

Cuba: What to Expect

SEMINAR SUMMARY

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Following is a summary of the major points made by participants, without attribution to them. A full web cast of the Seminar can be found on our Webpage <http://ctp.iccas.miami.edu>

PARTICIPANTS

Panel I The Role of the Military and the Party

Moderator: Jaime Suchlicki, Director, ICCAS, University of Miami.

Speakers:

Brian Latell, Senior Research Associate, ICCAS, University of Miami.
Frank Mora, Professor, National War College, National Defense
University.

Alcibiades Hidalgo, former Cuban Ambassador to the United Nations.

Eugenio Yáñez, analyst, editor of Cubanálisis—El Think Tank.

Panel II Dissidents and Civil Society

Moderator: Carlos Alberto Montaner, author, columnist, Firmas Press

Speakers:

Orlando Gutierrez, National Secretary, Cuban Democratic Directory.

Andy S. Gomez, Assistant Provost and Senior Fellow, ICCAS, University
of Miami.

Marcos Antonio Ramos, historian, Director of “Herencia.”

Hans de Salas del Valle, Researcher, Cuba Transition Project, ICCAS,
University of Miami.

Luncheon Keynote Speaker:

The Honorable Carlos Gutierrez, U.S. Secretary of Commerce.

Panel III The Economy: Quo Vadis?

Moderator: Steven G. Ullmann, Professor, Business Management, University of
Miami.

Speakers:

Jorge Perez-Lopez, Economist, Private Consultant, Washington, D.C.

Mario Gonzalez Corzo, Assistant Professor, Department of Economics,
Lehman College, City University of New York.

Jose Azel, Senior Research Associate, Institute for Cuban and Cuban-
American Studies, University of Miami

Jorge Piñon, Private Consultant

Panel IV **U.S. Policy**

Moderator: Susan Kaufman Purcell, Director, Center for Hemispheric Policy,
University of Miami

Speakers:

Otto Reich, Otto Reich Associates, LLC, Former Presidential Envoy,
Western Hemisphere Initiatives.

Pamela Falk, Professor, Department of Political Science, Hunter College,
New York.

Bruce M. Bagley, Professor and Chair, Department of International
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INTRODUCTION

One and a half years after the de facto departure of Fidel Castro from the helm of the Cuban regime, General Raul Castro and the Cuban military are in effective control of the Cuban state, though Fidel Castro continues to cast a long shadow. To date, Raul Castro has spoken of the need to increase labor discipline and productivity, but there have been no major changes that would signal a new post-Fidel direction. There is no immediate prospect for a challenge to Raul Castro (even in the immediate aftermath of the death of Fidel), and the military and the Ministry of the Interior are in complete control.

While these basic observations are generally held by Cuba scholars, significant differences exist about the future course of Cuba in the post-Fidel period. Among these differences:

- Raul's tenure: will challengers arise from either the military or the Communist Party?
- Reform under Raul: will the younger Castro brother remain risk-averse and institute only small reforms, or will he undertake an ambitious reform program based on either the Vietnamese or Chinese models?
- Popular pressure: will the Cuban people press for change?
- A new migration crisis: will Raul Castro unleash a new migration crisis to attempt to force the United States into concessions?
- Normalization of relations with the United States: will Raul Castro launch an effort to end the US embargo?

THE ROLE OF THE MILITARY AND THE PARTY

Fidel Castro will not return to power, and Fidelismo is in eclipse. The post-Fidel period has seen an end to the Fidelista trappings of rallies, protests, mass demonstrations and long speeches. But while Fidel will not return to power he is still pontificating and interfering with the succession: under these conditions, the succession becomes more unstable at a time when five critical areas require attention. These are:

- Economic and structural reform.
- Succession after Raul.
- Rejuvenation of the ageing military high command.
- Determining the future of the Cuban Communist Party.
- How to deal with Fidel's final abdication.

Central to the resolution of these critical challenges is the question of how Raul Castro will perform as Fidel's successor. Raul Castro is 76 years old, not overly healthy, and has shown a past pattern of withdrawing from public life. However, should Raul fail to deal with these issues -- especially with the departure of Fidel from the public sphere -- he will lose legitimacy with the nomenclatura.

There is some chance of regime-threatening violence over the next year if the succession is not handled well, perhaps one chance in ten or twenty. Such violence would likely trigger a new Florida migration crisis.

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One of the crucial institutions during the post-Fidel transition is the military, an effective, trusted institution. What is unclear is the military's institutional disposition toward change: retrenchment or a move toward pluralism?

The military is aware of the need to improve the economy, but it must also guard against destabilization. The challenge is to ensure regime survival. Four factors could push the military to favor either the direction of retrenchment or toward a more pluralistic regime.

- External factors: Looking at the case of China is instructive. If the military perceives a high level of external threat, there is less likelihood of instituting change.
- Institutional prerogatives: The military has always had the monopoly on weapons, and now it has more economic resources, influence and power. As the power of the military increases, there is less institutional interest in change.
- Strategic interactions: The military does not have a positive view of civil society, and it is not interested in talking with potential interlocutors in civil society.
- Internal differences and cleavages: If differences and cleavages develop inside the military, these cleavages will provide openings for change, especially if there are elite defections from the status quo.

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The success of Raul Castro's succession depends on two pillars: the Cuban military and the Cuban Communist Party. These are the two most powerful institutions in the country, and they are interconnected. The military is involved in politics, the party grew out of the military, and military officers are important members of the politburo of the party. The military, however, cannot rule the country by itself; the party is indispensable.

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Cuba is not a country of strong institutions; it is a country of caudillos. This understanding is important in a situation where Fidel Castro is not really alive (politically) but he is not dead either. Everyone in Cuba except Fidel Castro is now thinking about change, and the polemics emerging from Cuba are about how to maintain power.

One problem is that, as a rule, members of the party's politburo never have care about political theory of communism, but about loyalty to "fidelism" as a guiding principle. A second problem for the party, the military and the state is the gerontological factor: much of the leadership is in their eighth decade, and these leaders will begin to die off, bringing inevitable generational change. In this situation, the civilian nomenclatura may well be pushed to the side by the military. But even with generational change, the

one group with whom the leaders of Cuba will not wish to work will be the Miami Cuban community, especially since there are other interlocutors such as China, Venezuela and Europe.

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Among the questions to watch are these:

- What is the relationship between Cuba and Venezuela?
- What would happen if Chavez were to lose power and Cuba found itself without Venezuelan oil?
- What would happen if both Fidel and Raul died at approximately the same time?
- Is there a possibility of a coup in the post-Castro period?
- Can the revolution survive the departure of the Castro brothers?

DISSIDENTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY

There is clear evidence that the vast majority of Cubans are not happy with the degree of personal freedom they enjoy: a rare Gallup poll conducted in Cuba revealed that only 26 per cent of Cubans were satisfied with their level of personal freedom, the lowest rate in all the countries covered in the survey.

The question is how to move from the current totalitarian control of Cuban life. Cuban society is rife with corruption, not just in the economic and political spheres, but also in the attitudes and values held by many Cubans. Older Cubans will be more resistant to change than younger Cubans because the older generations understand how to manipulate the current system to their benefit and are fearful of changes that could remove that advantage.

For Raul Castro, the challenge is how to meet the basic needs of the Cuban population. If he proves unable to meet basic human needs, the result may well be a new migration crisis. In the first 8 months of 2007, about 11,500 Cubans made their way to the United States by illegal border crossings from Mexico into Texas. The United States—in the midst of its presidential election campaign—is in a weak position to deal with a migration crisis, and if human needs are not met by the Cuban regime and if personal freedom is not expanded, there could be general migration from Cuba to all parts of the Caribbean and Latin America as well as the United States.

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Dissidence is a continuing reality in Cuba, as the continuing arrests of dissidents documents. Authoritarianism has long been pervasive in Cuba, but so have aspirations for democracy. The Cuban resistance is aware of the need to change Cuban political culture, and it sees non-violence as an essential part of pro-democracy activism.

The grass-roots pro-democracy movement in Cuba is based in the provinces, not in Havana. Dissident leaders in Havana get the attention of embassy staffs and news

organizations, while those in the provinces get less attention and many have spent periods in prison as a result.

Dissidence is an important issue for the regime because the regime's major international crises since the 1990s have been triggered by dissident activity. Currently, the regime is facing dissidence from the "Cambio" movement, efforts by university students for university autonomy, and campaigns for noncooperation with the regime.

Given the persistence of dissident movement, the regime has realized that it cannot crush the movement and there are indications that the security forces conduct ad hoc negotiations with dissidents rather than face the high costs of crackdowns.

The regime's ties with Venezuela are also problematic for dealing with pro-democracy and dissident movements: though Chavez's Venezuela is Cuba's closest ideological ally, Venezuela under Chavez has elections, an independent press, and a political opposition. Cubans wonder why they cannot have these same institutions.

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The role of religious organizations in Cuban society can easily be overestimated. Cuba is a highly secularized society: only 200,000 to 300,000 Cubans regularly attend Roman Catholic Mass, while the entire membership of Protestant churches is no more than 500,000. Cuba's syncretic religion -- Santeria -- is not well organized but is an important social force.

Neither the Protestant nor the Roman Catholic leadership has proved willing to openly challenge the government, and no one should expect the church to be the great factor in changing Cuba.

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A pessimistic view of the situation of dissidents in Cuba holds that Fidel Castro won the big confrontation with dissidents in 2003, as evidenced by Spain's renewal of aid to Cuba without conditions. Further, those who look to East European transitions as a model for Cuban transition are incorrect. A pessimistic appraisal of the Chinese transition showed that the Chinese regime, when it faced the Tiananmen challenge, did not fall but chose to fight back. This may be the lesson from China for transition in Cuba. The Cuban regime has weathered its most vulnerable period—the 1990s—and the willingness of the United States to continue confrontation with Cuba is likely to diminish with the next US President.

The big test for Raul Castro will be to deliver economic improvements, not political liberty. Political freedom is not that important an issue for US foreign policy -- after all, China has a dissident movement it oppresses and yet the United States does not make this an issue in interstate relations. The next US Administration, even if it is Republican, could well be the one that puts Cuba behind it as an issue.

Evidence of the willingness of the United States to move away from confrontation comes from the normalization of relations with Vietnam. This came despite the presence

of a strong and vocal South Vietnamese exile community in the United States that was strongly opposed to normalization.

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This panel provoked some of the sharper differences of opinion, with some members of the audience insisting that support for confrontation with Cuba was growing in the US Congress, that official circles in Europe were aggressively anti-Castro, and that East European governments were actively reaching out to the Cuban people.

There was also disagreement about the power of dissident movements in Cuba: on the one hand, there is evidence that dissidents have improved their power to mobilize and put demonstrators on the street. On the other hand, the large numbers of Cubans who choose to leave the island rather than go to the streets suggests that leaving rather than fighting is the choice of many.

**EXCERPTS FROM KEYNOTE ADDRESS:
THE HONORABLE CARLOS GUTIERREZ, SECRETARY OF COMMERCE
AND CO-CHAIR FOR THE COMMISSION FOR ASSISTANCE
TO A FREE CUBA**

Secretary Gutierrez said “change has begun in Cuba,” but that “freedom will not happen by going from one dictator to another. He defended the US embargo by arguing that when the Castro regime had access to resources, “that has not helped the people of Cuba.” Denying resources to Castro has meant the regime did not have resources: to do damage to this country and other countries around the world.”

Instead of asking when the United States would change its policy toward Cuba, the correct question to ask was “when will Cubans be free?” Secretary Gutierrez said: the embargo has nothing to do with the lack of freedom” in Cuba. And, he added, “Cuba is an anti-American terrorist state.”

Secretary Gutierrez contrasted the outrage shown by the world toward human rights abuses in Burma (Myanmar) with the international response to Cuba. “Where is the outrage,” he asked?

Secretary Gutierrez said that when the true nature of the Castro regime, which he compared to Stalin’s rule in the Soviet Union, becomes known, “people who supported the regime will be brought to shame.”

Secretary Gutierrez predicted that Raul Castro would not be able to maintain the succession. “I don’t believe Raul Castro can keep it together. I don’t believe Raul Castro believes he can keep it together.

THE ECONOMY: QUO VADIS?

Cuba has sought foreign direct investment (FDI) as a means to develop its economy. In the initial years after the revolution, Cuba received “socialist investment” in the form of collaboration from COMECON countries in joint projects, particularly those related to the development of natural resources. In 1982, Cuba opened the door to joint venture with Western investors, and in 1995 introduced a broader approach that allowed not only joint ventures, but also other forms of investment including opportunities for foreign-owned companies to invest directly.

Reliable information about FDI flows and stocks are hard to obtain. Cuba provides no official statistics on FDI, but it is believed that FDI commitments may have been approximately \$1.5 billion in 1991, and that by 2002, they may have reached \$5.9 billion. It is believed that about 50 percent of FDI commitments have been realized. Currently, FDI is focused on strategic sectors such as tourism, oil and minerals.

The number of joint ventures peaked in 2002, when there were over 400 such investments in Cuba, but by 2006, the number had declined to 236. Two of the biggest private foreign investments in recent years have come in the natural resources sector, where Canadian company Sherritt has invested in nickel production and a Spanish firm is modernizing a cement plant.

Since 2004, Cuba has taken a more ideological approach to FDI, as seen by the rising role of investments from Venezuela and China. Venezuela has invested in joint ventures in the oil sector; Cuba also has five joint ventures in Venezuela. China has six investment projects including nickel production ventures.

The new politicized approach to FDI limits Cuban access to technology transfers and other benefits that are associated with private investment.

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As Raul Castro assumes responsibility for the development of the Cuban economy, there are three questions: will he reform the economy, what types of reforms might he implement and which areas of the economy will he select for reform?

Cuba’s economy since 2001 is said to have shown an average annual growth in GDP of 8 per cent, but these figures are questionable, due to changes in how the country computes the GDP. Further, the economy since 2001 has been characterized by increased centralization, falling output in non-sugar agriculture and in many industrial sectors, a worsening trade balance and a slowdown in tourism.

Thus far, Raul Castro has introduced some minor economic changes, but these will not be sufficient to address challenges that include raising agricultural production, reducing the growing dependence on food imports, raising salaries and pensions,

repairing and replacing substandard housing stocks and crumbling infrastructure and reviving the failing transportation system.

The economic situation facing Raul Castro is one in which economic conditions have declined in Cuba over the past five years. Among the possible responses to this reality may be the introduction of markets in the food and agriculture sectors, unification of the monetary and price structures, and a program of investment in housing and infrastructure.

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In recent years, Cuba's reliance on subsidized oil from Venezuela has placed it in the same situation that it faced when it was dependent on the Soviet Union for petroleum. For Cuba, this is not a problem of supply, but rather one of payment: should Venezuelan subsidies disappear, how could Cuba pay its \$3 billion oil import bill?

Cuba does have recoverable oil resources, about 4.6 billion barrels, according to US government estimates, while there may be another 15 billion barrels off-shore in the "Eastern Gap," an area of offshore reserves shared among Cuba, Mexico and the United States. Dealing with oil is one of the challenges faced by the country.

Other challenges include the resolution of property claims against Cuba by multinational corporations, the need for reform of land tenancy laws to stimulate the agricultural sector and the need to replace revenues from the sugar sector of the economy. One possible development could be the granting of large scale (35,000-acre or higher) agricultural concessions to multinationals with production-sharing agreements.

The capitalization of state enterprises could be pursued, but the reality is that these enterprises have little of value to sell. In any case, large-scale foreign investments in the economy will not be likely for three to five years after Cuba moves to transform its economy.

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Many believe that once Cuba undergoes a real transition, there will be a bonanza of US direct investment in the country. However, even if the transition to political and economic liberty goes smoothly, sizable US FDI is not guaranteed. Many US companies will prefer to serve the new Cuban market through exporting, which has much lower risk and cost. Indeed, a surge of US exports will develop. Exporting, however, will not benefit the development of the post-transition Cuban economy in terms of capital contributions or technology transfers.

Generally, the decision to invest in a foreign market is driven by three factors: resource availability, efficiencies of production and the need to satisfy market needs. In the case of Cuba, there will be some resource-driven investment in areas like tourism and natural resources. However, the Cuban workforce is not likely to be comparatively attractive as a source of inexpensive labor. After years of working in a command economy, Cuban workers in comparative terms, have not developed the work ethic that would make a Cuban facility attractive for investors seeking efficiencies of production.

And, while the Cuban market of 11 million people is large enough to be attractive, this market is not particularly affluent. Therefore a rush by US businesses to invest in post-transition Cuba is unlikely to develop outside the resource-seeking type of investments.

Though recently the role of the Cuban-American community in post-transition Cuba has been de-emphasized, this community could play a significant role in encouraging direct investment in Cuba because investment decisions by this community will not follow strict business rationality. Some small entrepreneurs are likely to invest in businesses that can be run by relatives who have stayed in Cuba. Equally significant will be the role of Cuban-American executives in the US corporate world, who can be expected to act as opinion leaders pushing their firms to look at Cuba as an investment target. If a post-transition Cuban government wants to encourage US FDI, it should provide competition-driven arguments for entrepreneurs and executives in the form of offers of preferential treatment for early foreign investors.

US POLICY

US policy toward Cuba is largely reactive, and there are no reasons to foresee a change in policy barring change in Cuba. For Cuba, the fact that US policy discussions mainly focus on the embargo is a success. The embargo is seen by US policy makers as necessary to retain as a bargaining tool to use with a future Cuban government.

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During the next 14 months, US policy to Cuba will remain at the status quo, barring some major development, such as a new migration crisis. As one looks at the principal contenders for the US presidency, there is little reason to predict a major change in US policy toward Cuba in the next administration, though some change might come with some Democratic contenders.

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US policy makers can expect an excruciatingly slow transition in Cuba, with at least five to 10 years of continued domination by the military and the Communist Party. The success of the Chinese military in recent years and the ability of Vladimir Putin to recentralize the Russian economy and purge political opposition point the way ahead in Cuba.

Those who see a major change coming in Cuba in the near future are likely to be disappointed. There is no reason to expect the US embargo to force transition, as it has failed to do so thus far, though the embargo has reduced the rate of growth in Cuba by about 1 per cent per annum.

If a Republican wins the US presidency, there will be no change in Cuba policy. If the next occupant of the White House is a Democrat, policy may be modified to allow credit sales of agricultural exports, a more liberal policy toward the pharmaceutical sector, ratcheting back on rules that make family reunifications difficult, easing of rules on remittances to Cuba and more educational exchanges.

CUBA: WHAT TO EXPECT

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Pamela Falk, is a professor of Political Science and Law at Hunter College, CBS News Foreign Affairs Analyst and U.N. Resident Correspondent, and former *Staff Director of the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs* of the U.S. House of Representatives. She has written and edited books on Cuba, immigration, and U.S. foreign policy. As a lawyer, she negotiated several high-profile immigration and asylum cases, including the children of former Yankee pitcher, *El Duke*, the travel to Cuba of Kevin Costner to show the film *13 Days*, the largest defection in the history of the U.S., the 60-dancer ensemble of **Havana Night Club** dance company in 2005, and the recent defection of the Cuban Olympic Gold Medal-winning boxing team. She received her J.D. from Columbia University and her Ph.D. from New York University.

Andy Gomez, serves as Assistant Provost at the University of Miami and Senior Fellow at the Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies. Dr. Gomez was Dean of the School of International Studies (2002-2004). Before joining the University of Miami, he served as Undersecretary of Education and Chief of Staff at the Executive Office of Education in Boston, MA (1991-1994). Prior he served in several capacities at the University of Houston, including Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs. Dr.

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Carlos Alberto Montaner, is a writer, journalist, and professor at several universities in Latin America and the United States. For over thirty years, several dozen journals have published his weekly column. In 1990 he created the Liberal Cuban Union (ULC) and shortly after its formation, affiliated itself with International Liberals, of which in 1992 Montaner was elected vice president. He has published numerous books several of which have been translated into different languages. Two of his best-sellers are Manual del perfecto idiota latinoamericano (Manual of the Perfect Latin American Idiot) and Fabricantes de miseria (Fabricators of Misery).

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Jorge Piñon, a graduate from the University of Florida in International Economics and Latin American Studies, recently returned to Miami after a thirty year career in the international energy sector with BP-Amoco. His most recent assignments were President of Amoco Oil Latin America (1994-1999) based in México City, México, and head of BP Supply & Logistics Europe operations (1999-2003) based in Madrid, Spain. Piñon is currently a private consultant.

Susan Kaufman Purcell, is the Director of the Center for Hemispheric Policy at the University of Miami. Prior Dr. Purcell was Vice President of the Council of the Americas and the Americas Society in New York beginning in 1989. Between 1981 to 1988 she was a Senior Fellow and Director of the Latin American Program at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York. From 1980-1981, Dr. Purcell was a member of the U.S. Department of State’s Policy Planning Staff. She was a tenured professor of political science at the University of California, Los Angeles (1969-79). She currently writes a monthly column for *AméricaEconomía*, a leading business magazine in Latin America.

Marcos Antonio Ramos, is Professor of History at Florida Center for Theological Studies and a Senior Research Associate at ICCAS. He is the author of nine books including Panorama del Protestantismo en Cuba and Protestantism and Revolution in Cuba. His most recent publication is La Cuba de Castro y Después. He has written extensively on religion and society in contemporary Cuba and writes a Sunday column for *Diario las Américas* and for several Latin American newspapers. He is a corresponding member for Latin America of the Real Academia Española of Madrid, Spain. An ordained Baptist minister, he has served in several ecumenical and interfaith programs, some of them related to religious organizations in Cuba.

Amb. Otto Reich, is President of Otto Reich Associates, LLC, Washington, D.C. From 1986 to 1989 he served as U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela. He was U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs from 2001 to 2002. He then became

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Steve Ullmann, is former Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs and University Administration; Dean of the Graduate School, University of Miami, and is now Professor, Department of Management and Economics in the School of Business and professor in the Departments of Epidemiology and Public Health in the School of Medicine. Dr. Ullmann served as a research associate with two consulting firms, Health Manpower Policy Studies Group and Policy Analysis, Incorporated. He is the author of several books, among them, The Future of Health Care in a Post-Castro Cuba, and over two dozen chapters and journal articles.

Eugenio Yáñez, was former Professor at the Universidad de La Habana for 14 years, lecturing, researching and consulting Strategic Management & Marketing, Political Theory and International Economy. He arrived to the U.S. in 1993. He is co-author of Jaque al Rey: La muerte de Fidel Castro and Secreto de Estado: Las primeras doce horas tras la muerte de Fidel Castro. He is also Editor of Cubanálisis-El Think-Tank (www.cubanalisis.com). Yáñez holds a PhD in Economics from the University of Havana.