 2009, Ecuador, 2009, and St. Vincent and Granadines, 2009). There are three observer members, Haiti, Syria and Iran and Honduras was a member for less

than a year under Manuel Zelaya's government (2005-2009) who was overthrown by a military coup in July 2009<sup>214</sup>.

Cuba's leadership in ALBA increased its role in the hemispheric agenda because the ALBA placed the rejection of the U.S. embargo and Cuba's exclusion from the hemispheric organization at the center of the inter-American discussion of the Summits of Americas. The group coordinated opposition against the FTAA and pushed for the creation of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. In CELAC and the OAS, the ALBA countries acted as a bloc increasing the impact of their diplomatic positions. Simultaneously Cuba has used ALBA to institutionalize its medical, educational and sports cooperation with the region obtaining significant cash for the services provided to other countries. Cuba also has used ALBA as a hinge to connect some Latin American states with powers and countries outside the region with historical connections with Havana since the Cold War such as the PRC, Russia, Vietnam, Angola, South Africa, Algeria, Syria, Iran and others.

One of Cuba's new most active engagements was with the Holy See. In parallel to a dialogue with the Cuban Roman Catholic Church, the Cuban government engaged in a permanent conversation with Popes John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis I about

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<sup>214</sup>For a general explanation about the ALBA, see its website [alianzabolivariana.org](http://alianzabolivariana.org) (Americas. 2006)A more critical view can be found at Hirst, Joel, "What is the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas and What Does It do?" (Hirst n.d.)



humanitarian issues related to the conditions of political prisoners, family reunifications, travel to Cuba by Cubans living in South Florida and limited to do so after the 1994 rafters' crisis.

Pope Francis I was instrumental on promoting the negotiations between Cuba and the United States that ended in the re-establishment of diplomatic relations. As it has been revealed by Madeleine Albright at her memoirs, John Paul II, and Vatican diplomacy actively played a communication role between the higher echelons of the Cuban and American government (Albright 2003). The Vatican welcomes this new role that highlighted its moral stature. Using two Papal trips to the island in 1998, 2010, and 2015; Cuba rebutted the image of a country frozen in the Cold War, highlighting the space available to freedom of religion, diplomatic engagement and moral dialogue. Vatican engagement with Cuba also served to spark actions and declarations against the embargo by the influential American Roman Catholic Church.

### **Transcending Conflicts:**

A less visible strategy but far more consequential for Cuba's national security was one targeted **to transcend** potential areas of high risk conflict with the United States such as nuclear proliferation, or lack of cooperation in anti- terrorism, and drug interdiction. This strategy of **transcending conflicts** is in line with what historian Paul Schroeder

discussed in his work about the contradictions between historical reality and neo realist theory. Schroeder defined the transcending strategy as:

attempting to surmount international anarchy and go beyond the normal limits of conflictual politics to solve the problem, end the threat and prevent its recurrence through some institutional arrangement involving an international consensus or formal agreement on norms, rules and procedures for these purposes (Schroeder 1994, 117)

One of the most important actions in the strategy of transcending conflicts was Cuba's decision to fully cooperate with the non-nuclear proliferation international regime. Beginning in the 1990's with its new attitude towards the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Denuclearization in Latin America treaty of Tlatelolco, Cuba subscribed actively several international non-nuclear proliferation, anti-terrorism, and human rights agreements.

This was a significant change in Cuban diplomacy. Since the beginning of the discussion of regional initiatives against nuclear weapons, Cuba declared its sympathy for the non-proliferation agenda but rejected how it was promoted. Havana argued lack of reciprocity and sovereign equality. During the sixties, seventies and eighties, Cuba clashed with Mexico's efforts to promote regional denuclearization in Latin America because it allowed a special status for the existing nuclear powers, particularly the United States.

From a hard defense of the principle of equal sovereignty, Havana insisted that the NPT contained unacceptable hierarchical privileges for great powers allowing them a right to preserve their nuclear military arsenal. Castro also criticized that the Latin America denuclearized zone allows the great powers, specifically the United States, to transport Nuclear weapons throughout the region. As a condition to sign the treaty in the name of Cuba, Fidel Castro demanded a commitment by nuclear powers to never use nuclear weapons against any member country of the Tlatelolco Treaty.

Jorge Dominguez (J. I. Dominguez 1989) had identified Cuba's attitude towards the Tlatelolco Treaty as one of the most important differences between Havana and Moscow in their policies towards Latin America in the sixties, seventies and eighties. While the Soviet Union considered the treaty and its protocols I and II positive steps for international peace, Cuba rejected to sign up them at least unless the United States committed itself not to deploy nuclear weapons in the Panama Canal Zone, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guantanamo and any U.S. military base in Latin America and the Caribbean.

But by 1992 during the first Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government, Cuba announced its intention to sign the Tlatelolco treaty. One year later, Cuba stop the construction of its first nuclear power plant and never went back to build it at Juragua, near Cienfuegos port. Fidel Castro reiterated the position when Russian

president Vladimir Putin offered in 2001 to finish it as part of a renewed Russia-Cuba cooperation.

In 1995, Cuba signed the Tlatelolco treaty as the last Latin American country to do so. In October 23, 2002 Cuba submitted its ratification in Mexico. The diplomatic move included the ratification in November of the same year of the non-proliferation treaty in Moscow. Cuban Ambassador Carlos Palmarola ratified Havana's denunciation against Washington's lack of commitment to not attack Cuba under any circumstances (Arms Control Association 2002). Cuba's actions were part of a well timed diplomatic act. 2002 was the fortieth anniversary of the Missile Crisis when the world was at the verge of total nuclear destruction.

The transcending conflict strategy also included some unilateral confidence building measures. Since 1993, Cuba began to invite delegations of retired American military to visit Havana and exchange views with members of the upper echelon of the Cuban Armed Forces. The FAR created the Center for Security Studies (CES), a think tank leaded by retired generals including the former chief of the military intelligence, Division General Jesus Bermudez. In addition to its role preserving Cuba's military memories about the conflict with the United States, CES hosted former military visitors from the U.S. and other countries with which the U.S has good relationships such as Mexico and some members of NATO. CES also sponsored conferences about

international security and confidence building measures to transmit the United States and others in the region a message of trust about Cuban Armed Forces military capabilities and lack of interest on getting weapons of mass destruction.

Havana approved conversations with the U.S. military about avoiding accidents and unwanted confrontation around the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo. By the end of the Clinton Administration, Cuban and American Coast Guard began to cooperate in their patrol missions in the Strait of Florida. When the United States sent prisoners from the war on terrorism to Guantanamo, Raul Castro, then minister of the Armed Forces made clear on a speech that although Cuba rejected the presence of a U.S naval base in its territory, it will return to the United States any escapee from the prisoners' camp.

Raul Castro also reiterated Cuba's disposition to raise the level of the dialogue and cooperation in the security realm, against terrorism. By opening informal and formal channels of communications with the U.S military, Havana send clear signals to the American security establishment about its acknowledgement of a security hierarchy in the hemisphere. Retired U.S. military personnel got access to military and biological centers denounced by Cuban exile groups as capable of developing biological weapons to confirm that Cuba was not involved in a any effort of this kind.

The creation of these informal communications channels created a pro-engagement group within American military establishment. Several retired generals,

including former Chiefs of the Southern Command, Charles Wilhelm and Barry McCaffrey, who also served as Clinton anti-drugs czar had been outspoken in favor of not treating Cuba as a military threat and even to take Cuba out of the list of nations sponsoring nations of the State Department. Some of the military who participated in these exchanges such as Lawrence Wilkerson (Lopez-Levy and Wilkerson, the Havana Note 2011), former chief of staff of General Colin Powell, and retired Army General David Adams (Jones 2012) became advocates of a new engagement policy towards Cuba.

Cuba's acceptance of the Non-nuclear proliferation regime responded to the priority the issue has in Washington's security policy but the government presented it as a goodwill gesture to Latin America. Havana was insistent on avoiding conflict with the United States related to weapons of mass destruction. The move proved to be a clever understanding of American foreign policy making after the end of the Cold War. During the George W. Bush Administration neoconservative foreign policy hawks such as Roger Noriega, Elliot Abrams and John Bolton tried to present Cuba together with Syria and Libya as part of a second tier of the so called "Axis of evil"<sup>215</sup>.

John Bolton was particularly active in pushing an anti-Cuba position into the nonproliferation agenda. Just the day before the beginning of President James Carter's visit to Cuba in 2002, Mr. Bolton, then Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and

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<sup>215</sup>The label created by President George W. Bush referred to countries in the top target list of states connected to terrorism with weapons of mass destruction capabilities.

International Security accused Cuba of developing a biological weapons capability in a speech at the Heritage Foundation. Bolton claimed that most previous analysis about Cuba's offensive biological weapons capabilities underestimated the threat Cuba posed to the United States.

Bolton's accusations were dismissed by the global and hemispheric arms control global epistemic community. The accusation fails flat when former President James Carter said in Havana that his State Department preparation briefing contains no mention about biological weapons. Even Bolton's chief, Secretary of State Colin Powell did not endorse the ambassador's accusations. Powell just said that Cuba has a research capacity that can be potentially used to produce biological weapons, something that many countries in the world possessed.

Mr. Bolton's manipulation eventually backfired when Senator Christopher Dodd (D-Conn) called him to testify under oath at the hemispheric affairs subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Secretary Powell decided to send Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research Carl Ford (Sub-Committee on Western Hemisphere, Peace Corps and Narcotics. 2002) because he claimed that Mr. Bolton was not the proper official to testify on the matter of Cuba's biological weapons capabilities. Mr. Ford denied most of Bolton's assertions and concurred with the general

consensus(The Nuclear Threat Initiative 2013) : Cuba obeyed its ratification of the Biological and Toxic Weapons Convention in 1976<sup>216</sup>.

Another area in which Cuba moved to transcend conflict was anti-terrorist cooperation. Together with Great Britain at the time presiding the U.N. Security Council, Cuba ratified all the twelve U.N major conventions on terrorism less than one month after September 11, 2001. This is another area in which Cuba's narrative of acceptance of ideological pluralism in international affairs bear fruits. After 1991, Cuba began a long cooperation with the government of Colombia to mediate agreements with the insurgent groups. In the case of Spain, Cuba cooperated with the Spanish government's monitoring of members of ETA.

## 6.5 Conclusions

All these adaptation strategies undermined U.S. discourse about Cuba as a threat to the international system and a remnant of the Cold War. Most countries identified American effort to isolate Cuba as driven not by U.S. national security interests but by

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<sup>216</sup>In 2005 Assistant Secretary Ford testified in the Foreign Relations Committee against Mr. Bolton's nomination for U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Mr. Ford accused Mr. Bolton of bullying an analyst in the State Department in pursuit of information to confirm his accusations. Mr. Bolton served as U.S. ambassador to the U.N as a recess appointee but eventually he had to leave the post since the Senate did not give consent to his nomination.



Florida politics. This reality made any coordination of collective sanctions against Cuba almost impossible and lowered U.S. conflict with Cuba in the American hierarchy of security issues to discuss in the U.N and other international forums. These differences placed Cuba in its own category, apart from other countries labeled as rogue by Washington's security establishment. Cuba is/was as a United States' rival but inserted positively in its own geostrategic region: Latin America.

Cuba's adaptation strategies had a constitutive effect on its foreign policy identity. By adopting the language of ideological pluralism in the global arena, Cuba acquired new identities and drops some previous ones. Accepting great powers hierarchy in the nuclear proliferation issue affected Cuba's policymaking and narrative since it created a precedent useful for a potential acknowledgement for deference arrangement to the asymmetric conflict.

Using strategies such as buffering and beleaguering with countries of the region with different political systems and transcending conflict, Cuba began to act more as a stakeholder of the international system than as a revisionist revolutionary state. Its discourse about the nonproliferation regime, human rights, and terrorism became less confrontational with the U.S. led international regimes about these issues.

## Chapter Seven: U.S-Cuba Asymmetric Relations: Breaking the Stalemate

### 7.1 Introduction

The history of the last fifty years of conflict between Cuba and the United States has been written many times. This is not the space to discuss the origins of the U.S. embargo against Cuba or Cuban response from 1959 to 1991. The emphasis of this chapter is on the changes in the conflict after the end of the Cold War and after the presidential succession from Fidel Castro to Raul Castro. Which new features of the bilateral relationship emerged in the last decade in parallel to the processes of economic reform and political liberalization in Cuba? Which dynamics led to the establishment of diplomatic relations in December 17, 2014?

The chapter analyzes how the asymmetric relations structure between Cuba and the United States matured for a minimal compromise in which Presidents Raul Castro and Barack Obama agreed to restore diplomatic relations. For the last five decades Cuba and the United States engaged in an asymmetrical conflict (Womack 2006) in which Cuba as the smaller side demonstrated its capabilities to survive. By achieving this outcome despite the disparity of power in favor of the United States, Cuba created an asymmetric *stalemate*<sup>217</sup>.

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<sup>217</sup>Stalemate is one of the most important concepts in the theory of asymmetric relations. “If B (the smaller power) in an asymmetric conflict cannot force a conclusion because it

The stalemate altered U.S foreign policy makers' cost-benefit strategic calculation about their policy towards Cuba in the context of American global grand strategy. This new calculation took into account the irrational cost of the U.S. embargo in hegemonic prestige and soft power. It made possible a change from an imperial/coercive approach to a persuasive/hegemonic one. The stalemate also altered the strategic calculation of Cuban policy makers in Havana because they understood that the options of a partial dismantlement of the embargo from the executive branch could generate more positive dynamics for the bilateral relations than a maximalist position of pursuing only a total dismantlement of the illegal embargo/blockade before the restoration of relations.

During the last two decades, Cuba and its ties with the United States were not frozen in the Cold War. On the contrary, relations between the two countries became

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is incapable of destroying the larger capacity of the opponent, and A (the great power) cannot force a conclusion because the limited resources it can commit cannot sustain submission by B, then a situation of asymmetric stalemate exists. Like asymmetric hostility itself, stalemate can be either "hot" or "cold." Hot stalemate involves continuous military confrontation, but with the gradual realization that a military breakthrough is highly unlikely. If the relationship between A and B is hostile but they are not at war, then cold stalemate would imply that neither side expects that their posture of hostility will change the opposition of the other side....

From the subjective perspective of the antagonists, stalemate seems to last forever because there is no prospect for a unilateral resolution of the conflict. But not all stalemates are hopeless. Stalemate creates two conditions necessary for an eventual negotiated settlement. First, the situation of stalemate is lose-lose, although the nature and scale of the losses are different on each side in an asymmetric stalemate. Secondly, the illusions of winning have withered. If neither side can compel the other and time is on no one's side, then negotiation is a reasonable step, even with an enemy". (Womack, *Asymmetry and International Relationships* 2016, 89)

more dynamic, plural and fluid despite the reinforcement of the embargo policy. A series of social interactions between the two states and societies were influential in shaping their construction of a new bilateral dyad and the images about each other. As Womack defines in cases of asymmetric stalemate; “illusions of winning have withered” (Womack, *Asymmetry and International Relationships* 2016).

In Cuba there was a conviction that as long as the United States do not acknowledge Cuban sovereignty, there was no alternative but to resist. Resistance to American hubris brings intangible benefits to the Cuban government such as international revolutionary solidarity, symbolic respect and opportunities to crush opposition forces as long as they don't take distance from the embargo/blockade policy. On the other hand, the burden of resistance against American hostility in terms of economic and democratic development is high, including the permanent uncertainty that a policy mistake might be fatal. Domestic political conflicts are always aggravated by the role of United States' hostility. Leaders of the communist party were convinced of the convenience of accelerating a potential agreement at the moment of economic reform and inter-generational leadership transition.

Stalemate was not an urgent situation for the United States. According to U.S. documents, American policy makers recognized since 1968 in a very explicit document (U.S. State Department 1968) that the possibilities of ending the Cuban communist regime

by sanctions were very remote. But a combination of the international consequences, in terms of Great Power prestige, of ending hostility while Cuba had a major role in Africa and Central America with the diminishing role after the Cold War of Cuba in American security strategy together with the increasing role of Florida in national elections allowed the illusions of victory to persist in the margin. These “illusions” were severely hit by the tranquility of the intra-generational succession from Fidel Castro to Raul Castro at the presidency and the launching of the processes of economic reform and political liberalization after 2009. It was clear that the stalemate and its costs for American grand strategy could rise easily for at least the next decade, in the presence of a new regional scenario more favorable to Cuba and the rise of American strategic rivals in China and Russia with vigorous diplomatic efforts towards the Western hemisphere.

This chapter highlights the starting point of hostile impasse (stalemate) from which U.S.-Cuba relations began the post-Cold War period. American Cold War policy constructed an official response to a radical variant of Cuban nationalism in what U.S. policymakers saw as their backyard. The pro-embargo forces in the United States transformed into laws in 1992, 1996, and 2000 the executive and presidential regulations that codified an imperial coercive policy towards Cuba during the Cold War. This historic reality granted the continuity of premises and the constraints for change in the culture and norms of American institutions regarding Cuba. Equally important is the

institutionalization of structures for resistance on the Cuban side. Cuba approved laws for the explicit purpose of defeating U.S. designs.

After the Cold War, the United States Congress passed laws not just to impose a regime change policy against the Cuban government but to proof such strategy against an American president with a different approach to Cuba<sup>218</sup>. The new phase of the conflict (1992-2014) carried on the legacy of the Cold War, but it was not a continuation of such previous era. Before 1992, American policy was hostile to the Cuban government but the president had all discretion for compromise without the end of the Cuban government.

The current framework of the conflict was shaped in the nineties when the United States foreign policy establishment lost attention on the Cuban issue allowing domestic groups with a hostility agenda prevail over national strategy concerns<sup>219</sup>. In response, the Cuban government set an institutional-political course punishing harshly any collaboration with the Helms law. The most important of this legislation is the law 88 (1999) of the protection of National Independence and Cuban economy. The law was

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<sup>218</sup>William Leogrande and Peter Kornbluh have discussed this issue in her article “The Real Reason it is nearly impossible to end the Cuban Embargo” (Leogrande and Kornbluh 2014)

<sup>219</sup>Patrick Haney, Walt Vanderbush and Phillip Brenner explained this transformation through the concept of “intermestic interests”. This definition refers to the emergence of foreign policy lobbies that construct American national interest” based on their power within U.S. domestic politics (Brenner, Haney and Vanderbush 2008).

invoked as an emergency measure by Fidel Castro who warned about the proliferation of opposition groups financially supported by the U.S. government directly or indirectly.

Law 88 doesn't exist in separation but connected to a system of national security legislation at the core of Cuba's constitutional structure as a national security state. It regulated a system of political vigilance against any American plan targeted to subvert the current political system or any attempt to organize the political opposition to the CCP. The harsher measures are reserved for those who favor the U.S embargo but served to harass any Cubans who disagree with the CCP even if opposed to the U.S. embargo.

Continuity in American disrespect towards Cuban sovereignty since 1898 and Cuba's responses to the United States qualifies the presumption that the conflict persists due to the strength of the Cuban American anti-normalization lobby in South Florida. This lobby didn't consolidate as an autonomous domestic force in American politics until the end of the Reagan Administration. The hostility between the U.S. and Cuba existed before the creation of the Cuban American pro-embargo lobby and at times, it was strengthened when the influence of the lobby declined, as it was the case during the Clinton Administration.

The Cuban American pro-embargo lobby had a considerable influence but its reach would be far less in other foreign policy and national security culture. Structural features of American politics provide stronger explanation of the attitudes and rationality

of U.S. policy towards Cuba. Among these features a short list will include: United States' foreign policy culture of maximalism (Sestanovich 2014), particularly in the Caribbean, in which anything short of absolute victory was always difficult to sell domestically, the wide definition of security and American mission in the world, and the pluralistic opening to the influence and leverage of ethnic lobbies in the post-Cold War context. These factors amplified the pro-embargo voices that articulated its demands with other interests and discourses.

It is important to look not only at causal questions (why) but also to constitutive mechanisms (how possible) (Hopf 1998) to explain how the pro-embargo lobby built its control over institutions and ideas that empowered its leverage in the process of “producing and reproducing the identity of American foreign policy” (Campbell 1992). Due to the interests of this lobby on an uncompromising total defeat of Cuba's revolutionary process, not on launching a democratic process, American policy has been a persistent contributor to Cuba's partial reform equilibrium. Until December 17, 2014, American foreign policy did not pursue the deepening of Cuba's economic reform and political liberalization but the failure of these two processes and the collapse of the CCP regime. The persistence of the imperial policy versus nationalist resistance dispute at the center of the Cuban political struggle relegates the issues of development and democracy.



The second part of the chapter emphasized that the sovereignty conflict between United States and Cuba can be stabilized with an Acknowledgment for Deference solution<sup>220</sup> but will not be likely solved without a change on the identity of at least one of the actors and this is unlikely in the short or medium term.

Economic reform and political liberalization does not amount to an end of the nationalist identity or the internationalist revolutionary impulse. Washington's hierarchical paradigm for its relations with Cuba and Cuba's revolutionary identity collide structurally. The rise of a less doctrinaire generation of Cuban leaders does not represent the end of a revolutionary post-totalitarian nationalist definition of Cuban interests domestically or in the international arena. As long as the United States has a policy of regime change with or without the embargo, Cuba will seek to counter-balance

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<sup>220</sup>I focused on the analysis of different variants of acknowledgment for deference (AFD) solutions because these ones don't predict a drastic change in the nature of the actors, American hegemonic presumption in the Caribbean and Cuba's nationalist aspiration to a full sovereign status. There are others less likely scenarios given the "Lockean" culture (Wendt 1999) of the international system but still plausible such as the use by the U.S. of military force or the success of sanctions and coercion to submit Cuba to U.S. mandates. Another possible scenario although not probable is that an increasingly tired and isolationist U.S. abandon any hope of shaping Cuba's policies and judge Cuba is not worthy of all the attention dedicated to change its regime. This scenario of neglect is plausible although not probable in a Donald Trump's administration. For an exceptional defense of the isolationism argument see Eric Nordlinger's book *Isolationism Reconfigured: American Foreign Policy for a New Century* (Nordlinger 1995).

American preponderance with alliances with Russia, China, Brazil, possibly India and even other regional alternative powers such as Iran, Venezuela or Algeria.

An American shift from an imperial coercive policy towards one of a persuasive hegemonic character can stabilize the asymmetric conflict within a peaceful structure but in Cuban revolutionary view, anything less than equal sovereignty<sup>221</sup> does not amount to “normal” relations. More business, travel, market homogeneity and interdependence do not solve the incompatibility between U.S strategic great power aspiration to lead a liberal world order and Cuba’s revolutionary views about an international system without hierarchies. In virtue of its identity as a revolutionary state, Cuba is at times a cause, not a country. In response, American foreign policy dominant mindset<sup>222</sup> had conceived regime change not only as convenient and proper policy, either by hostility or rapprochement.

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<sup>221</sup>Equal sovereignty is not the same as equal status. Fidel Castro expressed conscience of the asymmetry of power and acknowledged the special status of Great Powers in the international system when subscribing the non-nuclear proliferation treaties and other international instruments that reserved some privileges for the permanent five members of the Security Council.

<sup>222</sup>There are several cases in which the United States as a country has adopted by law a policy of regime change in ways that are in violation of international law: Cuba (Helms-Burton law), Iraq under Saddam Hussein (1998 Iraqi Freedom Act), the Islamic Republic of Iran, Syria, and Libya. Notice that these are examples of countries in which Congress without declaring war against another country established a set of regulations by which every U.S. foreign policy action must include a direct component of regime change. This is obviously different from executive covert operation of the kind conducted against many more governments in the world as part of CIA toolbox or policies of containment

But this structural continuity should not let us to forget important changes. Cuba's economic reform and political liberalization activated important anti-embargo forces in the U.S. foreign policy making process: a) the business community, b) humanitarian, pro-business and trade groups within the Cuban American community, c) segments of the human rights and pro-democracy community who see political liberalization and economic reform as steps to democratization in the logic of modernization theory, d) trends towards market homogeneity and interdependence that exacerbate the contradictions of the hegemonic paradox and costs for U.S. foreign policy grand strategy. On the other hand, a Cuba attempting to build a friendly international environment to its economic reform needs stability in its state-state bilateral relations and a general attitude favorable to global markets stability, precisely the opposite of what a revolutionary actor would desire.

The appearance of these factors at both shores of the strait of Florida provides opportunities for shifts on the American debate about U.S. policy towards Cuba and Cuba's views about opportunities in its relations with the United States. It also makes possible the appearances of logics of understanding, alter-casting and empathy between Cuban and American elites.

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during the Cold War in which there was a policy to cultivate a change of government or system in the countries behind the Iron Curtain by interacting with their elites and nationals through diplomacy, public diplomacy, radio, etc.

Under those circumstances, a definitive AFD arrangement is more elusive than conflict stabilization in asymmetrical contexts. There is a culture of conflict in which structures of hostility and separation are solidly in place. Diplomacy understood as a key institution in the sense described by the English School was constrained until the recent opening of embassies in their capitals (July 20, 2015). American statecraft is still placed by law and design at the service of removing from power the current Cuban elite. Cuba's statecraft was designed by Fidel Castro's historic generation to resist and fight American imperial designs.

**Stabilization**, as a different stage from AFD solution is still an improvement from the current situation of conflicted asymmetrical impasse. It has important unlocking consequences for the partial reform dynamics and Cuba's foreign policy behavior due to its empowerment of development oriented politicians within the Cuban elites. At the end of the chapter, I will summarize the centrality of the ties and conflict with the U.S in the design of Cuban foreign relations.

## **7.2 Brief historical review: From the beginnings of the Cuban Revolution to the fall of the Communist Bloc**

The history of the last two centuries of Cuba-United States relations played a central role in the configuration of the current asymmetrical structure between the two

countries. It is important to look not only at the content of the conflict but also at the level of attention dedicated to it by each side.

Cuba was a security priority for American Foreign Policy and an issue in American domestic politics<sup>223</sup> during the whole XIX century. The Monroe Doctrine expressed American security worries about Cuba changing hands from Spain to a more powerful European power (France, Germany, or the U.K). American elites solved the issue with the Spanish-Cuban-American war of 1898, considered by Secretary of State John Hay a “splendid little war”. After the war, the United States discussed Cuba in the context of Washington’s policy towards the Western Hemisphere and the relevance given to the region in U.S. global strategy.

The United States has been a central actor in Cuba’s politics since their formation. In the second half of the XIX century, the United States was an alternative republican model to the failed Latin American republics and Spanish colonial order. The neighborliness of the American society influenced the formation and development of Cuban nationhood (Perez, *On Becoming Cuban* 2000). The Cuban Republic was born in 1902 marked by the subordination to Washington’s tutelage but, the birth of the Cuban

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<sup>223</sup>American history is generally taught from a perspective that based the origins of the nation in the North Atlantic coast but cities like St. Augustine and New Orleans existed before several of those that later constituted the Confederation and later the Union. Cuba’s colonial history and Spanish policy of alliances and conflicts in Europe and the Caribbean played an important role in the destinies of Florida and Louisiana as Spanish and French territories and later the American South.

republic represented the defeat not only of Spanish colonialism but also of a strong pro-U.S. annexationist movement.

The 1902 independence left three problems that fed Cuban nationalism along the first third of the XX century: The Platt Amendment as an affront to Cuban sovereignty, the naval base in Guantanamo, and the occupation for two decades of the Island of Pines. From the perspective of its foreign relations, republican Cuba's history before 1959 is divided in 1933-1934 when the Platt Amendment was derogated after a revolution overthrew Dictator Gerardo Machado. Before 1933 the political system consisted of a traditional two party system with a Conservative and a liberal party. The possibility of an American intervention authorized by the Platt Amendment was an intrinsic challenge embedded into the political calculation of all factors.

The transition to the second republic began with the government of the one hundred days in September 1933. President Ramon Grau declared the Platt Amendment abolished. The Roosevelt Administration did not recognize the revolutionary government. In 1934 after president Grau's revolutionary government was removed by Colonel Batista's coup, the United States reached an agreement with the successor government to abolish the Platt Amendment. The post-revolutionary order expanded Cuba's sovereignty reinforced institutionally by the adoption of a new constitution in 1940. The constitutional order lasted until March 10, 1952, when General Batista

overthrew President Carlos Prío ending the short, meaningful but troublesome twelve years democratic experience.

In all these events, the United States played a major role, either by action, reaction or indifference. The abolition of the Platt Amendment placed the asymmetrical relation on new bases because it ended the 1902 imposed legality of U.S. interference in Cuba's internal affairs. Yet American diplomats and government continued to have major influence in Cuba's domestic politics.

The post 1934 order strengthened nationalism by creating educational, political and economic institutions destined to promote Cuban culture and interests not necessarily in conflict but independent from the United States. The birth of the second republic in 1940 represented a more modern and less controlling asymmetry between Cuba and the United States, but still one of subordination. The period 1940-1947 represented a balancing juncture for U.S.-Cuba relations since the United States as a great power focused in the global theater of the Second World War but gave positive attention to Cuba as a reliable sugar supplying partner for the anti-Fascism effort (Pettina 2011).

This situation changed with the beginning of the Cold War. The United States concentrated its efforts in Europe and East Asia, lowering Latin America priority in its grand strategy. George Kennan designed a policy based on a strict anti-communist discipline in the Western hemisphere. American strategy prioritized ties with

anticommunist military dictatorship (Pettina 2011). Washington's lesser attention to Cuba and effective global power status translated into tensions for U.S.-Cuba asymmetrical relations during the Carlos Prio's government (1948-1952). The conflict was one of the factors that favored the emergence of the Batista Dictatorship (1952-1958) pretending to solve the contradiction by aligning and subordinating Cuba's foreign policy to U.S. global anticommunist grand strategy.

After Fidel Castro's revolution triumph in 1959 the clashes between American hegemonic presumption in the Western Hemisphere and Cuba's aspiration to full sovereignty led to an asymmetric conflict that still persists. Earl Smith, the last U.S. Ambassador to Cuba during the Fulgencio Batista's dictatorship described his role by saying that the American Ambassador before Castro "was the second man in importance in Cuba, sometimes even more important than the president" (U.S Senate Committee on the Judiciary. n.d., 700). American policymakers began from the premise of an unbounded hierarchical order with the United States as the superpower in the Western Hemisphere and Cuba constrained to be a subordinated follower.

Cuban revolutionaries proposed an alternative narrative: Cuba was an independent country; Havana should agree with the United States only when it promoted Cuban national interests. The revolutionaries felt frustrated with Cuba's dependence from the United States and subordination. From the beginning of the Cuban republic in 1902,



nationalists had insisted on the importance of diversification of foreign ties and trade as the wisest policy. The international system provided them with some significant opportunities after 1959. The Cuban revolution was part of a Latin American awakening rejecting anti-communist dictatorships favored by the Eisenhower administration. The post-Second World War order brought about decolonization and the birth of new African and Asian states. Cuban revolutionaries identified their cause with these trends. There was also the communist countries bloc eager to engage with the post-colonial world.

During his first visit as prime minister in 1959 to the United States Fidel Castro ordered every member of its delegation not to ask for aid even after he received news from his minister of Treasure “Rufo” Lopez Fresquet that there was a U.S disposition to provide 25 million dollars in aid. Castro explicitly stated that he wanted to change the dynamics of the relations. He was cordial with Vice-president Nixon and talked receptively with Secretary of State Christian Herter and the officer of the CIA in charge of combatting communism in the Western Hemisphere Frank Bender, but he made clear that his agenda didn’t have these priorities but his own<sup>224</sup>: Cuban sovereignty and development.

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<sup>224</sup>For a discussion of U.S.-Cuba relations after the revolution in 1959 and during the Eisenhower Era see the coverage of this issue by William Leogrande and Peter Kornbluh in “Back Channel to Cuba” (Leogrande, William & Kornbluh, Peter 2014). For an academic view, closely associated with the Cuban government narrative, see

Just showing independence from the United States scored points for the revolutionaries with their Cuban and third world constituencies. American policymakers didn't have the patience to let Cuba pass its revolutionary fever. Superpower's interests took precedence over any acknowledgement of past mistakes or support for the previous dictatorship in their relations with Cuba. Cuban leaders' vision of their country as equal seems to American policymakers completely out of place. For Cuban revolutionaries the central task was to put Washington on notice: times of Cuba's limited sovereignty were over. For an American Cold War warrior, any disagreement between Havana and Washington might be solved only after Cuba aligns without any reservation under Washington's hegemony in the Western Hemisphere (Pettina 2011).

The clash of foreign policy strategies was the decisive factor at the conflict between the Cuban state and American companies, not economic interests. U.S. security hawks tied to red scare hysteria were generally more radicals in their anti-Castro views than the business owners, lobbyists or managers<sup>225</sup> whose companies were affected by Cuban nationalism. In the the Dulles brothers' foreign policy establishment, any neutralism or small countries playing superpowers against each other was harmful for

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“Algunos antecedentes históricos. El Conflicto Cuba-Estados Unidos desde el umbral del siglo XXI”(Morales 2009)

<sup>225</sup>See Leogrande and Kornbluh (Leogrande, William & Kornbluh, Peter 2014) for details about the clash of the Cuban government with the most important U.S. companies in Cuba at the time. These companies were in the energy sector and communications.

anti-communist solidarity (Pettina 2011). The insulation of the Western hemisphere from the red threat was not a matter of persuasion but of “democratic” discipline.

The post-revolutionary period 1959- 1989 vindicated a successful Cuban resistance, a necessary although not sufficient condition for an Acknowledgement for deference compromise with the United States. Cuban post-revolutionary elites proved their resilience against United States’ ceaseless policy of regime change against them. Soviet support for Cuban revolutionaries was decisive in the early years. With Soviet political, economic and military support, Castro broke regional isolation in the Western hemisphere. Survival with Soviet support allowed Cuba to build powerful Armed forces and form new alliances of the utmost importance with the emerging developing world as well as workable relations with Western Europe and Canada. Last but not least those were the years in which American sanctions had the higher impact because of Cuba’s technological and trade previous connections to the United States. The Soviets provided suboptimal technology, energy and food security but their help was vital to keep the country running.

But communist involvement in the U.S.-Cuba conflict added serious triangular complications to the asymmetrical conflict and bolstered the view of Castro’s Cuba as a national security threat in the American imagination. The dispute between communism and capitalism added an ideological layer to the dispute between American hegemonic

presumption and Cuban nationalism. Communism as an expansionist ideology is antithetical to the American paradigm of liberal democracy and market economy. Logically the central attention for the United States as a superpower was on the communism-capitalism controversy while Cuba's attention was on the promotion of its sovereignty. There were chances of accommodation of a Tito<sup>226</sup> like Cuban nationalist communism but most American administrations did not explore them. Fidel Castro also sent during the Carter administrations several explicit signals about his refusal to play a Tito-like role. The intervention in Ethiopia in 1978 was the most clear example.

The Cold War logic puts Cuba back as a priority in the American political radar. From January 1959 to March 1960, the prevailing image of Cuba in American foreign policy circles went from revolutionary country and Latin American troubled modernizer to communist threat<sup>227</sup>. Cuba became an important piece in the Great Powers puzzle: Khrushchev, Kennedy, Fidel Castro, De Gaulle, Mao and others would discuss Cuba with

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<sup>226</sup>This a reference to the non-alignment foreign policy adopted by Yugoslav Communist nationalist leader Josip-Broz Tito during the Cold War. Supporters of a détente course with Cuba during the Johnson, Ford, and Carter administration used several times this

<sup>227</sup>There were important debates within the State Department about the proper diagnosis and policy to apply to the Cuban revolution since its insurrectional phase. These debates are documented in several books including Thomas Patterson's "Contesting Castro" (Patterson 1995), Mark Falcoff's "The Cuban Revolution and the United States: A history in documents 1958-1960" (Falcoff 2001) and more recently William LeoGrande and Peter Kornbluh's "Back Channel to Castro" (Leogrande, William & Kornbluh, Peter 2014).

references to Munich, Pearl Harbor and even the Guns of August of 1914. The White House Tapes of the Kennedy Administration about decisions during the Missile Crisis (Naftali 1997) shows how American moves on Cuba were generally analyzed in the context of potential retaliation by the Soviets in Berlin or other parts of the old Continent.

The danger of nuclear annihilation during the 1962 Missiles Crisis produced an understanding between Washington and Moscow by which each country committed to exercise restraint in their military conflict about Cuba. Cuba's locking of Soviet support was the result of a historical moment in the ideological power play between the USSR and China, the two communist superpowers. Soviet rush to support Cuba was unintelligible outside Moscow's competition with Beijing for the leadership of the communist movement. United States' insistence on expelling Cuba from the Inter-American system because of Havana's alliance with "the Soviet-Chinese Axis" made support for Castro's government a matter of revolutionary prestige for the Soviets and the Chinese who were not allies by 1961.

The consolidation of Cuba's revolutionary state was also favored by the compromises and strategic restraint by the superpowers within the context of the international order that emerged in the world after the Second World War (Ikemberry 2001). Part of the U.S.-Cuba conflict was negotiated through the great powers management created together with the United Nations. From the debates about the

Missile Crisis in the Security Council to the overwhelming votes against the embargo in the General Assembly since 1992, there is a normative structure imposing restraints on power.

The non-intervention norm, the principle of peoples' self-determination and human rights; and the promotion of development throughout an open economic order were proclaimed and defended by the international society as civilization norms of the post-second world war order. These international *norms* helped the definition of *normalization* and *normality* in U.S.-Cuba bilateral relations. Cuba developed an attrition strategy that placed the United States in the dilemma of trashing the general order and destroy its Cuban adversary or respecting its general liberal design trying to deal with the Cuban issue with covert operations and even temporarily accept the existence of a restrained (non-nuclear) Soviet ally in its vicinity.

The Cold War played an important role in the construction of new visions in conflict. The United States constructed an image of Cuba's subordination to the Soviet Union that was not real but functional to the containment strategy. Superpower's struggle about Cuba reached its climax in October 1962 with the missile crisis. This episode left important scars at both sides of the Strait of Florida. Any American responsible policymaker could not ignore Fidel Castro's petition to Khrushchev to launch a first nuclear strike against the United States in case of an American invasion of Cuba. Any

Cuban responsible policymaker couldn't ignore how close the American national Security Council was to adopt General Curtis LeMay suggestion of a Pearl Harbor style massive bombardment of Cuba. These existential threats were learnt in both countries' schools of international relations about a disposition to escalate causing the other side the most unbearable consequences.

For the United States, the Cuban threat was significant because of the island's place in the ideological struggle between superpowers and their respective socioeconomic models. Cuba amounted to a communist beachhead in the Western hemisphere for thirty years. Cuba's official narrative was essentially different. The defeat of the American organized Bay of Pigs invasion and survival at the "sad and luminous" days of the Missile Crisis (Brenner, James Blight and Philip 2002), when the entire country could have disappeared from the earth, fed a nationalist pride on revolutionary unity.

There are also differences in the role of historical memory in the discussion about U.S.-Cuba relations. The asymmetry of power between Cuba and the United States has a correlate in an asymmetry of attention. Cuban nationalists discuss their history in connection with events that have the United States as a protagonist (The Spanish-Cuban-American War, the Bay of Pigs Invasion, the Missile Crisis, etc.) while American policymakers are educated in a vision that logically see Cuba as a marginal issue with

importance associated to its connection to a European power (Spain, or the Soviet Union).

The asymmetry of attention created important pathologies of misunderstanding when the two countries negotiate. Americans misperceived Cuban insistence on reminding historical grievances as expression of disinterest to address current issues. Meanwhile Cubans misperceived American disinterest on acknowledging past grievances as a desire to reinstate the imperial type of ties that caused Cuban humiliation. Their respective visions might have been true at certain times but at others what happened was a mismatch of cultural attitudes.

### **7.3 American hegemonic presumption and Cuban nationalism in the context of post 1991 Cold War inertia**

A central debate in international relations theory addresses questions of whether and how low politics cooperation (people-to-people exchanges, travel and trade) mitigate or exacerbate conflict in high politics (security and grand strategy images). In U.S.-Cuba relations, American policy- defined by Cold War strategic desire to create a sanitary cordon around Cuba- blocked most of society-society ties. In contrast to explanations that emphasize the role of the pro-embargo Cuban American lobby in American politics; I emphasized the political inertia of Cold War in the context of Cuba's post-Cold War low



relevance for American grand strategy as the main block to an AFD compromise. This factor empowered the Cuban American lobby but it is not one and the same.

Rather than why absence of comprehensive social exchanges remained the dominant pattern of U.S.-Cuba relations, the question here is why it took more than twenty years for the two countries to seriously explore a variant of an Acknowledgement of sovereignty for deference to great power status (AFD) compromise. Diplomacy as a central institution of the society of states mitigates conflict and helps to manage relations of trade, cultural exchanges, low security measures and other non-ideological areas between countries. The differences between grand visions of Cuba's post-revolutionary nationalist state and American oriented liberal hegemony in the Western hemisphere are incompatible but manageable<sup>228</sup> precisely because of the huge asymmetry between Cuba and the United States.

AFD solutions to asymmetric conflicts are favored by the existence of a liberal international order in which sovereignty, international law and hierarchy in international society (Great Powers Management) are recognized institutions. Such normative structure contributes to anticipate states' behavior, facilitate world order and lower the cost of joint

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<sup>228</sup>As Alexander Wendt (Wendt 1999) demonstrated intersubjective knowledge is not necessarily of cooperative nature. Communications and diplomacy help to solve problems of misunderstanding between states but don't solve antagonistic contradictions of interests and values.

pursuit of valued goals. Interactions of cooperation or conflict are facilitated or obstructed by respective visions about the other state, their capacity for empathy and the accuracy of the information they possess. AFD solutions become difficult when the absence of communication reinforces foreign policy visions of the other state as a rogue.

Explanations of dynamics of U.S.-Cuba relations begin by specifying the characteristics of the two states, and their roles in international society. The United States sees itself as the leader of the Western Hemisphere due to its history, “manifest destiny” narrative and capabilities<sup>229</sup>. Cuban nationalists- since the time of Jose Marti- look at their movement as a platform to achieve Latin American integration creating a different balance of power in the hemisphere.

No logic of conflict of values and interests between Cuba and the United States justify the extreme hostility that prevailed between Havana and Washington since the end of the Cold War. Neither in security nor in ideological terms, had Cuba represented a threat to the U.S.-led liberal world order after 1989. It can even be argued that Cuba’s international status as a rival to the United States has gained prominence precisely for the world’s rejection of the outdated American embargo.

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<sup>229</sup>For a discussion of American hegemonic presumption in the Western hemisphere and its role in the policy towards Cuba, see David Bernell’s “Constructing US Foreign Policy. The Curious Case of Cuba.(Bernell 2011)

The U.S.-Cuba case shows how a change in the objective circumstances did not reflect automatically in a foreign policy rationally adjusted to the new conditions. When Congress discussed the two main laws to strengthen the embargo in the 1990's (1992 Cuban Democracy Act and 1996 Helms-Burton Act), the State department officials objected such moves as counterproductive to their global and regional goals of economic liberalization, democracy promotion and international security.

Foreign policy visions convey a synthesis of ideas, beliefs, and political ideology. These Foreign policy visions are generally presented as “common sense” but things “evident” in one side are not so in the other<sup>230</sup>. American expectation of a sudden collapse of Cuba after the fall of the Soviet Union based on the inertia of logical centrality of Moscow in U.S. containment strategy bolstered visions that appropriating new foreign discourses (democracy promotion, nonproliferation, anti-terrorism) advocated for continuing old policies that defined Cuba as an enemy and threat under the new situation. As a consequence, despite president Clinton's realistic assessment in his private judgment that the embargo was a failure since the early days of his administration, during his terms, American foreign policy establishment took the illusion

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<sup>230</sup>I recognize that I might be drawing inferences from my experience of working as political analyst for two years for the Cuban government (1992-1994) and dealing also with U.S.-Cuba relations from a civil society perspective on the Cuban side as a leader in the Cuban Jewish Community (1999-2001) and later discussing and interacting with U.S. policy towards Cuba as a columnist and political advocate in Washington. The normative frameworks, themes, priorities and discussions of the elites in the two countries are essentially different. I would call this statement a result of my observant participation.

that “one further escalating step” will produce the end of the CCP regime to its utmost extremes with the Helms-Burton law.

Asymmetric conflicts are the result not only of disparity of power and disagreement in terms of interests and values but also they have to do with status consciousness and self fulfilling prophecies of hostility<sup>231</sup>. One of the main obstacles to an AFD solution after the end of the Cold War was American official discourse about revolutionary Cuba as a remnant of the communist cause destined to disappear, not as a nationalist project<sup>232</sup>. This diagnosis created a self-fulfilling prophecy that blocked opportunities of interaction by confirming a U.S. policy of isolation and harassment against Cuba. By holding the post-1991 circumstances hostage of the Cold War culture of

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<sup>231</sup>Robert Jervis has defined the concept of self-fulfilling prophecies of hostility in inter-state conflicts: “For our purposes the crucial question is the degree to which a state’s actions that are based on an initial false image have transformed the other state’s intentions. If the prophecy of hostility is thoroughly self-fulfilling, the belief that there is a high degree of conflict will create a conflict that is no longer illusory. Overtures that earlier would have decreased tensions and cleared up misunderstandings will now be taken as signs of weakness” (Jervis 1976, 77).

<sup>232</sup>Here the question is one of degrees. Cuba is at the same time a country with a nationalist project of sovereignty and a revolutionary cause identified with communist challenges to the liberal world order. Given the asymmetry of power after the defeat of the Soviet Union in the Cold War, American insistence on highlighting the communist threat, not the nationalist project, in Cuba’s role reinforced precisely Cuba’s most troublesome identity (revolutionary internationalist) for a U.S. led liberal world order. That is a self-fulfilling prophecy.

communism-capitalism enmity, the American diagnosis made Cuban behavior more predictable but also more hostile at the international scene.

Foreign policy discourses are not explanatory variables but major conditionals that help to reproduce or mitigate the animosity between states. Changes on discourses or the emergence of new narratives might also help to consolidate areas of cooperation and de-escalation. In 1991-1992, the IV Congress of the CCP in Havana and the passing of the 1992 Cuban Democracy Act by the United States congress expressed domestic victories of intransigent positions in both countries. The logic of partial reform proclaimed in Cuba's discourse as using segments of market economy to save communism found a correlate in American discourse about the absence of real change in the political and economic nature of the Cuban regime.

The low density of the interactions between foreign policy discourses of Cuba and the United States played a central role in the obstruction to the creation of a common knowledge about their international status. States -histories lead to conceptions about their "rightful place" in the international system. These conceptions generate an expectation of a certain interaction and level of respect among enemies, rivals or friends (Wendt 1999). Social interactions between states, policy makers, academics, businesspeople and other contribute to achieve some match between expectations and

real possibilities of compromise. These interactions were not the norm of relations between Cuba and the United States between 1992 and 2014.

While Washington looked at Cuba as a defeated communist foe in 1992, revolutionary Cuba saw itself as a victorious nationalist revolution still standing. Cuba's successful resistance against a far stronger power generates an expectation of greater respect. Castro's Cuba was in the vortex of the 1962 Missile Crisis and didn't blink. Just before the end of the Cold War, the Reagan Administration and Cuba negotiated together with Angola and South Africa a series of agreement to bring peace and political opening to Africa's southern cone. Post-revolutionary Cuba looks at itself as a sovereign state with the right to be taken serious in its sovereignty in the international system.

At the transition from the XX to the XXI Centuries, a Cuban nationalist hostile reaction to U.S sponsored neoliberal wave in Latin America was as logical as U.S. superpower assertiveness for proving a market oriented and democratic system superior to the communist alternative. Given the hostility of the United States towards the post-revolutionary government, a Cuban government's deference to American superpower status represented a political and ideological suicide. In the absence of regular venues for interactions and diplomacy, any proposal of an AFD solution to the US.-Cuba asymmetric conflict was at a tremendous disadvantage in Washington and Havana versus its domestic opponents at the starting point of the post-Cold War period.

The election of Barack Obama as the first post-Cold War generation president in the United States, and Cuba's processes of economic reform and political liberalization ignited changes in the discourses about Cuba and the United States in the two countries. However those changes were not the end of the U.S. regime change narratives or Cuba's nationalist resistance and revolutionary internationalism. There is an adjustment of these discourses in a direction to stabilization and prevention of the escalation of conflicts but such change is: 1) **constrained** by the limits to United States executive action settled by the rigidity of the Helms-Burton law, 2) **enabled** by changes in the demographic and sociopolitical conditions in the two societies (Milliken 1999), and 3) **limited** by the "social construction of the respective foreign policy of each country understood as the image of the other in connection to an image about themselves", the implicit paradigms for U.S.-Cuba relations, and the policy options that flow from them (Weldes, Jutta & Saco, Diana 1996).

Even if a discourse is not dominant anymore in one side of the strait, it might remain a historical reference in the vision on the other shore. That is the case for instance of the annexationist idea in the United States that is not dominant anymore in the American political imagination but it is frequently invoked and instrumented in Havana to rally the Cuban population around the nationalist flag. It happens also with the image of Cuba as a "red menace". This image was inextricably associated to the Soviet Union but it is embedded in laws, norms and procedures of the American state. Politically it is

agitated in conservative circles every time Cuba develops ties with an adversary of the U.S. such as Russia, Iran or the PRC.

Each state's foreign policy discourse is not the result of how a unitary rational actor understands the other country but the polyphonic result of contestation between different narratives. Discourses about sovereignty and international hierarchy, and about the other and the Self condense processes of perception and interpretation by state-society actors<sup>233</sup> in which the domestic balance of power play major roles. The Cold War has been over for quite a long time but important groups in the anti-normalization lobby used its legacy to solidify in laws resentment and hostility towards the island nation. Today, May, 2016, Cuba is the only country in the world considered "enemy" of the United States under the Trading with the Enemy Act of 1917 and every U.S. president since 1977 has renewed its presidential authority for the embargo under a clause that grandfathered this status. Rarely the question is asked about what options Cuba has in the international arena in the presence of such American hostility.

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<sup>233</sup>Some constructivists define the reality from which visions and discourses emerge as "intersubjective" (Wendt 1999) indicating a context of material and ideational factors in which ideas and actors change themselves in the process of reproducing identity, roles and interests (Onuf 1989).



This situation resembles what Emmanuel Adler (Adler 1997) described as “mutually constitutive” effect between image and context: the particular images about the international context affect the context itself within which officials apprehend the events taking place and frame their foreign policy options. This is particularly important for understanding the nature of the reproduction and change of foreign policies in conflict. Discourses of hostility or cooperation in U.S.-Cuba relations do not replace or displace each other. They tend to accumulate and build upon each other even if at times they seem to be contradictory or anachronistic<sup>234</sup>.

In the period 2009-2012, Cuba and the United States entered into a synergic cycle that propelled new narratives that recognize differences but facilitate a stabilization of the asymmetric conflict through negotiation and social interactions. Key elements of these new narratives were President Obama’s disposition to negotiate with U.S. adversaries and Raul Castro’s offer of a new relation with Washington as part of the foreign policy associated to economic reform and political liberalization. But these new images of

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<sup>234</sup>For instance, when Cuban nationalist discourse claims that the United States developed for Cuba a sophisticated form of neocolonialism around the Platt Amendment (1902-1934) and even after during the 1934-1959, it is admitting that the annexationist project was unviable. But this implication does not mean the end of a sub-discourse that keep reminding Cubans about the danger hanging over Cuba’s independence; the annexationist idea that supposed to be long defeated. In the case of the United States the number of incompatible discourses that coexist is even higher. The same pro-embargo group that claims a Hayekian view about the liberating power of free trade and capitalism to criticize the Cuban government defends the idea that blocking trade and travel to Cuba is the way to promote democracy in the island.

disposition to negotiate do not displace entirely stereotypes developed in previous periods. On the contrary, the adjustment of foreign policies between Cuba and the United States include situations in which different visions of hostility and understanding project, collide and at times overlap within the public spheres of both countries competing about the proper model of bilateral relations.

### **7.3.1 Washington's three false narratives about revolutionary Cuba**

Due to the asymmetric nature of the U.S.-Cuba conflict, the first obstacle to AFD stabilization comes from the absence of an American acknowledgement of Cuban sovereignty in its entirety. The United States was not always the hegemon in the Western hemisphere but after defeating Mexico in the struggle for the annexation of Texas and the control of the West in 1846-48, it became the strongest center of North America and the Caribbean. This situation, although harsh for some countries of the region that suffered several U.S. military interventions, the loss of half its territory (Mexico) or a province (Colombia with Panama) and the imposition of military dictatorships, created a more stable international system than the competition of empires in Europe and Asia that led to two world wars.

For decades, the United States look at Cuba as a potential addition to its territory or later as a subordinated country under the notion of limited sovereignty according to the Monroe Doctrine and the 1901 Platt Amendment. Cuba was during the XIX century- according to Thomas Jefferson in 1803- “the most interesting addition which could ever be made to our system of states” (Jefferson 1972). This American perspective about Cuba was a major motivation in the proclamation of the Monroe Doctrine. By 1823, John Quincy Adams, the first half of the XIX century U.S. premier foreign policy grand strategist wrote that “It is scarcely possible to resist the conviction that the annexation of Cuba to our federal republic will be indispensable to the continuance and integrity of the Union itself” (Adams 1965).

This self-representation of American superiority had clear racial and Anglo-Saxon cultural superiority undertones<sup>235</sup>. Some of these images are not completely absent from the designers of current U.S. policy towards Cuba<sup>236</sup>, even if anti-Hispanic racism is not anymore at the core of U.S. foreign policy projection into the Western hemisphere. Still it

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<sup>235</sup>Lars Shoultz (Schoultz 2011) and Louis Perez (Perez 2008) have well discussed most of the metaphors and discourses by which the United States self proclaimed its mission to uplift Cuba from its backwardness.

<sup>236</sup> Jesse Helms left a lot of evidences that confirms how he was a racist and racism was an intrinsic part of many of his foreign policy positions. He had very positive views about segregation and the South Africa apartheid regime. Relevant to Cuba, he was quoted with hard phrases about Mexicans and Latinos in general in several discussions about foreign policy in the Senate. Christopher Hitchens called his legacy for American policy, “a national embarrassment” (Hitchens 2008).

is worth to mention them because of two reasons: 1) racist assertions were original sources for implicit arguments in favor of an American political superiority with a right and duty to guide the destinies of its southern neighbors. 2) These racial, religious and cultural superiority undertones provide frequent ammunition to a radical Cuban nationalist narrative that see the Cuban revolution as the moment in which the Cuban people stand up from a century of Latin American humiliation.

I will highlight three of the most relevant images about Cuba that remain relevant after the 1990's in the making of U.S. policy towards Cuba:

1) Cuba is a nation of the “Americas’ family” with “common values” in the Western hemisphere<sup>237</sup>. Cuba is- in this narrative- at U.S.’s “backyard” or “doorstep”, the region in which the United States would fulfill its “Manifest Destiny”<sup>238</sup>. When the preservation of the so called “common values” is discussed

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<sup>237</sup>Louis Perez’s “Cuba in the American Imagination” presented and analyzed a historical collection of images about Cuba in the American mind (Perez 2008).

<sup>238</sup> Manifest Destiny is a concept attributed to NY journalist O’Sullivan by which the United States was destined to expand across the North American continent with its republican, federal and liberal institutions. The definition of the territories to acquire included parts of Mexico, Cuba and in some later readings Hawaii. The idea of Manifest Destiny is one of the best structured proposition that guided the transition of the United States to superpower status. Two books that cover the issue with important references to current U.S. foreign policy are “Special Providence” by Walter Russell Mead (Mead 2002), and “From Wealth to Power” by Fareed Zakaria (Zakaria 1998). Zakaria made the important distinction about national wealth and state power. U.S. foreign policy as a

in the context of an “American family”, the community center is the United States, the house of which Latin America or at least the Caribbean is the doorstep or backyard.

2) Washington attributes to itself to be a “community of judgment” (Weber 1995) that evaluates the state of Cuban sovereignty. In American narrative, Cuba’s sovereignty that supposed to naturally coincide with the values of “the Americas” is blocked by Fidel and Raul Castro. The embargo- in this view- does not violate Cuban sovereignty but try to restore it. The adoption of communism in Cuba-this narrative follow- is the exclusive outcome of deceitful and seductive tactics by a caudillo in connivance with the international communist movement. Eliminating the Castros appears as a U.S. duty, if supported by others better, if not; the United States should do it alone. It is its regional responsibility.

3) The Cuban Revolution was an “*accident of history*”. It is history, therefore it shouldn’t count. From this benign premise, the Fulgencio Batista’s coup in 1952 was a rupture with Western hemisphere common democratic values. American support to this authoritarian dictatorship was an unfortunate mistake

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Super power was launched after the consolidation of important transformation of the executive branch and the governmental management of internal industrialization. The event that christened the launching of superpower status by the United States was the American-Cuban-Spanish War of 1898. This leftan important symbolic legacy for the United States and Cuba.

that never justified anti-imperialist resentment. Fidel Castro took advantage of this situation and after he took power *betrayed* his own revolution.

As an accident, the revolution is simply *a transitional phase* of Cuban history without a legacy. Any major humanitarian cost of the sanctions or resentment created against the U.S. policy in Cuba or Latin America is a simple temporal pain to free the continent of bad influences, completely foreign to the values of the “American family”.

4) Of the two previous premises, a conclusion emerges: Due to its conflictive nature with American liberal democratic values shared by the whole hemispheric family, the Cuban government is at its last throes and isolated. It has lasted for five decades because of Fidel Castro’s evil wisdom for seduction but after his death and that of his brother the system is destined to the dustbin of history.

These three narratives are essentially false and present a clear lack of respect for Cuban sovereignty. Tzvetan Todorov said clearly:

it is only by speaking to the other (not giving orders but engaging in a dialogue) that I can acknowledge him as a subject, comparable to what I am myself...unless grasping is accompanied by a full acknowledgement of the other as a subject, it risks being used for purposes of exploitation, of “taking” knowledge will be subordinated to power (Todorov 1992, 128-132).

Not gratuitously Cuban nationalist historians argued that Cuba was in the period 1902-1958 a “neocolonial republic”<sup>239</sup>.

To begin, the Cuban government is entitled to sovereignty rights because it possesses all the characteristics of statehood and recognition by homologue states from all over the world. Yes, Cuba is not a liberal democracy but that is the case for the majority of the countries in international society. There are issues of human rights violations in Cuba but this is not an accident of history. Cuba lived a revolution that was not the outcome of any unusual seduction. Fidel Castro is not a historical aberration, his radical nationalist ideology and non-democratic projection were probable courses given the trajectory of the first sixty years of the Cuban republic and the American reactions towards nationalist movements in the hemisphere. Castro didn't betray his nationalist revolution by choosing the alliance with the Soviet Union. In fact the majority of his non-communist nationalist cadres remained loyal to his government after he chose the communist course.

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<sup>239</sup>Not all nationalist historians and intellectuals remained loyal to Castro's government after he took the communist path. Nationalist historians played a very important role developing a strong conscience and discussion of Cuba's problems throughout their role in the universities and public schools. Some of them such as Ramiro Guerra and Raul Roa served as officials in various governments of what they called “the neocolonial republic”. A minimal list of these intellectuals includes Jose Luciano Franco, Jorge Manach, Emilio Roig de Leuscherling, Julio LeRiverend, and HerminioPortell Vila. After the revolution of 1959 the nationalist trend intermingled with Marxist analysis in the works of Manuel Moreno Fraginals, Jorge Ibarra and Oscar Zanetti among others.

Cuba's processes of economic reform and political liberalization discussed in the first three chapters of this book exacerbate the incompatibilities between U.S. policy towards Cuba and the current liberal international order created under American leadership at the end of the Second World War. International acknowledgment of Cuba as a country in transition undermines the viability of any American call to isolate the island as the optimal policy to promote democracy and human rights. Inside the American society, Obama's approach to countries in conflict provides a space of attention in which new discourses emerge. The new discourses that emphasize Cuba as a country in transformation, not a threat, carry on the justification for a policy of engagement and dialogue, regardless of the admission of some antagonistic conflicts of interests and values.

### **7.3.1.2 Washington as a unilateral “community of judgment” of Cuban sovereignty**

At the core of Washington's attribution to play a fundamental role in the destinies of Cuba is an imperial version of pan-Americanism<sup>240</sup>. The idea that the Western

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<sup>240</sup>Here I distinguish between traditional Pan Americanism, a vision about the Americas as subordinated to U.S. interests and ideals from proposals of new Pan Americanism in which there is the idea of a Pan American multilateral community of equally sovereign nations that integrate economically and politically. New Pan Americanism does not preclude U.S. leadership but oppose any domination. During President Carter's years



Hemisphere constitutes a sub-community of international society does not amount to accept that the United States should dominate the region. Historically, Washington has followed a unilateralist hierarchical view of this hypothetical hemispheric community.

Cynthia Weber has explained how Washington has taken in most cases the role of *a community of judgment* in itself. It is not throughout multilateral understandings of collective security and international law but by the mighty destiny of the American Republic that the boundaries between sovereignty and intervention are drawn and interpreted<sup>241</sup>. U.S. justification for having an imperial-coercive policy towards Cuba is based on similar arguments to the ones described by Weber about Wilson's intervention in Mexico in 1917 (Weber 1995). The U.S.-Cuba conflict is one of sovereignty with deeper roots than the Cold War conflict.

The structural core of the conflict is ideational. Conceptions of American status that include a responsibility to force American values that are allegedly universal remained prevalent in Washington. The idea is not that the United States interferes in

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there were proposals for a new Pan Americanism such as the Linowitz Report. A most recent proposal was L. Ronald Scheman "Greater America: A new Partnership for the Americas in the XXI Century (Scheman 2003).

<sup>241</sup>Weber's examples about interventions are mainly military ones but (Naples during the Concert of Europe, Mexico during President Wilson or Reagan administration's intervention in Grenada) but the construction of the narrative, the speech is equally valid for the case of sanctions, particularly unilateral sanctions.

Cuban internal affairs since this will be a violation of the proclaimed right of self-determination that Washington supposed to respect. The self-serving narrative affirms that the United States from a position derived from its democracy and higher development is using sanctions to uplift the Cuban people.

Jutta Weldes analyzed the origins of current U.S. policy towards Cuba at the light of these self-serving paternalistic metaphors:

if the Latin American states were ‘sisters’ in the ‘American family’, then the ‘communist threat’ amounted to their ‘seduction’. The invocation of the particular metaphor brought with it the quasi-causal argument that, given the opportunity, ‘the Communists’ will ‘seduce’ these ‘sister republics’ away from both their ‘American family’ and from the path of virtue, that is, from the straight and narrow pursuit of the shared values of ‘American civilization’. As the defender of these values, it was the familial obligation of the US to prevent the ‘seduction’ of its ‘sisters’ by the Soviet Union or the ‘international communist movement’.... This argument implied as well that the US and OAS actions taken against the Castro regime, such as the trade embargo... were not violations of Cuban sovereignty. They were instead the fulfillment of a familial obligation (Weldes, *Constructing National Interests: United States foreign policy and the Cuban Missile Crisis*. 1999).

According to this logic, Washington sanctioned the Cuban government because it is not only separated from the other countries in the hemisphere but also from the Cuban people. The Cuban government- according to this logic- is run by outsiders, almost non-Cubans, who behave in ways contrary to the “American family of nations”. Such

government is not part of the Cuban nation and the Americas but a group preventing the Cuban people from exercising its self-determination.

These false premises are at the base of an anti-engagement bias because it refuses to acknowledge something central to the post 1959 revolutionary order: its nationalist roots. Even in its totalitarian features, the Cuban current system is not imported but the result of a rejection of liberal values by a significant segment of Cuban political society. This segment and others have a cynical and instrumental view about American promotion of representative.

History is not destiny. Nothing stop the possibility that Cuban political culture evolve towards more tolerant attitudes (in fact this is what is already happening as part of modernization) but to begin from the assumption of a natural Cuban democratic order disrupted by Fidel Castro and his “commies” is simply an ideological construction without roots in history. These ideological premises appear even faker when the ghost of a history of American support for previous non-democratic anti-communist regimes hover over any discussion about human rights.

The imperial character of this set of assumptions becomes evident when Washington confronts international norms and the judgments of the United Nations (UN) and even the Organization of American States (OAS), the latter of which Cuba is not even a member state. Many countries in the world perceive the Cuban government as in

conflict with some international human rights norms but their diplomacies consider the Cuban government as illegitimate or outside the community of states. Indeed, the United States assume a responsibility to promote democratic values in other countries such as China, or Vietnam with similar domestic arrangements as Cuba's but American officials don't begin from the premise that the rulers of these countries seduced the Chinese, the Vietnamese or for that matter the Saudi people away from the natural values that they share with the United States.

The "Wilsonian" neoconservative policy towards Cuba poses some of the same questions that Cynthia Weber asked about the precedent of Mexico in 1917 when the United States intervened against revolutionary authorities there. The United States in the Cuban case simply does not accept a standard view of the right to self-determination of the peoples as defined by the resolutions of the United Nations or other multilateral bodies. As in the Mexico case studied by Weber, the U.S. does not discuss "how is the identity of the people decided" (Weber 1995, 27). It simply assumes that the Cuban government is the fundamental obstacle to put an undefined Cuban people (whose voice supposed to be represented by the Cuban-American dominant forces in South Florida<sup>242</sup>)

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<sup>242</sup>Here it is important to notice how the American government's narrative has chosen to ignore the numerous evidences about the non-democratic features of the Cuban American political subsystem in the United States. Organizations of civil liberties and human rights such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch have dedicated reports to denounce serious threats and complicity of the Miami authorities with practices that endanger freedom of expression and other political

in line with the “common values” of the “American family”, on a path of democracy and development, understood narrowly as what the Helms-Burton legislation said Cuba should be.

This vision doesn't recognize the complex civil conflict from which the Cuban revolution aroused and the Cuban condition of those who govern in the island nation and their support base. The Cuban government appears-according to this distorted vision- in a state of permanent war and deception against Cuban civil society. The government-according to this vision- is not in the hands of a Cuban political movement with roots in the island's history but the legacy of a Cold War when manipulation and betrayal prevailed over the Cuban people's desire for democracy. The revolution- in this narrative- was “betrayed” curiously by its main leaders who overwhelmingly remained loyal to the course it took.

It is obvious that this narrative does not fit well with Cuba's history and current reality. In order to solve this cognitive dissonance between the rejection of U.S. policy by the most relevant groups of Cuba's civil society and the U.S claim to represent the Cuban people, the National Endowment for democracy has invented the concept of “independent

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rights within the Cuban American community (Americas Watch 1994). It also ignores the line of continuity of polarization in Cuban political culture in the island as well as in the diaspora. Nelson Valdez pointed out some of these features in his essay “Cuban Political Culture: Between Betrayal and Death (Valdez 1992).

civil society”. This segment gathers only opponents to the regime, “more than 29 000 members”<sup>243</sup> in a population of 11 million, supporting American policy of regime change.

Even by their own calculus, the so called “independent civil society” does not match five percent of the CCP membership and twenty percent of those who assist regularly to Catholic mass. Yet members of Congress such as Senators Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Marco Rubio (R-FL) and Ted Cruz (R-TX) insist on keeping pro-embargo exiles and their sponsored dissidents as the most legitimate if not the only interlocutors from Cuban society. This approach of not acknowledging organizations, intellectuals, people who are considered “civil society” by the rest of the world in Cuba have created a schism between United States human rights policy and civil society promotion by other democratic countries.

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<sup>243</sup>Normando Hernandez, a Cuban dissident who became the “expert” of NED on issues about Cuba told the U.S. Congress: “I use the terms true and emerging Cuban civil society to distinguish from those organizations that call themselves civil society, when in reality they are created and manipulated by the Cuban government. Independent civil society in Cuba is composed of self-created citizen groups-established without authorization from the government to defend their interest before the state. This includes what is known today as the dissidence, the peaceful opposition, the human rights movement, independent political parties, bloggers, and professional and intellectual associations”. Making clear who he meant in a population of more than 11 million, Hernandez said: “to give you an idea of the growth of the Cuban civil society, in 2003, the Institute of Independent Economists of Cuba counted in a census more than 29 000 citizens as members and supporters of more than 450 independent, non- governmental organizations” (Hernandez 2012)

American policy was so obsessed on promoting some particular groups that missed the non-governmental character of other actors renegotiating state-civil society relations from other perspectives. In a revealing line, one of the U.S. interests section 2009 report about how to promote human rights in Cuba told the story of a meeting between Switzerland human rights special envoy and several Cuban organizations.

“The Swiss Human Rights Special Envoy Rudolf Knoblauch met with his Cuban counterparts on November 12, government-organized groups (GONGO’s) and the Catholic Cardinal. *He did not meet with civil society leaders nor make any public reference to Cuba’s human rights record*” (Farrar 2009).

Here it is worth noticing the oxymoron contained in the American diplomatic report. The Swiss Envoy met “the Catholic Cardinal” but the Chief of Mission of the United States reports that he “did not meet with civil society leaders” simply because the Swiss envoy never met members of opposition groups with a very limited appeal. The report later criticized the Swiss envoy for not raising the issue of human rights publicly or privately while mentioning his visit to Cuban prisons as part of European delegations concerned with the situation in Cuban jails. Another clear contradiction because improving the conditions for those behind bars is in most countries a concern the U.S. embassies consider within the realm of human rights.

The presumption of American superiority to decide which organizations constitute civil society presents U.S. policy towards Cuba as imperial. An AFD solution is impossible when the United States policy pretend to dictate who “the Cubans” are or should be. The legacy of Cold War policies in the context of the 1990’s had dramatic negative consequences because in the absence of a critical mass of contacts with the plural identity of Cuban people, the United States projected a discourse that ignored the views not only of the government but also of important segments of civil society about the impact of the sanctions on the Cuban population.

No matter how many international organizations, non-governmental groups and think tanks discussed the negative effect of U.S. policy on the human rights of the Cuban people, the U.S. Government insisted on saying that the sanctions are fundamentally targeted against the Castro brothers. In their view, sanctions do not affect those they arbitrarily decided to consider “the Cuban people”. It might affect those under the leadership of the Catholic Bishops, the protestant churches, the Jewish community, the segments of the Cuban population who support the CCP for communist or nationalist. It might affect those who are neutral or oppose the Castro government and reject also the U.S. embargo. They are numerically a majority but in the National Endowment for Democracy’s programs, they are not the “real, true, and independent Cuban civil society” described by Normando Hernandez with 29 000 members in a population of eleven millions.



This American refusal to engage with Cuban society in its merits has important implications for American regional leadership from the perspective of asymmetrical relations. Relative imperial overstretch- from an asymmetric relations view- is not only about a gap between capabilities and commitments of the hegemon<sup>244</sup> but also about the leader's capacity to accommodate efficiently demands from smaller nations in its regional or world order. This leader's capacity to accommodate hegemony, not domination, is more difficult when the hegemon does not even recognize realistically who the weaker side is.

### **7.3.1.3 Second false premise: the CCP regime as transitional and temporary**

Another major obstacle to the necessary although not sufficient condition of American acknowledgment of Cuban sovereignty is the myth that present the Cuban government as separated from the Cuban people and therefore a temporary “accident of history”-in Senator Marco Rubio's words. **This premise presents the radical nationalism that demands an equal treatment from the United States, the**

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<sup>244</sup>The concept of relative imperial overextension or overstretch is well explained by Paul Kennedy in his theory of cycles of rise and fall of great power. A sign of imperial decadence occurs when a gap appears between the political commitments and the economic, political, technological and social capabilities of the hegemon (Kennedy 1987).

**unconditional lift of the embargo and the devolution of the Guantanamo naval base as a temporary revolutionary fever to end with the Castro's passing from history.**

The main problem of this argument is that assumes as temporary a nationalist movement that has existed for more than a century with no sign to abate. After the end of the Cold War, American diplomacy wasted until December 17, 2014 the possibility of exploring an AFD compromise with the Castros, who are at the dawn of their political career. Fidel and Raul are temporary but Cuban nationalism is not. The Castros, who resisted historical pressures from Americans, Russians, Europeans and Chinese are in the best position to sign up an AFD compromise. Nobody in the present or the future can question Fidel and Raul Castro's nationalist credentials.

Radical nationalism has been strengthened in Cuba's political culture as result of the revolutionary regime's successful resistance against the embargo. Nationalism is not only present in the institutions of the regime but also at the civil society, in publications of the Church, reform oriented magazines, etc. Cuba has paid a heavy price in terms of development and democratic development as result of the command economy, the partial reform adaptations and the national security state but the power of nationalist mobilization is by far stronger than any of its potential rivals, even in the Diaspora.

The Cuban revolution was not predestined to take a communist path but a radical turn was not an aberration. Between 1895 and 1959 (less than fifty five years), Cuba had three revolutions. The humiliation of the Platt Amendment in 1902 and the frustration of a previous nationalist revolution in 1933 fertilized the ground for the 1959 radical turn. In 1952 General Batista's second coup finished a very dysfunctional democratic system in which nationalist parties were already gaining traction.

In 1959, there was significant admiration within Cuban society for the United States. Cuban elites and middle classes were very integrated to cordial relations with their northern neighbor. Yet a vision of the U.S. as an imperial superpower was not marginal in Cuban politics. Before the revolution Cuba was not guided by liberal and democratic "hemispheric values". In fact, "hemispheric democratic values" of the "family of American republics" were not common practices. U.S. policy prioritized anticommunism over any liberal democratic concern until the Carter Administration<sup>245</sup>.

The survival of the CCP regime two decades after the loss of its Soviet ally disproves the idea of communism as imported. U.S. post-Cold War diplomacy envisioned that the CCP would necessarily follow the destiny of its counterparts in Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall. That was the central forecast for most of the 1990's. This

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<sup>245</sup>For a theoretical and historical discussion of the role of Human Rights in American policy towards Latin America see Kathryn Sikkins' "Mixed Signals: U.S. Human Rights policy and Latin America" (Sikkins 2004).

was changed later to the common notion that everything would fall apart as soon as Fidel Castro, the charismatic enchanter disappears. It didn't happen.

It is worth noting the contrast between the U.S. official discourse about Cuba and the sophisticated U.S. view about other countries ruled by non-democratic nationalist regimes. American policy adopted towards China and Vietnam is not based on the premise that their revolutions were an "accident" or "transitional" but an important stage in their nation-building<sup>246</sup>. Would it make any sense to say that every country in the world ruled by a non-democratic regime is "transitional" and not entitled to sovereignty? American foreign policy combines the idea of liberal democracy as a final criterion of legitimacy with the acknowledgment of sovereignty of many countries with whom Washington disagrees. With respect to China and Vietnam, United States' solidarity with anti-government forces does not amount to an unrealistic confrontational approach.

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<sup>246</sup>Ineed to make a distinction here between pre-Nixon and post Nixon policy towards China. During the Eisenhower Administration, John Foster Dulles who advocated for some restraint in the Taiwan Strait also argued that Communist rule in China was a "passing phase" because its repressive structure makes it unsustainable (Tucker 1990). The Kennedy Administration began to change the perception about communist rule in China as a political process to cope with a long term perspective. These changes in image are well explained by Evelyn Goh in "Constructing the U.S. Rapprochement with China, 1961-1974. From Red Menace to 'Tacit Ally'" (Goh 2005). In the case of Vietnam after the U.S. defeat in the war and the rapprochement process of the 1990's the Clinton, Bush and Obama administration followed a bipartisan policy that took a long term approach to the promotion of human rights. For a contrast between the Bush Administration statements about a constructive dialogue with the communist party of Vietnam and its policy towards Cuba see Michele Zebich-Knos's "U.S. Foreign Policy towards Cuba: Trends and Transformation during the George W. Bush Administration" (Zebich-Knos 2005)

Cuban processes of economic reform and political liberalization favored the emergence of a counter-narrative in the U.S. to the theme of the transitional character of the CCP regime. One important contribution came from the unintended consequences of the proposed track II (people to people exchanges) of the Torricelli law (CDA) of 1992.

Rapprochement with civil society was presented in the CDA as a tool for peeling off segments from the Cuban government's political base. But the "people to people" travel brought airs of change not only to Cuba but also to U.S. policy. American travelers saw the inadequacy of the embargo for Cuba's reforms and American interests in the island. Looking at Communist Cuba from a long-term perspective gained traction in the last two years of the Clinton's administration. In what Patrick Haney, Maureen Haney and Walt Vanderbush describe as "Clinton's Other Infidelity", president Clinton allowed exchanges with Cuba that were out of line with the directly subversive line suggested by the same law he signed for Florida politics in 1996 (Haney, Patrick, Haney, Maureen & Vanderbush, Walt 2006).

The pro-embargo sectors tried to slowdown these people to people contacts as soon as they realized the feedback pushing for a change to a more constructive policy towards Cuba. The 1996 Helms-Burton law was a substantial step against an AFD stabilization of the U.S.-Cuba conflict. It deepened the flaws of the politics of inattention in the great power, a pattern of asymmetric conflict. The 1996 Helms-Burton law and the

two commissions for a Free Cuba (Commission for the Assistance to a Free Cuba 2004) under George W. Bush (2004, 2006) personalized the Cuban government in Fidel and Raul Castro (Zebich-Knos 2005). Such diagnosis confused what democratization theory identifies as a post-totalitarian regime with a sultanistic one (Linz, Juan & Stepan, Alfred 1996). From this wrong diagnosis came out the policy of waiting out the Castros since the regime is only based- it is presumed- on their control and terror of the other 11 million Cubans.

President Bush's restrictions against licensed travel to Cuba based on the idea of a regime on its last throes proved to be unpopular in the Cuban American community. In 2004 and 2008 all democratic candidates with the exception of Senator Joseph Lieberman (in 2004) advocated for relaxing travel regulations to Cuba, primordially for family travel. Beginning in April 2009, president Obama allowed Cuban American unrestricted travel to Cuba setting an example that culminated with the 2015 January measures allowing twelve general licenses for non touristic traveling to Cuba. The expansion of society contacts favored the deepening of the processes of economic reform and political liberalization in Cuba.

#### **7.3.1.4 Third false narrative: The Cuban regime as an isolated and repudiated threat to international society**

The U.S embargo narrative until December 17, 2014 presented Cuba as an isolated country ignoring that Havana has relations with all the countries of the hemisphere except the United States. Actions to punish countries, foreign companies and banks from third countries as part of the embargo were conceived as legitimate since the Cuban regime-in this vision- was hated by the public opinion of those countries. Whenever United States' allies in Europe and the Western hemisphere argued for engagement strategies, they were dismissed as motivated by selfish economic interest. Even the sanctions against third countries under the Helms law were approved without any sunset clause or mechanism for periodic evaluation of the effect of the sanctions in the Cuban population or U.S. relations with other nations<sup>247</sup> despite the warnings of the State Department.

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<sup>247</sup>For instance several European banks including French BNP-Paribas has been sanctioned by the U.S. treasure not for violating a European or even an international law or obligation from a U.S.-France or U.S-European treaty. The Bank was punished with a fine of more than 8 billion dollars fine for violating several extraterritorial U.S. laws with no consent in Europe. Although the U.S. succeeded in the imposition of sanctions, the debate about transferring operations of the banks to other currencies different from dollars has gained traction. This intangible issue might become tangible in monetary terms if the credibility of the U.S. dollar as a safe currency is deteriorated.

Most diplomatic reports from American allies' embassies in Havana or even the U.S. Interests section <sup>248</sup> have disputed for decades the vision of the CCP regime as isolated. But the politics of inattention in Washington postponed a debate about the changes taking place in Cuba and the best strategy to coordinate diplomatic action with American allies. Due to American politics of inattention, Washington policymakers had taken long to realize how Cuba's general position had strategically improved significantly since 1993 to the present in all the major strategic triangles with American allies and rivals. Cuba counted with some important support from China and Russia, a special relationship with Brazil and Venezuela, and better relations with Europe and Canada. The lowest point of Cuba's post-Cold War weakness was already passed by 2000.

Washington missed the optimal moments to build an AFD solution when Cuba was less internationally connected and weaker. As former Ambassador and Cuban scholar Carlos Alzugaray pointed out the updating of Cuba's foreign policy has preceded the launching of its economic reform (Alzugaray, *La Actualizacion de la Politica Exterior Cubana* 2014). Cuba has today diplomatic relations with 182 countries, with missions

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<sup>248</sup> I will not quote here Wikileaks cables due to the recommendation by the school that those are still secret documents of the U.S. government. Quoting or sharing them might be considered against potential applicants to jobs in the U.S. government but there are plenty of evidences that reports from the U.S. interests sections in Havana are on target and realistic about the level of support for the government and lack of it among the opposition.



(diplomatic, consular, and with international organization) in 133 countries. There are 87 diplomatic missions in Havana plus direct missions of six international organizations. Havana was successively president of the Non-Aligned movement (2006-2009) just before the OAS lifted up the sanctions against Cuba, eventually inviting Cuba to the Summit of the Americas in Panama in 2015.

#### **7.3.1.5 How these three American narratives matter?**

These three narratives (Cuba without sovereignty, the CCP nationalist regime as a transitional phase, and Cuba as an isolated threat to international society) created a Cold War culture and set of official routines within American foreign policy disconnected from the realities of the island-nation. This hostility was institutionalized in presidential order and laws between 1959 and 2000. It was also internalized as a foreign policy culture and connected with other core beliefs of U.S. self-image, values and projections towards the Western hemisphere and the world. For decades, the belief of these three narratives led to a policy of low interaction between American and Cuban societies. This structural context, more than the power of the pro-embargo Cuban-American lobby, explains the success of the exile agenda of hostility and isolation. A vicious cycle took place in which lack of interaction boosted the three false narratives and these conceptions

encouraged a situation of no-interaction in which the narratives were more difficult to disprove.

The adoption of these three narratives preceded the creation of the Cuban American pro-embargo lobby in 1981. Once it was created, the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF) and its derivatives became active reproducers of the culture of hostility and misperception. The end of the Cold War and a change in the priorities of the United States and conditions deepened the politics of inattention and the institutional inertia of the U.S. official narrative about Cuba.

During the 1990's, the Cuban American pro-embargo lobby promoted the legal codification of the embargo policy narrative. The Cuban American National Foundation was successful in passing laws that cemented a maximalist agenda of regime change in Cuba as the policy of the United States. As David Campbell explained there is within American foreign policy a process of redefinition of dangers that does not begin from zero. "There has always been more than one referent around which danger has crystallized. What appears as new is more often than not the emergence to the fore of something previously obscured by that which has faded away or become less salient" (Campbell 1992, 196). A relatively low key designation of Cuba as a terrorism sponsoring country in 1982 as part of the rhetoric and accusations of Cold War containment got its own life in the post-Cold War world.

Until May 2015, Cuba was still listed as a terrorist state by the U.S. Department of State despite the fact that no act of terror have been sponsored or organized by Cuba or any of the countries mentioned as supported by Cuba in all the previous reports. This is what the report of the State Department about Cuba as a state sponsor of terrorism said in May 2014:

Cuba was designated as a State Sponsor of Terrorism in 1982.

Cuba has long provided safe haven to members of Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA) and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Reports continued to indicate that Cuba's ties to ETA have become more distant, and that about eight of the two dozen ETA members in Cuba were relocated with the cooperation of the Spanish government. Throughout 2013, the Government of Cuba supported and hosted negotiations between the FARC and the Government of Colombia aimed at brokering a peace agreement between the two. The Government of Cuba has facilitated the travel of FARC representatives to Cuba to participate in these negotiations, in coordination with representatives of the Governments of Colombia, Venezuela, and Norway, as well as the Red Cross. There was no indication that the Cuban government provided weapons or paramilitary training to terrorist groups.

The Cuban government continued to harbor fugitives wanted in the United States. The Cuban government also provided support such as housing, food ration books, and medical care for these individuals"(Department, U.S. State 2014).

The persistence of Cold War narratives in U.S. policy towards Cuba until December 17, 2014 confirms what David Campbell presented as "the reproduction of identity". The end of the Cold War and Cuba's alliance with the Soviet Union did not spark a re-analysis of the otherness Cuba represented for the United States establishment. On the contrary: "while the objects of established post-1945 strategies of otherness many no longer be plausible candidates for enmity, their transformation has not by itself altered

the entailments of identity which they satisfied” (Campbell 1992, 195). With Cuba, enmity identities were reinforced soon after the United States enunciate a new hierarchy of principles for its foreign policy such as the promotion of democracy and free trade to replace the containment doctrine.

The hostile narratives were embedded on the executive branch routines and colored the bilateral relations with a stain of suspicion and rancor. Cuba is object of much politicized scrutiny and hostile labeling. It was called in the 1990’s “rogue states”. The State Department highlighted every negative aspect of Cuba’s record in human rights, human trafficking, internet freedom, or religious liberties at times just for not cooperating. Since the hostile attitude was across the board every aspect feeds from the others. Congress appropriated funds between twelve and twenty million dollars every year to promote opposition activities. A constituency of groups profiting from those regime change activities appeared within the American bureaucracy and political society with counterparts in Cuba (Brenner, Haney and Vanderbush 2008).

The agreement of December 17, 2014 between presidents Raul Castro and Barack Obama closed a period in which the anti-Cuba narrative in the executive branch complemented a corresponding settled position in Congress. The Helms-Burton law is considered one of the more intrusive legislation on foreign policy presidential powers. Secretary of State Warren Christopher warned Congress about the problems the law

would bring to relations with Cuba and third countries, because it will “damage prospects of a peaceful transition in Cuba” and “jeopardize key U.S. interests around the world” (Weinman 2004). With few exceptional terms such as the 2008-2010 term, most of the post-Cold War period Congress tried to obstruct any movement to relax it.

That is why President Obama’s action to change the executive branch’s narrative about the policy towards Cuba is of utmost relevance. Because of the relative preeminence of the executive branch in the construction of American foreign policy narrative, the presidency has the most privileged position to alter or reproduce the images about Cuba. Gradually President Obama abandoned the image of Cuba as a threat replacing it with one of the island as a country in transition. By visiting Cuba in March 2016, Obama reinforced the new post-Cold War narrative of a country in economic reform and political liberalization, Obama opened a chance of some AFD solution because he also recognized Cuban sovereignty as part of his new hemispheric policy.

### **7.3.2 Cuban narratives of revolutionary resistance and solidarity: Another obstacle to AFD solutions?**

Given the disparity of power and the differences of perception of vulnerability between the United States and Cuba, it is impossible to expect that a nationalist Cuba could express deference to the United States' great power status without getting first an assurance of respect for the island's sovereignty. The most powerful self-image guiding Cuba's foreign policy identifies the country as a Latin American bulwark of independence against United States domination.

This narrative might be an obstacle to an AFD management of the asymmetric conflict for two main reasons:

- 1) Cuba's nationalism implies an active role bringing Latin American countries and markets together to gain leverage versus the United States. This is necessarily a challenge to American hegemony since Cuba's projections towards hemispheric governance pursued organizations from which the United States is excluded as a way to articulate a Latin American agenda of claims and demands against the industrialized north and for a more balanced hemisphere<sup>249</sup>.

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<sup>249</sup>This attitude is clearly expressed in Cuban government's rejection of the OAS. Cuba was expelled from the OAS in 1962 on dubious arguments about lack of democratic governance (at the time the continent was plagued with anti-communist dictators that were never expelled) and alignment with "the Soviet-Chinese Axis"(when China and the Soviet Union were already at odds with each other). But the organization changed and in

2) Cuba's post-revolutionary identity includes a nationalist component (sovereignty principle) and an internationalist impulse (communist solidarity). The internationalist impulse is expressed in Cuban foreign policy practices in two main forms: Third World internationalism and proletarian-socialist internationalism. The internationalist principle implies a support for Cuba's ideological homologues that in many cases have a conflictive relation with the hegemonic norms of a U.S.-led liberal order (free trade, liberal democracy and at times, sovereignty).

These two obstacles are accentuated or mitigated by the structure of the international system and the agency developed by the Cuban state in the balance of its nationalist and internationalist impulse. Hostility from the United States and encirclement strategies that prevent American allies from a productive relation with Cuba reinforce the alignment between nationalist and internationalist impulses. In contrast, persuasive-hegemonic contexts offer mutual benefits opportunities in which confrontations are counterproductive to the interests and reputation of Cuban elites.

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2009 had removed all sanctions allowing the return of Havana to the hemispheric organization. Cuba has expressed no intentions to join. Raul Castro has repeated several times Fidel Castro's argument against "having the empire within the family" (F. Castro, Acto Central por el aniversario XX del Asalto a los Cuarteles Moncada y Carlos Manuel de Cespedes 2013) and the option for a Latin American organization capable to deal with the United States as a united front.

In contrast to isolation, cooperation dynamics open possibilities for deference with the United States in the context of normalization (acceptance of international norms by Cuba and the United States). The internationalist principle then can be expressed in a peaceful competition with the United States for influence in helping other countries<sup>250</sup> and even in some cooperation against problems of underdevelopment or global governance with the United States.

In terms of agency, there is an internal debate within Cuba post-revolutionary elites. There are positions that emphasize development and defense as the central priorities while other highlights issues of political control and offensive alliances to balance American real or potential hostility. In typical fashion of asymmetric relations, Cuba's security debate is not only about current threats but also focus on the question "what if?" inquiring about possible future vulnerabilities.

The image of Cuba as a Latin American David against an American Goliath is particularly powerful within the Cuban political culture for several reasons: 1) for its evocation of views expressed by Jose Marti, the father of Cuban independence, in his political testament. Within Cuba, coincidence with Jose Marti, "the Apostle" is a source

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<sup>250</sup>This disposition was expressed by Fidel Castro even at the top moment of Cuban internationalist projection in 1979 when Cuba welcomed a 300 million dollars food aid offer by the United States to the National reconstruction government of Nicaragua after the fall of dictator Somoza (F. Castro, *Acto Central por el aniversario XXVI del Asalto a los Cuarteles Moncada y Carlos Manuel de Cespedes* 2013, 176).



of legitimacy<sup>251</sup>, 2) For the grandiose role attributed to Cuba's role in Latin America, a region of which Havana has been an important ideas powerhouse but never a locomotive for economic growth, 3) For the connection it builds between Cuban nationalism and revolutionary internationalism (Cuban independence was the Latin American cause célèbre during the second half of the XIX century and the Cuban Revolution made Havana a revolutionary Vatican against right wing dictators in the second half of the XX century).

There are more perspectives emphasizing American democratic and republican dimensions as well as its condition of host of the largest Cuban emigrants' communities. But the image of the United States as a threat to Cuban sovereignty is still prevalent. The image of a Cuban David against an American Goliath was used by Cuba's national hero

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<sup>251</sup>Different from other communist countries, Cuba is not characterized by a cult of personality of the kind that existed in The USSR with Stalin, in China with Mao Zedong and North Korea with the Kim family. As a Latin American country, Cuba is part of the Western Tradition. However there is a cult to Jose Marti, as Cuba's national hero or the Apostle of Cuba-as he is known. Marti is at the same time the greatest Cuban political writer, and his most important poet. He lived half of his political life in the United States, Spain and Mexico, the three countries that played the most strategic role in Cuba's destiny during the XIX century. There is a Marti's sculpture in the central square of every Cuban town. There are two institutes in Havana to study his literary work and his political thoughts. Every primary, secondary, high school or University has a Marti's sculpture and every year nationally there is a contest about interpretations and discussion of Jose Marti's complete works that are available in every library of the whole country. Jose Marti proclaimed himself heir of Bolivar's mandate for the integration of Latin America. Marti rejected integration between Latin America and the United States based on the difference of cultures and the exclusion and discrimination against Hispanics, blacks and native Americans he witnessed in the North's colossus.

Jose Marti to discuss his struggle for organizing the Cuban Revolutionary Party within the Cuban Diaspora in the U.S. Marti's immediate goal was to achieve the independence of Cuba from Spain and contribute to release Puerto Rico from Spanish colonial chains. But in his political testament, Marti confessed the long term goal of his life: to block the United States' expansion in the Caribbean and Latin America<sup>252</sup>.

Marti lived in the United States for almost fifteen years of the last quarter of the XIX century and witnessed the impetuous industrial development of his time and the expansion to the West territories, from which Native Americans and Mexicans were displaced. Marti respected American republicanism but was not an enchanted Tocqueville. Marti proposed a different modernity open to the cultural-social pluralism of the Latin American population: Black, Indian and European immigrants that he saw as impossible in the short term in the United States. Marti proposed a Latin American republican paradigm but insisted on not using an "imported book" from Europe or North America.

Marti alerted that the absence of balance between North and South America was an incentive for U.S expansion. In his essay "Our America", Marti called Latin American governments to create an alliance and not to support any U.S. confrontation with Europe

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<sup>252</sup>For a good selection of Jose Marti's works see the Penguin Book reader (Marti, Jose Marti Reader: Selected Writings 2002)

or any European war against the United States. Marti explained his warning against U.S. expansionism based on his criticism of several features of American domestic politics.

First, Marti developed a systematic criticism of the anti-Latino racism prevailing at the end of the XIX century in the United States. The Cuban apostle criticized white supremacist treatment of Native Americans, Latinos, and Blacks as a result of American victory in the American-Mexican War of 1846-1848. He identified racism as a feature of the U.S. culture pushing for an expansionist policy. In his article "Vindication of Cuba" (Marti 2002), published on March 21 in "the Evening Post" he repudiated the discrimination of Cuban cigar rollers in Tampa and Key West by Whites. Exalting the merits and laboriousness of the Cuban immigrants he rejected white supremacist propaganda treating it as a dominant element of American society (Thomas 2008).

About the possibility of conflict between the United States and Latin American states, Jose Marti wrote:

the pressing need of our America is to show itself as it is, one in spirit and intent, swift conquerors of a suffocating past, stained only by the enriching blood drawn from the scarfs left upon us by our masters. The scorn of our formidable neighbor who does not know us is our America's greatest danger. And since the day of the visit is near, it is imperative that our neighbor know us, and soon, so that it will not scorn us (Marti, Our America 2002).

Marti's words got an aura of prophecy with the outcome of the Hispanic-Cuban-American war of 1898. By this year, Jose Marti was already dead. The American High Command humiliated Cuban general Calixto Garcia who was their ally in the combats of

El Caney and San Juan Hill. Garcia's troops couldn't enter into Santiago de Cuba with the racist pretext that the Cuban Army was full of black brigands. The U.S. intervention is not presented in Cuban history as one of American help to Cuban independence but as a late opportunistic U.S. military action to frustrate Cuban independence.

The influential events of the XIX century led to the creation of the Cuban republic in 1902. The first Cuban republic came to live under United States' interference in Cuba's internal affairs. From the first constitutional assembly in 1901, the United States imposed an ultimatum to the Cuban legislators. The United States as an occupying power conditioned Cuba's independence to the incorporation of a "permanent clause" authorizing American intervention in the island at will. The Platt Amendment (L. Perez, Cuba under the Platt Amendment 1986) codified Cuban subordination to the United States in a kind of suzerainty similarly applied by Washington to other territories such as the Republic of Panama.

A majority of Cuban legislators initially rejected in 1901 the Platt amendment but after tough negotiations in which the alternative seemed to be unlimited occupation, the Cuban Congress accepted. This episode coined a pejorative term in Cuban political culture: "plattista" that still is frequently used by nationalists to stigmatize Cubans who accept to bestow U.S. authorities with prerogatives that fall under Cuban sovereignty. The Platt amendment was abolished unilaterally by a revolutionary Cuban government

that deposed Dictator Gerardo Machado in 1933 but was never recognized in Washington. By 1934, U.S. “good neighbor” policy designed by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt nullified the amendment understood as a test case for the seriousness of the new attitude towards Latin America<sup>253</sup>.

This is not the space for presenting a whole history of Cuban nationalism. Suffice to say that the nationalist narrative became hegemonic in Cuba’s educational system even when the United States exerted political tutelage over the island. The time of the Cuban Republic before the 1933 revolution was crisscrossed by the dominance of nationalist ideology. Central themes of the twenties were the abolition of the Platt Amendment and American devolution of the island of Pines to Cuba’s jurisdiction.

After the 1940 democratic transition, the Cuban state developed several institutions to expand Cuban sovereignty and negotiated some AFD successful arrangements with the United States. The new political system was more autonomous from American interference than its predecessor (1902-1934). The main party of the period was called the Cuban Revolutionary Party, invoking Marti’s ideology and called itself the “autenticos”. It governed Cuba from 1944 to 1952 (Ameringer 2000). The main scenario of Cuba’s foreign policy was the Western Hemisphere where Cuba promoted

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<sup>253</sup>For a discussion about the impact of the end of the Platt Amendment on U.S.-Cuba relations from an American perspective in 1935 see the report “Problems of the New Cuba” (Foreign Policy Association 1935)

coalitions of Latin American countries to fight for a developmental agenda and reduce American dominance.

The autenticos governments had a policy of democratic solidarity with countries submitted to dictatorial regimes and in defense of Puerto Rico's independence from the United States. During the 1940-1952 democratic experience, Cuba's relations with the United States matured. A central issue of bilateral discussion was Cuban sugar quota in the U.S. market. The nationalist doctrine denounced economic pressures such as the cutting of market quotas as foreign aggression to force smaller ones to adopt detrimental policies to their national sovereignty and development.

President Ramon Grau San Martin coined a foreign policy doctrine against economic aggression as a form of intervention. Cuba will oppose to any economic sanctions approved unilaterally. Cuban Secretary of State advocated for its codification in inter-American law at the founding conferences of the OAS and the Rio Pact. Cuba also opposed the veto right conferred to the five permanent members of the Security Council in the United Nations San Francisco Charter. Havana denounced the veto as opposed to the principle of sovereign equality. These two Cuba's anti-hierarchy positions in international relations caused some frictions with the United States but they never represented a Cuban rupture with American led order in the Western hemisphere.

American Cold War pivot to East Asia and Western Europe had a profound impact on U.S. Cuba relations. It lowered Latin America priority in U.S. foreign policy after 1947. In the absence of a security and foreign policy logic, the politics of inattention prevailed. Washington deferred to the interests of local beet and corn sugar producers in detriment of exports from Cuba. Under such conditions the Cuba's position deteriorated versus the United States and experienced a cut down of the island's sugar quota in the American market. In the middle of the 1952 presidential and congressional elections, General Fulgencio Batista returned to power through a coup d' etat on March 10. Foggy Bottom welcomed the coup.

The triumph of the Cuban revolution in 1959 happened in a context of profound resentment towards United States in the Western hemisphere. In the Caribbean, the United States supported the dictatorships of Trujillo en Dominican Republic, Perez-Jimenez in Venezuela, Somoza in Nicaragua, Castillo Armas in Guatemala, and Batista in Cuba. In this context, American protests against the revolutionary summary trials of military loyalists of Batista's regime sounded hypocritical (Chase 2010). It was the beginning of a difficult dialogue about human rights between the two societies.

Cuba's revolutionary foreign policy entered rapidly into conflict with American hegemony in the Americas. First, Fidel Castro promoted a political model domestically in direct clash with any American tutelage over Cuban politics. His views were at least

socialist, if not already communist and procured from early on at least an equidistant relation with the United States and the countries of the communist bloc. This projection was in direct conflict with U.S.'s views of continental solidarity against communism (Guevara 1964). The revolutionary narrative did not limited to nationalism but included a permanent invocation of internationalist socialist solidarity.

This double dynamics made almost impossible to advance an AFD solution to the bilateral conflict in the first decade of the asymmetric conflict. Not only because of the U.S imperial coercive policy. For Cuba's revolutionary policy, deference to U.S. great power status was anathema. Castro's Cuba worked feverishly to support revolutionary movements across the Latin American region, and the world (Africa for instance) in conflict with the U.S. led world order. The declared goal of the Cuban revolution was to make the Andes the "Sierra Maestra" of Latin America, creating- in Che Guevara's words- "two, three, many Vietnams" against the United States. Most Cuban allies in the United States were affiliated to the new left, specifically the anti-war and black radical movements.

AFD solutions require some historic maturity of asymmetric conflicts, difficult to achieve in the immediate aftermath of a revolution. The hegemonic great power looks at the weaknesses and disorganization created by revolutions and tends to believe on the leverage conferred by the disparity of capabilities. Revolutions have an unusual



assertiveness originated on the support by passionate masses. In terms of historical cycle, an AFD compromise in earlier moments of revolutions is improbable because there is no accepted stalemate or impasse between the contenders. The real balance of power is diffused and surrounded by a maximalist feeling not amenable to strategic cost-benefit calculation.

As long as there was an implacable U.S. opposition to post-revolutionary Cuba, the internationalist impulse was part of the survival strategy. Washington's confrontational attitude attracted support for Cuba from the communist bloc. Cuba's posture was strengthened with every action in the world that distracted the efforts of the United States to put off anti-capitalist fires. Cuban revolutionary leaders demanded the USSR and the PRC to support their project as inseparable part of socialist struggle over the world (Guevara 1964).

Reciprocally Cuba expressed a commitment to conduct its foreign policy towards the United States in coordination with the world socialist bloc. This was not an issue of only the 1960's or 1970's but also invoked in the 1980's when Cuba was an active player in Angola. In 1985, Raul Castro told the then Secretary of the CPSU Mikhail Gorbachev how Cuba rejected negotiations with the United States as the Reagan Administration wished. Cuba was taking into account the atmosphere of hostilities between the soviet

block and the U.S. in Europe (Castro, Woodrow Wilson Center of International Scholars. 1985).

According to a declassified report by Raul Castro of his conversation with Gorbachev:

the Reagan Administration wrongly believes that we are desperate to negotiate. They are totally wrong. We want to complicate their aggressive policy. We are using our contacts with the printed press and TV, the Catholic Church to gain a political space. We want to influence liberal and moderate elements defeating the aggressive image about us presented by the Reagan administration within the United States.

There is a cardinal factor too. *We are not going to negotiate a regional détente in the Western Hemisphere, not with us, while there is not world détente, firstly with the Soviet Union.* Cubans are not SamoraMachel in Nkomati” (Castro, Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars 1985).

### **7.3.2.1 What changed with the end of the Cold War in Cuba’s narrative?**

The end of the communist bloc made potential AFD solutions more probable because the balance between nationalism and communism in Cuban identity moved in favor of the former. This was expressed in Fidel Castro’s discourse when he claimed that Cuba’s first internationalist duty was to survive itself and develop (F. Castro 1996). This shift in Cuba’s policy and Castro’s renunciation to any weapons of mass destruction provided security assurances to the United States and other governments in the Caribbean. It was difficult to argue that Cuba was a potential base for Soviet or Chinese

military power because neither Havana nor any of these two countries were interested in this type of alliance.

One area of direct impact on Cuba's narrative was the gradual opening to a more dynamic relationship with his émigrés in the United States. In 1994, the ministry of foreign affairs created the Division of Cuban Residents Abroad Issues, known as DACRE for its Spanish acronym. The new division expressed a rapprochement policy of the Cuban government to émigrés beyond those who were part of the revolutionary solidarity movement<sup>254</sup>. The dialogue with moderate groups opened an agenda of limited reconciliation. This friendlier environment sparked increased Cuban-American travel to the island, communications and remittances.

Politically, these new relations Cuba-Diaspora showed a new image of Cuba to the American society and a new vision about United States as a more Latin country and the home of 15 % of the Cuban population to Cubans in the island. A more nuanced view about Cubans living abroad including those who disagree with the regime emerged out of the contacts. Cuban-Americans travelled to the island since the Carter Administration but

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<sup>254</sup>There are several groups involved in actions of revolutionary solidarity with Cuba in the United States. The pioneer of these groups was the Fair Play For Cuba Committee (FPCC) founded in 1960 and considered a precursor of the American new left. The Committee included cultural celebrities and journalists such as Allen Ginsberg, the sociologist Charles Wright Mills, William Worthy, an African American journalist who became famous for his defense of freedom of speech and the right to travel to China and Cuba (Gosse 1993). Later there are groups such as the Venceremos Brigade, Pastors for Peace and within the Cuban American community, the Antonio Maceo Brigade.

during the nineties the tone of the contacts and the contribution of émigrés to the population's welfare reached a critical mass. These contacts, later food sales and humanitarian aid helped to mitigate an official line of permanent antagonism to the U.S.

The massive travel of émigrés to Cuba changed political dynamics not only in terms of their direct role in Cuban society but on the government's narrative about their potential constructive role in the United States. Since many of the travelers to the island opposed the U.S. embargo a new patriotic image of the Cuban American community emerged. Cuban expatriates and American political society appeared more as a pluralist polity, not a monolith against the Cuban revolution. This represented an opportunity for nationalists since many émigrés support trade and dialogue between the two countries.

After the interlude when George W. Bush Administration attempted to stop the flow of travelers and remittances to the island, the Obama Administration expanded people-to-people contacts with Cuba. Cuba's image in the American press began to be one of a country in transition, not a threat. Obama's policy of dialogue bolstered a less hostile image by allowing cooperation between the two countries. One important case was Cuba's contribution to the campaigns against Ebola and cholera pandemics in Western Africa and Haiti (Fighting Ebola: A new Case for US. engagement with Cuba 2014).

This logic provided incentives to American projections towards Cuba in which Americans adopted new roles as businessmen, tourists, and health personnel, social and environmental activists. Cuba's rhetoric about the United States had to adjust in the form of "the two United States", one imperialistic, the other popular and friendly. This dual image got momentum after president Castro referred to the American with respect and even admiration. The mood filtered into Cuban official discourse when reform oriented intellectuals and officials expressed desires for a more sophisticated vision about the United States in Cuba's political discourse.

#### **7.4 Setting the Analytical Framework for stabilization (normalization) and Acknowledgement for Deference solution (Normalcy)**

Disparity is the distinctive feature of Cuba-US relations. Power asymmetry is not limited to differences of capabilities but entail systemic differences in the way Cuba and the United States assess security risks and define their interests and perceptions. As Brantly Womack explains

An asymmetric relation is not composed of two similar actors who happen to have a difference in capacities. Rather, mutual perceptions and interactions in an asymmetric relation will be fundamentally shaped by the differences of opportunity and vulnerability each side confronts. In effect, the relationship of A and B is best viewed as a set of two very different sub relations,  $A \rightarrow b$  and  $b \rightarrow A$  (Womack 2006, 17-18).

Although equal sovereignty and Great Powers management are constitutive norms of international society (Bull 1977), tension exist amid those specified principles and their acceptance by respective governments. The English School, some constructivists (Wendt 1999) and asymmetric relations theory emphasize the role of history (Buzan 2000) as a ripening factor of cultural structures (legal, behavioral and attitudinal) between states. Governments have the ability to mature stable asymmetric relations through diplomacy and self-restrain.

In contrast to visions that looks an asymmetric relation as unidirectional and signed by domination, asymmetry theory in international relations is dialectical and relational.

It concentrates on the essential interdependence of the two sides of the relationship. Disparity is real and it structures the relationship so that the sides are not transposable. However, a normal asymmetric relation is a product of interactive negotiation (Womack, *Asymmetry and International Relationships* 2016, 12).

Normalcy in asymmetric relations is the result of negotiated arrangements in which the two sides manage their affairs constructively in ways that the sovereignty of the smaller side is not threatened and the great power status is recognized. The relevance of historical trajectories comes from the premise of interdependence theory that expects mature relations to become stable because chances for coordinating interests and values

should reduce state-state frictions associated to lack of communication and create issue-linkages opportunities.

Perception and interactions between Cuba and the United States are in permanent flux. Great Powers leaders (In this case, the United States) have the choice to use self-restraint as a prudent course to build stable relations with weaker neighbors (Cuba). Rationally the path of confrontation tends to be reserved for the gravest contingencies because they provoke unintended negative effects, costs and political backlash. International society had evolved in ways that limits significantly the utility and legitimacy of the use of force and sanctions between states.

When using diplomacy, a liberal great power such as the United States enjoys the leverage of a peaceful order tailored according to their values. Disparity of power and material resources is still relevant but zealous defenders of their sovereignty have historic opportunities to build agreements with regional powers within their hegemonic orders. Such arrangement provides security assurances that allow Great Powers and weaker neighbors in peace to concentrate in economic and political development goals. From a foreign policy perspective, Great Powers can rationally adopt a hegemonic accommodation when threats by smaller countries are neither mortal nor

unmanageable<sup>255</sup>. This is the case of Cuba's challenge to the U.S. led world order after the defeat of the Soviet Union.

Asymmetry is not a transitional feature. During the Cold War, the United States increased its absolute power in terms of economic and military capabilities while Cuba's nationalist resilience also strengthened. Cuba's political position in terms of active relations with American strategic rivals, allies and regional actors gained considerably in autonomy expanding the island's possibilities of surviving long periods of U.S hostility.

An important factor contributing to this stalemate is the fact that asymmetric relations are made up of a sharp disparity not only of power but also of attention. This feature mitigates the impact of power disparity because the smaller power rationally dedicates relatively more efforts, resources and attention to the bilateral ties. In these circumstances interaction between both nations raises the stakes to win by their ability to build a mature stable relation.

Typical solutions to conflicts between successful nationalist resistance (Cuba's) and a neighboring great power (United States), are the arrangement defined as "**Acknowledgement by deference**" (Womack 2006). In such arrangements, the stronger power acknowledges the sovereign status of the weaker one, and the latter, in turn,

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<sup>255</sup>I admit that this is a questionable assertion because as Winston Churchill wrote although the most rational foreign policy would "appease the weak, defy the strong", countries frequently do the opposite because of domestic passions and historical legacies. (Hughes 2014)



expresses deference in global to the hierarchy of the great power. This has been the case of the United Kingdom with Ireland; France and Germany with Belgium; Russia with Finland; China with Vietnam, and the US with Canada and Mexico.

Reference to these arrangements place asymmetrical US-Cuba relations in a conceptual-comparative framework beyond Cuba's transition and foreign policy challenges as exceptional. Logics of dominance and resistance don't discard the possibility of a constructive diplomatic approach to disparity. Brantly Womack explains:

...in a stable asymmetric relationship, each side has different basic expectations of the other. Because of its vulnerabilities, the smaller side needs acknowledgment of its autonomy from the larger side. Autonomy implies respect for the smaller side's space, identity and interests. It does not require agreement with the smaller, but it does require that differences be negotiated or at least accommodated rather than forced. For its parts, the larger side requires deference from the smaller. The larger must be able to interact with the confidence that smaller side acknowledges the respective difference of capabilities, and does not deny or challenge them. Deference does not mean submission, but the expectation of deference is directly related to the willingness of the larger side to acknowledge the autonomy of the smaller side, since otherwise the larger would be granting space to a plausible usurper. By the same token, for the smaller to give deference without at the same time being assured of its autonomy would be to expose itself to domination" (Womack, *Asymmetry and International Relationships* 2016, 13).

Washington's imperial- coercive policy is not necessarily a constant of US hemispheric strategy<sup>256</sup>. Indeed it can be argued that a hegemonic-persuasive strategy toward the Americas is more realistic and functional to United States' global leadership. Cuban nationalistic conviction is a permanent factor of the bilateral relations but its expression adjusts according to strength, alliances and contexts<sup>257</sup>. The revolution was embedded into world trends of mid-20th century such as decolonization and socialism. The aspiration to a respectful relation with the United States, its neighboring superpower, was encouraged in Cuban foreign policy by various elements of "Lockean" culture of the international system<sup>258</sup>.

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<sup>256</sup>Here it is important to consult not only the dominant view in Cold War studies about the conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States in the Latin American battleground but also alternative views such as Tanya Hammer's "Allende's Chile and the Inter-American Cold War" that assigns a more important role to regional actors such as Cuba, Brazil, and Chile as the country in direct conflict with the United States in her study (Hammer 2014)

<sup>257</sup>One of the main mistakes of the US diagnose on Cuba in the last decades, also typical of the greater powers in unstable asymmetrical relations, has been the personalization of the conflict on Fidel Castro, ignoring the appeal and mobilizing power of nationalism in Cuban culture as a structural factor

<sup>258</sup>Here I use the concept of lockean culture advanced by Alexander Wendt (Wendt 1999) at macro-systemic level. Anarchic condition of the international system is compatible with different logics. Wendt proposes at least three: Hobbsean with a high rate of war and death of states, typified by identities of mortal enmity, lockean, with a culture of norms around sovereignty, in which war decreases its role as international institution, with a

Post-1959 Cuba's foreign policy has lived the tension –proper to revolutionary processes— between nationalism, centered on sovereignty, and internationalism, centered on ideological solidarity. This is the sort of tension that – as Fred Halliday demonstrated – exists as long as the revolutionary regime persists domestically but adopting different balances according to the dynamics of internal policies and the international system in which it operates (Halliday 1999). One possibility not explored so much by Halliday who concentrated on the study of military and ideological solidarity is an internationalism expressed within international norms, such as Cuban efforts in international health.

Cuban resistance to US imposition developed a successful strategy of diplomatic attrition in which success implied just surviving and increasing the opportunity cost of American imperial policy. U.S sanctions were used as an alternative to the direct use of force because of its relative lower cost. But as it was recognized publicly by the Linowitz reports in the early seventies once Cuba broke the regional isolation in the Western hemisphere, Washington's use of overt or covert force against Cuba would harm

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relative low rate of states' death and Kantian, a type of supranational integration beyond the national state of the kind of the European Union.

American claim to build a world order for peace, democracy, international law and trade<sup>259</sup>.

Due to power disparity, AFD solution requires a specific sequence by which the great power (United States) dismantles first hostility structures and provides security assurances to Cuba. The dismantlement of hostility structures generally begin by the adoption of new images about each other. The accumulative effect of successive negotiations created a thaw in which stabilization and normalization became plausible.

What happened on December 17, 2014 had precedents in several agreements between Cuba and the United States about airlines hijacking, fishing borders, migration and peace in the Southern Cone of Africa. This is not a question only of outcomes but also of negotiating respect. After Secretary Henry Kissinger launched a major secret initiative towards Cuba as part of his détente policy, the rapprochement reached an important milestone when the Carter Administration and the Cuban government opened Interests Sections in both capitals. Although the sections model was short of the embassy status, it allowed better information and communication between the two governments.

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<sup>259</sup>This position was expressed by several members of the Kennedy Administration but it was stated in the clearest way by the National Policy Paper-Cuba-United States Policy of July 15,1968, prepared under the leadership of Viron (Pete) Vaky (U.S. State Department 1968). This document can be considered the first comprehensive argument in American diplomacy for an acknowledgment for deference solution between Cuba and the United States.

Institutionalization of dialogue through the sections favored information flows between both governments and societies. Still given the nature of hostility and the sensitivities of American great power's face (Ramirez and Morales 2014) and Cuban nationalism, most important negotiations were conducted in secrecy (Leogrande, William & Kornbluh, Peter 2014). In such emotionally charged environment, diplomatic institutions provided space for political catharsis and cooled down passions. The Interests Sections provided consular services, and management crisis mechanisms.

The opening of the interests sections in 1977 represented a move in direction to an AFD solution. President Carter's policy changes by the United States were predicated on the understanding that: a) imposing an imperial course to relations with Cuba was not worth its costs in terms of regional and global grand strategies, 2) a hegemonic persuasive logic could increase the asymmetric leverage promoting interests and values more efficiently than an imperial coercive policy. 3) A stable policy of self-restraint that guarantees predictability to a relationship with Cuba, allows the United States to focus on more significant issues (such as policies between great powers or regional hegemony management).

American détente moves by the administration of James Carter, Barack Obama and Bill Clinton in a lesser extent put the ball at times in the Cuban court, generating phases of internal debate about how to deal with a less hostile logic in nationalist Cuba's

relations with its neighbor Superpower. This debate is complicated by the revolutionary nature of the Cuban regime. Evidences show how Castro's foreign policy changed not only in the national but also in the regional-global scenario. As predicted by Fred Halliday in his discussion about revolution's foreign policy, Cuba didn't abandon completely its revolutionary projection but calibrated its approach to regional and global affairs. That did not mean the abandonment of revolutionary ideals but providing a nationalist explanation of conformity to act within the norms of the world order led by the superpowers<sup>260</sup>.

After the experience of failing to consolidate an AFD solution with the Carter Administration, Cuban diplomacy embarked in a transition for a potential AFD opportunity by channeling the new internationalism into areas of civilian cooperation. During the 1980's Cuba kept its internationalist presence in Angola, Ethiopia and Nicaragua together with some minor military support for insurgent groups in El Salvador, Guatemala and Chile. But for the most part, Cuba's presence in the third world, after the end of the Cold War concentrated in civilian sectors such as education and health. Cuba's

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<sup>260</sup>Here it is important to remember that normalcy and normalization of diplomatic relations with a status quo superpower (the United States) have conformity costs for a revolutionary actor (Cuba) in terms of discourse, alliances, symbolism, etc. For instance better relations with the United States bring some logical uncertainty for the Chinese and Russian visions about Cuba. Notice how important members of the Cuban Cabinet, including president Raul Castro and vice-president Diaz-Canel visited Beijing and Moscow with clear statements of reassurances about Cuba's special relations with the two U.S. strategic rivals.

pre-eminent role in international health issues is not a challenge to the U.S. led world order, regardless of its political promotion of Cuba's socialist values.

One factor contributing to an AFD compromise under presidents Obama and Castro is the role of regional actors. Latin America and the Caribbean welcomed Cuba's reforms. Most Latin American governments support Cuba's gradual transition to a market economy with the patient hope that such a process will bring about deep political transformations. President Bush's insistence on an imperial policy provoked sharp Latin American responses. Since the IV Summit of the Americas in Mar del Plata, countries started demanding that Cuba be incorporated into the hemispherical dialogue.

The rapprochement between Cuba and the United States gained momentum in the VII Summit of the Americas in Panama in April 2015. Cuba harvested the benefits of a policy of raising the costs of American embargo not only in the bilateral but at the regional context (Lopez-Levy 2014-2015). In the V and VI Summits of Trinidad and Cartagena, several Latin American countries announced their intention not to participate in another hemispheric conclave if Cuba was excluded, just because the United States opposed. The VII summit appeared as a critical juncture, an event that raised the profile and attention on U.S. policy. This contributed to president Obama's decision to end the policy of isolation from the executive branch and get the credit from the hemisphere for doing so.

### 7.4.1 Normalization and Normalcy

The agreement of December 17 2014 proved to be just the beginning of a process of normalization not its conclusion. Normalization as a process and normalcy as a destiny are related to the adoption by Cuba and the United States of behaviors and convictions aligned to the norms of current international society<sup>261</sup>. At the core of the conflict there are two challenges to the liberal international order:

- 1) The sovereignty challenge. United States refuses to treat Cuba as a sovereign country with all the prerogatives of this status in the XXI century. In reaction to American interventionism in the first half of the XX century, Cubans developed a radical version of nationalism that is a predictable feature in Cuban politics for the near future. This nationalism although opposed to any American

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<sup>261</sup>At the core of the current international order are two major international regimes, the sovereignty regime embodied in the UN Charter that rejects the use of force between states and the respect for sovereignty as the ordinal principle of international society and the International Human Rights Model in which the society of states have converged on the adoption of legitimacy criteria about the domestic relations between governments and their respective societies.



tutelage in Cuba's internal affairs did not make the island a threat to its neighbors and the international liberal order. Cuba is located in a region with a relatively strong normative regime in terms of human rights<sup>262</sup>, and regional security<sup>263</sup>.

2) The heterogeneity challenge. Current Cuban leadership conceives Cuba not only as a sovereign but also a revolutionary state. This formulation implies contradictions with the international liberal order. Cuba does not accept representative democracy and market economics as principles of regional or international legitimacy. Cuban foreign policy not only rejects U.S. imperial policy towards the island or Latin America but also an international hierarchy that confers Great Powers unequal status, responsibilities, rights and prerogatives<sup>264</sup>.

While acknowledgement of sovereignty depends on a U.S change of policy and roles (a great power doesn't need to have an imperial policy towards a small neighbor),

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<sup>262</sup>For a discussion on the inter-American human rights international regime see the volume "The Inter-American System of Human Rights" edited by David Harris and Stephen Livingstone (Harris 1998).

<sup>263</sup>For a discussion of the dynamics of regional security see "States, Nations and the Great Powers: The Sources of Regional War and Peace" (Miller 2007). In his chapter about Latin America, concentrated in South America, Miller attributed Latin America's relatively peaceful character to the consolidation of congruent national states in terms of a regional state-to-nation balance.

<sup>264</sup>For a discussion of the issue of sovereign inequality in the international order see Gerry Simpson's analysis in "Great Powers and outlaw states" (Simpson 2004)

the heterogeneity problem is one that touches the identity of the two actors: The United States as a superpower and Cuba as a revolutionary state. As long as Cuba is a revolutionary state, its foreign policy would balance the nationalist pragmatic imperative with the internationalist revolutionary impulse. Even after the accommodation, revolutions continue to conflict with the international system. In the words of Fred Halliday:

The central question is not whether the revolutionary state is “socialized” in its external relations, but whether in the longer run the pressures of the external context lead not just to changes in foreign policy but also to an internal change, whereby the commitment to an alternative path of social development is abandoned (Halliday 1999, 135).

To recognize the duality and interdependence of these two conflicts is not to say that the two problems are equivalent. Cuban revolution, by reason of its radical ideas clashed with the status quo. It also generated solidarity and desires of emulation in other societies particularly in Latin America but also in what was later known as the American new left. It is false to say that Castro’s Cuba owes its internationalist orientation to American opposition to his nationalist revolution. Mark Falcoff and others demonstrated how Castro was a revolutionary with strong radical convictions and a decision to challenge U.S. hegemony in the Western hemisphere. William Leogrande and Peter Kornbluh documented several occasions in which the Ford and the Carter Administrations tried to reach a modus vivendi with Cuba, on the condition that Cuba

will accept to live within a U.S. led world. Fidel Castro did not totally rejected the idea of an accommodation but embarked on revolutionary endeavors in Africa and Latin America that made most difficult a political arrangement.

That highlights the importance of the opening of the embassies and the creation of a climate of respect and negotiations after December 17, 2014. When the American executive branch commits to the dismantlement of an imperial policy such as the embargo, a normalization process undermine the vicious cycle of hostility built on the absence of cooperative interdependence. Brantly Womack said: “The best friend of normal asymmetric relationship is habit, and its worst enemy is novelty” (Womack, *Asymmetry and International Relationships* 2016, 69). Diplomatic negotiations provide the best mechanism to deal not only with bilateral problems but also with issues of misperceptions, a not minor problem given the propensity of asymmetry to magnify misinterpretation and uncertainty.

A good step for managing well U.S.-Cuba asymmetric conflict was the creation by the two countries of a bilateral commission to address issues of cooperation, differences and contradictions. The commission provides a mechanism to evaluate progress and stalemate and establish when possible some issue-linkage without falling

into the trap of negative complementarity<sup>265</sup>. The Commission is not a panacea but fall in line with the creation of structures of bilateral normalcy and a virtuous cycle of diplomatic ritual (it includes periodic meetings to assess the general state of the relations) and habituation to constructive management of controversies (inclusive rhetoric, neutral zone, and issue routinization). Less than a year and a half after the December 17 agreement, more than fourteen groups were negotiating issues of interests and multiple ministerial visits in Commerce, health, investment, and security cooperation were taking place.

The intangible issue of inclusive rhetoric is deeply influential at the society level. President Obama's multiple declarations of respect for Cuban sovereignty still contrast with the practices implemented as result of the Helms-Burton law and the presence of an unwanted naval base in Cuban territory but it helps to cool off some of the most intransigent Cuban discourses warning about an American invasion or war at every

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<sup>265</sup>The problem of negative complementarity has been studied by Brantly Womack as a complication of asymmetric conflict. In the absence of asymmetry, many problems of misperception identified by Robert Jervis can cancel one another (Stein July 1982) but in asymmetric conflict crisis there is a propensity in the stronger power's different apparatus to concentrate on the controversial behavior of the smaller one, magnifying a perception of threat and ignoring the general context of the bilateral relation (extrapolation). Since the smaller power tends to make its strategic calculus on the bases of worst case scenario, it look at the actions of the more powerful through its own over-attention to bilateral relation and connect dots of hostility that are not necessarily connected (interpolation). For a discussion of these issues, see Brantly Womack's discussion of "misperception and negative complementarity" (Womack, *Asymmetry and International Relationships* 2016, 74-76).

instant. Cuba's current domestic debate about policy towards the United States is one with references to challenges but also opportunities for Cuba's reform and economic development.

Obama's inclusive discourse and reference to international norms during his visit to Havana addressed the historical reality that five decades of American imperial disrespect for Cuban sovereignty made a difficult relation intractable. American policy of regime change by coercion transformed a heterogeneity conflict into an existential one (sovereignty). In response to such imperial behavior, Cuba's revolutionary government presented a foreign policy doctrine aligning Cuba's most primary national interest (sovereignty) with a commitment to an alternative world order.

Under those circumstances, the internationalist impulse to promote radical change beyond Cuba's borders became the need not only of the revolutionary cause but also of nationalism. The alignment of the two conflicts (nationalism versus imperial policies, radical internationalism versus American liberal hegemony) mitigates the typical antinomies (Halliday 1999, 133-157) of revolutionary foreign policy. Instead of a tension between pragmatic nationalism and revolutionary internationalism, the Cuban leaders found a synergy between the nationalist and internationalist impulses.

Since American policy didn't give the Cuban government other choice than surrender its nationalist principles, to be internationalist became for the Cuban leadership

the safest way to preserve national sovereignty. No matter how much a fraction of the Cuban post-revolutionary elites could want accommodation with the United States, it cannot do it by itself without an American partner acknowledging the interests and nationalist values developed by the new elites after 1959. Obama's explicit decision expressed in the 2015 State of the Union Address to reject the Helms-Burton law blueprint for a negotiation with Cuba was decisive to bring a comprehensive attitude of cooperation to the negotiation table<sup>266</sup>.

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<sup>266</sup>The passing of the Helms-Burton law is in itself an example of how misperceptions dynamics typical of asymmetric relations in the absence of routines of negotiation, communication and partnership to diffuse negative actions by spoilers. When the Helms-Burton law was discussed in Congress, Secretary of State Warren Christopher warned the White House that such legislation would push the United States in a course of violation of international law, clashes with American allies and troubles to promote democracy in Cuba with flexibility. Still, when Cuba shutdown two civilian planes after reiterated warnings about violations of its air space the law was passed in the heat of 1996 electoral year (Kornbluh, Peter & LeoGrande, William 2014). Cuba's decision, admitted by Fidel Castro as a mistake in a message to president Clinton- according to the memoirs of the Arkansan- reflected a lack of information (The Clinton Administration had already revoked the flight license of those involved in the violation of Cuba's air space). Cuba assumed a coordination and tolerance from the Clinton Administration with the violators that by 1996 was not so. Today, a confusion of such magnitude seems unlikely capable of derailing the rapprochement process. There are exchanges of information among officials of the two countries and especially military to military consultations. Corresponding experts and officials are developing a habituation to diffuse crisis with technical solutions. A qualitative sense emerges that differences can be bridged and crisis managed or solved peacefully. Obama's unilateral steps of taking Cuba off the list of nations sponsors of terrorism and opening channels of interactions with Cuban society opened chances for Cuba adopting some deferential attitudes (Different from other Latin American leftist governments, Cuba did not offer asylum to Edward

Since the terms of accommodation contemplated by the United States in the Helms-Burton law are so humiliating to Cuban nationalists, negotiations under the Clinton and Bush administration occurred only in the margins. Then the statu quo of minimal interaction got reinforced because Cuba was a low priority issue on U.S. post-Cold War foreign policy, and absent of a crisis there was little incentive for both sides to yield to a diplomatic settlement in which trade and travel relations could be normalized. Even under Obama, who had sent many proper signals to Havana from the electoral campaign, Cuban experts assumed normalization with the United States as a low probability event in the course of one-term administration. In consequence, the Cuban government sought partnerships with countries less vulnerable to pressures by the United States, such as China, Russia and later the new emerging markets from the South.

The fact that Obama's overtures to Cuba come from the executive branch without rejection or approval of Congress define its merits but also its vulnerabilities. Since the Cuban government as the smaller side in asymmetry tends to look at the bilateral ties with the perspective of "what if", Havana would always include in its strategic calculation the possibility of a policy reversal under a different administration. The desire to counterbalance hostile relations with Washington remains at the core of Cuba's triangular strategies.

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Snowden or an opportunity for a stopover in a flight to Venezuela, Ecuador or Bolivia (Alzugaray, Cuba's Former Ambassador to the European Union 2016)).

One way to grasp how U.S. hostility helped to push Cuba into a more traditional communist command economy and totalitarian regime is to contrast the type of system consolidated in the aftermath of the Missile Crisis and the paradigm Che Guevara described to Richard Goodwin in one of the first attempts to find an accommodation with Washington in 1962. According to Goodwin, Guevara told him that “in building a communist state they have not repeated all of the aggressive moves of the East. They did not intent to construct an iron curtain around Cuba but to welcome technicians and visitors from all countries to come and work” (Goodwin 1961).

The possibility of a “modus vivendi” between the U.S. and Castro as a “nationalist communist Tito in the Caribbean”, distanced from Soviet military power, was never consistently explored by American policymakers until December 17, 2014. Cuba as a national communist regime could have satisfied the central concerns of United States containment strategy towards the developing world in the Cold War. A modus vivendi could have not peel Cuba off from the Soviet Alliance immediately but it could mitigate Moscow’s role in Cuban and Latin American affairs, and offer incentives to dissuade Cuba from a subversive attitude towards the U.S. led order.

Reflecting on this counterfactual possibility, Richard Goodwin said years later: “It wasn’t a bad deal”- he wrote-“and given what was to come later, a detached analyst might urge that it be pursued. But the mood in America was not one of detachment. The



*emotion* that had always surrounded the “problem’ of Cuba had, if anything been heightened by our defeat at the Bay of Pigs. To make a deal with Castro, any kind of deal would have been politically difficult, perhaps, impossible” (Kornbluh, Peter & LeoGrande, William 2014). In brief, the United States couldn’t adopt a rational course because of imperial rancor and the structural design flaws of its Cuba policy in the context of asymmetry.

Which were these structural flaws of American foreign policy that led to Cuban victory (asymmetric stalemate) despite the disparity of power? Pathologies of neglect and emotional distress aroused from the politics of inattention:

A) A trend to personalize foreign policy as targeted to a leader not to a country. Rather than a policy towards a state-society complex, the political debate about foreign policy adopted the emotional soft/hard-doves/hawks divide about approaching a person: Fidel Castro. To grasp the attention about a negative development to its interests, Washington needs a face to oppose. Castro’s Cuba was one of many episodes together with Mao’s China, Allende’s Chile, and others.

B) A trend to look at superpower’s statecraft mainly for coercive tools underestimating the mobilizing power of nationalism in asymmetric conflicts. In most asymmetric conflict a solution of AFD required tactical generosity from the

more powerful side. For two main reasons: first, because of the intangible importance of respect. Second, because the more powerful side have a safer ground to withdraw. But due to the hypertrophy of the coercive muscle in American policy toolbox, an AFD solution with Cuba was seen as a policy of last resort.

C) A tendency to dismiss concessions to any non-democratic government as “appeasement”. American politicians and pundits abused the 1936 Munich analogy with Cuba. The United States is the most powerful country in the world, not Czechoslovakia in 1936. As president Obama said to Thomas Friedman<sup>267</sup> after more than fifty years of embargo:

You take a country like Cuba. For us to test the possibility that engagement leads to a better outcome for the Cuba people there aren't that many risks for us. It's a tiny little country. It's not one that threatens our core security interests, and so [there's no reason not] to test the proposition (Friedman 2015)

D) In the presence of a non-priority as Cuba is for the American foreign policy establishment, absence of people to people contacts reinforced public perceptions of enmity framed by interested parties, particularly groups in the Cuban American community who were politically and economically profiting from the embargo policy.

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<sup>267</sup>For a good discussion of the misuses of history in policymaking see “Thinking in Time” by Ernest May and Richard Neustadt (May 1986) with several successful and unsuccessful cases about U.S. policy towards Cuba.

E) A tendency to underestimate the costs of economic sanctions and the difficulties to lift them once they are the law of the land. Sanctions are generally perceived as an alternative to war, not as a choice within a wider spectrum of options that might include AFD. As part of a general attitude towards international law, American foreign policy does not align with international best practices of smart and well-targeted sanctions and does not contain sunset clauses that favor a reevaluation of its effectiveness. Once sanctions against Cuba were established, the embargo was difficult to reassess due to the status quo bias embedded in the American legislative process.

F) Lack of empathy for the weaker side's higher vulnerabilities in asymmetrical conflicts. Even when the United States explored an AFD agreement under the Ford, and Carter Administrations, policy makers insisted on reciprocity ignoring the differences between a superpower and a small country. While the United States' sovereignty was never at issue, Cuban policymakers had to calculate not only in terms of current dangers but responding the question "What if?" the political situation in the United States changes. The experience of dealing after Carter with Ronald Reagan's aggressiveness proved them right from the worst case scenario point of view but it became also evident that skepticism in both sides slowed down chances to make more détente actions irreversible such as the end of the travel prohibition and other sanctions.

Although the negotiation processes between the United States and Cuba in the seventies did not reach normalcy, the opening of social and state-state contacts transformed the bilateral relationship. After the establishment of the interests sections by the two governments, a group of master variables began to play a socialization role of the two state-society complexes:

a) **A spike of Interdependence**<sup>268</sup> as a result of licensing travel, remittances and trade as exceptions to the embargo impacted the Cuban-American community, cultural and educational constituencies, and farmers in the United States. In Cuba the contacts with the Cuban American community helped to initiate reconciliation processes at the family level and undermined adversarial images promoted by the government about the émigrés.

b) Identification of **common destiny communities** and areas of cooperation (handling of tensions regarding Guantanamo Naval Base, Peace in Southern Africa, international health issues as a global public right as in the campaign against Ebola in West Africa ), with **the coincidence of adversaries** (international crime, terrorism, drug traffic, pandemics, natural disasters, etc.), and

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<sup>268</sup>Robert Axelrod explained how interdependence generate stable and reciprocal cooperation (Axelrod 1984). The constructivist approach has rendered various case studies in which cooperation is not only an strategic rationale but also social, generating changes in the roles and identities of states and societies (Neumann 1996).

c) **Homogenization**<sup>269</sup> processes (adoption and recognition of common elements as successful forms of organization or policies, for instance, features of market economy, Cuban acceptance in 1995 of deference to great powers in the 1968 Nuclear Non- Proliferation Treaty, and the beginning since 2008 of economic and political liberalization).

These three master variables (interdependence, creation of common destiny communities and homogenization) have prompted states' socialization that undermines important pillars of the U.S. isolation strategy and Cuba's revolutionary foreign policy projection. These processes are inserted on the dynamics of asymmetric conflict but they highlight gains to harvest from a potential AFD arrangement. They show to the United States the road to hegemony by détente while presenting the Cuban state-society complex with the dilemmas (costs and gains) of having a foreign policy guided by the internationalist impulse versus a narrower definition of the national interest.

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<sup>269</sup>On the homogeneity of social, economic and political systems at the national level and the homogenization trend of the international, Fred Halliday recognized the explanatory power of realist and transnationalist views of international society. He added a third meaning to the concept, "a set of norms shared by different societies and which are promoted by inter-state competition. This is based neither on inter-state nor on transnational models, but on the assumptions of inter-societal and inter-state homology. This refers to a similarity of domestic values and organization, i.e. to what has been termed 'homogeneity', in the way societies are organized" (Halliday, *International Society as Homogeneity* 1994).

#### **7.4.2 Hostility, stability and cooperation within an asymmetric conflict structure:**

The institutionalization of hostility towards Cuba in American laws and institutions stamped not only the routines of U.S. policy towards Cuba but also the character and identity of Cuba as a national security state. This action-reaction created predictability within conflict to the point that adding sanctions and responding to them became more a reiteration of patterns rather than substantially changing the balance of forces across the Strait of Florida or in Cuba. When comprehensive sanctions become a five decades routine, their political effect turns limited and fundamentally inconsequential except as reinforcing the security perception that war is always a present probability.

Relations and conflict with the United States are external but not secondary issues in the design of Cuba's political system. Resistance versus U.S. imperial impositions is invoked in the 1976 Constitution and the Constitutional reforms in 1992 and 2002. Defenders of the one party system openly argued its convenience on the basis that it rallies Communist and nationalist forces together against American pressures. Cuba responded the 1996 Helms Burton law with its own law 88 of defense of Cuban sovereignty that punished hard any cooperation with the U.S. regime change plan

regardless if it is espionage, open subversion or part of a sequence to empower political opposition. For every action, there is a response<sup>270</sup>.

In this action-reaction, governments imposed more restrictions to their populations<sup>271</sup>. The prevalence of U.S-Cuba conflict over Cuba's domestic politics has devastating effects on democratic development chances. Cuban opponents of the regime are frequently presented through their attitude towards U.S. designs. U.S. manipulation of democracy discourse to defend the U.S. embargo made positive views about American democracy an anathema in a political culture dominated by a cult to sovereignty. The rejection of the embargo is prevalent among active and passive supporters of the regime,

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<sup>270</sup>For instance, if the United States creates a program to undermine Cuban health diplomacy in the developing world by promoting defection of Cuban doctors and health personnel, Cuba increases the graduation of doctors and nurses, strengthening surveillance over those who works overseas. "As of April 2012 there were 38,868 Cuban medical professionals working in 66 countries-of whom 15,407 were doctors (approximately 20 % of Cuba's 75 000 physicians. In Africa some 3000 Cuban medical personnel are currently working in 35 of the continent's 54 countries, while in Venezuela alone there are approximately 30 000"- wrote Erisman and Kirk (Kirk, John & Erisman, Michael 2009), the premier experts on this area. The U.S Cuba Medical Parole Program (CMPP) created by the Bush Administration in 2006 provides information and encourages Cuba's health mission's personnel to defect by offering them a fast track asylum through embassies and consulates in third countries. The program has been criticized by Cuba and other countries as a violation of human rights and it came under political attack during Cuba's rapid response to the Ebola pandemics in Western Africa. Data shows that only between 3-5% of the targeted personnel has defected (Blue 2010, 34-35). The program mainly functions as an irritant to Cuba and the recipient countries.

<sup>271</sup>Today it is paradoxical but after Cuba's migratory reform in 2013, there is less limitations for a Cuban citizen to travel to the United States from the Cuban government than for an American citizen for travelling to Cuba.

and the defense and security institutions. It is also shared by many potential supporters of the political opposition. The identification of liberal democratic ideas with the agenda of imperial imposition undermines chances of convergence of values at the levels of the elites and the population.

Asymmetry theory of international relations looks at the process of normalization of bilateral ties from an institutional and cultural perspective. The legacy of hostility, skepticism and suspicion institutionalized not only in policies but also in cultures and constituencies of confrontation cannot be removed by some years of limited social and state-to-state diplomatic interactions. Side by side with institutionalized structures of hostility, there are factors of stabilization that aroused from the two states' need for elemental cooperation in international society and attempts to normalize bilateral relations. Despite the animosity between their states, both foreign policy establishments have strong rationale for managing conflict within a calculated risk.

The creation of these structures for solving issues of mutual interests aroused from both sides' conviction that a military confrontation will result in huge unjustified costs to the United States and the destruction of most Cuban national assets. Both nations acknowledge the need to have some institutional channels to prevent undesired disasters. For decades, most negotiations between the U.S and Cuba have used backdoor channels. Secrecy was used to avoid a backlash from polities at both sides of the Strait of Florida



who were feed by narratives of intransigence. This has been the case even when the issues of the dialogue were clearly in the interests of the two states. The 1973 Memorandum of Understanding on Hijacking of Aircraft and Vessels and Other Offenses”<sup>272</sup> is an example.

American preferences for secrecy reinforce the taboo of negotiating with Cuba. Since 1988 until 2008, no presidential nominees declared upfront a desire to negotiate a settlement with “Castro’s Cuba”. By not discussing openly their efforts, politicians, in favor of a negotiated settlement with Cuba, did not prepare the political ground for it. Havana also had also a preference for secrecy according to the non-democratic security driven CCP rule and the convenience of reproducing the enemy image about the U.S for copying with domestic dissidents. This institutional preference for ad hoc secret talks made difficult a long term habituation to periodic negotiation as a method to solve differences.

Since 1977, the interests sections in Havana and Washington helped to pave a road to institutionalization of negotiation of common interests such as emigration, fishing zones, maritime economic borders, meteorological and information exchanges. There were also low profile military cooperation around the Guantanamo naval base, anti-

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<sup>272</sup>For a Conflict resolution perspective on this episode see the work by Karen Feste “Reducing International Terrorism: Negotiation Dynamics in the U.S. - Cuba Skyjack Crisis” (Feste 2006).

narcotics interdiction and accidents in the high seas. The two countries also agreed to cooperate within multi- countries arrangements with other nations of the Caribbean Basin, in the eventuality of an oil spill in the Gulf. One of the most important activities of the sections is consular services, including the visa processes for visitors and immigrants.

Although these structures were conceived as part of détente and rapprochement (The interests sections opened during the Carter Administration fall on this category), they were never insulated from the general mood of the relations and the problems of inattention and over-attention. At times of conflict, they even became grounds for confrontation and hostile rhetoric and actions. Fidel Castro explained several times that he was forced to use non-official emissaries to the White House because his official communications to the Chief of the Interests Section did not receive proper attention and response in Washington. The two governments have expelled American and Cuban diplomats accused of espionage or engaging in political activities incompatible with their diplomatic status.

A extreme situation happened during George W. Bush Administration when the interests section in Havana got transformed by the Mission Chief James Cason in the headquarters of Cuba's pro-embargo opposition. This misuse of the American diplomatic locals for meetings, workshops and conferences for opponents of the Cuban government provided opportunities for spoilers interested on putting the bilateral relations in a clash

course for the two countries<sup>273</sup>. A group of political appointed neoconservatives led by Ambassadors John Bolton, Roger Noriega and Otto Reich brought an ideological approach to the State Department attempting to raise the profile of Cuba as a threat to the United States<sup>274</sup>.

After they left their posts in the Bush's administration, James Cason and Roger Noriega revealed their attempt to roll the bilateral relations back to 1977 when there were no interests sections in Havana and Washington. According to Cason and Noriega the goal was to create "chaos and instability" as a precondition for a collapse of the communist regime. The policy deviated even from American proclaimed goal in the Torricelli Act of a "peaceful transition" to democracy in Cuba. It was rejected by most civil society groups in Cuba and international human rights groups that found counterproductive to promote "chaos and instability" in the name of human rights (A. Lopez-Levy Sep/Oct2011).

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<sup>273</sup>Interestingly some of the most scandalous meetings in which the interventionist regime change policy of the Bush administration got self-exposed were organized by Mr. Cason together with Manuel David Orrio, who was working as agent of Cuba's state security.

<sup>274</sup>In a famous episode involving a visit to Cuba by former president James Carter, ambassador Bolton was caught bullying analysts of the State Department and the CIA with the purpose of falsifying information and accusing Cuba of developing biological warfare capabilities.

Removing the Interests Sections from both capitals proved not to be even the policy of Bush's foreign policy team. In her memoirs, Condoleezza Rice, who was secretary of State, suggested the interests' sections model as a way to stabilize relations with Iran. Rice described the Interests Section in Cuba as a good source of information about the island and a platform to interact with societies in hostile countries (Rice 2011). Under Rice's leadership at the State Department, most of Mr. Cason's most provocative practices against the Cuban government were dropped by his successors. Yet, the evidences of these attempts to torpedo the bilateral relations by a cabal of ideologically driven officials warn about the problems of irreversibility of détente steps and potential miscommunication.

After July 2015, the interests sections were transformed in embassies raising the potential profile for negotiation and cooperation within the codes of the 1962 Vienna Convention of diplomatic relations. In contrast to other approaches that focus on "deliverables", asymmetry theory assigns great importance to diplomatic rituals because as Womack puts it: "without prejudicing either side in the give-and-take on specific issues, diplomatic ritual shows mutual respect" (Womack, *Asymmetry and International Relationships* 2016, 213). Official diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States opened the door to meetings at the summit between presidents Castro and Obama and paved the way to a historic symbolic visit by president Obama to Havana raising the profile of détente between the two nations

Economic contacts are a growing arena of stabilization. Their impact on the political scenes of Cuba and the United States make economic reform and political liberalization in Cuba a potential game changer. The core of these economic ties has changed over time on a trend to add new activities but also subjected to the ups and downs of the conflict and the political muscle of the business groups involved. Since 1973, Cuba developed an important open trade with subsidiaries of American companies in third countries, particularly Canada, Argentina, and Mexico. This trade was conceived by the Kissinger team as a door opener for subsequent economic rapprochement after the U.S. public was softened and Cuba understands the benefits of a moderate posture towards U.S role in the world. But in 1992 this trade was cut by the Cuban Democracy Act (CDA)<sup>275</sup>.

President Obama's policy of licensing most economic activities with Cuba allowed within the embargo framework is testimony of its relevance and limitations. In terms of the travel licenses and the authorization to commercial aviation companies to run flights to the island there is an enormous potential for improving and cheapening the

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<sup>275</sup>The CDA opened the door for "people-to-people" contacts allowing some economic activities as part of this approach. The more important presidential licenses were for travel, remittances, and telecommunications. There were obvious stabilization effects related to the involvement of families, students, co-religionists, artists and sportspeople travelling, sharing economic assets or interacting by phone, e-mail or internet. But these constituencies were diffuse outside the Cuban American community, and some religious, educational, or academic associations.

contacts between the two societies but also challenges to the political management of the transition from the charters model to the more open logic of commercial flights.

There is an industry of charter flights between the United States and Cuba fundamentally concentrated in South Florida and Havana but expanding to other cities in both countries. This industry produces a gross revenue calculated around 2.7 billion dollars in Florida just in authorized travel to Cuba. A penumbra of associated businesses' profits, governments' revenues and jobs surrounds flights, packages shipping and distribution, remittances, telecommunications, and financial support for these activities in both countries. After several years a set of industries such as charter flights, telecommunication companies, shipping and port companies, money sending businesses such as Western Union have developed pure economic interests in these exchanges.

The importance for those industries of connections with Cuba is such that they are very sensitive to the debate in Washington about the issue. It is to be seen whether big American actors such as the commercial airlines or other companies would put the attention on Cuba developed by these actors since Cuba would have less relative importance in these companies' general portfolio.

In 2000 Congress passed the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act (TSREEA). This legislation opened a heavily restricted but substantial space for U.S. agricultural exports and cooperation with Cuba. The Act prohibited the president from

using agricultural export sanctions against several adversaries (North Korea, Iran, Sudan, Cuba and then Libya) but simultaneously denied any government assistance to American exports to these countries demanding payment in cash in advance for all transactions routed through third-country banks.

Fidel Castro rejected to buy “one grain” under those terms. But after hurricane Michelle depleted Cuban government’s food stores in 2001, Castro contacted American Agricultural companies. Cuba’s purchases of U.S. agricultural products became a major feature of the relations. The Cuban side understood that the benefits of this trade outweighed the costs, which was not the case of medicines trade in which Cuba had developed a generic drugs national pharmaceutical industry and one in which the U.S. conditionality for sales was really intrusive. Business relations under TSREEA favored the emergence of constituencies demanding a better environment for their business opportunities.

The U.S. agricultural sales to Cuba have attracted a powerful lobby of farmers and sellers to the debate about U.S. policy towards Cuba. The Cuban government targeted politicians by distributing food sales opportunities across different states. The implementation of the law created also an ironical contradiction in the embargo legislation: it allowed American ships to carry food to Cuba while European and other nations’ ships that touch Cuban ports are prohibited from entering American ports for six

months. The Cuban side highlighted this irony for third countries that, although rejecting the extraterritoriality of the embargo, accepted American limitations as a *fait accompli*<sup>276</sup>.

In addition to clearly defined opposite structures of hostility and ad hoc cooperation there are institutions that supposed to be for an alleged benign purpose but legislation transformed them in sources of conflict. The Helms-Burton Act requests a regime change rationale for every action of every U.S. government agency towards Cuba. This openly proclaimed regime change narrative provides the Cuban government with the discretion to present any American action as an act of hostility when it is instrumental to its own political convenience.

These action-reaction dynamics set a vicious cycle of polarization and suspicion favoring actors with contentious preferences over those with a dialogue agenda. The USAID Cuba program is the classical example. The Helms-Burton Act twisted the mission of this international development agency into a tool for regime change policy in charge of covert operations that are euphemistically described as “discreet”. Due to the logic of regime change that drives them, USAID programs did not ask the informed consent of its recipients. Programs that could be sources of dialogue and understanding as

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<sup>276</sup>Still, the processing of this trade through Cuba’s national security driven political process has been slow with concerns about vulnerability and food dependence beyond the costs issue. After increasing U.S. food imports from less than 1 million annually to a billion in just four years (2001-2005), Cuba began to reduce this unilateral “trade” adducing lack of reciprocity since the island cannot sell a penny in the American market.



it is the case in Vietnam are rejected by Cuban civil society groups that supposed to be their beneficiaries.

### **7.5 Normalization, normalcy, and stabilization within the paradigm of Acknowledgment for deference**

The term normalization might be useful in the diplomatic lingua but it is a misnomer in the U.S.-Cuba case if the structure and paradigm of normalcy is not defined. The foreign policy establishments of the two countries assign disparaged content to what “normalization” means. For some of the U.S. establishment normalization of relations with Cuba means a return to what was “normal” before 1959, a time in which multiple Cuban governments and political actors complained about U.S. “undue” interference in the island-nation’s internal affairs. For other groups it means Cuba’s integration to the hemisphere according to the legitimacy principles of representative democracy, and market economics.

In Cuba’s narrative, the five decades resistance to the U.S. embargo entitled Havana to Washington’s noninterference in Cuba’s internal affairs. Great power privileges apart, Cuba assume that the paradigm of relations between Cuba and Canada or Cuba and the European Union are the “normal” paradigm for the relations across the Florida Strait. The most radical segments of Cuba’s political establishment see

“normalization” as U.S. acceptance of Cuba as a communist state promoting revolution by all possible means all over the world. For others, the idea of normalization might include a democratization process in Cuba in line with hemispheric norms of democratic governance but preserving the privileges, interests, and socialist ideals of the current elites.

Under these mutually exclusive expectations in which the two countries sleep in the same bed but with different dreams, full diplomatic relations cannot mean a solution of the conflict but merely a better management of it, an institutionalization of stability. The AFD formula provides a cultural structure for stabilization in which norms, institutions and routines can diffuse unnecessary conflict. Stabilization is conceptually an intermediate stage in which zones of conflict enters into dynamics of manageability. Negotiation is favored over rhetorical hostility for specific algid points.

Stabilization is an improvement from the condition of conflicted coexistence. I does not prescribe a transformation of the rivals’ culture of the relation but it makes it possible. Stabilization can occur while Cuba remains a revolutionary state committed to pursue a balance of power in the hemisphere in which Latin American countries integrate without including the United States. It might contemplate a Cuba that supports the independence of Puerto Rico as long as it is not by violent means. Stabilization can also happen if the United States replaces its current policy of regime change by coercion by

one of change by rapprochement that does not accept the communist character of the Cuban political system. The United States and Cuba can have “normal diplomatic relations” of the kind Washington has with China or Vietnam while promoting liberal democratization. This seems to be the course proposed by Presidents Barack Obama and Raul Castro in their announcement of diplomatic relations on December 17, 2014.

The concept of stabilization within the AFD framework is also useful to incorporate the interplay between low and high politics<sup>277</sup>. The trajectory of U.S.-Cuba relations offers contradictory evidences about the relative insulation of security and hegemony-national sovereignty conflicts from improvement in communication, family travel, or even trade. One problem to judge the spillover effects of low politics into issues of security and political dialogue (high politics) is the fact that licenses to travel, trade and people-to-people contacts are openly conceived as part of a regime change policy, and severely restricted. For decades until December 17, 2014, low politics contacts of trade, remittances and travel were described as track II, a mere complement to track I (the embargo).

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<sup>277</sup>The division between high politics and low politics presented by Stanley Hoffmann (Hoffman 1966) in the sixties is considered artificial by some authors (Ripsman 2000). Realists have emphasized the difference between high politics that encompass issues of national security and sovereignty and low politics that deal with issues of less urgent matter for survival of the state such as economic welfare, trade, scientific and educational exchanges, cultural and family travel, etc.

The hostility structures of the embargo have a high degree of legal institutionalization while low politics rapprochement actions are entirely dependent upon the executive branch. This reality has an important effect on the Cuban side that judges the effects of any rapprochement gesture not only by the actions of the administration in office but alert about the possibility of a more belligerent president in the White House. After dealing with six decades of conflict, Cuban officials are familiar with Washington mechanics and know the collective action problems of coordinating a new policy throughout the bureaucracy. Executive actions to dismantle elements of the embargo require valuable political capital difficult to find given other domestic and foreign policy priorities.

There is little evidence to confirm that in the presence of an asymmetric conflict such as the one between Cuba and the United States, a rise in soft transnational ties change the security dynamics in which cold politics dominate over warm culture, family ties, etc. It is not clear even that warm economic ties would decisively propel an AFD solution<sup>278</sup> of the sovereignty and heterogeneity conflicts. Given the asymmetries of power, the first step to stabilization (An AFD solution) is a completion of the transformation of U.S. strategy towards Cuba from an imperial coercive policy to one of

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<sup>278</sup>For an interesting analysis of the relationship between low politics and high politics in the context of Taiwan and China see “Warm Economic Ties, Cool Political Relations, Prospects for Cross-Strait Economic Integration after SARS and WTO” by Karen M. Sutter (Sutter 2003)

hegemonic persuasion. Although the two policies are based on American great power privileges, they are fundamentally different not only in terms of methods (coercion versus persuasion) but also about their attitudes to the multilateralism of a liberal world order.

The same can be said about Cuba's potential deference towards American great power status. Low politics contacts of people-to-people economic, educational, humanitarian and cultural ties thickened the volume of the bilateral relations and raised the cost of conflict for particular constituencies. But those issues are not the main drivers of Cuba's revolutionary authorities' decisions to act friendly or adversarial to the United States. Cuba's deference to U.S. great power status depends on clear hard national security calculations. A potential redesign of Cuba's grand strategy disaggregating nationalism and the internationalist solidarity impulse is a high politics issue.

Whether Asymmetric interdependence (Nye 2001, 27) would be more effective for American policy goals towards Cuba than imperial confrontation is an empirical question. Under "normal" asymmetry, Havana could be more tempted to integrate into a U.S. led world order that is –in John Ikenberry's phrase- "easy to join and difficult to subvert" but this is not a predetermined outcome. The Cuban and American governments are composed by social agents that could reproduce or change logics of conflict or cooperation throughout their foreign policy narratives.

The search for balance to the overwhelming weight of American influence on Cuban Affairs is a constant of the island's nationalists' grand strategy. How much the new generation of Cuban leaders who will replace Raul Castro after 2018 would sacrifice in economic development just to prefer economic, cultural and educational contacts with Russia, China or Venezuela rather than with Canada, the United States, the European Union, Brazil or Mexico is an open question. Different from the Cold War context, most of these governments are today wholehearted parts of the liberal order. Even if Cuba prioritizes its ties with China and Russia, these countries are already varieties of the capitalist market system partially integrated to the liberal world order. The goal of foreign policy diversification has been proclaimed by many Latin American nationalists but achieved by few.

## **Conclusions:**

At the end of the VII Congress of the Cuban Communist Party in April 2016, its first secretary and president of the Councils of State and Government, Raul Castro, ratified the chronogram by which the “historicos”, the revolutionary group who fought the nationalist insurrection against dictator Fulgencio Batista, would complete the passing of the torch of the Cuban party-state to a new generation of leaders in 2018 (Reuters, 2016). Almost one month before the CCP congress, U.S. president Barack Obama visited Havana after several waves of executive actions approved to circumvent the embargo legislation and increase travel and trade between the United States and Cuba (Leogrande, 2016). In the two years before Obama’s visit, Havana welcomed the presidents of all the Latin American countries (except Panama) for the summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and joined the Summit of the Americas announcing the total end of Cuba’s separation from the Western Hemisphere.

As Cuba enters a new phase of its political history, this dissertation made clear how important reforms have happened in the last two decades to adapt the economy, politics, leadership succession and foreign relations to the post-Cold War and post-Castro eras. The research developed its main arguments at the intersections between comparative politics, political economy and international relations. The goal was to understand the interactions between the processes of economic reform and political liberalization at the

domestic level and the changes in Cuba's foreign relations. This task requires a systemic approach aware of side effects and unintended consequences associated to changes in some subsystems (Jervis, 1997). It also takes into account the role of perceptions and misperceptions in the strategic calculation and the formation of attitudes and identities by the different domestic and international political actors (Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, 1976).

The research provides confirmatory evidence for cultural and institutional change within the policy frontiers of Cuba's one-party regime and for relevant progress towards stabilization, normalization and normalcy in the asymmetric relations between Cuba and the United States along the paradigm of an exchange of Acknowledgment of sovereignty for deference to the great power status (Womack, 2016). These changes increase the regime's resilience and legitimacy zones in a much changed world and regional order. The emergence of a mixed economy model with a substantive role for the non-state sector (with small and medium scale national private property, foreign investment, and integrated institutional market relations between the different sectors), the liberalization and institutionalization of the one party-rule; the acceptance of a new social, economic and cultural pluralism, the generational renewal of the low and medium echelons of the CCP, and the defeat of the U.S. embargo policy mean that the collapse of Cuba's socialism is not a structurally predetermined outcome (Hernandez, 2015)



However, the one-party regime faces considerable challenges ahead. The traps of partial economic reform equilibrium (Hellman, 1998) and the potential transformation of the failed imperial policy of embargo and regime change by coercion into one of a persuasive hegemonic character, according to the norms and institutions of a liberal regional and global order, are the most relevant ones. Cuban society is also becoming more plural and complex developing issue and interests groups that pushed for a less hierarchical relation between the party-state and civil society (Bengelsdorf, 1994).

To recall, the crises of adaptation to the post-Cold War world were at the beginning of the XXI century of three types: 1) economic, based on the lack of viability of Cuba's command economy in the absence of a benefactor as the Soviet Union was until 1991, 2) political, because the charismatic model of Fidel in command was unsustainable in the absence of the charismatic leader and the charismatic moment from which he emerged as the minimal winning coalition of Cuban politics, 3) of ideological trust, due to the lack of confidence by significant segments of the Cuban population, particularly within the new generations, in the capacity of the communist ideology to provide effective policies to cope with the structural problems of Cuba's political modernization and economic development.

The reforms of the last decade made important progress but these challenges are still far from being solved. In addition to these crises associated to the communist regime old politics and the flaws of command economy structures, the transformation of Cuban economy, politics and international insertion has created new dilemmas. Adding up to the test of creating new rules and routines for policy-making and intra-elite conflict management, Castro's heirs will face six additional challenges that were presented at several moments of this dissertation:

**First**, the partial economic reform equilibrium has an increasing economic, political and social cost. Rejecting shock therapy was the optimal approach to economic reform in the interest of domestic political stability but excessive gradualism reduces the quality of life of Cuba's citizens by slowing down the complementary and interdependent effects of comprehensive adoption of a market oriented mixed economy.

**Second**, a systemic corruption (Diaz-Brisquets & Perez-Lopez, 2006) has arisen as the result of the combination of traffic of influences and arbitrage opportunities for people in positions of power with lack of accountability, consumers' protection, competition and transparency.

**Third**, the new communications technology creates challenges derived from the educational boom developed by the revolution and the access to different political discourses for growing segments of the population (Diaz, 2013).

**Fourth**, the opening to the outside world and the economic reform create new losers with regional, racial, and gender gaps undermining the levels of equality achieved by the revolutionary project (Espina, 2010).

**Fifth**, there are dangers derived from insufficient political reform (S. Eckstein, *Back from the Future: Cuba under Castro*) to manage the new pluralism of Cuban civil society and the demands for development within the dominant nationalist and socialist currents of supporters of the government.

**Sixth**, for decades, the CCP elites relied on an under siege political unity around Fidel Castro's charisma and resistance against the imperial-coercive policy of the U.S. embargo. The new course inaugurated on December 17 by president Obama of replacing the imperial-coercive embargo policy by a persuasive hegemonic one might erode the unity of the nationalist camp, creating opportunities for an acknowledgement of sovereignty for deference to great power status (AFD) solution and peeling off nationalists from the CCP.

The dissertation studied Cuba's adaptation to the post-Cold War world in two fundamental dimensions: its institutions and the mindset (the culture) of its political decision making process. Special importance is assigned to the conflict between Cuban nationalism and the American hegemonic presumption towards the Western Hemisphere, and particularly towards Cuba. Change, political, social, economic, generational and of

Cuba's foreign relations is conceived as primarily of institutional and cultural nature. The dissertation presents the adaptation of Cuba's one party regime as guided, shaped and conditioned by the focus of the decision-makers in Havana in two main purposes: **domestic stability** and **international legitimacy**.

Different from other studies (Suchlicki, 1985), this dissertation looks at Cuban elites as a pluralistic group, divided by multiple factors (ideology (communist and nationalist), foreign policy mindset, generational gap, views about the market, etc). These divisions make a difference in terms of political paradigms, priorities and preferences in political organization and foreign policy. The content of reform, domestic stability and international legitimacy is contested by the different institutional factions and ideological currents that form "the revolutionary family" and conditioned by the nature and phases of the conflict between the post-revolutionary regime and the imperial policies of the United States' embargo.

Yet there is a minimal consensus about what domestic stability and international legitimacy means as survival of the current regime and defeat of the American embargo as essentials to Cuban radical nationalism's agenda. The dissertation does not look at the regime's capacity of resistance in mere material terms or limited to the current balance of forces. On the opposite, as it is essential to constructivist and asymmetry theories approaches, our discussion emphasized the role of history and revolutionary culture

(Bunck, 1994)in the institutional development of the CCP repertoire of practices, resources and policies capable to guarantee its victory (defined as survival) versus the imperial policy of regime change imposed from abroad.

The dissertation identifies four major arenas in which the adaptation is taking place:

- 1) The economy, with particular attention to the institutions and conceptions that guide the relations between state intervention and markets (property rights, regulation or prohibitions of market transactions, relations between the state and non-state sectors). An important distinction is established between the functions and purpose of the dual track economy before 2006 under the Fidel-in-command model and later under Raul Castro's leadership and the VI Congress of the CCP's social and economic guidelines.
- 2) The politics within the one-party system, as concerned with the change in state-society relations, role of rules and routines in the regulation and functioning of political society, as well as changes in the official attitudes towards loyal dissent, and the existence of social, economic, cultural and political pluralism as part of the political contestation

between factions and the two competing ideologies of the Cuban revolution: communism and nationalism.

- 3) Leadership succession. The emphasis is on how the impact of the end of charismatic leadership reverberates in the legitimacy of Cuba's political institutions and the position of the different echelons and political factions within them. Fidel Castro's retirement and the anticipated end of Raul Castro's rule at the top of the party-state combine two different transitions (one intra-generational that has been successfully managed and another, inter-generational) with important political turnover and consequences in the operation of the regime domestically and internationally.
- 4) The struggle for international legitimacy as a national state and a revolutionary actor, two competing albeit not necessarily incompatible identities. There is a symbiotic relation between Cuba's economic reform and political liberalization on one side and Cuba's role in regional and world affairs. Economic reform and political liberalization push for a foreign policy driven by the national interest of promoting a world friendly to reform, not revolution. Such interests are affected by the country's role in world affairs and the problems of mutual

perceptions and misperceptions between Cuba and other foreign and international state and non-state actors.

In the discussion of the economic reform as well as in the chapters about political liberalization and foreign policy issues, the dissertation emphasized the role of the starting point of the transformation in 1989-1991. In Cuba, the starting point represented a centralized command economy under a communist one-party rule, in an economic, political and military alliance with the Soviet Union and subjected to a policy of economic isolation by the most robust great power of the international system, the United States. Half of the dissertation was dedicated to explore the impact of the international context in the design of the reforms, and how the reforms shape the identity and role of Cuba's foreign policy.

Not less important is the fact that the reforms occur as part of a political cycle that began with a revolution rooted in intense ideological mass mobilization of the overwhelming majority of the Cuban people and a large international support (Perez-Stable, 1999). The ultimate goal of the revolution was communism, not capitalist development. This revolutionary identity plays an essential role in the politics of domestic reform and the making of Cuba's foreign policy. It is not market's invisible hand but Fidel Castro's spirit and Raul Castro led organizations (The CCP and the

Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) the cultural and institutional bases behind a managed openness, decentralization, decollectivization and expansion of the non-state sector.

Cuba's initial conditions for reform highlight a combination of four important factors that make difficult comparisons with the processes of reform in communist regimes in China and Vietnam and the transitions to market in Eastern Europe: 1) Cuba's economy was highly centralized as the ones in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the central unit was the ministries, not the provinces, a scheme that allowed in East Asia for more competition, experimentation and emulation of best practices, and for certain areas to take the lead in promoting foreign investment. 2) The strength and legitimacy of Cuba's communist party-state in 1989 was closer to the position of Vietnam's because it was judged as successful in terms of nationalist resistance to U.S. imposition. The CCP did not experience an implosion of the type that brought down its ideological homologues in Eastern Europe. Whatever his faults, until he fell ill, Fidel Castro governed Cuba and the CCP remained in control of state functions all over the country with no major political challenger in the horizon. 3) Cuba was already an urban and modern society with high standards in health and education. It was not, as China and Vietnam, an agrarian society capable to move population to new industries from the rural areas. The option of shifting large segments of the population into low wage manufactures for export is not available. It has to redistribute its labor force from inefficient industries and services to efficient ones. In fact because of its heavy dependence in food imports,



moving some population back to agriculture is a neuralgic point of the reform and the achievement of strategic food security. 4) Different from Vietnam and China (Womack, *Modernization and the Sino-Vietnamese Model*, 2013), Cuba is not located in a region of high economic dynamism as East Asia, and it was not attracted by the chances of joining a perceived successful economic integration scheme as the European Union was for the countries in Eastern Europe in the early 1990's.

In sum, comparisons are useful but it is always important to be aware of the exceptionalism of Cuba not only in Latin America but also in terms of its position in the spectrum of communist countries (Hoffman & Whitehead, *Cuban Exceptionalism Revisited*, 2007). Ideas are important all the way down. Policies of opening to foreign investment, decollectivization, decentralization, acceptance of economic, social, cultural and political pluralism are familiar in the developing world and countries in transition from plan to market, but the flexible introduction of such policies by a communism inspired party-state are not (Brundenius & Weeks, 2001). China and Vietnam are the closest cases in which disillusionment with state socialism as a viable path of economic brought not a shift to open capitalism but the implementation of partial market overtures by the same party-states responsible for the failed socialist idealistic policies of mobilization and central planning.

When the dissertation uses the term “post-totalitarian” to qualify Cuba’s regime type is recognizing a systemic change that happened as result of the end of charismatic leadership, the ascendance of new types of pluralism, the decrease of popular mobilization and a decreasing role of communist ideology. But different from others (Latell, 2003) who treat the Castro brothers as opportunists and the CCP and FAR as cynical tools of domination for the post-revolutionary Cuban elites, I take seriously the role of ideology and institutional organization of Cuba’s political system. Fidel Castro, the main inspirational figure of the CCP is not only a nationalist but a revolutionary communist. References to Marxism-Leninism are together with Jose Marti’s Latin American nationalism central orthodoxy of the political education of the Cuban cadres and population at large. A Leninist party and the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) formed and educated under Leninist principles are at the heart of Cuba’s political system.

Cuba remains after reform, at its core, a Leninist state. As Fred Halliday (Halliday, 1999) described in his discussion about revolution and international relations, the flexibilization of policies by revolutionary actors in specific sectors, such as foreign policy, does not mean the abandonment of their anti-systemic identity. Revolutionary actors tend to calibrate and rebalance their ideas and behavior to particular circumstances but as long as the revolution remains alive in the domestic arena, radical ideas have a space in the adopted policies. Cuba’s economic reform, political liberalization, leadership succession and foreign policy adaptation to the post-Cold War world have shown

important changes in the political regime, its economic paradigms, and its international projection. However, this research shows how the expectation reiterated intermittently (Lopez, 2002) that the revolutionary spirit will fade away failed.

It might happen that someday the anticipated change (Oppenheimer, 1992) occurs and the CCP loses its grip on the Cuban state. But twenty five years after the demise of the Soviet Union and ten after Fidel Castro's retirement are enough to discuss how post-revolutionary Cuba reformed and adapted rather than formulating the research puzzle as why the communist regime has not fallen yet (Lopez J. J., 2001). CCP's adaptation to the post-Cold War world and the post-Fidel Castro situation provides a useful case study to understand the dynamics of post-totalitarian resilience and the challenges and dilemmas confronted by regimes of its kind (nationalist-communist) to achieve political stability and international legitimacy.

### **Economic reform and political stability**

The first chapter covered the theme of Cuba's economic reform as a tool to maintain political stability. The chapter established clearly that the transition to a mixed economy is managed first and foremost to contain liberalizing political effects. By 2009, when Raul Castro launched its efforts of economic reform, the academic debate about the optimal approach to restructure former socialist economies was overwhelmingly settled

in favor of gradualism. In 1999, Thomas Rawski said “we are all gradualists now” (Rawski, 1999, p. 153) referring to the contrasting successes of China’s incremental approach versus the disastrous experiences of Russia. As a late reformer, Raul Castro got the benefits of this consensus and launched the economic transformation under the rubric “Without haste, but without pause” (“sin prisapero sin pausa”) (Castro, 2014).

Since the IV Congress in 1991, the political discourse of the CCP acknowledged that reforms were urgent. A conversation was noticeable in the public sphere about international experiences of transition from the old state socialism to other systems. Fidel Castro was horrified by Russia’s destructive record in the 1990’s and the CCP used the experience to persuade the population about the risks of a mismanaged transition to the market without a well-tested political leadership. The evidence of successful Chinese gradualism offered the opportunity to emulate an approach in which new reformed institutions were created without dismantling all of a sudden those that served the old command economy.

However, Fidel Castro warned Cuban policymakers that the Chinese approach couldn’t be a model for Cuba given the historical, cultural, size and regional differences between the two countries. In 1993, he launched a version of the two tracks system with two currencies but not as vehicle of transition to market socialism but as a tool to rescue the command structures by using some insulated market oriented tracks. As the

dissertation traces the transformation of the two track system into an explicit platform for a more market friendly model began to happen explicitly in Cuban economic structures and political discourse after the rise of Raul Castro to the helm of the Cuban state and his consolidation of power in the VI Congress of the CCP.

The two tracks model (Roland, 2000) of reform has been used in three countries, China, Vietnam and Cuba. The three countries are very different and provide opportunities for comparison beyond the reach of this research. Thus far, the discussion of these experiences was limited to the context of East Asia. This dissertation explained how Fidel Castro's initial conception of the two tracks system failed as a recourse to save the command economy but developed an institutional and political base for its transformation in a transition tool for a mixed economy. The expansive nature of the market track and the constituencies that it developed within the system pushed for a use similar to the one observed in Vietnam and China: a transition to a market oriented economy, integrating the state and the non-state sectors in a single strategy of development. The evidence is conclusive that dual track economies led structurally to the integration of the market and the non-market oriented sectors, affecting in the end the behavior and conception of actors across the society.

The research tracks how one of the most loyal institutions of the socialist system, the Revolutionary Armed Forces became the principal relevant advocate of a more

profound transformation of the Cuban economy. It also shows the limits associated to such development when state socialism began to be replaced by structures of state capitalism with monopolist structures, not friendly to institutions of competition, transparency and consumers' protection among other things related to a well functioning market economy. This is a fertile ground for situations of partial reform equilibrium.

The political trap of partial reform equilibrium is an issue well explored in the research. Here it is important to distinguish the problems of partial versus comprehensive transition to a market economy, of socialist or other character, from the debate between shock therapy and gradualism. A transition from plan to market can be comprehensive and gradual as long as does not reach an equilibrium<sup>279</sup> in which a partial dismantlement of the command structures becomes a new steady state. This last scenario can happen also under a shock therapy case. The alternative between comprehensive and partial reform is relevant because markets are not natural outcomes that develop as result of some invisible hand but products of historical development of institutional capabilities. There are interrelated elements of complementarities and interdependence among market institutions playing a considerable role in efficiency improvements and capabilities building to cope with problems such as inequality, poverty, rent-seeking opportunities, and other issues (Hellman, 1998).

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<sup>279</sup>Let's recall a definition from the introductory chapter; equilibrium is a situation that remains stable in the absence of an external shock.

In Hellman's model, partial reform equilibrium emerged in Eastern Europe as result of the role of "early winners" who acting as rent-seekers capture the policy making process and delay comprehensive changes to retain their privileged arbitrage and better position. In other explanations of partial reform, Victor Shih (Shih, 2006) explored the case of premier Zhu Rongji in China, showing how even insulated reform oriented bureaucrats are driven by their political and careerist goals, producing sub-optimal partial reform situation. This research contributes to the study of the partial reform problem by analyzing the role of national security concerns in shaping it versus the role of communist ideologues, losers and winners of the early stages of reform.

Although reforms are conceived as "policies that enhance the efficiency in resources allocation" (Drazen, 2000), they depend on the political context in which they are designed and implemented. In the Cuban case, the national security state is the main filter that reform proposals have to pass. This research explained how national security logic has prevented structural and institutional variables from cascading into a more comprehensive reform effect. Different from some authors (Mesa-Lago & Perez-Lopez, 2005) who underestimate the impact of the national security logic in the reform and highlight other factors (ideological rigidities, power control, etc), I argued here that national security concerns have been central to the adoption and design of the reforms. For instance, the opening to foreign investment or the creation of small and medium scale private enterprises are subjected to the scrutiny of national security policies in charge of

minimizing liberalizing effects and nipping regime change potential entrepreneurs in the bud.

Then the partial reform issue brings us back to the question of the quality of politics and the public sector in context of economic transformation. Making the situation more complex, other groups such as communist ideologues centered on political control not on economic development or early winners of the reform (rent-seekers) connect their agendas with the national security central logic. These intra-elites disputes define the character of the “gatekeeper state” (Corrales, December 2003) and its multiple uses<sup>280</sup>. The gatekeeper state could be a national security one, or one focused on sovereignty and development as nationalists want, or one focused on political control as communist hardliners prefer, or a predatory one, if captured by early winners and rent-seekers of partial reform. Not surprisingly this is a question that cannot be answer in abstract outside time and specific government organisms. That is why it is essential to look at the dynamics of political liberalization since it is a factor that would shape the character of the Cuban state and its relations with Cuban society and international actors.

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<sup>280</sup>In addition to the role of the Cuban “gatekeeper state” in terms of preserving political control described by Javier Corrales, Bert Hoffman has proposed a theory by which the state also plays a role in framing the terms of Cubans’ emigration as “exit” from the political system, limiting the effects on it. (Hoffman, November 2005)



### **Political liberalization, and political stability**

Although several upper echelon officials of the Cuban government have claimed that political reform is totally off their agenda (Robinson, 2012), politics has not been insulated from the effects of generational, social, economic and cultural changes. Moreover, the Cuban Communist Party has engaged in its own set of political reforms as part of the process of adaptation to a post-Cold War, post-Fidel Castro world, preserving domestic stability and expanding international legitimacy. These policies have had an important impact on enhancing the zones of legitimacy of the CCP rule, improving the quality of the management of intra-elites differences, and decompressing the social pressures associated to the relatively low economic growth rate and the implementation of the economic reform.

The political reform implemented by the Cuban Communist Party after 2006 can be resumed in four main lines: 1) the transition from a mixed system of charismatic-weakly institutional rule to a robust Leninist institutional one, 2) A less vertical relation between the State and Civil society requiring higher levels of consultation between the party-state and the non-political organizations invigorated by the new social, cultural and economic pluralism 3) a process of social decompression based on significant improvements of the situation of some specific rights such as the right to own private property, and the freedoms to travel and religion, 4) the establishment of institutional

policies of leadership succession and cadres education destined to outlast the passing of the “historicos”, the generation who led the revolutionary insurrection, and provide permanence to the post-revolutionary system (Berman, 2008).

This research presents solid evidences that the Cuban political system is post-totalitarian and becoming more Leninist in virtue of the institutionalization of the one-party rule as a “vanguard party”. While there is an assumption that a Leninist system cannot be legitimate and stable because of its lack of democratic contestation, I argued that the system has developed and reinforced some zones of legitimacy beyond Fidel Castro’s charisma and the revolutionary aura of the first generation. Like other authentic revolution-based Leninist states, the original claim to legitimacy came from the fact that an overwhelming majority of the Cuban population gave their consent to the revolutionary discourse by supporting the revolution in 1959-1961. Secondly, a more ambivalent source was the nationalist and socialist ideological mixture proclaimed as a national credo, setting the policy frontiers of the intra-system politics. But political legitimacy is not given once for all. The passing of the first generation of revolutionaries including charismatic Fidel Castro and the failure of the government to address the daily problems of the population within the margins of the official ideology began to empty the “mobilization mode of legitimacy” (Beetham, 1991, p. 95).

In response to those trends, a new political discourse emphasizing the themes of a “prosperous and sustainable socialism” began to emerge from the VI Congress of the CCP in 2011. The motto of “prosperous and sustainable socialism” emphasized nationalist goals of development, end of irrational prohibitions, empowerment of women and blacks, respect for sexual preferences and rights of the LGBT community. In terms of the economy, Raul Castro said “Either we rectify or we will sink” in a hard judgment that called the CCP not to allow the end of the work of several revolutionary generations (Vicent, 2010).

The research argued that economic reform was mainly motivated by the political need to achieve some legitimacy by economic performance. But different from the cases of China and Vietnam, success has eluded the Cuban leadership in the economic realm. As Emily Morris (Morris, 2014) demonstrated Cuban economy’s performance after the collapse of the Soviet Union is close to the median of the economies in transition. This is enough to survive and claim a successful resistance against the hostile circumstances created by the U.S. embargo but not to claim economic performance as a source of new legitimacy.

But this dissertation explains how even in the absence of East Asia-style growth rate, the CCP regime has developed zones of legitimacy in which it is expanding its capacity to meet central aspirations of the Cuban population (nationalism,

acknowledgment of religious liberties, and social, cultural and economic pluralism) and overcoming governance challenges (successful foreign policy versus American policy of isolation, adoption of term-limits for government and party officials as vehicle for elite renewal, decentralization of the decision making process to provinces and companies, constitutional reform to allow citizens to travel abroad and the expansion of small and middle size private companies, etc.).

The ideological shift to more nationalism from state socialism orthodoxy in the political discourse and intra-system culture widens the frontiers of the policy debate. In economic terms, it means a higher priority for the question of economic efficiency and development, ending the stigmatization of private property and market mechanisms. In political terms, it reduces the excessive focus on political control versus opening a discussion about varieties of socialism and the effectiveness and relevance of the bureaucratic agencies and the republican institutions of horizontal accountability such as the anti-corruption agency, the parliament and the courts.

Such dynamics opened space for a debate about revolutionary history and injustices and insufficiencies of the post-1959 political system without giving up the central pillar of CCP-one party rule but rectifying some major policy failures. Although the Cuban government doesn't formally negotiate or acknowledge anti-system opposition or intellectual dissent within the system, it is becoming flexible enough to accommodate

critical opinion and steal issues from the opposition or critical dissent agendas whenever it found them useful and manageable to bolster its legitimacy. The dissertation discusses Cuba's emigration reform as a case in which a controversial issue of opening towards the outside world was presented as a test case by the United States government, members of the opposition and critical dissenters within the system. The research traces how this political liberalization change took place.

The dissertation discusses the question of political stability in the context of institutionalization of the CCP Leninist rule. Samuel Huntington stressed a positive correlation between strong or high institutionalization and stability (Huntington, 1968, p. 18). The idea was ratified by Guillermo O'Donnell who saw "institutional weakness" as increasing the probability of "interruption and breakdown" (O' Donnell, January, 1994). Linz and Stepan sustain that post-totalitarian leadership tends to be more technocratic and bureaucratic but they do not conclude that more institutionalization under this context makes the political system more stable. The reason is that a gap appears between the weakened ideology driven utopian goals of the system and the "ideology's irrelevance to policymaking, or worse, its transparent contradiction with social reality" (Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe* 49).

This dissertation discusses how a rebalancing of the regime's ideological matrix in favor of nationalism (an option that was not available to the Soviet Union propelled Eastern European regimes after the 1968 Prague Spring) allows the post-totalitarian variant to adopt a more market friendly position. Under those circumstances, institutionalization of intra-elite conflict tend to produce a more stable setting since bureaucratic routines make political life and leadership transitions more predictable without making the ideology of the system a "living lie". Hypothetically, the limited party-bureaucratic- technocratic pluralism under a nationalism oriented post-totalitarianism can authentically co-opt non-regime elites. This is what has partially occurred in Cuba in the cases of leaders of religious groups, business oriented segments, women, LGBT activists and émigrés whose sectarian interests fit and even can be more prioritized in the public debate of a constrained nationalist regime than in a open political contestation scheme<sup>281</sup>.

The Cuban Communist Party is structurally in a position in which the survival of its rules depends more on the implementation of its own designed reforms than in the capacity of other forces to displace it from power. Cuban leaders extracted important lessons from the demise of communism in Eastern Europe and the adaptation of

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<sup>281</sup>None of this denies Linz and Stepan's observation about the loss of credibility of the official ideology because of the gap between concrete policies and anti-market communist principles. That said, the CCP has emphasized its opposition to concentration of wealth and property as well as its commitment to the state socialism companies as the spinal cord of the Cuban economy.

communist parties' rule in East Asia. The party leaders have conscience on the pertinence of the adoption of market mechanisms without giving up their gate keeping powers. They understand that political institutionalization of collective leadership is necessary not only to consolidate their power against domestic opposition, exiles and U.S. regime change policy but also for the convenience of their own functioning: a) to manage economic reform, b) to provide the end of Fidel Castro's charismatic leadership with stabilizers, c) to smooth intra and inter-generational political transition and presidential succession preventing the appearance of a leader like Gorbachev committed to an agenda of big bang democratization d) to enhance the international legitimacy of their system.

### **Cuba's change of leadership: political stability and international legitimacy**

Although the first two chapters of the dissertation emphasized the structural dimensions of adaptation, the research also explores the question of political stability from the point of view of the agency of Cuban leadership and the path created by the intra-generational transition after 2006 for the coming inter-generational transition after 2018 when biology if not politics would motivate the passing of the first leadership generation of revolutionaries.

The research reached ambivalent conclusions from the fact that the regime managed a successful intra-generational transition demonstrating the falsehood of those

who looked at the system as “a single fail point mechanism” (Leogrande, William & Kornbluh, Peter, 2014) and anticipated a collapse without Fidel Castro at the helm. Raul Castro proved to be right when on August 18, 2006; he ridiculed President Bush’s bravado about the impossibility of a succession without transition in Cuba. In an interview published in Granma, the newspaper of the communist party, Raul Castro declared that the government was “working smoothly”. No major political problem was faced until 2010 when a hunger striker died in a Cuban jail demanding better conditions for political prisoners. Raul Castro’s government’s response was a release of most political prisoners of the Black Spring of 2003 in coordination with the Catholic Church and the Spanish government of Jose Luis Rodriguez-Zapatero. Fidel Castro never returned to the presidency, succession did produce a significant change in economic terms, and political liberalization, but the regime continue to function stably.

But this research concludes that the success of the intra-generational succession does not mean that the coming inter-generational transition will be necessarily as smooth as the one that took place. The intra-generational transition benefitted from the hybrid character of the previous leadership system (charismatic and weakly institutionalized) and the stabilizing factors of Fidel Castro’s endorsement, Hugo Chavez’s economic support and Raul Castro’s condition as leader of the dominant factions in the CCP (the provincial party czars and the organization department) and the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR). The first three factors would not be present in the passing of the torch to



the new generation, with a civilian, Miguel Diaz-Canel, as the most probable successor at the head of the State and party. Raul Castro seems to understand that because in the VII congress of the CCP in 2016 announced a project of constitutional reforms before the end of his second and last presidential term in 2018.

The passing of the generation of leaders “historicos” (those who fought for the revolution against the previous dictatorial regime) poses a legitimacy dilemma for the institutions of the system, precisely when it is most needed by the successors. As a central problem the dissertation calls the attention on civil-military relations given the contradiction between the position of the FAR as the most powerful actor in the Cuban system and the role assigned to the CCP in the Leninist model as the central core of decisions. Helping a successful presidential succession the dissertation lists four major factors: 1) the appeal of Miguel Diaz Canel as a leader educated and trained in the different areas of the system by the organization department of the CCP with regional constituencies in two of the most important provinces (Holguin and Villa Clara) as well as the support of the high military command. 2) the intergenerational transition that already took place with the renewal of the party-state cadres at the intermediate and lower levels, something that happened in a well organized and institutionalized manner. 3) The common political experience of the third generation of leaders, born after 1959 and trained in the politics of internationalist missions of Africa and Central America, the partial opening of the 1990’s and the reforms after the VI Congress of the CCP. 4) Term

and age limits for the cadres has proven to be an effective institutional incentive for stability in communist regimes presidential succession in Vietnam (Pike, 1989) and China (Shirk, 2012).

The discussion about leadership succession and political liberalization led to questions about whether there are connections between liberalization and democratization in the long run. The dissertation builds on the experience of other processes in China, Vietnam, Taiwan, Korea and Mexico. Based on the evidences of the Cuban case, it concludes that although liberalization represents a significant improvement in some human rights and liberties, and promises a potential significant improvement in economic efficiency, it does not mean a necessary transition to a multiparty democracy or even higher contestation within the margins of the one-party system. That is why it is important to look at the issue of Cuba's foreign relations and the role of Cuba's principal economic and political partners as suppliers of political models to emulate

### **Cuba's role in World Affairs**

The discussion about Cuba's role in world affairs began by questioning the repeated mantra that U.S.-Cuba relations after 1991 were a remnant of the Cold War. Instead of blaming Florida politics for the continuation of the embargo policy beyond any foreign policy rationality, this research asked three other questions: How did the

American policy making process about Cuba change after the end of the Cold War? How did those changes enable a relatively weak Cuban American pro embargo lobby to impose its agenda in ways that were not even possible before 1990? What changed in the asymmetric relations between Cuba and the United States after the end of the Cold War? Why Cuba survived the strictest embargo declared by the United States against any country in earth short of a war? Which foreign policy strategies the Cuban government employed to outmaneuver American hostility and overcome attempts to isolate it? How the process of economic reform, political liberalization and leadership succession shape Cuba's new role in world affairs?

In response to these questions, the research focused on the roles of history and attention in asymmetric relations. The Cold War left for U.S.-Cuba relations a legacy of American inattention due to the lowering of the island's relevance in U.S. central security issues: non-nuclear proliferation and terrorism. On the American side, a lack of grand strategy rationality made possible the continuation of hostility, given the political inertia from the Cold War and the difference of values between American liberal democracy and Cuba's communist regime. On the Cuban side, the United States remained the central target of Havana's grand strategy that perceived an existential threat in the policy of embargo and the possibility of an American military intervention. This disparity of attention to the bilateral conflict provides Havana's resistance with a compensating

advantage versus the overwhelming disparity of military and economic resources in United States' favor.

Cuba's central focus on the asymmetric conflict with the United States allowed the CCP government to design a post-Cold War foreign policy pre-empting the worst scenario of confrontation (international security). Once this outcome was granted by Cuba's military preparation and reluctance to engage in a competition for weapons of mass destruction (that could attract the repulse of the international community and American security establishment's attention), Havana exploited the **hegemonic paradox** that placed the United States in conflict with the norms of the liberal global and regional order Washington pretended to lead. Since 1992, Cuban diplomacy worked on a United Nations General Assembly condemnation of American policy towards Cuba. It has achieved so for twenty five years.

The research employed a process-tracing method to explain the outcome of the conflict between Cuba and the United States at the multilateral level. Chapters IV explain how the process of partial economic reform and political liberalization impacted Cuba's foreign relations, creating dynamics of rapprochement with several U.S. allies interested on helping Cuba's soft-landing in market oriented structures. Contrary to views of Cuba as frozen in the Cold War, the study explained how interactions which were originally very limited before 1992 in Cuba's bilateral ties created a new culture of interdependence

and a trend to homogeneity between Cuba and international normative regimes in several areas, particularly in the economic and social realms. Although these trends to international homogeneity and interdependence did not translated immediately into Cuba's domestic political order, they mitigated the conflicts that the American strategy tried to exacerbate pursuing a collapse of the Cuban economy and thus, of the political regime.

Cuba's grand strategy achieved an asymmetric stalemate in which the great power, in this case, the United States, was unable to translate the disparity of power in domination, while the resistance of the smaller, Cuba, is not strong enough to force a change in the great power's confrontational policy. This grand strategy included different dimensions such as hiding in the nuclear issue, and buffering and beleaguering in the regional scenario as ways to prevent a scenario in which Cuban isolation could become possible. Havana's diplomacy did not abandon its Cold War allies but combined several competing identities, including the socialist and revolutionary one, to attract support and solidarity from other international actors. The study provides confirmatory evidence for Fred Halliday's theory (Halliday, 1999) about revolutions, the international system and the policies of revolutionary actors.

After presenting the features of the impasse that placed U.S.-Cuba ties in the context of asymmetric relations theory, the research studied the factors that pushed for a

shock on the statu quo in search for stabilization and normalization, with a possibility of normalcy (Brenner, 2016). By using the methodology of asymmetric relations and the paradigm of Acknowledgement of sovereignty for deference to great power status (AFD) developed by Brantly Womack (Womack, *Asymmetry and International Relations*, 2016), the dissertation allows us to have a comparable case with situations of similar nature in the relations between great powers and smaller neighbors such as Russia and Finland, China and Vietnam, United States and Mexico or Great Britain and Ireland.

In the case of the U.S.-Cuba relations, the reestablishment of diplomatic relations after the agreement of December 17, 2014 and the beginning of a process of stabilization-normalization was possible because three factors converged: 1) the accumulation of spaces of interactions between Cuba and the United States allowing the development of constituencies in favor of engagement. These spaces of interdependence, licensed travel, and sale of food contributed to the creation of engagement- favorable constituencies in the two societies. 2) the emergence of a post-post Cold War world in which strategic rivalries with China and Russia take center, combined with the need for a coherent policy towards the Western hemisphere (Hershberg, 2016) raised the profile and attention of the Cuban issue as a test case in American foreign policy. 3) These two trends were bolstered by Cuba's economic reform (Torres, 2016) an political liberalization (Leogrande, *The end of the bogeyman: The political repercussion of U.S.-Cuba rapprochement*, 2016), two processes that accelerated interdependence, the creation of

communities of common destiny and sparked coalitions against common enemies between Cuba and the countries of the Western hemisphere (international criminal networks, terrorism, natural disasters, etc) including the United States (Ebola in Africa).

As result of these dynamics and the presence in the White House of the Obama Administration with a desire to align American role in world affairs with the principles of a liberal international order (promotion of international trade, multilateralism, diplomacy, dialogue and negotiation rather than use of force), a change of Cuba's image in the American official discourse was possible (Lopez-Levy, 2016). Eventually Cuba was taken off the list of terrorist countries of the State Department and a series of negotiations about more than fourteen topics (protection of the coral reefs, cooperation in the case of natural disasters or oil spills in the Gulf of Mexico, law and order, rescue and salvage, immigration, human rights, among other issues took place leading to the first American president's visit to Cuba in March of 2016. New dynamics of cooperation are beginning to operate in parallel to the permanence of the policy of the embargo that it is still in place as a legal act of the U.S. congress and a solid structure of hostility.

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