SURVIVAL, ADAPTATION AND UNCERTAINTY: THE CASE OF CUBA

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The Cuban Revolution recently experienced a major transition of leadership as power shifted hands from Fidel Castro to his younger brother, Raúl. Eschewing the role of caretaker, Raúl embarked on an ambitious program aiming to streamline a cumbersome and inefficient state while reforming the economy in ways that will increase agricultural production, encourage self-employment and lead to sustainable economic growth. At the same time, Raúl Castro refashioned the ruling coalition and proposed major changes to the ruling Communist Party, including term limits, leadership rotation and the separation of party and state functions. This article analyzes the emergence of a new Cuban political elite, explores how power is distributed between its military and party wings and examines the major challenges this coalition must overcome if it is to successfully manage the transition from the Castro era and stabilize Cuban autocracy.

The Cuban Revolution is now in its sixth decade. Born in the crucible of the Cold War, it survived the effects of longstanding U.S. sanctions, the collapse of the communist bloc and Fidel Castro's quixotic efforts to create the "new man" through both socialism and communism. The collapse of the Soviet Union plunged the Cuban economy into a prolonged tailspin from which it has yet to emerge; twenty years later, most economic indicators are still at a fraction of their pre-1989 levels.[1] Christening this phase as the *Período Especial en Tiempo de Paz* (Special Period in Time of Peace), Fidel Castro vowed never to surrender. He did not capitulate and the regime endured. The profound economic crisis that engulfed the island spurred neither dangerous instability nor drastic political change.

Forty years after coming to power, Fidel Castro was still in charge; only a serious illness in July 2006 finally forced him to abdicate his posts. As the economy continued to stumble, he seamlessly turned power over to his brother Raúl, who

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formally assumed the presidency of the Council of State in February 2008 and then the post of the first secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC) at its Sixth Congress in April 2011.

The defining characteristics of the Cuban Revolution have been chronic economic difficulty and remarkable political durability. But how long can this endure? There is little doubt that Raúl Castro views the faltering economy as a challenge to the regime's long-term survival. His speeches are replete with calls for order, discipline and exigency in all spheres; his words exude a sense of urgency. In an address to the National Assembly, he declared that the country was on the verge of a "precipice."[2] During another, he noted: "We have to permanently erase the notion that Cuba is the only country in the world where people can live without working."[3] "Socialism," he affirmed on yet another occasion, "means social justice and equality. . . . Equality of rights [and] of opportunities, not of income. Equality does not mean egalitarianism [which is] another form of exploitation . . . exploitation of the responsible worker . . . by the slothful."[4]

Chronic economic difficulty and remarkable political durability are the defining characteristics of the Cuban Revolution.

Since taking over from his brother, the eighty-one-year-old leader has begun to implement wide-ranging changes designed to reform the Cuban economy and reduce the bloated state—which employs nearly 85 percent of the workforce— while putting in place a "successor generation" that will inherit a more stable Cuban Revolution.[5] Raúl Castro does not describe his efforts as "reforms," preferring instead to describe them as an *actualizacion* (updating) of the model.[6] It is too soon to tell whether these initiatives, which are timid in comparison to those implemented in China and Vietnam over the past three decades, will spur sustainable economic growth, but they nevertheless represent a sharp break from the paternalistic vision of his brother.

Raúl Castro seeks to change more than the face of the Cuban economy. He has fashioned a new ruling coalition and has begun to prepare the transfer of power to the next generation of party leaders. Many younger cadres who worked closely with Fidel are gone. The new coalition includes remnants of the revolutionary generation (most of whom are in their seventies or eighties), but beneath this gerontocracy, a "successor generation" of military elites and party provincial secretaries has emerged.

This article analyzes the rise of this new ruling elite. The first section explores how the economic crisis of the 1990s spawned the conditions for its emergence. The second section analyzes how Raúl Castro and his supporters consolidated

power. The conclusion discusses the challenges this new elite will face when it inherits power after the era of the Castro brothers ends.

The Struggle for Survival and its Consequences

Cuba was rocked by the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, and in short order, the island nation became an international orphan. The effect was devastating. More than 85 percent of Cuban trade was with the Soviet Union—90 percent if one includes the entire Soviet bloc.[7] Year to year, trade and commerce collapsed, along with all subsidies, loans, grants and free military equipment Cuba had been receiving from the Soviet Union. Precise data are difficult to come by, but reliable estimates put the figures of economic aid at $39.5 billion from 1960 to 1990, loans at $60.5 billion (most of which were written off or unpaid) and military parts and equipment at $13.4 billion.[8] The demise of the Soviet Union also had major political and ideological consequences for Cuba. Not only was the Castro regime cast adrift in an inhospitable world, but it also had to adjust to the demise of communism as an ideology. Because the Cuban Revolution had genuine nationalist roots, however, it was able to replace Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin with José Martí and Antonio Maceo with relatively little effort.

If Cuba could afford to postpone its economic day of reckoning, it was only because Hugo Chávez came to power in Venezuela.

The economic consequences of the Soviet collapse were profound and long lasting. The Cuban economy went through a particularly rough period between 1990 and 1994, with widespread food shortages and electricity outages. In August 1994, a spontaneous riot involving several thousand people (known as the *maleconazo*) erupted in Havana. Shortly thereafter, thousands of *balseros* left the island on makeshift rafts and inner tubes. However, with the exception of the Havana riots, occasional protests elsewhere and the heroic defiance of dissident groups, there were few overt signs of dissent during the early years of the Período Especial—certainly none that placed the regime in jeopardy.

By 1996, the worst was over. Over the next fifteen years, the economy stabilized and even showed signs of growth. But the improvement concealed persistent structural problems in the economy, especially the inefficiency of the state sector and the low productivity of its workers. As soon as things started to improve, Fidel Castro slammed the brakes on the tepid reforms he had only grudgingly accepted. If Cuba could afford to postpone its economic day of reckoning, it was only because Hugo Chávez came to power in Venezuela in 1999 and began to provide Cuba with nearly $3.5 billion in subsidies annually.[9]

There were several reasons why the Cuban regime survived the economic and social cataclysms of the early 1990s. One was the efficacy of its mechanisms for social control. The Cuban state was omnipresent, employing a mix of strategies to control, direct and disarm society.[10] Opposition was also weak, and immigration served as a safety valve for nonconformists. The absence of viable alternatives helped the regime survive but this was only one side of the equation. Fidel Castro and many Cubans struck a grand bargain when the regime consolidated power in the early 1960s. This project involved a radical defense of national sovereignty, the promise of social equality and the delivery of universal health care, education and housing—the so-called accomplishments of the revolution. In exchange, citizens could expect tight political restrictions and a constant struggle against domestic and foreign enemies, including a permanent conflict with the United States. This confrontation (which was fueled on both sides of the Florida Straits) helped consolidate and sustain the regime.

The regime's survival strategy had another consequence: it greatly enhanced the power and influence of the Revolutionary Armed Forces.

The consensus forged in the early 1960s between the Cuban state and its citizens lost adherents over time. Many people who originally supported the project became disenchanted, retreating into a form of internal exile that did not require confrontation with the status quo. *Resolver* (to get by) was the new normal; stealing from the state and trading on the black market became part of everyday life. Support declined steadily once the Período Especial arrived.[11] The decline in fervor was most evident among Cuban young people who grew tired of the incessant calls for struggle and sacrifice that never improved the lives of ordinary citizens.[12] Finding that their education did not guarantee employment in the brave new Cuba of the 1990s, university graduates left their professions and took jobs in tourism and other lucrative sectors of the service economy. Many young people left the country or just strolled along the *malecon*, a long seaside walkway in Havana, and dreamed of doing so. More than 500,000 people left Cuba between 1994 and 2009—a statistic that does not include those who departed illegally.[13]

Both critics and supporters of the regime took note of the deep social malaise. In May 1999, Archbishop Pedro Meurice spoke of the "anthropological lesions" suffered by Cuban society during the preceding forty years.[14] More recently, Alfredo Guevara, a cultural icon and close friend of the Castro brothers, commented on the "material and spiritual crisis" that had enveloped Cuba since the start of the Período Especial.[15] Even if such dissatisfaction did not find political expression, it was increasingly evident that the national project—which had generated great

enthusiasm forty years before—had been replaced by quiet desperation.[16] Even Fidel Castro sensed the growing gap between the regime and the younger generation when, in one of his last major speeches at the University of Havana, he warned that the revolution could be destroyed from within.[17]

The Cuban leadership responded to the demise of the Soviet Union by introducing limited reforms and searching for new trade and investment partners. The most important changes included legalizing the U.S. dollar and introducing a dual currency, issuing permits to engage in limited self-employment, reopening farmers' markets that had been closed during the Castro's "rectification campaign" in the late 1980s, expanding the tourist industry, encouraging remittances from Cuban immigrants and authorizing joint ventures with foreign investors.

These measures helped the revolution survive, but they also went against the grain of Fidel Castro's state-centric, anti-capitalist vision.[18] Though limited, the reforms expanded the scope of personal initiative and highlighted the shortcomings of the Cuban socialist state. They also opened the door to increased social stratification and income inequality. A growing chasm began to separate those who had access to the dollar economy and those who did not. These developments undercut the egalitarian foundations on which the revolution claimed to stand.

The regime's survival strategy in this period had another consequence: it greatly enhanced the power and influence of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR). The military had had a privileged role in the Cuban Revolution since 1959.[19] The FAR had been under the command of Raúl Castro since its inception and developed a degree of institutional autonomy to which no other organization in Cuba could aspire. Already in the mid-1980s, Raúl Castro had authorized the application of capitalist management techniques in military enterprises known as the *sistema de perfeccionamiento empresarial* (SDPE). Many of those who worked in the SDPE would eventually receive key ministerial and sub-ministerial appointments when the younger Castro came to power.

The enhanced role and influence of the FAR was not limited to training managers. During the 1990s, the armed forces became the go-to organization for the regime, adjusting without complaint to severe personnel cutbacks and becoming self-sufficient in food production and in the manufacture of spare parts, all the while maintaining a credible defense posture and the general respect of the population.[20] Its military-technocratic entrepreneurs ran a holding company, Grupo de Administración Empresarial, SA (GAESA), whose partners were the principal foreign investors on the island. The range of GAESA activities was extensive, and its subsidiaries (Gaviota, Cubanacan and Agrotex, among others) were key players in the tourist sector as well as in agriculture, telecommunications and mining.[21]

By the beginning of this century, the FAR was a virtual state within a state. It

was responsible for national defense and, since the Ministry of the Interior was under its chain of command, internal security as well. Its technocrats and managers represented a ministerial elite in waiting. The officers who administered GAESA and its subsidiaries lived well, controlled jobs and had access to scarce resources. They would also be first in line to acquire great wealth if and when "market socialism" arrived in Cuba. Despite its joint-venture successes and the managerial skills its members acquired through the SDPE, the FAR was not in charge of economic policy making during the 1990s. Its officers would take over such duties when Raúl Castro ascended to power and displaced the technocrats (including Carlos Lage) to whom his brother had entrusted the management of the economy after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

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The preceding discussion begs the obvious question: where does the Communist Party—the "organized vanguard of the Cuban nation," according to the 1992 constitution—fit into this account of the Período Especial?[22] The best answer may be that it was tending to its patronage network and serving as an ideological guardian and tribune. The PCC had always been a secondary actor on the Cuban scene. It did not formally exist until 1965 and did not celebrate its First Congress until ten years later. It was only during the 1970s and 1980s, with the adoption of a constitution and the implementation of Soviet-style economic and administrative reforms, that the party expanded its grip on the state bureaucracy.

Although the PCC had ample parcels of power, it did not rule Cuba. The core of the ruling class held high party positions, but what distinguished them was their dependence and unswerving loyalty toward the *comandante en jefe* (commander in chief). Within this *partido fidelista*, the PCC was responsible for administering the party-state bureaucracy and coordinating the mass organizations that organized, directed and channeled participation in Cuban society.[23] Fidel Castro emphasized the PCC's importance, but he was also a constant critic of its bureaucratic lifeblood. He also organized a parallel structure of young functionaries (the Grupo de Coordinación y Apoyo del Comandante en Jefe, or the Coordination and Support Group of the Commander in Chief) which reported directly to him and made unannounced visits to ministries, state enterprises and collective farms.[24] The decline of the PCC began with the Rectification campaign that Fidel Castro launched in April 1986. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the onset of the Período Especial further weakened the Communist Party. Even if its functionaries continued to control a large patronage network, during the 1990s the party found its political credibility reduced and the resonance of its ideological exhortations limited.

The Challenges of Adaptation and Change: Raúlismo in Power

When Fidel Castro fell gravely ill in July 2006, he delegated major executive functions to his brother.[25] The delegation was distinctly provisional, suggesting that Fidel Castro hoped to return to office in short order. However, this did not occur. He nearly died in late 2006 and in subsequent years he faded from the scene. In his new role as a "soldier in the battle of ideas," he wrote many *reflexiones*, mostly on international topics.[26] Though consulted by his brother, he generally did not make comments about domestic issues. When the battle between his brother, who was pushing for change, and opponents within the party bureaucracy intensified, the elder Castro joined the fray more directly. In an interview with *The Atlantic* in 2010, he declared that "the Cuban model doesn't even work for us anymore."[27] The statement came just as the Cuban government announced plans to jettison a cornerstone of the paternalistic state Fidel Castro had founded and to lay off more than one million workers. At a November 2010 meeting with University of Havana students, Fidel Castro took another opportunity to show support for his brother, insisting that "we have committed many errors, and it is those errors that we are trying to rectify, that we are rectifying."[28] The ultimate seal of approval came at the close of the Sixth PCC Congress when a visibly infirm Fidel raised the hand of the new First Secretary, Raúl.

Over the past five years, Raúl Castro began to implement an extensive agenda of change. Its principal elements include: (1) consolidating political control and preparing for the orderly transfer of power to the successor generation; (2) shrinking the size and scope of the paternalistic state while enhancing its administrative efficiency and maintaining control over strategic economic sectors; (3) transforming state enterprises into autonomous holding companies that would no longer receive state subsidies and whose survival would depend on their ability to increase productivity and generate profits; and (4) expanding opportunities for self-employment (*cuentapropismo*) with the goal of spurring agricultural production and providing additional jobs for those state workers who would be eventually laid off. The remainder of this article focuses on the first of these objectives, analyzing how Raúl Castro recast the ruling coalition and what this might mean for the future of Cuban politics.

A key challenge for the new leader was to place his own people in the key positions of the Council of State, the Council of Ministers and the PCC politburo. His first public moves focused on the Council of State, a body whose members are elected by the National Assembly at the beginning of its five-year term. The assembly meets for only a few days per year, and when it is not in session, the Council of State assumes legislative functions. The president of the Council serves simultaneously as head of state and head of government. It was this position that

Raúl Castro assumed in February 2008, appointing several revolutionary veterans to key vice presidencies but making few other changes and, most notably, failing to name a new cabinet.

The pace of personnel appointments and turnover quickened soon enough. In April 2008, Raúl Castro added three new members to the PCC politburo.[29] Several months later, heads began to roll. The first to fall were individuals identified with the so-called *talibanes*, a loose group of young leaders generally known for their hard-line views and enthusiastic participation in the "battle of ideas" that Fidel Castro had launched nearly a decade earlier in an effort to mobilize young people.[30] The *talibanes* shared a common characteristic: they owed their meteoric rise directly to Fidel Castro. Alongside their proclamations of unflinching loyalty could be heard their claims to the mantle of succession. Their removal (and the eventual purge of nearly all those who had served in the aforementioned Grupo de Coordinación y Apoyo del Comandante en Jefe) reflected Raúl Castro's preference for trustworthy loyalists who respected institutional boundaries and rules.[31] These *talibanes* had been Fidel Castro's favorites, but in moving against them Raúl Castro never criticized his brother or undermined his image.[32] Too much joined the two brothers. Not only was Raúl co-architect of the revolution, but his own claim to legitimacy was also inextricably tied to Fidel. In removing these "test tube leaders," Raúl signaled that he intended to place his own imprint on the successor generation.[33]

The leadership shuffle continued through February 2009 when Raúl Castro appointed a new cabinet, removing virtually all holdovers from his brother's government and appointing a slew of ministers with backgrounds in the armed forces and SDPE management techniques. One of the most dramatic personnel changes occurred a month later. Cuban security services secretly taped politburo member Carlos Lage and Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque (both considered heirs-apparent at one time) as they mocked Fidel Castro and other octogenarians in the leadership.[34] Disrespect is never a minor offense in an autocratic system; this alone may have been sufficient reason to oust both men. Speculation abounds, however, that the two men were ensnared in a security operation and that one or the other may have passed information to Spanish security services.[35] Policy differences may also have come into play since Lage, and perhaps Pérez Roque, apparently supported deeper engagement with and dependence on Hugo Chávez and Venezuela.[36] Whatever the explanation, Fidel Castro sharply rebuked his former protégés, saying they had fallen prey to "the honey of power," which had awoken their new ambitions.[37]

Three years after announcing its convocation, Raúl Castro finally presided over the Sixth PCC Congress in April 2011.[38] The principal purpose of the gathering

was to approve the *Lineamientos*, the guidelines for economic reform that were first distributed in December 2010.[39] In its final version, the document bore the mark of the multiple committees that worked on it. Many of the measures it advocated (increasing labor productivity and agricultural output while reducing the size of the state and eliminating monetary and exchange rate duality) made good sense, but the document sometimes read like a laundry list that lacked strategic vision. Making socialism "irreversible" was its stated objective, but the *Lineamientos* offered no definition of Cuban socialism, other than to say that it did not mean "egalitarianism." The *Lineamientos* were also resoundingly silent on private property rights and barely mentioned legal reforms and guarantees. They proposed expanded self-employment but severely limited the range of persons who could apply for permits. Farmers and menial categories of urban labor were permitted to apply, while professionals, intellectuals, scientists and technical workers could not.

The unanimity with which the nearly 1,000 delegates to the Sixth PCC Congress approved the *Lineamientos* should not obscure the depth of resistance to the reform package. Conservative opposition had grown in the years since Raúl Castro assumed power. Its sources lay within the party-state bureaucracy whose members feared the loss of jobs and patronage. Their opposition was rarely expressed directly; inertia and obstruction were the tactics of choice. Raúl Castro probably delayed the PCC Congress in an effort to simultaneously court and pressure his opponents. In the months running up to the party conclave, national newspapers *Granma* and *Juventud Rebelde* published countless articles and letters to the editor complaining about bureaucratic incompetence and obstruction. By the conclusion of the Congress, a new mantra had entered the *Raúlista* lexicon: "order, discipline and exigency."[40] The words echoed up and down the party hierarchy. By early August 2011, when he spoke to the National Assembly, Raúl Castro indicated his patience had worn thin, warning that "all bureaucratic resistance [to the reforms] will be useless. . . . I have never pressured or pressed for abrupt changes . . . but faced with violations of the Constitution . . . there is no alternative but to resort to prosecutors and the courts, as we have already begun to do."[41] With the battle over the reforms still raging, Raúl Castro intensified the anti-corruption campaign he had earlier asked Comptroller General Gladys Bejerano and her army of auditors to wage.[42]

Raúl Castro's report to the Sixth Congress offered a blunt assessment of the deficiencies of the Communist Party: "What we approve at the Congress must not suffer the same fate of agreements approved at earlier congresses [that were] nearly all forgotten without having been implemented."[43] He went on to criticize the personnel policies of an earlier era that led to "the accelerated promotion of inexpert and immature cadres [who were guilty] of sham behavior and opportunism." As

a result, he believed the revolution lacked "a reserve of substitutes properly prepared and with enough experience and maturity to assume the new and complex tasks of leading the Party, the State, and the Government." Perhaps borrowing a page from the Communist Party of Vietnam, whose bifurcation of party and state responsibilities has allowed for the development of greater institutional autonomy and competition, Castro insisted that party membership would no longer be a prerequisite for "any position within the State or Government administration."[44] Finally, Raúl Castro offered abundant praise for the "authority and prestige" of the FAR, as well as their "discipline and order in defense of the [Cuban] people and socialism."

The military was always important in Cuban politics, but over the past decade the FAR has accumulated an unprecedented amount of influence.

The Sixth PCC Congress did not settle the uncertainties regarding the pace and scope of the economic reforms, but it did render a clear political verdict on Raúl Castro's efforts to consolidate control and forge a new ruling coalition. This coalition had several distinctive characteristics, the most important of which was the prominence of the FAR. The military was always important in Cuban politics, but over the past decade the FAR has accumulated an unprecedented amount of influence. Not only are the armed forces responsible for national defense and internal security, but its officers are deployed throughout the country's economic institutions, particularly in the joint-venture sector linking foreign investors with the government. Another distinctive feature of the new elite is the junior-partner role of the Communist Party. Raúl Castro cast aside an earlier generation of successors and handpicked a rejuvenated group of party cadres and provincial first secretaries. Their challenge would be to share power with the FAR while adjusting to both a sharp reduction in the patronage networks they previously controlled and to an institutional climate where party control over the state and society is likely to be more diffuse.

The personnel changes announced at the Sixth PCC Congress became a culmination to an extraordinary period of turbulence in the highest ranks of the party. Table 1 identifies the current members of the politburo and illustrates the degree of personnel turnover that occurred between the Fifth Party Congress in 1997 and the Sixth in 2011.

The Sixth PCC Congress confirmed the predominance of the military sector within the Cuban leadership. Of the fifteen members of the politburo elected in April 2011, eight were on active duty in the FAR, had substantial military experience or had careers working in the interstices of the FAR. Of the 115-member

PCC Central Committee, nearly 30 percent also hailed from the armed forces. As Table 2 shows, of the nine people who hold overlapping appointments in the politburo and the Council of State (the apex of the elite), three are members of the revolutionary generation and four have backgrounds in the armed forces.

The results of the April 2011 PCC Congress showed that the revolutionary generation is still firmly in control, but eight of the fifteen serving members of the politburo who were elected in April 2011 are seventy years old or older (also shown in Table 2), and a successor coalition of military elites and provincial party first secretaries stands ready to take their place. There is likely to be significant turnover within the politburo (and the Central Committee) as older veterans pass away or are replaced in the next five years. The prime candidates for promotion to the politburo (listed in Table 3) come from the ranks of current provincial party secretaries, all of whom are appointees of Raúl Castro. They are the future leaders of Cuba.

At the Sixth PCC Congress Raúl Castro also announced the implementation of new rules regarding term limits and mandatory retirement ages. These issues (and the corresponding election of additional members to the politburo and Central Committee) will be the key items on the agenda at the January 2010 national conference.[45]

The Prospects for Political Adaptation in Cuba

A new ruling elite—headed by Raúl Castro and with members drawn from the armed forces and the Communist Party—has come to power in Cuba. The novelty lies not so much in the dominant role of the FAR (which harkens back to the origins of the revolution when a triumphant rebel army defeated Fulgencio Batista and then consolidated power) as in the role that military technocrats play in spearheading the implementation of economic reforms.[47] If fully and successfully accomplished, these reforms could reduce the weight of the state and create conditions for the emergence of private property and a "social market" economy. They could also stabilize the Cuban autocracy, which has long labored under the shadow of permanent economic crisis. Were this to occur, some of these military technocrats—and their entrepreneurial colleagues who run large holding companies like GAESA—might well become the embryo of a future Cuban capitalist class.

Table 1: Members of the PCC Politburo, 1997 and 2011[46]

Politburo Member	*1997*	*2011*	*Notes*
Fidel Castro Ruz	✓		Declined reelection
Raúl Castro Ruz	✓	✓	
Leopoldo Cintra Frías	✓	✓	
Esteban Lazo Hernández	✓	✓	
Abelardo Colomé Ibarra	✓	✓	
Ramón Espinosa Martín	✓	✓	
Ricardo Alarcón de Quesada	✓	✓	
José Ramón Machado Ventura	✓	✓	
Julio Casas Regueiro	✓	✓	Died after 2011 election
Alfredo Jordán Morales	✓		Died in 2005
Juan Almeida Bosque	✓		Died in 2009
José Ramón Balaguer Cabrera	✓		Not reelected in 2011
Misael Enamorado Dager	✓		Not reelected in 2011
Concepción Campana Huergo	✓		Not reelected in 2011
Abel Prieto Jiménez	✓		Not reelected in 2011
Pedro Ross Leal	✓		Not reelected in 2011
Ulíses Rosales del Toro	✓		Not reelected in 2011
Roberto Robaina González	✓		Removed in 2002
Marcos Portal León	✓		Removed in 2006
Juan Carlos Robinson	✓		Removed in 2006
Carlos Lage Dávila	✓		Removed in 2009
Pedro Sáez Montejo	✓		Removed in 2009
Jorge Sierra Cruz	✓		Removed in 2010
Yadira García Vera	✓		Removed in 2010
Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez		✓	Added in 2003
Ramiro Valdés Menéndez		✓	Added in 2008
Alvaro López Miera		✓	Added in 2008
Salvador Mesa Valdés		✓	Added in 2008
Lázara Mercedes López Acea		✓	Added in 2011
Marino Murillo Jorge		✓	Added in 2011
Adel Yzquierdo Rodríguez		✓	Added in 2011

Key: ✓ = Politburo Member

Source: *Granma* and *Juventud Rebelde*.

Table 2: Members of the PCC Politburo with Joint Appointments to the Council of State, September 2011

Name	*Politburo*	*Council of State*	*Background*	*Year of Birth*
Raúl Castro	✓	President	REV	1931
José Ramón Machado Ventura	✓	1st VP	REV	1930
Ramiro Valdés	✓	VP (Dec. 2009)	REV	1932
Abelardo Colomé Ibarra	✓	VP	FAR	1939
Esteban Lazo Hernández	✓	VP	PCC	1944
Ricardo Alarcón de Quesada	✓		PCC	1937
Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez	✓		PCC	1960
Leopoldo Cintra Frías	✓	Member	FAR	1941
Ramón Espinosa Martín	✓		FAR	1939
Alvaro López Miera	✓	Member	FAR	1943
Salvador Mesa Valdés	✓	Member	PCC	1941
Lázara Mercedes López Acea	✓		PCC	1964
Marino Murillo Jorge	✓	VP (Dec. 2009)	FAR-TECH	1961
Adel Yzquierdo Rodríguez	✓		FAR	1946

Key: VP = Vice President; REV = Revolutionary Generation; FAR = Military; PCC = Cuban Communist Party; FAR-TECH = Military Technocrat; TECH = Technocrat

Source: *Granma* and *Juventud Rebelde*.

But this is only one of several possible outcomes. The Cuban economy suffers from a deep and structural economic crisis, and the path to growth and sustainability is long and rocky. There is little doubt that Raúl Castro will press forward with his economic agenda, applying increasingly stringent pressure on state-sector budget and performance. There is no guarantee that the current economic reforms are deep and strong enough to pull Cuba out of its economic doldrums, especially in the context of a persistent global crisis. Agricultural production may rise over the next few years, thus easing the pressure to import foodstuffs. But until access is broadened, self-employment is not likely to have much impact in the urban centers where most of the population lives.

Moreover, employment opportunities in the military-controlled holding companies are not generally available to the broader public. If the state sector sheds the 1.3 million jobs that Raúl Castro considers redundant, where will these citizens find employment? And what effect will the restructuring of the public sector have on the ruling coalition? There will be winners and losers from this and any other economic reform, which may engender tensions in society and within the ruling

coalition. There are strong parallels between the Cuban situation and what happened elsewhere in Latin America when structural reforms were implemented more than two decades ago. The latter shook political parties and structures throughout the region. Perhaps the most dramatic outcome occurred in Mexico where the Revolutionary Institutionalized Party imploded after President Carlos Salinas de Gortari took a scalpel to its patronage lifeline.

Table 3: PCC Provincial First Secretaries, September 2011

Province	*Name*	*Membership*
Artemisa	Ulises Guilarte de Nacimiento	CC
Camagüey	Julio Cesar García Rodríguez	CC
Ciego de Ávila	José Luis Tapia Fonseca	CC
Cienfuegos	Lidia Esther Brunet Nodarse	CC
Granma	Sonia Virgen Pérez	CC
Guantánamo	Luis Torres Iríbar	CC
Holguín	Jorge Cuevas Ramos	CC
Isla de la Juventud	Elizabeth Cámara Báez	None
La Habana	Mercedes López Acea	CC and PB
Las Tunas	Teresa Amarelle Boue	CC
Matanzas	Omar Ruiz Martín	CC
Mayabeque	Juan Miguel García Díaz	None
Pinar del Rio	Gladys Martínez Verdecía	None
Sancti Spiritus	José Ramón Monteagudo Ruiz	CC
Santiago de Cuba	Lázaro Expósito Canto	CC
Villa Clara	Julio Ramírez Lima Corzo	None

Key: CC = Central Committee; PB = Politburo

Source: Compiled by the author.

While the eighty-one-year-old Raúl Castro is in control, odds are that tensions within the ruling coalition can be managed. What will happen when he disappears from the scene? The succession from Fidel to Raúl came off without a hitch, but the real challenge will be to maintain stability within the leadership when both Castro brothers exit the political stage. Communist elites in Vietnam and China have successfully managed such a transition. Can Cuban elites do the same? Perhaps. China's Deng Xiaoping took more than a decade to manage this process, and he had strong economic winds at his back. A successful transition in Cuba will require that the FAR-PCC coalition remains united. Military discipline and democratic centralism will undoubtedly help in this regard, but the post-Castro era

will have no dominant figure to manage the competition and cleavages that will inevitably emerge.

The FAR is the dominant actor in contemporary Cuban politics; its influence is felt in nearly all spheres of Cuban political life. But the Achilles' heel of the FAR may lie precisely in the extensive and multiple functions its different sectors perform, including national defense, internal security, economic policy making and emerging entrepreneurial-elite functions. The implementation of budget cutbacks and the accompanying reallocation of resources may also generate tension between the government's military and civilian branches. The military has been immune to such cutbacks, and its entrepreneurs control jobs in the most dynamic economic sectors. Party cadres, on the other hand, rely on a declining state sector for their jobs and patronage networks. So long as the revolutionary generation is in place, however, it is difficult to imagine the transfer of power to a new elite. As for Raúl Castro, he is focused on implementing economic reforms; he does not intend or desire to engage in opening the political system. He and the FAR-PCC coalition he has brought to power are well aware of the regime's vulnerabilities, and with good reason: they fear that any political opening could destabilize an already fragile situation.

The new Cuban elite must show progress on the economic front. Success in this sphere will be crucial if the successor generation is to reconstruct the social compact and lay new foundations for regime legitimacy. Not much remains of the original bargain sealed in the early 1960s—except, perhaps, the focus on defending national sovereignty. Even this claim has frayed substantially in a country that suffers a constant hemorrhage of emigrants. Its persistence (and the accompanying real decline in population) is merely a symptom of the chronic economic crisis that bedevils the island. As the charismatic founder of the revolution, Fidel Castro could transcend the country's poor economic performance. The successor generation cannot. Its fortunes will rise or fall depending on whether Cuba finds the path to economic growth and sustainability.

Material progress is one aspect of the challenge the post-Castro elite will confront in the quest to refurbish its legitimacy. Another major task will be to mend a nation fractured by separation, conflict and internal and external exile. One dimension of this task relates to the diaspora. More than one million Cubans live in the United States. They have maintained close links with relatives on the island, and the recent lifting of U.S. restrictions on family visits and remittances has deepened these connections. Strengthening the bonds between the two parts of the Cuban nation is a spiritual imperative, but it could also have important material consequences for the development of Cuba. The Chinese experience is instructive in this regard; before foreign investors arrived, the overseas Chinese

community provided an early boost to the economy. If the appropriate political and economic conditions materialize in Cuba, its diaspora could also become an important source of investment capital and technical expertise.

There is a domestic side to the coin of national reconstruction. The past fifty years have torn the Cuban nation apart. If emigration is one of its symptoms, the other is the phenomenon of a profoundly divided society where internal exile and disengagement are the preferred modes of dissent. The regime may take comfort in its ability to control, fragment and infiltrate those who oppose it, but this does not make it less brittle and vulnerable. One of the most important developments since Raúl Castro took power has been the opening of social and cultural spaces that allowed the emergence of a lively debate, albeit with clearly defined limits. The situation is complicated and contradictory; its implications are still unclear. On the one hand, the repression and harassment of dissidents continues unabated and has recently intensified. On the other hand, the range of debate and discussion in various journals and blogs—from Catholic Church–sponsored journals like *Espacio Laical* and *Palabra Nueva* to the website *Havana Times*, the nonconformist *Generación Y* and the more orthodox magazine *Temas*—continues to expand. Behind these efforts lies the *Raúlista* strategy of broadening social consensus and fostering a less restrictive cultural environment.

The greatest challenges will come once the Castro brothers and other members of the revolutionary generation pass from the scene.

A similar logic is evident in recent overtures Raúl Castro has made toward the Catholic Church. At the Sixth PCC Congress, he explicitly thanked the church and archbishop of Havana, Cardinal Jaime Ortega, for contributing to national unity by helping to negotiate the release of political prisoners.[48] Such a formulation would have been unthinkable under his brother. By inviting the church to join forces in a new national compact, Raúl Castro acknowledged how much Cuban society had changed in the preceding two decades and made clear his desire to expand the base of support for the revolution. This strategy could eventually spur a transition to an authoritarian regime with greater social, cultural and economic pluralism where reformers from within the regime could interact with members of the moderate opposition.

Only time will tell if this strategy will work. While Raúl is in charge, such an evolution is highly unlikely because, as indicated earlier, there is no political liberalization component to his reform agenda. Furthermore, this is not only Raúl's personal view; it is probably shared by officers in the FAR and the PCC cadres who form the new ruling coalition.

Raúlismo represents the transition from *Fidelismo*. It is an effort to shore up the revolutionary project by stabilizing the economy and clearing the way for a successor generation to take up the reins of leadership. But if the point of departure is known in Cuba, its final destination is not. It is unclear—and will remain so for several years—whether Raúl Castro and the new ruling coalition will be successful in their venture. If they succeed, we shall see the stabilization of the Cuban autocracy. If they fall short, regime instability will be the most likely result. The greatest challenges will come once the Castro brothers and other members of the revolutionary generation pass from the scene. Only then will we learn if the younger brother of the *líder máximo* was the architect of the stabilization of the Cuban autocracy. ♔

NOTES

[1] Archibald Ritter, "Can Cuba Recover from its De-Industrialization?" *The Cuban Economy*, 27 September 2011, http://thecubaneconomy.com/articles/2011/09/can-cuba-recover-from-its-de-industrialization-i-characteristics-and-causes.

[2] "El Socialismo es la única garantía para seguir siendo libres e independientes" [Socialism is the only guarantee for remaining free and independent], *Granma*, 20 December 2010.

[3] "Hemos adoptado importantes decisiones . . ." [We have adopted important decisions . . .], *Granma*, 2 August 2010, http://www.granma.cubaweb.cu/2010/08/02/pdf/pagina4.pdf.

[4] "Castro: 'Socialismo significa igualdad de oportunidades, no de ingresos'" [Castro: Socialism means equality of opportunity, not of income], Publico.es, 12 July 2008; see also *Granma*, 13 July 2008.

[5] "Cuba to Cut One Million Public Sector Jobs," *BBC*, 14 September 2010.

[6] See Raúl Castro's Central Report to the Sixth PCC Congress. "Informe Central presentado por el compañero Raúl" [Central Report presented by Comrade Raúl], *Granma*, 17 April 2011.

[7] Carmelo Mesa-Lago, *Market, Socialist, and Mixed Economies: Comparative Policy and Performance—Chile, Cuba, and Costa Rica* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 378–79. The data presented in this paragraph draw on this fine book.

[8] Ibid.

[9] "If Hugo Goes," *Economist*, 7 July 2011.

[10] The Committees for the Defense of the Revolution played a key role in social control. These neighborhood committees collaborated closely with the Ministry of the Interior and its security force and performed many functions, not least in organizing citizens to spy on and control each other. Josep Colomer, "Watching Neighbors: The Cuban Model of Social Control," *Cuban Studies* 31 (2000): 118–38.

[11] See the contributions in Velia Cecilia Bobes and Rafael Rojas, eds., La transición invisible: sociedad y cambio político en Cuba [The invisible transition: society and political change in Cuba] (Mexico City: Editorial Océano, 2004), 179–244.

[12] For a perceptive analysis, see Katrin Hansing, "Changes From Below: New Dynamics, Spaces, and Attitudes in Cuban Society," *NACLA Report on the Americas*, July/August 2011, 16–19, 42.

[13] Haroldo Dilla Alfonso employs data from the National Statistics Office (ONE) in "Hemorragia demográfica" [Demographic hemorrhage], *Cuba Encuentro*, 11 July 2011, http://www.cubaencuentro.com/opinion/articulos/hemorragia-demografica-265215.

[14] Pedro Meurice, "Presente y Futuro de la Iglesia en Cuba" [Present and future of the Church in

Cuba] (speech, Georgetown University, Washington, DC: 29 May 1999), http://college.georgetown.edu/43702.html.

[15] Alfredo Guevara, "En los propósitos de la revolución encontraremos el rostro verdadero de Cuba" [In the purposes of the Revolution we find the true face of Cuba] (speech, University of Havana, Havana, Cuba, 22 June 2011), http://www.cubadebate.cu/opinion/2011/06/22/en-los-propositos-de-la-revolucion-encontraremos-el-rostro-verdadero-de-cuba.

[16] Alejandro Morales, Matthew Brady and Kira Ribar, "Real Change for Cuba? How Citizens View Their Country's Future," Freedom House Special Report, 9 June 2011, http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/special_report/102.pdf.

[17] Fidel Castro, "Commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of Admission to the University of Havana" (speech, University of Havana, Havana, Cuba, 17 November 2005), http://www.cuba.cu/gobierno/discursos/2005/ing/f171105i.html.

[18] In a 1997 speech, Castro observed that "struggle in the economic sphere is bitter, terribly bitter . . . sometimes a patient much ingest medicines with a disagreeable taste or undergo certain surgical procedures that bring him a great deal of suffering." Fidel Castro, "Report to the Fifth PCC Congress" (speech, Havana, Cuba, 8 October 1997), http://www.cuba.cu/gobierno/discursos/1997/esp/f081097e.htm.

[19] The discussion in this and the subsequent paragraph draws on Eusebio Mujal-León and Lorena Buzón, "El Excepcionalismo y la Transcendencia: El Caso de las Relaciones Cívico-Militares en Cuba" [Exceptionalism and Transcendence: The Case of Civil-Military Relations in Cuba], in *Influencias y Resistencias: Militares y Poder en América Latina*, ed. Felipe Agüero and Claudio Fuentes (Santiago: Editorial Catalonia, 2009), 35–78.

[20] Hal Klepak, *Cuba's Military 1990–2005: Revolutionary Soldiers in Counter-Revolutionary Times* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

[21] The longtime head of GAESA, Gen. Julio Casas Regueiro, died in September 2011. He was a close associate of Raúl Castro and had been a member of the PCC politburo since 1991. Gen. Casas Regueiro became vice president of the Council of State in February 2008 and was named minister of the RAF when the younger Castro stepped down from this position. GAESA's revenue is a closely guarded secret, but a Spanish newspaper quoted Col. Luis Alberto Rodríguez López-Calleja (who is Raúl Castro's son-in-law and succeeded Gen. Casas Regueiro as head of GAESA) to the effect that GAESA grossed nearly $1 billion in 1997. "El poder económico de los hermanos Castro" [The economic power of the Castro brothers], *Diario 16*, 24 June 2001.

[22] Const. of the Republic of Cuba, art. 5.

[23] Mujal-León and Buzón, "El Excepcionalismo y la Transcendencia."

[24] Armando F. Mastrapa III, "Equipo de Coordinación y Apoyo al Comandante en Jefe" [Coordination and support group of the commander in chief], *Parallel Government of Cuba*, 24 November 2004, http://foros.abc.es/cgi-local/forosabc/ultimatebb.cgi?ubb=print_topic;f=14;t=003521.

[25] Fidel Castro, "Proclama del Comandante en Jefe al pueblo de Cuba" [Proclamation of the commander in chief to the people of Cuba], *Granma*, 1 August 2006.

[26] Brian Winter, "Fidel Castro resigns Cuban presidency," *USA Today*, 19 February 2008.

[27] Jeffrey Goldberg, "Fidel: 'Cuban Model Doesn't Even Work For Us Anymore'," *The Atlantic*, 8 September 2010.

[28] "Fidel Castro apoya cambios impulsados en Cuba" [Fidel Castro supports changes taking place in Cuba], *El Universal*, 17 November 2010.

[29] They were the veteran Commandant Ramiro Valdés, FAR Chief of Staff Gen. Alvaro López Miera and Salvador Valdés Mesa, secretary general of the Central de Trabajadores de Cuba.

[30] Mauricio Font, "Cuba and Castro: Beyond the 'Battle of Ideas'," in *Changing Cuba/Changing World*, ed. Mauricio Font (New York: Bildner Center for Western Hemisphere Studies, 2008), 43–72.

[31] Samuel Farber, "Cuba, después de Fidel" [Cuba, after Fidel], *Herramienta* 12, no. 39 (October 2008).

[32] Deng Xiaoping adopted a similar approach toward Mao Zedong and his legacy. Ezra Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

[33] Raúl Castro employed the phrase at the February 2007 meeting of the National Committee of the Communist Youth (UJC). He included Carlos Lage and Felipe Pérez Roque among those "who thought they were leaders since childhood." Julieta García Ríos, "Dialoga Raúl con participantes en el Pleno del Comité Nacional de la UJC" [Raúl talks with participants at the plenary session of the National Committee of the UJC], *Juventud Rebelde*, 25 February 2007.

[34] Lage had been responsible for economic policy since the early 1990s, while Pérez Roque had been Fidel Castro's personal secretary during the same period, becoming foreign minister in 1999 when he was thirty-four years old. Wilfredo Cancio, "A video showing reasons why two officials were forced from their posts has been viewed by Cuban leaders," *Miami Herald*, 27 May 2009.

[35] J. M. Reviriego and M. Rueda, "Investigan por espionage al delegado comercial del gobierno vasco en Cuba" [Basque government's trade representative in Cuba investigated for spying], *El Correo*, 4 August 2009.

[36] In October 2005, Lage said: "Our country has been accused of not having a democracy, but at events like this one we realize that we are one of the most democratic countries of the world, because we have two presidents, Fidel and Chávez." "Cuba tiene dos presidentes, Castro y Chávez, afirma vicepresidente cubano" [Cuba has two presidents, Castro and Chavez, says the Cuban vice president], Agence France-Presse Español, 6 October 2005.

[37] "Fidel Castro acusa de 'indignos' a dos de los destituidos en el cambio de gobierno" [Fidel Castro accuses two of the men removed in the change of government as being "unworthy"], *El País*, 3 March 2009.

[38] "Raul Castro to Convene Cuba Congress," *USA Today*, 28 April 2008.

[39] "Es preciso que de inmediato nos concentremos en hacer cumplir los acuerdos de este Congreso . . ." [It is necessary that we immediately concentrate on implementing the agreements of this Congress . . .], *Granma*, 20 April 2011.

[40] Ibid.

[41] "El mayor obstáculo que enfrentamos . . ." [The biggest obstacle we face . . .], *Granma*, 2 August 2011.

[42] In early 2010, a prominent communist intellectual, Esteban Morales, created quite a stir when he published an article entitled, "Corruption: The True Counter-revolution?" on the official webpage of the Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba (UNEAC). Morales charged that corruption (not the dissident movement) represented the "true counterrevolution," telling his readers that corrupt officials had "taken up positions at certain levels of the State and Government." Esteban Morales, "Corrupción: ¿la verdadera contrarrevolución?" UNEAC, 12 April 2010, http://www.uneac.org.cu/index.php?module=noticias&act=detalle&tipo=noticia&id=3123. Morales was expelled from the PCC in mid-2010 and reinstated a year later. Patricia Grogg, "The Significance of Cuban Academic Esteban Morales Recovering His Party Card," *Havana Times*, 15 July 2011.

[43] Raúl Castro, Central Report to the Sixth PCC Congress, *Granma,* 16 April 2011.

[44] There is an extensive literature on the Vietnamese economic and political reforms. See Edmund Malesky and Paul Schuler, "Nodding or Needling: Analyzing Delegate Responsiveness in an Authoritarian Parliament," *American Political Science Review* 104, no. 103 (August 2010): 482–502; Regina Abrami, Edmund Malesky and Yu Zheng, "Accountability and Inequality in Single-Party Regimes: A Comparative Analysis of Vietnam and China" (draft working paper, Harvard Business School, 2008), http://www.hbs.edu/research/pdf/08-099WP.pdf.

[45] Among the key members of the successor generation are several current politburo members: Miguel Díaz-Canel, Marino Murillo and Lázara Mercedes López Acea. Díaz-Canel is a fifty-one-year-old engineer who has had a long career within the PCC. He served as provincial party first secretary in Villa Clara (1996 to 2003) and Holguín (2003 to 2009) and is currently the minister of higher education. When Díaz-Canel was incorporated into the politburo, Raúl Castro strongly praised him: "He stands out for his tenacity and his systematic approach to work, for his self-critical spirit and his constant connection with the people." Marino Murillo is a FAR technocrat and has worked closely with Raúl Castro. Though his military rank is unknown, he studied at the Colegio Nacional de Defensa and spent much of his career working in the military-led program of SDPE. He has had a meteoric career. In 2006, Murillo was appointed vice minister of internal commerce, and in 2009 he was appointed minister of planning and economy and vice president of the Council of Ministers. He held his ministerial post until March 2011, when he was named chairman of the Economic Policy Commission of the PCC. A month later he was elected to the politburo. López Acea is the forty-six-year-old first secretary of the Havana Provincial Committee. She held the same post in Cienfuegos (from 2003 to 2006) and

then joined the PCC Secretariat until she was named to replace the disgraced Pedro Sáez Montejo in 2009. López Acea is one of several women (including Gladys Bejerano, the comptroller general) who have risen rapidly within the PCC hierarchy over the past few years.

[46] There were twenty-four members in the politburo of the PCC when Raúl Castro assumed power in August 2006. By the celebration of the Sixth Congress in 2011, the number had declined to 19 with the death of one member (Almeida) and the ouster of several others. Several members of the 1997 politburo were not reelected in April 2011. These include Ulíses Rosales del Toro (who remains a member of the Central Committee and holds the post of vice president of the Council of Ministers), José Ramón Balaguer (who is also on the Central Committee and is responsible for international relations in the Secretariat) and Misael Enamorado (who is similarly on the Central Committee and the Secretariat). Concepción Campana Huergo, an immunologist, is no longer on the Central Committee but remains director of the Carlos Finlay Institute. Pedro Ross was secretary general of the Cuban workers' trade union from 1989 until 2006 and is currently ambassador to Angola. He was not reelected to the April 2011 Central Committee. Abel Prieto Jiménez was dropped from both the politburo and the Central Committee at the Sixth Congress, though he remained Minister of Education.

[47] For more details on this historic parallel, see Julia Sweig, *Inside the Cuban Revolution: Fidel Castro and the Urban Underground* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 172–82.

[48] Raúl Castro, Central Report to the Sixth PCC Congress, *Granma* 16 April 2011.