CUBA AND LATIN AMERICA: THE POLITICAL DIMENSION

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The peculiar situation of the Cuban economy in the 1990s has brought to central stage the island's role in world society.1 The severe crisis induced by the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the old Soviet Union left Cuba's state socialism facing the challenge of reintegration into a largely-capitalist world society. But the international context of the 1990s differs from that Cuba might have expected in earlier decades in at least three major dimensions—the massive shift toward democracy since the 1970s, the consolidation of global capitalism, and the new momentum in integration processes. This paper explores this conjuncture and notes Cuba's response to it. It probes in particular the significance of Latin America, as it explores Cuba's international strategy and search for a new role in the world economy.2

CUBA'S NEW INTERNATIONALISM

The post-1989 collapse of state socialism in Eastern Europe led to a severe contraction in the Cuban economy and with it the need to either refine the state-centered development model or find new support from the international community.³ Significant forms of change followed, including expanding the tourist sector in partnership with foreign private capital, the legalization of dollar holdings, and the limited liberalization of food and crafts production and

sale. The response to the crisis was essentially a new outward strategy that sought to minimize reforms in the internal economy. The main policies were largely oriented to attract dollars to stabilize the Cuban currency and trade accounts and concentrate resources in a segmented part of the economy linked to the outside. While part of the economy's external sector has grown, the critically important sugar sector and much of the non-external sector remained stagnant. By most accounts, the country has a segmented economy and has yet to define a viable new development strategy.

The official response to the crisis can be partly explained by the institutional characteristics of Cuban state socialism—centralization, collectivization, moral/ideological orientation, charismatic authoritarian, and a high degree of non-market external support (Font 1996). Cuban state socialism was shaped by a peculiar international context that made possible heavy outside sponsorship of Cuba's extreme form of state socialism. Soviet and Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) support during the 1970s and 1980s allowed Cuba's socialism to develop in relative isolation from the difficult market forces that drove much of Latin America into a structural crisis in the 1980s followed by a major era of reform in the 1990s. Cuba's outward strategy before 1989 had in-

^{1.} This essay draws from and extends the analysis presented in M. Font, "Advancing Democracy in Cuba: The International Context," in P. Alamos et al. (1998).

^{2.} A set of statements bearing on the relationship between Latin America and Cuba can be found in P. Alamos, et al. (1998). The processes of integration and globalization have received widespread attention. The "third wave" of democracy, the processes of democratization since the 1970s, has been studied by Samuel Huntington and others.

^{3.} The essays in Centeno and Font (1996) discuss various aspects of Cuba's post-1990 crisis.

deed been quite successful in mobilizing international resources to the island and left as legacy a high international profile, including a large and effective foreign service. Through the second half of the 1990s Cuban leaders continued to deny the need for substantial market reforms, proclaiming the viability of the state socialist model and the notion that it represented the only legitimate option for the Cuban nation.

Cuba's new internationalism in the second half of the 1990s sought to find a mode of international insertion through which the island could hope to make up for the loss of markets, aid, and resources since 1990. The search has led to significant progress in the development of bilateral relationships. Compared to the pre-1990s pattern, the rate at which it has developed diplomatic and commercial relations with Latin American and the Caribbean has been almost phenomenal. But Cuba's new internationalism of the 1990s also faced an acceleration of processes of regional integration and globalization, including a policy-making context driven by major market-oriented reforms. In this rapidly changing context, Cuba's process of international "re-insertion" faces the difficult task of developing institutions and policies to gain admission into the major trading or economic blocs in formation in the Western Hemisphere particularly the emergent Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and MERCOSUR, but also CAR-ICOM and the Central American Common Market (CACM). (See the Appendix for more information on Western Hemisphere organizations.)

The broad challenge for Cuba is to forge development-oriented international coalitions and institutionalized multilateral economic relations to obtain credits and investment, grants and technical assistance, access to markets, and the like. Having largely exhausted its capacity to mobilize internal investment resources, the country badly needs credits and fresh investment to modernize its eroded capital stock and infrastructure—a figure hard to estimate

but that probably exceeds 20 billion dollars at a minimum. Canada, Mexico and Spain have emerged as key partners in this regard. But the bilateral relationships with these countries is unlikely to yield by themselves the full developmental coalitions able to meet the country's needs. With relations with Europe, Asia and Africa also having ceilings in the current context, the Latin American and Caribbean region is of considerable importance to the island.

In the evolving context of the late 1990s, processes of integration in the region figure prominently in this regard.4 In principle, Cuba could hope for membership in MERCOSUR or even NAFTA-FTAA, the two largest blocs in the hemisphere. Membership in CARICOM emerged as another possibility (Erisman 1997). A diplomatic Cuban offensive in this regard seemed poised for success in mid-1998. But, even if it fully materializes, the value of this membership would be more symbolic than real, since the Caribbean is just too small, competitive with the Cuban economy, and relatively poor to provide the kind of partnership Cuba needs. Something comparable can be said about the CACM, while the potential of the newly forming Association of Caribbean States will take many years to bear fruit, given the diversity of cultures, political dynamics, and previous disinterest in the countries making up the Caribbean Basin.

Cuba's outward strategy forces its leaders to face economic and political conditions defined by the regional organizations and processes of integration to which it hopes to join. The larger regional blocs have "democratic clauses" which a country has to meet in order to gain or maintain membership. Major political and institutional obstacles related to Cuba's authoritarianism top the list of impediments to a rapid breakthrough in the country's ability to join the main international organizations and integration processes. Though the precise terms of admission Cuba could expect are not yet fully clear, what is less uncertain meanwhile is that the current crisis of the island deprives it of the ability to set these terms. With the

^{4.} Besides FTA's, other possible options are Customs Unions, Common Markets, and Full Economic Unions. Cuba's bilateral relationships have failed to produce bilateral free trade agreements with industrial nations and are unlikely to do so in the near future.

end of the Cold War, Cuba went from an era of substantial international leverage to one in which it finds itself with little and probably decreasing influence in world affairs as well as enhanced external dependence. It hence seems unlikely that the country could hope for full membership in the main economic blocs without engaging in a serious process of institutional change and even democratization.

Cuban policymakers therefore face a dilemma with regard to participation in regional integration and cooperation. If they fail to adopt reforms to conform to the regnant liberalization paradigm, Cuba will probably continue to play a marginal role in the main forms of economic and political cooperation governing the turn of the century in the region. A meaningful program of reform will on the other hand be likely to accelerate and deepen the economy's ability to join the processes of integration, but at the cost of fundamental changes in Cuba's state socialism.

The year 1999 will bring important tests in this regard. That year will see Cuba host the Ibero-American Summit. Before that, it would also like to take part in the summit between the European Union and the Rio Group. Cuba has approached and will continue to approach the Rio Group and MERCOSUR. The 1998 deepening of negotiations regarding MERCOSUR and FTAA has added pressure. Unless it joins the talks surrounding the FTAA, it will be left out of a critical axis of cooperation in the hemisphere.

LATIN AMERICA AND CUBA

The New Consensus on Democracy in Latin America

From a broad perspective, Latin America's special significance to Cuba goes beyond the current phase of economic integration. It also derives from the region's experiences with democracy and transitions to democracy—a process which actually shapes the Latin American approach to integration. Still unfolding,

these processes define the main political developments in the region. The experiences with democratization are also a reservoir of practical and theoretical knowledge that could help Cuba's own search for a modernized political system. Latin American democratization is also important because it defines the political and institutional framework governing the region's relations with Cuba. Given the new emphasis on democracy (with all its problems, at no other point in history has Latin America been so uniformly engaged in the construction of democracy), the marked inclination is to go beyond the preference for deeper relations with other democratic countries toward the explicit promotion of democracy.⁵

This trend toward democracy is in fact a key underlying historical process facilitating regional integration. To Latin American policymakers, the latter would be inconceivable without basic consensus on forms of governance and the bonds linking current democratic leaders in the continent. While the processes of democratic transition in Latin America have been rooted in local conditions, there are many signs of effective cooperation. In the case of Brazilians and Chileans, there is a unique bond, as many of the leaders of the Brazilian democratic movement of the last two decades developed close personal and institutional relationships and networks during exile in Chile in the 1960s.6 Perhaps more importantly, political parties of the left have generally embraced democracy. This includes the Workers Party of Brazil, the PS and PPD of Chile, MAS in Venezuela, and the PRD in Mexico. In Chile, this movement made possible a very strong coalition, Concertación, with the Christian Democratic Party (PDC), a historically centrist political organization whose intellectuals also have very strong links with democratizing movements in the region. Democratic socialist and socialdemocratic currents in Latin America have in fact played key roles in processes of democratic transition and consolidation. At the same time, conservative

^{5.} For instance, the Rio Group has maneuvered repeatedly to prevent the return of authoritarianism in Paraguay.

^{6.} Brazilian exiles in Chile during the 1960s include current President Fernando Henrique Cardoso as well as such prominent figures in his government as José Serra (past Minister of Planning), Francisco Weffort (Minister of Culture), Paulo Renato Souza (Minister of Education), and several others. Several leaders of other parties, including the Workers Party, also lived in Chile in the 1960s.

forces in the region have experienced processes of renewal which have taken them to reaffirm democracy. The movement of Latin American society to reaffirm and deepen democracy as the only legitimate political organization is hence both broad and deep.

The rich research and debate generated by processes of democratic transition and consolidation in the region has implications for the Cuban case. They have yielded and continue to yield major results and implications for the understanding of political change (for recent reviews see Brachet-Márquez 1997, Sørensen 1993, Remmer 1995). The task of extrapolating these experiences to the Cuban case is fraught with great perils. Yet, there would seem to be plenty of illuminating lessons.

The Latin American experiences made a large number of scholars favor actor-centered, strategic models of democratization over those emphasizing structural prerequisites. Few such prerequisites could be found to predict short-term advances or failures of democratization in the region. Rather than viewing Latin American democracy as the natural result of economic development, education, or value systems, much of the emphasis has come to be placed on political actors making decisions. In this context, transitions take place in the context of divisions in the authoritarian regime often prompted by economic crisis, new patterns of mobilization, the death of autocratic leader, military defeat, foreign pressure, or some combination of these factors. Those who start political reforms see themselves surviving in the new regime.

In this perspective, there is no single path to democracy, as the actions and interactions toward democracy cannot be easily predicted. Paths differ in terms of speed, elite continuity, nature of elite settlements, role of the masses, and the relative role of internal and external forces.

The Latin American experiences tend to confirm the view of transitions as path-dependent phenomena in which institutional and structural frameworks constrain choice, even if they in turn are re-shaped by them. The nature of the pre-existing constrains reverberate through time, creating conditions for continu-

ity. Democracy is partly contingent on ideological shifts and institutional developments. The new consensus in the region is that it requires active care and defense.

The discussion of democratization in Latin America has centered on the paths of the Southern Cone and Brazil, including decisions "from above" and peaceful negotiation. Even if such experiences as Nicaragua and Mexico represent differentiated transitions that have not been fully theorized, strategic interactions by consequential actors have been identified as critical in all cases in the region.

The "strategic interaction" approach justifies optimism about the prospects of installing or maintaining democracy even when prerequisites may not seem to be present. But certain strands of the "prerequisites" school can also lead to optimism in Latin America and even Cuba. Latin America made decisions largely as a result of the strengthening of the democratic impulse within, in the context of long struggles for democracy as well as ideological shifts. And, as recognized in Samuel Huntington's recent reaffirmations of culture and political culture, Latin America as a whole should be seen as part of the tradition of Western civilization.

Cuba is not really an exception in this regard. Like Latin America in previous decades, it accompanied the ebb and flow of political liberalism since at least the turn of the century. The Cuban revolution itself began as a reflection of a long-sustained struggle for democracy. Through four decades of Marxism-Leninism, important segments of the Cuban population have probably remained wedded to the basic values and institutional organization conforming Western civilization. And, as noted, Cuba is desperately seeking incorporation into regional and international blocs dominated by the liberal or liberalizing democracies of the West, including Canada and Spain. There are hence grounds to surmise that Cubans might eventually adopt or reaffirm the kind of institutional and political profile found throughout the West and much of Latin America.

The Latin American experiences with democratization tend to confirm some of the lessons from the Eastern European transitions, including the role of outside factors. Distillates of the literature based on Eastern European cases often favor a policy of assertive engagement with such features as:

- sensitiveness to the need for balance between economic and political reforms;
- providing outside support and understanding to construct a political order based on pluralism, rule of law and respect for human rights, free media, free markets, and the like;
- offering outside technical assistance in designing and maintaining safety nets;
- helping to build civil society, including the creation of a non-profit sector of national and international non-governmental organizations; and
- encouragement of incorporation into the post-Cold War system of international security.

The Western Hemisphere too has taken significant steps toward an engagement policy in support of democracy and democratization. The Ibero-American summits, the Summit of the Americas, and Mercour/Rio Group have converged on an assertive stance in this regard. The new willingness and ability of Latin Americans to engage in joint action to support democracy and peace has included the leadership of the Rio Group and the Contadora group.

In the early 1990s the OAS began to reflect the new sentiment.⁸ The General Assembly meeting in Santiago de Chile in June 1991 adopted a strong endorsement of democracy in "The Santiago Commitment to Democracy and the Renewal of the Inter-American System," calling for "the creation of efficacious, timely, and expeditious procedures to ensure the promotion and defense of democracy." More broadly,

the United States and Latin American governments are collaborating with counterparts in Europe, Asia and the hemisphere to create "a vast interlocking array of organizations, mechanisms, and programs" to promote human rights and democracy (Millet 1994). A growing list of examples shows how the above array of organizations are supporting regional cooperation in favor of democratic development—monitoring elections, reforming electoral laws and proceedings, training police forces, improving democratic administration and legislatures, strengthening the courts, and the like (in Nicaragua, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti, Paraguay, Guyana, Ecuador, Panama, and even Mexico).

The Cuban case presents a challenges for the region. Cuban state socialism still elicits considerable sympathy among some sectors, including the perception of it as a rare case of successful standing up to U.S. hegemony and interventionism. Moreover, while engagement with Cuba over this issue risks complicating relations with either that country or the United States, the odds of success seem low. Nevertheless, countries playing exemplary or leading roles in the region—including Chile and Brazil—have opted to tackle the difficult regional dilemmas and political costs associated with the international promotion of human rights and democracy.⁹

One of the issues in need of clarification is how to gauge the character of political trends and dynamics in Cuba, including the regime's claim to have already embraced a distinctive form of democracy billed as superior to others in the region in terms of social policies. The Sixth Ibero-American Summit in fact emphasized the idea of multiple paths toward democracy in the region. In the process, it left open to interpretation important aspects of democratic devel-

^{7.} Millet (1994) provides a useful overview.

^{8.} Within the OAS, some early steps include the formation of a Unit for Promotion of Democracy in 1990.

^{9.} For Chile, see "Cuba no va a ser invitada a la Cumbre," an interview with the Chilean Foreign Minister (*La Epoca*, May 25, 1997, pp. 12-13). Chile has emerged as a leader in the hemisphere. It has completed the most mature and consolidated economic and political reforms in Latin America, has experienced sustained economic growth for more than a decade, has hosted a number of important international gatherings (including the 6th Ibero-American Summit and the upcoming Summit of the Americas). It is next in line to join the NAFTA countries into an expanded free trade area in the Americas and in that role will serve as a link between that body and MERCO-SUR. Chile has been a member of the UN's Human Rights Commission.

opment and precisely where the Cuban case stands in that regard.

Latin American Integration and Democracy

This section explores in more depth how the regional processes of cooperation and integration accelerating since the late 1980s shape Latin American policy toward Cuba. Progressively in the 1990s, the Rio Group, MERCOSUR, the Ibero-American Summits, and the Summit of the Americas jelled or peaked in political importance, in the context of the consolidation of democratizing and liberalizing reforms in the largest and most influential countries in the region. In Central America and the Caribbean, previous efforts of the Contadora Group, the G3 (Mexico, Colombia and Venezuela) led to the creation of the Association of Caribbean States. In part, this broad movement meant the loss of function by the Washington-based Organization of American States, though some see a subsequent process of invigoration of the OAS. In counterpoint with these processes, the official U.S. agenda for the Americas still called for turning NAFTA into a free trade agreement for the entire hemisphere by the year 2005, to be known as the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas. 10

Throughout the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s, Latin America countries focused on democratization, economic policy to arrest a lingering crisis, and peace-making efforts. Multilateral efforts had a narrow sub-regional focus. For instance, the Rio Group emerged as the main political forum in the region, focusing on processes of democratization in Brazil, the Southern Cone, and other countries in South America. This consultative body went on to focus on economic liberalization and economic integration, paving the way for MERCOSUR.

Through mid-1996, Latin American statements about advancing democracy in Cuba remained vague and did not really articulate a coherent alternative approach linking Cuba's international reintegration to

a process of democratization. The importance of the Sixth Ibero-American Summit¹¹ in this context is that it took a major step in this direction.

Latin American countries generally pursue an approach to Cuba likewise marked by independence and distance from Washington's official line. The early September, 1996 meeting of the Rio Group, for instance, strongly condemned the Helms-Burton law. The Rio Group, an organization of eleven Latin American countries representing 300 million people (Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Paraguay and Panama), was formed in 1986 to promote democracy and economic integration in the region. It is the main political forum in the region. It has a strong democratic clause. The vote against U.S. policy toward Cuba came out in spite of direct pleas by Madeleine Albright, the current Secretary of State and then U.S. envoy to the United Nations. Earlier that year, the Inter-American Juridical Committee, an agency of the Organization of American States, declared the Helms-Burton legislation "not in conformity with international law."

The Sixth Ibero-American Summit: The Sixth Ibero-American Summit confirmed the anti-embargo position of Latin America, passing a resolution against Helms-Burton and other clauses decrying obstacles to free trade. But its focus on the consolidation of democracy in the region led to a more general call for democracy. The twenty-one signatories of the Summit's Viña del Mar Agreement, a list which included Cuban President Fidel Castro Ruz, endorsed the region's commitment to democracy (and the latter's superiority over authoritarianism and totalitarianism), political pluralism, and the primacy of human and civil rights.

Like the governments of Mexico and Canada, Latin American leaders clearly advocate the incorporation of Cuba into the region's multilateral bodies, seeing this as a better way to promote changes in the island.

^{10.} French-Davis (1995) notes at least 25 bilateral and multilateral trade agreements between 1989 and 1995 (see also Byron 1997, p. 3).

^{11.} The Declaration of Viña del Mar is discussed in Barzelatto and Font (1997).

But they are evolving toward a more assertive position with regard to calling for democratization.

The Sixth Ibero-American Summit did not directly assess the claim in Castro's presentation to the twenty-one delegations that Cuba already has a system of direct grassroots participation that is better than "representative democracy." In fact, the Summit emphasized the role of "national traditions" and other factors in determining the "means, instruments, and mechanisms most suitable" to define a road toward democracy. That way, it endorsed the idea of diverse forms and approaches to democracy.

However, several major statements during the Summit demanded the return of democracy to Cuba. Shortly before the event, the Chilean Congress passed a resolution urging full democratization in Cuba. During the summit, Chilean President Eduardo Frei dismissed the idea that the Cuban polity was democratic, emphasizing that the only legitimate democracy is one built on respect for human rights and one which "makes decisions according to majorities expressed in honest elections." Spanish Prime Minister José Maria Aznar was even more blunt, directly pressing Castro for democratic reforms and hinting that European aid was conditional upon such moves. The Spaniards pointed out that the continuation of Cuba's single-party system and Castro thirty-seven year rule contradicted Castro's very signing of the Summit's final resolution.

It is noteworthy that during stay in Castro, that country's Socialist Party organized a luncheon for him in which prominent party figures, including Hortensia Bussi de Allende, Salvador Allende's widow, made dramatic pleas for democracy in Cuba. This seems to reflect a broad consensus in that country on the need for socialism to unambiguously embrace democracy.

Much of Latin America was hence moving toward a distinctive third position in relation to the positions of the United States or those of Canada-Mexico. While Latin America opposes the Helms-Burton law

and is sympathetic to the idea of Cuba's integration into the region's economy and multilateral organizations, the Ibero-American Summit indicated that it was evolving toward a form of assertive cooperation and diplomatic pressure to help the Cuban people move toward democracy after nearly four decades of authoritarian rule by one party, one leader, one regime, and one model of social organization.

The II Summit of the Americas and the Negotiation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas: The debate about the relationship between integration and democracy and the implications regarding Cuba's inclusion are also present in the movement toward the creation of the FTAA. From the perspective of the United States, the idea behind the FTAA is to extend NAFTA to the rest of the hemisphere. Ironically, NAFTA did not contain a democratic clause. In fact, the United States and Canada ignored the authoritarian characteristics of the Mexican political system. When the I Summit of the Americas (Miami, 1994) placed the FTAA on the hemispheric agenda, it justified Cuba's exclusion with strong argument by the United States, the host county, about the absence of democracy in the island. But it did not advance a formal democratic clause.

The II Summit of the Americas, which convened in April 1998 in Santiago de Chile, did take major steps toward formalizing a democratic clause. As it opened the negotiations for an eventual FTAA, some of the lobbying surrounding this event came from a hemispheric "leadership council" that included several past Latin American presidents and Richard Feinberg, a high-level Latin American policy-maker in the first Clinton administration. Such a clause was defended on the grounds of preventing attempts at destabilizing democracy in the region as well as providing an incentive in the Cuban case. 12 The final accords of the II Summit of the Americas had strong language in favor of preserving and strengthening democracy and human rights. It emphasized such areas as a strong and independent judiciary, enhanced educational opportunities, deepening of civil society,

^{12. &}quot;Proponen establecer cláusula democrática en Acuerdo del ALCA," El Mercurio (17 de abril de 1998), p. C4.

protection of human rights, the modernization of the state, and the battle against corruption, crime, and terrorism.

Though the political climate in Santiago de Chile in 1998 differed greatly from that of Miami in 1994, Cuba was not invited and hence was not part of the official agenda. But Cuba was extensively discussed informally. As President Clinton discussed the agenda with his counterparts in the hemisphere, newspapers and various interest groups pressed for more open discussion of the Cuban case. With journalists asking persistently about Cuba's absence, it dominated the formal press conference closing the Summit. This time it was Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso who stole some headlines with an inspired statement acknowledging social achievements in Cuba but also asking why democracy was not given to Cuban society. This was a historic moment in that it symbolized, at the same time, Latin America's independence from Washington and its demand for democracy.13

Throughout the Summit, Latin American countries had tried to meditate the differences between the United States and Cuba, asking both that the United States revise its policy toward Cuba and that Cuba begin a process of democratization. Chile's Foreign Minister, for instance, acknowledging that Cuba was being discussed in informal conversations, lamented Cuba's absence but argued that NAFTA negotiations were only for countries that met prerequisites in terms of democracy—i.e., Cuba needed to take steps toward democracy if it hoped to join the process of regional integration. Cuba's inclusion in the FTAA process. Even Argentina's Carlos Menem and Peru's Alberto Fujimori pronounced themselves in favor of that notion, as did

Canada's prime minister Jean Chrétien—who made public plans for an imminent trip to Havana.

The MERCOSUR Summit of 1998: The question of democracy re-emerged shortly after in the 14th MERCOSUR presidential summit of July 1998. The six Latin American presidents meeting in the southern Argentine city of Ushuaia, in Tierra del Fuego, signed a protocol in defense of democracy. The statement holds that "respect for democratic principles is an essential element of the process of integration."

The 1998 MERCOSUR summit provided a test of the strength of the Latin American commitment to integration and democracy. This summit dealt with a difficult trade integration agenda, including differences with respect to the auto industry, canned goods (the threat of flooding the Brazilian market with canned products originating in countries outside MERCOSUR), and sugar (Argentine tariffs but also Brazilian subsidies). The presidents did not reach agreement on the economic agenda. But it was clear that their governments maintained a diplomatic thrust in support of the further development of the accord. The agreements in the political area took the limelight. The "democratic clause" adopted foresees the possibility of sanction against any member state that experiences an institutional rupture. The summit also generated a strong statement in the area of national and regional security, declaring MERCO-SUR a "peace zone." The clause is an important step toward formalizing the notion of MERCOSUR as a region free of nuclear weapons. It invokes sanctions against countries participating in wars. The document reinforces other documents about regional security and cooperation in the battle against illegal drug and weapons trade and terrorism.¹⁵ This is a major step that takes member countries beyond

^{13.} Brazil paid a price for this role. In the aftermath, a visit to Cuba by the Brazilian Foreign Minister largely failed in further improving relations between the two countries.

^{14.} E.g., "Cuba debe dar señal para reintegrarse a Hemisferio," El Mercurio (19 de abril de 1998), p. C2.

^{15.} See Monica Yanakiew and Isabel Braga, "Presidentes tornam Mercosul uma zona de paz," *O Estado de São Paulo* (July 24, 1998), www.estado.com.br/edicao/pano/98/07/24. Assessments of the 14th MERCOSUR Summit can be found in "Mercosul, devagar e sempre," *Folha de São Paulo* (July 26, 1998), www.uol.com.br/fsp/opiniao, and in Gilson Schwartz "Economia dificulta aliança no Mercosul," *Folha de São Paulo* (July 26, 1998), www.uol.com.br. The MERCOSUR website is at www.rau.edu.uy/mercosur.

"concertación política" and toward political integration.

Once again, Cuba ended up receiving more coverage than anticipated at this MERCOSUR gathering. South African president Nelson Mandela, a special guest, gave an interview in which he defended Cuba and stated that democracy with hunger and illiteracy was an "empty shell." Brazilian President Cardoso rapidly replied that in this country the shell was not empty and that in any case democracy was the best way "to fill the shell." ¹⁶

Latin America's regional gatherings (in the context of the Ibero-American Summits, FTAA, the Rio Group, MERCOSUR and the like) will no doubt continue to debate the defense of democracy and its relationship to integration. The forms of democracy being consolidated or deepened in Latin America are still imperfect and in some cases in danger of reversal. Structural, institutional and cultural realities and practices impose limitations on the development of democracy in the region. Deepening is hence neither guaranteed nor is it likely to occur without political effort. It is precisely the realization what drives Latin American leaders to emphasize the active defense of democracy. The link between democracy and integration is a political choice that conditions enhanced forms of economic cooperation to the embrace of democracy. The hope is that the formalization of democratic clauses will help prevent reversals to authoritarianism and provide incentives for democratic development.

With democracy a long-term goal of regional multilateral organizations, the turn of the century will probably see efforts to define the specific patterns of cooperation and "conditionalities" deemed effective in the development of democracy in members or prospective members, including Cuba. While Latin American countries will give top priority to trade and integration issues in the context of the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas, the Cuban question will continue to draw attention. With Canada and much of Latin America and the Caribbean in support of that notion, the United States will have a difficult time keeping Cuba out of the third FTAA summit to be held in Canada in 2001. But effective membership in this process seems remote at this point, given Cuba's official policy. After all, trade and economic liberalization is one of the central premises of the new integration process in the hemisphere. Likewise, Cuba would have to make major liberalizing reforms to hope to join MERCOSUR one day.

If Cuba's evolving relationship to Latin America will hence need to take into consideration the region's economic re-alignment process favoring regional economic units, the chief underlying issue is really Cuba's readiness to embrace the region's prevailing economic and political trends. With Cuban authorities on record as dismissing Latin American democracy and arguing that Cuba has the best democracy in the hemisphere, there are few grounds for optimism that the Castro regime will decide to organize a democratic transition in Cuba. In fact, in the framework of the analysis advanced here and Font (1997, 1998), what can be expected is a sustained international offensive by the Cuban authorities oriented to obtaining external support and resources to minimize the need for internal change. In a speech on July 26, 1998—as this essay was being readied for distribution—Cuba's President Fidel Castro announced a series of trips for the rest of the year that would take him to several countries in the Caribbean, Portugal and South Africa. Earlier, Cuban authorities had announced a major international conference on globalization to take place in Havana in January 1999.

In the light of previous statements, it might be surmised that the regime is preparing itself for the tough debates ahead in the context of Ibero-American summits and the advancing regional negotiations about integration. Cuba's president will participate in the Ibero-American Summit of 1998 (Portugal) and will host the Ibero-American Summit in 1999. The issue of democracy will surface at these gatherings, as

^{16. &}quot;Democracia só vale sem fome, diz Mandela," O Estado de São Paulo (July 24, 1998), www.estado.com.br.

heads of state in still democratizing societies ask the Cuban delegation about the commitments which it signed in the 1996 Summit of the Americas in Santiago.

The very internationalization of the debate about the promotion of democracy in Cuba will draw from the three approaches to the subject found in the region. Two alternatives to U.S. policy hence can be discerned in the Latin American and hemispheric debate about Cuban democratization. That represented by the traditional positions of Mexico-a country that had a political system diagnosed as authoritarian as it signed an integration agreement with the two paramount democracies in the hemisphere maintains that economic contact with little or no pressure is the best way to handle Cuba. This position has many points in common with that of Canada, with whom Mexico shares deepening economic interests in Cuba. The rest of Latin America seems to be moving toward a position emphasizing assertive cooperation to enhance the prospects for political development.

IMPLICATIONS

If Cuba's process of re-insertion into the changing Western Hemisphere and world economy can be expected to have profound implications for internal political and economic dynamics, the precise impact of this process on the development of Cuban democracy hinges on Cuba's willingness and capacity to engage in substantive reforms. The Cuban state retains a pronounced anti-market, ideological, and authoritarian institutional form. Cuban state socialism has adopted limited market measures reluctantly, cautiously, and with a sharp eye to maintaining itself. It has seemed to prefer antagonism to rapprochement with the United States and on the grounds that proximity would endanger political unity. At least on the short term, a reinsertion process that did not challenge these premises would tend to reinforce the preestablished response.

It seems reasonable to expect that changes in Cuba's institutional framework will take time and effort. One plausible scenario for the institutional-ideological factor to change is an extended period of "social learning" driven by poor performance and crises. The regime either believes that state socialism can survive or so fears the consequences of economic liberalization and democratization that it will not embrace either or, much less, both. Either way, the end result is a decision to maintain reforms to a minimum and retain control.

If—as many believe—Cuba does not have the size or other conditions to successfully maintain such a policy, then crisis or a prolonged period of stagnation in the socialist sector of the economy will be the result. Such a prolonged crisis would lead to change probably in the medium or long term, possibly in the course of changes in the top leadership. If such a pattern of change could take a relatively long time to occur, the resulting "transition" might be likely characterized by political and social turmoil. It is hence possible that reforms might come "too little, too late" to make a substantial difference to most Cubans. It seems worrisome in this regard that so few policymakers in Cuba acknowledge that insufficient interim reforms will delay substantially an eventual process of full recovery.

Meanwhile, it is certain that Cuba will continue to place in high and even increasing priority its relationship to the international system. The island's new internationalism cannot but deepen. The above discussion has emphasized external influences on the island. However, apparently there is enough fluidity in the international system to continue to justify among some Cuban decision-makers the notion of a process of re-insertion that minimizes or even reduces the need for change. This enhanced outward strategy can be expected to include tactical innovations and eventful foreign relations in the near future. 17 Relations with the Caribbean and Latin America are of special strategic significance in terms of member-

^{17.} The visit of Pope John Paul II to Cuba in early 1998 confirms this prospective analysis written in early 1997. By the same logic, other events will take place after full assimilation of the Pope's visit.

ship in larger economic units in formation and the process of gaining international leverage.

It follows from the line of analysis sketched above that major internal reforms will probably await the results of these campaigns, as Cuban policy-makers will need to have exhausted all possibilities in the international arena before they adopt massive internal reforms. Meanwhile, a policy shift in the United States—added to the acceleration of regional and global multilateralism (or "globalization")—might indeed help bring about conditions that alter the dynamics and terms of Cuba's reinsertion. As noted above, critics of the current U.S. policy claim that it is counterproductive to democratization on various grounds, including the fact that the Castro regime uses it to justify its rule. The embargo failed to induce change in Cuba for nearly four decades and clashes with notions of sovereignty.¹⁸ Unilateral interventions have generally failed to promote democracy. Castro's longevity in power owes in part to his ability to play to the worst fears of Cuban nationalists and convince Cubans that the United States is bent on intervening in the island to gain unfair advantages. The Helms-Burton law gives support to those skeptical of U.S. intervention in Cuban affairs.

In this context, it seems likely in the short run that enough Cubans will distrust U.S. policies and oppose any form of rapprochement that does not respect the principle of Cuban sovereignty. If so, the Helms-Burton law will not succeed in either overthrowing the current regime or creating conditions conducive to democracy. In addition, the Helms-Burton law might be a significant impediment to political stability and democracy in a post-Castro Cuba, since governments coming to power under its rule will tend to be seen as lacking legitimacy by vast sectors of the Cuban population.

The toughened embargo policy toward Cuba is being challenged in the United States as well as throughout the Western Hemisphere and Europe, where it is seen as clashing with important international principles and trade policies endorsed by the United States. President Clinton inherited from George Bush a vision of trade integration partly as a way of shifting from the regime of development aid which had guided policy making since the late 1940s. Enthusiasm for NAFTA and trade integration cooled down considerably in response to labor opposition as well as the Mexican crisis of 1994-95. However, though support for a Free Trade Area of the Americas, originally proposed by the U.S. President in 1994, was also receding in the United States, liberalized trade and economic relations continue to be pillars of the foreign policy of the United States. The growing perception is that the Helms-Burton law neglects to take fully into account the interests and views of with other nations in the hemisphere as well as important lessons from transitions in various parts of the world. This aggressive legislation, not present even in the depths of the Cold War, will fuel intensified international opposition in the context of trade and economic liberalization and integration. In this context, it is indeed conceivable that U.S. policy toward Cuba will experience significant revision in the not too distant future. If so, hardliners in Cuba will not be able to claim that the island's authoritarianism and poor economic performance are explained or justified by U.S. aggressiveness.

CONCLUSION

Several implications follow from the above discussion. First, to the extent that democracy and the promotion of democracy have emerged as international norms, particularly in the context of Latin American and European integration, it seems likely that inter-

^{18.} Indeed, Cuban nationalism has been wounded by U.S. policies well before Castro came to power. The very rise of the United States to world power entailed costs to Cuba. Most Cubans believe that the Spanish-American War (1898) took victory away from the hands of Cuban insurgents and led to a humiliating intervention (lasting until 1902, but later repeated) and the much-resented Platt Amendment imposed to the Cuban constitution, giving the United States government constitutional rights to intervene in the island's affairs. Cuban nationalism, fueled by fears and resentments about U.S. designs on the island, simmered throughout the ensuing decades of the 20th century and was no doubt a major factor in defining the course of the Cuban revolution of 1959. Cuban nationalists base their arguments on a two-century history that began with George Washington's efforts to buy the island of Cuba from Spain and includes the Manifest Destiny and the rise of annexionist currents in the United States and Cuba.

national actors will play a key role in Cuba's dynamics of transformation compared to other democratizing transitions. A word of caution, however, is necessary. Powerful economic actors have apparently decided to lobby against any law or policy that links or subordinates trade to political goals. Much will depend on how politicians and policymakers in the region interpret their roles in the process of globalization and integration.

Second, Latin America provides an important framework to help orient actors in the critical decisions shaping Cuba's inevitable long-term path toward integration and democracy. The integration process in Latin America and the Caribbean (MERCOSUR, CARICOM, and CACM) is a key stage in which to define Cuba's new role in the world economy. But, as noted, this influence is not unambiguous. Policymakers and policy-oriented fora in the region have yet to fully probe the mutual relevance between the Cuban dynamics of transformation and the processes of regional integration and change. If negotiations about Cuba's participation in regional integration processes can advance the dynamics and prospects of democratization in the island, an immediate task is to develop channels of discussion and assertive cooperation that bring key players together to address the difficult predicament of the Cuban nation and the role of Latin America and the Caribbean in the search for constructive solutions. The Ibero-American summits, one of the few regional fora in which Cuba participates, can be important in this regard.

Third, broader negotiations for an expanded Free Trade Area of the Americas are a critical factor in structuring new patterns of cooperation in the hemisphere. This process brings together all nations in the hemisphere, except Cuba. In fact, Cuba is not part of any of the key regional organizations in the Western Hemisphere—the Organization of American States, the Inter-American Development Bank, NAFTA, and the like. Obviously, this situation will need to come to an end at some point. Other things being equal, it is best that this happen sooner rather later. Cuban society will be damaged for a long time to come if it plays a marginal role in the formative stages of this process. It is primarily up to the Cuban authorities to respond to this challenge. Nevertheless, debate on a policy toward Cuba and its hemispheric integration may perhaps make such an adequate response more likely, while beginning to forge the context governing the island's incorporation into the regional integration and cooperation schemes. Again, the first challenge in this wider context is to specify the conditions and processes under which Cuban society could have access to the changing Inter-American system. Beyond that, the task is to construct an effective framework to engage all actors. Discussion in the context of the European Union will be central in defining the conditions of Cuba's access to other forms of international cooperation and integration.

Lastly, if the United States, which has a key role in the process of global liberalization and cooperation, also adopts a fresh approach toward Cuba, the island might face an international context so clearly favorable to overall liberalization that it would be a decisive test of the readiness of the current Cuban regime and society to change and embrace democracy.

Appendix ORGANIZATIONS IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

ACS: Association of Caribbean States. In 1992 the leaders of the Central American Common Market decided to begin to negotiate with CARICOM the formation of a broad regional organization including the two. Mexico, Colombia and Venezuela joined the deliberations. Collectively, member countries have a population of 202 million inhabitants and in-

come of more than \$500 billion dollars in mid-1990s. [See Byron (1997), Ceara-Hatton (1997), Erisman (1997).]

CACM: Central American Common Market. Signed in 1960 by Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. [See Erisman (1997).]

Andean Pact: Initially called the Andean Subregional Integration Agreement, its purpose was to promote economic integration by the progressive elimination of tariffs and coordinated industrial development. Original agreement signed by Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru in 1969. Venezuela joined in 1973, but Chile withdrew in 1977. Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru have suspended membership for brief periods, responding to bilateral conflicts with other member countries. After 1992, the Andean Pact aimed at the creation of a free-trade zone and then an integrated common market by 1995, but its limited success has been overshadowed by the rise of MER-COSUR.

CARICOM: Caribbean Community and Common Market. Created in 1973, taking the place of the Caribbean Free Trade Association of 1965. Its purpose is to promote trade and development within the region. Governed by a Council made up of Ministers of Government. The Secretariat is in Georgetown, Guyana. Current 14 members: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Suriname, Jamaica, Montserrat, St Kitts-Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago. It also has 2 Associate Members and 9 Observers. [See Ceara-Hatton (1997), Erisman (1997): 20-23.]

FTAA (ALCA): Free Trade Area of the Americas (Acuerdo de Libre Comercio de las Américas). Concept articulated in I Summit of the Americas (Miami, December, 1994) and further developed by Ministerial and lower level meetings (e.g., Ministers of Trade Meeting, Belo Horizonte, Brazil, May 1997) as well as Business Fora. The II Summit of the Americas (Santiago de Chile, April 1998) formalized the start of multilateral negotiations for the establishment of the FTAA. [See Ceara Hatton (1997).]

Group of Three (G-3): Informal association between Mexico, Venezuela, and Colombia, the three largest countries/economies in the Caribbean basin.

LAIA: Latin American Integration Association. Established in 1980. Latin America Free Trade Area (LAFTA) came into existence in 1961 with the goal to promote trade and became LAIA in 1980, with the limited purpose of protecting existing intra-regional trade.

MERCOSUR: Decision to form it made in 1991 by the presidents of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay. Trade liberalization started in December 1994. Grew out of bilateral accords. With population of 200 million and a combined GNP of \$420 billion. Bolivia and Chile joined as associate members in 1996. Cuba would like to join, but MERCOSUR is likely to remain a South American phenomenon for some time. Its headquarters are in Montevideo.

NAFTA: Following an earlier accord between the United States and Canada, in 1992 Mexico initiated discussions to form a free trade agreement among the three countries. Came into existence on January 1, 1994. Trading bloc of 320 million people.

OAS: Organization of American States.

The Rio Group: The Rio Group is an organization of eleven Latin American countries representing 300 million people (Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Paraguay and Panama) formed in 1986 to promote democracy and, later, trade and economic integration in the region. Cuba and the Dominican Republic have expressed interest in joining, but the Rio Group has repeatedly declined.

SELA: Sistema Económico de América Latina (Latin American Economic System). Founded in 1975. Regional organization of Latin American countries, excluding the United States and including Cuba, to promote economic cooperation and development. Emphasizes study and discussion. Has 26 members. Decisions are made at annual conferences held in Caracas, where SELA's secretariat is located. It has had a limited impact on public debate and policy.

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