

Political Intolerance and Cuba's Future: To Hell in a Hand Basket

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Pobre Cuba, tan lejos de Dios y tan cerca de los EEUU.

Adaptation of a phrase by General Porfirio Diaz.

The topic of the 2012 ASCE Conference is “Where is Cuba Going?” This begs the answer in the subtitle of this paper. There is a simple reason: political intolerance has plagued Cuban history from the start. And democracy can only flourish under tolerance. *Tolerance* means that one is willing and/or able to listen and understand the views of others, especially when they differ from our own. Hence, where there is tolerance, one is willing and able to *negotiate* with other stakeholders, especially those with opposite views.

This paper analyzes the prevalence of intolerance throughout the last 250 years of Cuban history, and provides suggestions on how to overcome this problem, in order to move forward and rise above the current political and economic Cuban impasse. We discuss the problems of intolerance under (1) the Spanish colony; (2) the Republic (1902 to 1959); and (3) the revolution (1959 to present). We identify common causes and characteristics of intolerance during these different periods, and define a Cuban political behavioral model. We then provide several examples of Latin American peaceful evolutions from dictatorship to pluralism, through a process of negotiations. Finally, we suggest some courses of action to improve the Cuban model.

OVERVIEW OF THE SPANISH COLONY IN THE XVIII AND XIX CENTURY

We begin in the 1760s. Before that, Cuba, Santo Domingo, Puerto Rico and Venezuela (which, until the XVIII Century, was under the *Capitanía General* of Santo Domingo), were poor and ill-attended colonies, because they did not have precious metals.² Hence, Spain invested very little in them, and left them mostly to their own resources.

The city of Havana was an exception. Due to its excellent harbor and strategic position, it became the meeting place for the Spanish Fleet.³ This made Havana by far a much richer

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² Gold, silver, copper, among others. Mexico, Peru, Bolivia and Colombia had such precious metals.

³ *La Flota* carried silver and gold from Peru and Mexico, silk and species from Philippines. Guerra (1925).

and important city than any other in the Spanish Caribbean⁴ or in the rest of Cuba. For, *the interior*,⁵ especially the Eastern provinces of the island, had been traditionally neglected, prospering mainly on illicit trade.⁶ Their large socioeconomic differences define the *love-hate relationship and rivalry*, between Havana, and *el interior*, which exist to our present days.

In 1759, King Charles III, who had already ruled Naples for over twenty years, inherited the Spanish crown. With his long experience in government and very capable ministers,⁷ King Charles inaugurated a period of badly needed reforms in Spain and its colonies.

In 1762, during the French and Indian War,⁸ the British attacked Havana, and held it for two years. This event changed the fate of the colony. Havana was so valuable to Spain that, after the war, it traded this city to the British for Florida.⁹ And for the remaining years of the XVIII Century, Spain sent to Cuba a series of capable governors¹⁰ who diligently improved its social and material conditions, especially in and around Havana.

In 1789, the French Revolution changed Europe, as well as its colonies.¹¹ New ideas of liberty and equality fostered the conditions for the Haitian 1794 slave revolt and subsequent independence.¹² The consequences of Haiti's revolution for Cuba, its economy and its population were extensive: hundreds of French planters moved to Cuba, re-established their efficient sugar plantations, and contributed a flow of new ideas and customs that helped move the island forward.

From the 1790s onward, Cuba took the place of the English and French *sugar islands*,¹³ leading the world's sugar production. The new economic policy of Francisco de Arango y Parreno, a Cuban *criollo*, to make of Cuba a substitute for Saint Domingue, promoted the importation of large numbers of black slaves to develop the nascent sugar industry. Slaves thus supported the economic growth that followed in the next 80 years, as well as the demographics and the background for the political movements that ensued.

⁴ A cultural rather than geographical classification, which includes Spanish possessions in, and around, the Caribbean Sea. For more details, see Martínez-Fernández (1994), Arciniegas (1966), and Romeu (2005).

⁵ Usually, anything further than a few miles from Havana is called *el interior*, or *el campo*.

⁶ Freebooters and buccaneers traded beef, hides and other agricultural products for flour, species, hardware, clothes, etc. Bayamo, a smuggling center, became rich on this trade. Smuggling was also common in Santo Domingo, to the point that its governor was ordered by the King to burn all towns on the west of the island (today's Haiti), and to bring to the eastern part all Spanish colonists living there, thus facilitating its French colonization. See Franco-Pichardo (2002).

⁷ Campomanes, Floridablanca and Aranda, among the most capable. See Comellas (1985).

⁸ Known as "Guerra de los Siete Años" in Europe, Spain and Latin America. Comellas, *Ibid*.

⁹ Spain regained Florida from the British after aiding Americans in their Independence War. Comellas, *Ibid*.

¹⁰ Ricla, Bucarely, de la Torre, Navarro and finally Luis de Las Casas. See Márquez-Sterling (1975).

¹¹ Saint Domingue, later Haiti, was the richest of all French colonies, at the time.

¹² French colonists in Haiti claimed citizenship rights. But so did poor whites, free mulattos, and later, black slaves. The revolution destroyed the Haitian economy and dispersed whites all over the Caribbean.

¹³ Thus called due to their extraordinary production of sugar cane, made possible by African slave labor. For detailed statistics of production and slave population in the Sugar Islands see Rogozinski (2000).

The second decisive event affecting Cuba was the independence of the United States, and its territorial expansion. Americans worked to enlarge their country to its *natural* borders: Pacific Ocean, British Canada, and Mexico. But Americans also had a place, in their expansion plans, for Cuba,¹⁴ an island at the entrance of the strategic Gulf of Mexico. Coping with (1) the growth of the sugar industry and its economic and demographic consequences, and (2) the American efforts to acquire Cuba,¹⁵ has driven the island's history since the start of the XIX Century to date. These events have also defined four lines of thought that, under different forms and names, prevail in Cuban politics: (1) colonialism;¹⁶ (2) annexation;¹⁷ (3) autonomy;¹⁸ and (4) independence.¹⁹

Slave trade and development of the sugar industry widened the existing breach between the eastern and western parts of the island. Large plantations with hundreds of recently-brought African slaves, and few free blacks and mulattos, existed in the west. Smaller plantations with fewer slaves, many if not most born in Cuba and speaking Spanish, and a large class of free blacks and mulattos²⁰ existed in the east. This breach explains the different regional and historical developments of our two wars of independence.²¹

Another factor was that Spain underwent its “liberal” revolution in mid XIX Century,²² after losing its American colonies and becoming a second class power. Its *liberalism* never extended to Cuba or Puerto Rico, its only two remaining American colonies. These became *cash cows*, where Spain sold expensive products, and profited from Cuba's sugar production. In addition, Cuba's best colonial political positions were used to reward victorious generals and politicians, in the frequent XIX Century Spanish *revolutions*.

In spite of all the above, and of its strict colonial regime, Cuba grew economically into a sugar-producing powerhouse, attracting many Spanish immigrants (farmers, artisans and small merchants) who helped create a small middle class in and around many cities and towns. Cuba went from the poor, semi-abandoned territory that it was during the XVIII Century, to the *most precious jewel*²³ of the Spanish crown, in the late XIX Century.

Ignoring these facts will undermine efforts to understand Cuban history during the XIX and XX Century. For, the XIX Century Cuban economic and demographic situation was

¹⁴ Jefferson gave, in 1809, the following advice in a letter to President Madison: “we will raise a column in the southernmost part of Cuba, with an inscription: *Ne Plus Ultra*.” Foner (1962). Also see Douglas (2005).

¹⁵ Which have included proposals to Spain to buy the island, encouragement to pro-annexation groups, pursuing war with Spain to help Cuban independence, and military occupation of the island. Foner, *ibid*.

¹⁶ Some times called *integrismo* or *reformismo*, becoming a part (i.e., province) of continental Spain.

¹⁷ Incorporation of Cuba to the United States, or to other Caribbean country such as Colombia or Mexico.

¹⁸ Spanish territory, but governed by an insular parliament and special laws, such as Canada is to the UK.

¹⁹ At best, a work in progress: small Cuba has never been able to resist the influence of large United States.

²⁰ The Maceo brothers, Moncada and Banderas were mulattoes and free blacks, considered darker-skinned Cubans by many, as opposed to recently-arrived Africans, who maintained their language and customs.

²¹ The War of 1868-78, was fought to the east of the province of Santa Clara; the War of 1895 succeeded after breaking the *Trocha de Morón*, which divided East and West, extending the war to the West. Because of large population of recently-brought African slaves, Cubans in the Western part of the island were very concerned of a repeat of the Haitian slave revolt. This was not such a serious concern in Eastern Cuba.

²² England underwent its own with Cromwell, in the mid XVII Century; and the French, one century later.

²³ *La más preciada joya*; Spanish saying of the XIX Century regarding the colonial possession of Cuba.

the direct result of converting the island into the *Sugar Bowl* of the World. And our XX Century problems are only an extension and complication of the ones existing before.

THE BIRTH OF THE CUBAN NATION--THE XIX CENTURY

There is a thread of ideas carrying through several generations of *criollos* regarding Cuba's social and economic development. It starts with Francisco de Arango y Parreño, in the last decade of the XVIII Century, who fostered accelerated development of the sugar industry through massive importation of African slaves. Alejandro Ramirez then expanded Arango's economic policies.²⁴ Fr. Jose Agustin Caballero, in the first decade of the XIX Century, wrote the first proposal for autonomy in the island. His student, Fr. Felix Varela, taught the next generation in the *Seminario de San Carlos* and represented Cuba in the Spanish *Cortes* of 1820, where he also proposed autonomy for the island.²⁵

Jose Antonio Saco, Varela's best student, also taught in the *Seminario*, wrote papers on Cuban economy and social development,²⁶ represented Cuba in the Spanish *Cortes*, where he proposed the autonomy, and was an ardent adversary of Cuba's annexation to the United States. Varela's second best student, Jose de la Luz y Caballero,²⁷ continued this work after Saco and Varela were forced into exile. Luz founded schools, chaired the *Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País*,²⁸ and died in the island in 1862, highly respected even by Spaniards. The most prominent Cubans of the XIX Century, including Del Monte and Mendive, as well as Varona, Govin, Martí and many other members of the generation of 1880, were directly or indirectly, disciples of these four great Cubans.²⁹

During the period of 1825 to 1855, Cuba's landed and educated classes became interested in the annexation to the United States. They thought Cuba was too small to conduct a successful independence movement, and they were afraid of the black slaves. Those few who, at the time, looked into severing Cuba's ties from Spain³⁰ thought this would be possible only by joining another country where slavery was legal. They would have larger freedom of commerce and would enjoy both, political rights and their slaves.³¹

Mutual intolerance created gridlock: the Spanish government became reluctant to concede rights to the island and *criollos* sought separation from Spain at any cost, be it annexation to another country. However, large sectors of Cuban small farmers, artisans, merchants, and free blacks and mulattos remained indifferent to these movements. There was no spirit, nor desire, to find a negotiated solution. Some aspects of all this remind us of the current impasse between the Cuban government and its opposition.

²⁴ See Alvarez Díaz et al (1964); Martínez-Fernández, *ibid*; Moreno Friginals (1976); Marrero (1981).

²⁵ See Shelton (1993); Remos (1958); Moreno Friginals (2002); McCadden (2001); Guerra (1925).

²⁶ *Caminos; y Causas de la Vagancia en Cuba*. Saco also edited *Revista Bimestre*. See Arroyo (1989).

²⁷ See Shelton (1993); Remos (1958); Luz is the pioneer of Cuba's education in the XIX Century.

²⁸ Institutions created by King Carlos III in all Spanish domains, to foster socioeconomic development.

²⁹ See Remos, *ibid*; Gjeltten (2008); Ortiz (1973); Bizcarrondo and Alorza (2001), among others.

³⁰ For example, Narciso López landed in Cárdenas, in 1850, and later in Pinar del Río (1851), without much support from the local population, mostly indifferent to the insurrection. See Guerra, *ibid*.

³¹ Thence, Spain looked at Cuba's landed and educated classes as dangerous separatists, and used slavery and the fear of Africans as a tool to keep them at bay, alienating them. See Moreno Friginals (1976).

Only Saco³² firmly opposed the annexation to the United States. He wrote a series of articles³³ opposing such approach arguing that, if Cuba were to become an American state, its culture, language, customs, and eventually all the power of its landed classes would be overrun by the better organized and soon-more-numerous American immigrants.³⁴ Despite all his shortcomings, José Antonio Saco, a man of his class and his epoch, remains Cuba's first great statesman.

Luz y Caballero, essentially an educator and a moralist, is another case study of the evils of Spanish intolerance. The Spanish government not only considered him an enemy, but a dangerous separatist. Luz, like Varela and Saco had done before him, sought a political evolution of the island within Spain's suzerainty, in lieu of a costly and violent revolution for independence, nor the annexation to another country. But such political evolution was unacceptable at the time. Thence, intolerance brought Spain to its knees and triggered the island's economic destruction caused by the war of 1895-98.³⁵

In 1866, Spain finally convened a *Junta de Información* to improve conditions in Cuba and Puerto Rico. But only more and higher taxes resulted from this conference. And the frustration it brought about made our first War of Independence unavoidable.

Spain, as opposed to the English in Canada, was unable to act in response to the plight of Cubans and Puertorricans,³⁶ because of large flaws in its own political system. Spanish *liberals*³⁷ were unable to recognize the legitimate claims of its colonies. Autonomy would be granted only in 1898, as a result of Cuba's Independence war: too little and too late!

The War of 1868-78 destroyed the Eastern landed and educated *criollo* class,³⁸ as well as the class of small and middle independent farmers and artisans,³⁹ many of them free blacks and mulattos.⁴⁰ However, this terrible war was not fought in vain: it brought the emancipation of slaves,⁴¹ a limited but active two-party system,⁴² and freedom of the press and association.⁴³ In addition, the war affirmed Cuba's incipient nationality,

³² His epitaph reads: "Aqui yace José Antonio Saco, que no fue anexionista, porque fue más cubano que todos los anexionistas." Alvarez Díaz et al., *ibid*; Rexach (1991); Saco (2001, especially the preface)

³³ *Papeles Políticos sobre Cuba*, is a collection of Saco's political writings (Saco, 2001).

³⁴ As had occurred in Texas (1836), and would soon occur in New Mexico and California (1848).

³⁵ Between Weiler's *Reconcentración* and Máximo Gómez' *tea incendiaria*, Cuba was largely destroyed.

³⁶ Puerto Rico's delegates to the Spanish *Cortes* were also *autonomistas*. For more on the history and problems of *autonomismo* in Cuba and Puerto Rico, see Bizcarrondo and Elorza (2001), and Soucy (2009).

³⁷ A saying about XIX Century Spanish politicians: *son liberales en España, pero españoles en América*.

³⁸ For example, Céspedes, Agramontes, Aguilera, and other such large land owners and intellectuals.

³⁹ Maximo Gomez, Calixto Garcia, Vicente Garcia, and other such white ranchers and farmers.

⁴⁰ The Maceos, Guillermo Moncada and other free black and mulatto small farmers and artisans

⁴¹ Zanjón Treaty (1878) recognized the freedom of slaves incorporated in the rebel army; it was nonsensical to maintain slavery further. In 1880, a series of laws were passed that freed them all. By then, most slaves were already born in Cuba, as slave trade had slowly grinded to a halt after the 1844 black slave conspiracy known as *Conspiración de la Escalera*. Chinese and Yucatecos indented servants then substituted slaves. See Guerra, *ibid*; Márquez-Sterling, *ibid*.

⁴² *Partido Liberal Autonomista*, advocated internal self-government, and *Unión Constitucional*, advocated permanent union with Spain, and representation as a province in Madrid's *Cortes*. Bizcarrondo, *ibid*.

⁴³ Many Freemasons were leaders of the Liberal Party, and founded the Grand Lodge of Cuba. Soucy, *ibid*.

creating a more homogeneous constituency; one that autonomists⁴⁴ and separatists could call upon, during what José Martí called *el reposo turbulento*,⁴⁵ to build the ideological framework that generated the War of 1895, and to develop the basic organization of the new republic that emerged after the First American intervention (1898-1902).

Had Cubans and Spaniards been *tolerant*, that is, able to (1) *intelligently discuss their differences*, and (2) *negotiate* an insular parliament, Saco's keystone proposal,⁴⁶ the terrible wars of 1868-78 and of 1895-98 would have been averted. Spain would have not been humiliatingly defeated by the U.S. in *el desastre del '98*,⁴⁷ losing her remaining empire. And Cuban history perhaps would have been very different. Cuba and Puerto Rico would have formed an autonomous federation⁴⁸ *within Spain*, a European power that provided stability and *prevented foreign intervention*,⁴⁹ as the island of Jamaica has enjoyed. *Severed from Spain*, Cuba and Puerto Rico, two small islands just a few miles off the greatest economic, political and military power in the Americas would experience directly or indirectly, economic and political pressures from the U.S.

This author finds completely incomprehensible the famous segment of José Martí's unfinished letter to Manuel Mercado, found on his desk at the time of his death at Dos Ríos.⁵⁰ For, with the separation of Cuba and Puerto Rico from Spain, the last obstacle that prevented American interventionism in the Spanish Caribbean, was finally removed, as can be confirmed by the many landings and occupations that occurred there, after 1898.

THE XX CENTURY AND THE REPUBLIC

Cuba began its life as an independent nation with a remarkable act of political maturity and savvy:⁵¹ accepting the Platt Amendment⁵² imposed by the United States as a condition to terminate its military occupation. Unfortunately, since then most Cuban politicians have demonstrated two negative traits: (1) *lack of tolerance*, refusing to negotiate with the opposition,⁵³ and (2) actively seeking American involvement whenever things did not come out their way.⁵⁴ Add to the two above that (3) Cuban middle and educated classes, *as a category*, have lacked adequate involvement in politics⁵⁵ and that

⁴⁴ Similar pro-autonomy parties arose in Cuba and Puerto Rico, after 1880, but their plight was ignored.

⁴⁵ Period between the two independence wars: 1880 to 1895, with active, peaceful political engagement

⁴⁶ Saco sought for Cuba an autonomic state, with an insular parliament, such as Canada had from Britain. Spain finally set up autonomous governments in Cuba and Puerto Rico, in January of 1898, when Cuba was destroyed by three years of war and a clash with the United States was unavoidable. See Bizcarrondo, *ibid.*

⁴⁷ Some Spaniards said that *it was honorable to lose a war to the Americans, but not to Máximo Gómez.*

⁴⁸ Martí, Betances and Hostos, among others, sought such a federation. See Romeu-Fernández (1959)

⁴⁹ The political status that British suzerainty provided to Jamaica, protected it from foreign intervention.

⁵⁰ "(...) de impedir a tiempo, con la independencia de Cuba, que se extiendan por las Antillas los EEUU." Dos Ríos, V/18/1895. <http://www.granma.cubaweb.cu/marti-moncada/col-05.html> Accedida VIII/5/12.

⁵¹ Conventional wisdom during the *Convencion Constituyente de 1901*, was: *más vale una república a medias, que ninguna república.* See Portell, Ch. 2 (1986).

⁵² Gave the United States the right to intervene in Cuban politics, to safeguard American life and property. See Portell, Ch. 2, *ibid.*

⁵³ Exercise known in American politics as *horse trading*, which is the basis for parliamentary democracy

⁵⁴ Cuban politicians, unlike American, have never learned that *politics ends at the water's edge.*

⁵⁵ Had these always maintained the level of involvement they have kept after 1959, when their economic interests were affected by the revolution, contemporary Cuban history might have been totally different.

(4) American governments have actively intervened in Cuban internal affairs,⁵⁶ and one has the complete picture.

Tomás Estrada Palma, Cuba's first President, who created hundreds of schools and hired scores of teachers, constitutes a classical example of intolerance and pro-Americanism. Don Tomás and his Moderado party refused to accept the Liberal victory in the 1906 election and the latter, instead of negotiating, revolted.⁵⁷ Don Tomás, unable to quench the revolt, called in the Americans, who established the Second Intervention (1906-09).

In the 1909 elections, the Liberals again won.⁵⁸ Social inequities triggered the racial war of 1912, strongly repressed,⁵⁹ thus avoiding another intervention. In 1913, Conservative García Menocal⁶⁰ became president. After the 1917 elections, Liberals again revolted⁶¹ claiming that, as Don Tomás had done, Conservatives had misused government power to rig the results. Again, U.S. Marines were ready to come ashore, and some briefly landed in Oriente province. However, Liberals and Conservatives, realizing the imminent danger, toned down their grievances thus avoiding another American intervention.

In 1921 Alfredo Zayas, a scholar, was elected president. Enoch Crowder, the U.S. Special Envoy,⁶² suggested cabinet ministers and other policies, as condition for avoiding another intervention. Zayas successfully maneuvered throughout this period, including peacefully settling an internal revolt,⁶³ and passed the government on to Machado, in 1925.

President Machado⁶⁴ constitutes an interesting case study. A modernizer, he implemented a statist and nationalistic economic model, similar to what his contemporaries Ibañez in Chile, Vargas in Brazil, and Calles and Cárdenas in Mexico, had also implemented.⁶⁵

Starting with Machado, Cuba experienced several autocratic presidents.⁶⁶ Their efforts to control the country and to remain in power were supported by economic development and public works. In each of these cases, we can observe similar patterns of behavior:

⁵⁶ Some times militarily, as in the Second Intervention (1906-09), other times through diplomatic pressures (Crowder, Summer Wells), and still others through the threat of intervention (1912, 1917, 1923, 1933). After Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected, in 1933, Theodore Roosevelt's policy of *the Big Stick* was substituted by *the Good Neighbor*, whereby instead of the U.S. Marines, diplomatic pressures were used. Portell, Ch.4, *ibid*.

⁵⁷ Liberals took to the field in arms, against the government. U.S. Marines then landed. Portell, Ch. 3, *ibid*.

⁵⁸ General José Miguel Gómez, Liberal caudillo of the War of 1895, was elected. Portell, Ch. 5, *ibid*.

⁵⁹ *La Guerrita de los Negros* took place mostly in Camagüey and Oriente provinces. U.S. Marine units were ready to land, had the Cuban government been unable to control the insurrection. Portell, Ch. 5, *ibid*.

⁶⁰ American-trained engineer and 1895 War General, who governed for two periods: 1913-21. See Portell, Ch. 5, *ibid*.

⁶¹ *La Chambelona*, 1917 Liberal revolt, in Camagüey and Oriente provinces. See Portell, Ch. 5, *ibid*.

⁶² This situation was common at the time in Caribbean basin countries. See Vasconcelos (1998).

⁶³ Insurrection of Movimiento de Veteranos y Patriotas, in Las Villas, 1923. See Portell, Ch. 5, *ibid*.

⁶⁴ Gerardo Machado, a 1895 War General from Las Villas, was also a Liberal and the first one to set real policies to develop Cuban industry. For his side of the story, see Machado (1982). Also, Portell, Ch. 5, *ibid*.

⁶⁵ For a XX Century account of Latin American history, see Dabene (2000) among others.

⁶⁶ Machado (1925-33), Batista (1933-44, 1952-58), and Fidel-Raúl Castro (1959-present). See Portell, *ibid*.

1. *Government controls the political machine.* Machado created *cooperativismo*, where parties would share Congress; Batista created an activist army, with educational and economic functions, in addition to military. All followed the *Caudillo* model, similar to that of *Italian Fascism*, characteristic of the 1920s and 1930s. Finally, Castro abolished all political life, and created a one-party, Soviet-style socialist state.
2. *Government then develops* a series of necessary and useful *economic programs* and public works: Machado built the Carretera Central, Capitolio, Malecón, Universidad, Hotel Nacional, etc. and fostered industrialization through the “aranceles proteccionistas” of 1927; Batista fostered education through Maestros Sargentos and Escuelas Cívico-Militares (Ceiba del Agua⁶⁷), three-year economic plans, building of hospitals (Maternidad Obrera, Topes de Collantes); and Castro developed an entire socialist state, extending health, labor and education programs throughout the entire country and social classes, while *nationalizing* private property and dismantling most organizations of Cuba’s pre-1959 civil society.
3. *Opposition dislodged by government,*⁶⁸ *instead of negotiating fights and/or looks to the U.S. for solutions.* Machado provoked the 1930-33 revolution,⁶⁹ and was initially substituted through efforts of Ambassador Sumner Welles. Batista, with military and U.S. support controlled violent opposition in 1933.⁷⁰ His March 1952 coup had American blessing. All Cuban efforts to find negotiated solutions⁷¹ failed, leading to violent struggle,⁷² and to the 1959 revolution. Castro banned all forms of opposition, and all political parties, controlled the media and the economy, and his rivals were jailed or went abroad, where activities such as the Bay of Pigs attack were organized.
4. *After the “revolution” everything the previous administration did is denounced, then abandoned. All administration officials, efficient or incompetent, are discarded. Then, the cycle repeats itself.* After Machado, intellectuals of the caliber of Ferrara and Ramiro Guerra; after Batista, programs such as Topes de Collantes, Escuelas-Cívico Militares and Maestros-Sargentos; and with Fidel, everything not a direct product of the revolution, are discarded or abandoned. Such inefficient policies can only produce waste and prevent or delay Cuba’s badly-needed socioeconomic development.

Only three civilian presidents governed Cuba during 1909-1959: Zayas, Grau and Prio.⁷³ All showed serious corruption problems, but respected civil rights. Political parties had short lives and depended more on their leaders’ charisma, than on specific ideologies.⁷⁴

⁶⁷ Had Batista not staged his 1952 coup, he may have become the *Father* of XX Century Cuban education.

⁶⁸ Token opposition, docile and often under pay, was allowed by all but Castro, who did away with it.

⁶⁹ Armed and violent opposition groups, developed by organizations such as ABC, OCRR, DR-AIE-FEU.

⁷⁰ “Grupos de acción” resulting from the Machado revolution include ABC (uprising at Castillo de Atares, 1934); *Jóven Cuba* (sabotages, 1934-35), and Communists (strike, March 1935). They were suppressed and/or absorbed by General Batista and his Army.

⁷¹ Cosme de la Torriente’s civic dialogue, in 1956; Márquez-Sterling’s candidacy, in 1958 election.

⁷² Moncada, Goicurúa and Palacio Presidencial attacks, Cienfuegos military revolt and finally guerrillas in the mountains, organized by M-16-7, DR/FEU, OA, 2do. Frente, and other revolutionary movements.

⁷³ We do not considered *La Pentarquía* (1933), which was unacceptable to the US government, nor the presidencies of Grau, Mendieta, Barnet, Gomez or Laredo Bru, between 1933 and 1940. They were either short-lived, or were figureheads under the influence and control of General Batista. See Portell Ch. 6, *ibid*

⁷⁴ The exception was the PSP or socialist/communist party, who had a well-organized and stable leadership, local activists, and a clear Marxist ideology. They also operated a national newspaper and a radio station.

In addition, Cuba's middle class balked from politics,⁷⁵ concentrating on other activities,⁷⁶ thus leaving public affairs to *professional politicians*, not always qualified or honest.⁷⁷

In spite of all the above, however, and by the grace of God and the talent and hard work of its citizens, Cuba improved, inch by inch. Every government, however inept, left some good.⁷⁸ The *Enmienda Platt* was finally abolished; we had a highly recognized university, whose list of intellectuals and professionals is too long to list; and our artists and athletes are world-renowned. The Cuba of 1958 (as well as that of 2012) is, by far, much better than the Cuba of 1902. We are the proud children of all those heroes that preceded us, and were able to achieve so much, with so little, and under much worse conditions.

DISCUSSION

We derive no pleasure in criticizing our co-nationals, from all quadrants of the current Cuban conundrum. This is not an exercise in catharsis, either. We pursue a very practical objective akin to that of AA⁷⁹: first recognize the problem; then, define a process to fix it.

We see the problem as having three components: *government, opposition and philosophy*. Those *in government* want to (1) keep it indefinitely, and (2) monopolize it, neutralizing or disabling the opposition. The *opposition* believes the way to power is by (1) using violence to dislodge, and then ostracize those in government; and when this fails, (2) to seek external help, usually from the US. The *philosophy of mutual exclusion* used by government and opposition has always failed because it leaves no room for *negotiating*, nor for *incorporating* the positive policies and the competent people, from the other side.

There are two main issues that hinder or delay the solution of the Cuban conundrum. First, Cubans have always complained, and rightly so, of foreign (American) intervention in their internal affairs. Like any other great power, the US advances what they believe to be their best national interests. Given Cuban's proximity to the US, and its strategic position in the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean, the US has a legitimate interest in Cuba. It is the responsibility of the Cuban government, opposition, the general populace, and the educated classes, to conduct a policy that precludes any foreign intervention. Many years ago, don Manuel Marquez-Sterling expressed this in no uncertain terms⁸⁰.

The second issue is *opening a space for the opposition*. Systems that have successfully evolved, such as Brazil, Mexico, Chile and Spain, have allowed a space for (even an

⁷⁵ A popular saying of the times was: *Las personas decentes no se meten en politica*.

⁷⁶ During 1910-29, fancy upper and middle class neighborhoods were built in Havana (Vedado, Miramar, Country Club). In 1940-59, more neighborhoods were developed (Biltmore, Nuevo Vedado, Tarará, Santa María, Varadero). Few became interested and active in public affairs. Romeu (2011). Portell, Ch. 7. Ibid.

⁷⁷ Two mottoes, one American and one Cuban, explain it all: *you get what you pay for*. And *aquellos polvos trajeron estos lodos*.

⁷⁸ Including the current one, which extended medical and educational services to all citizens.

⁷⁹ Alcoholic Anonymous, a self-help group that rehabilitates former alcoholics, using inner-strength.

⁸⁰ *Contra la ingerencia extraña, la virtud domestica*. Marquez-Sterling (2005).

incipient) opposition⁸¹. Systems that have not (USSR, DDR) have imploded. It is mainly the responsibility of Cuba's current government, to foster the development of such a space; and it is the responsibility of the *opposition to use it judiciously and creatively*.

Summarizing, a *successful solution* for the current Cuban impasse requires that all parties involved are willing to (1) *exercise tolerance*, and (2) *negotiate their differences*. In the next section we overview several successful examples of said negotiating strategy.

Several Transition Examples

In the 1960s the military in Brazil, concerned with Marxist advances in the region, and fearing that such a regime could also flourish in their country, staged a coup and installed a dictatorship under the cover of a two-party democracy⁸². They suppressed old political parties and created the MDB⁸³, which comprised the *opposition*. In it, those outside the establishment (or in disagreement with it) could find a space and a voice, no matter how timid or restricted. And the government had someone with whom to conduct negotiations, no matter how constrained these would be. Such procedure fostered the transition.

In 1985, government support decayed while that for MDB and opposition forces, grew. The evolution started with the election of a new administration⁸⁴. The transition process took over 15 years. Neither Portugal, the OAS or any other country, imposed a schedule.

Readers familiar with the Spanish transition (1970-1985) following Franco's death will recognize similar characteristics, resulting from Lopez Rodó's economic reforms. The European Union did not impose a schedule or a structure to the Spanish transition, either.

In Mexico⁸⁵, a similar situation arose with the system of the PRI⁸⁶, created by Calles⁸⁷ in 1929, but whose roots could be traced to the Calles-Obregon pact of 1920, when these generals agreed to alternate in the presidency and implement common socioeconomic programs. The system developed further under President Cardenas⁸⁸ with the creation of the conservative PAN⁸⁹, the *loyal opposition*, and later with the organization of left-wing PRD⁹⁰, where those outside the establishment could congregate and operate.

⁸¹ For more comparisons of Spanish, Brazilian and Chilean transitions, with Cuba, see Romeu (2009).

⁸² Proyectyo Geisel-Golbery. For details of this period, see Ferreira and Almeida (2003)

⁸³ Movimento Democrático Brasileiro, only opposition organization allowed, which included leaders such as Neves, Guimaraes, Richa, Montoro and Henrique Cardoso, who eventually facilitated the transition.

⁸⁴ Tancredo Neves, prematurely died, and was substituted by Sarney. See Ferreira and Almeida, *ibid*.

⁸⁵ For a brief but accurate account of Mexican History, see Cossio-Villegas (1983), and Krause (1987).

⁸⁶ Partido Revolucionario Institucional (1929) aka Partido de la Revolución Mexicana. In spite of its many and real problems (e.g. corruption, violence, manipulation) PRI successfully ended revolutionary violence and brought the stability and socioeconomic growth of contemporary Mexico. See Romeu (2000, 2001)

⁸⁷ For more on Madero, Calles, Obregon and Cardenas, see *Los Caudillos* series by E. Krauze (1987)

⁸⁸ Lazaro Cardenas, one of Mexico's most important political leaders, was president from 1934 to 1940.

⁸⁹ *Partido Accion Nacional*, founded in 1940 by Manuel Gomez Morin, a former Calles Minister. For more on Gomez Morin, and a comparison with its Cuban counterpart, Jorge Mañach, see Romeu (2003).

⁹⁰ Partido de la Revolución Mexicana, a splinter of the PRI founded in 1988 by Cuahutemoc Cardenas and Muñoz Ledo, two former cabinet members under PRI governments. It is currently the 2nd political force.

The Mexican political system⁹¹ functioned under strict, unwritten rules that ensured its domination (*hegemonia*) for over seventy years⁹². PRI's presidential candidate (*El Tapado*), was selected and announced (*El Dedazo*) by the retiring president, a few months before an election that would anoint him. Such candidate (1) could not be a relative of the exiting president⁹³; (2) could not lobby for the position⁹⁴; (3) should be from the alternative wing of the PRI⁹⁵; (4) would inherit full command⁹⁶; (5) would receive total support of all PRI corporations⁹⁷. Finally, (5) the Mexican army would support and ensure this scheme, but would not participate in the political process⁹⁸.

There are *three common features* in these successful transitions. *First*, the establishment does *not corner the opposition*; on the contrary, it opens a space for its participation. *Second*, both *sides work inside the system*, avoiding asymmetric foreign intervention. *Third*, there is a sentiment of national responsibility among all parties involved, which fosters *cooperation, tolerance and negotiation*.

In all three cases the respective governments eventually lost popular support. Then, the opposition, through the alternative party, negotiated a peaceful change, avoiding civil war as occurred in Spain (1936-39), or foreign intervention as in Dominican Republic (1965).

Raul Castro, who is in his eighties, six years ago substituted his older brother Fidel, who governed Cuba for half a century. Raul has been implementing important⁹⁹ economic and political changes. He knows he has precious little time to pass into Cuban History either as a failed Marcelo Caetano, or as a successful Arias Navarro¹⁰⁰. By imposing a time table and a schedule for change, the US government can only provide excuses to forces within the Cuban regime that do not want any change, and will only delay the inexorable: that Cuba evolves at its own pace into an open society, just as Brazil, Spain and Mexico.

Conclusions

Intolerance and lack of cooperation between government, opposition, and foreign forces, has generated a deficient and recurrent three-phase political model: (1) violent access to

⁹¹ It brought stability to Mexico after twenty years of revolution. Its rules addressed several problems that had plagued Mexican politics: succession, nepotism and party bickering that allowed foreign intervention.

⁹² PAN had federal Senators and Congressmen since the 1960s, and governors since the 1980s. It won the Presidency in 2000, and again in 2006. The PRI again won the presidency in the 2012 elections.

⁹³ This precludes Nepotism, a disease that plagues Latin American politics, including Cuba's current one. An example is what happened to General Maximino Avila Camacho, brother of the president, in 1945.

⁹⁴ A popular Mexican saying regarding lobbying is: *El que se mueve, no sale en la foto*.

⁹⁵ PRI, is a non-ideological party, sort of coalition of national forces. Examples of such policy: left-leaning Cardenas was followed by conservative Avila Camacho, which was followed by Liberal Aleman, etc. The successive turns ensure stability by not moving to fast or too much, in one direction, splitting the coalition.

⁹⁶ Departing presidents would usually leave the country, some times for many years, not to return until he was no longer a real or potential threat to the president in power. Then, they would occupy an honorary and non-threatening position. Ex-President LaMadrid became head of Editorial Fondo de Cultura Economica.

⁹⁷ An exception occurred in 1988, when *LaQuina*, the head of PEMEX Union, refused to pay homage to Salinas, the new president. LaQuina's home was stormed by the army, and he was arrested and jailed.

⁹⁸ There have been no military coups in Mexico in seventy years, since the PRI system was instated.

⁹⁹ For details of such changes, their problems and their consequences, see The Economist (2012),

¹⁰⁰ For more on Raul Castro and his possible role in a Transition, see Romeu (2008, 2009b).

government, the creation of a power base through development plans, and destruction or neutralization of the opposition; (2) opposition turns to violence and/or foreign support to dislodge the government; (3) opposition reaches power, ignores or gets rid of programs and officers from the previous administration, and the process repeats itself. Such model only hampers economic advancement. The solution consists in creating a space for the opposition, and in developing a negotiating framework, where differences are resolved peacefully without interference of foreign forces that create asymmetric contenders.

If the *Cuban government* remains *unwilling to (1) open a space* and then *(2) talk with the alternative* tendencies within the country, it will fall in the same position Spain was, at the end of the XIX Century, when it refused to discuss a shared solution with the Cuban Liberal Autonomist Party. And it will end up, just as Spain did after *el desastre del 98*,

If the *Cuban opposition*, inside and abroad, *fails to negotiate* with the government, and instead *seeks foreign aid*, they will end up in the same position as Cubans, after the War of 1895: in a regime with little maneuvering room, just like the Cuban Republic of 1902.

Finally, if *the US government* becomes *king-maker*, fostering access of a particular group into government, as in Iraq and Afghanistan, they will have to support it economically and militarily. And, when the US leaves, *Cuba will return* to the situation that brought the Cuban revolution of 1959 to start with, and that helped to keep it in power for fifty years.

Thence, if neither side is willing to budge, *Cuba will only go to hell in a hand basket*.

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