

**EXCEPTIONALISM AND BEYOND:
THE CASE OF CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN CUBA**

Eusebio Mujal-León

Georgetown University

INTRODUCTION

The study of Cuban politics has been dominated by the notion that its subject is exceptional and immobile. To some degree this reflected the long shadow cast over Cuba by the permanent presence of Fidel Castro and his highly personal imprint on the Revolution. He and his regime outlived the Soviet gerontocracy, outlasted no fewer than ten US presidents, and survived the cataclysm provoked by the disintegration of the Soviet Union and its East European allies. Finally, in July 2006, biology accomplished what neither political nor economic crises had managed to do. Falling gravely ill, he temporarily ceded power to his brother, and then, in February 2008, the succession became permanent as Raúl Castro, after nearly fifty years as Defense Minister, formally assumed the presidency. It is Raúl Castro's task to manage the transition from a highly (though not exclusively) personalized system of rule to a more institutionalized one, while preparing the ground for the inevitable transfer of power from the *sierra* generation to a younger set of leaders.

There is no better analytical perch from which to analyze this process than through the relationship between the *Partido Comunista de Cuba* (PCC) and the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias* (FAR). They have been the two dominant institutions in revolutionary Cuba, and they are the interlocking and, occasionally, interchangeable core of the elite that rules Cuba. We shall analyze civil-military relations in terms of four phases. The first (1961-1970) involved state-building, mobilization, and guerrilla internationalism; the second (1970-1986) was characterized by institutionalization, specialization, and internationalism; the third (1986-1991) centered on the multiple crises brought on by rectification, the Ochoa affair, and perestroika; and, the fourth phase (1991-2006) involved implementation of a survival strategy, the end of autarky, and the transfer of power from Fidel Castro to his brother. At the conclusion of this essay, we speculate on the role each institution plays in contemporary Cuba.

STATE-BUILDING, MOBILIZATION, AND GUERRILLA INTERNATIONALISM (1961-1970)

The *ancien régime* collapsed in January 1959, and with its passing came an extraordinary opportunity to build a new state and to construct a new order. In the aftermath of the April 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion, as Fidel Castro proclaimed himself a Marxist-Leninist and welcomed himself into the Socialist community, external and internal threats merged.

Thereafter Cuba would live under a permanent state of siege with the corresponding intensification of nationalism and the reliance on mobilization as a privileged tool for building the New Man and scaling the heights of Communism. One crucial aspect of state building involved the transformation of the *Ejército Rebelde* into the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR). Fidel Castro entrusted this task to his brother, Raúl Castro, who became Minister of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (MINFAR) in October 1959. Over the subsequent years, the FAR was the bulwark of national defense and led the counter-guerrilla efforts in the Escambray, while also figuring prominently in the administration of the National Agrarian Reform Institute (INRA), in the literacy campaigns, in road and housing construction, and in the sugar harvests. The establishment of the Military Units to Aid Production (UMAP) and the *Ejército Juvenil del Trabajo* (EJT) reinforced the “militarization” of Cuban society.

The architecture of the new state also involved the construction of a unified revolutionary party. At least in this first phase of the Revolution, however, the Cuban case did not conform to the classic Communist pattern. Though the old-line PSP had had links with Fidel Castro and his Rebel Army (particularly through his brother who had been a member of the Communist Youth),¹ it had been an early and sharp critic of Fidel Castro’s insurrectionary tactics (describing him as a “putschist” and “petit-bourgeois adventurer”), and only supported Castro in the last months of the Batista regime. The PSP placed its cadres at the disposal of the new regime and played an important role as a broker in relations with the Soviet Union, but the old-line Communists were widely distrusted among the *sierra* veterans. Enrique Baloyra aptly summarized the situation: “(T)here was a revolutionary army before there was a party of the revolution and the main mission of that army (was) to guarantee the survival of the revolution, not of the party.”²

The former guerrillas and *sierra* veterans were clearly dominant both within the *partido fidelista* and in the leadership ranks of the PCC when it was founded in 1965. Of the Central Committee appointed at this congress, nearly 70 percent had military experience, 58 percent had direct military responsibilities, and 44 percent were on active duty.³ All eight members of the Politburo were *comandantes* (the highest military rank at the time) who had fought alongside Fidel Castro. The *guerrilleros* infused their spirit and style into the revolutionary enterprise, and they assumed virtually all the senior political and administrative positions in the new state. This phenomenon gave rise to the characterization of the “civic soldier” -- “(M)en who govern large segments of both military and civilian life...bearers of the revolutionary tradition and ideology...who have dedicated themselves to become professional in political, economic, managerial, engineering and educational as well as military affairs.”⁴

The external complement to the strategy of domestic mobilization involved alliance with the Soviet Union (though after the October 1962 Missile Crisis mutual distrust and frustration was never far from the surface) in order to fend off the United States. Fidel Castro lambasted the Communist parties of Latin America as “petrified,” “dogmatic,” and “pseudo-revolutionary,” while providing moral, financial, and organizational support to guerrilla movements throughout the region. There came a more sober assessment of the prospects for the guerrilla enterprise in Latin America after Ernesto (Che) Guevara died in October 1967. In relatively short order, there followed a rapprochement between Cuba and the Soviet Union. The public reconciliation began when Fidel Castro approved the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968, arguing that the protec-

tion of socialism trumped claims to national sovereignty. The foundation was thus laid for a strategic alliance with the Soviet Union and a new international role for the Cuban armed forces.

INSTITUTIONALIZATION, SPECIALIZATION AND THE NEW INTERNATIONALISM (1970-1986)

The Cuban Revolution entered a new phase in the early 1970s. The principal characteristic of this period was the reproduction of Soviet structures and institutional arrangements on the island and the integration of Cuba into the Soviet bloc. Such strategic convergence did not imply full trust or agreement on all issues, but it did offer the Cuban regime a wide range of new opportunities and, in the process, transformed the mission and structure of the PCC and FAR.

The priorities of state-building and mobilization, which had been accompanied by guerrilla internationalism in the previous period, now gave way to institutionalization, specialization, and a foreign policy where traditional instruments (such as the use of regular armed forces) played a much more prominent role. The foundations for the harmonization of structures and policies were laid during a lengthy visit Raúl Castro made to Moscow in September 1970. Shortly thereafter Cuba joined the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) and assumed its place in the “socialist division of labor.” By so doing, it gained access to extensive credits and subsidies, much of the latter coming in the form of guaranteed prices for its sugar and for its oil imports. By 1985, over 70 percent of Cuban trade was with the Soviet Union and over 80 percent with other CMEA members.

Strategic convergence offered the FAR an exceptional opportunity to improve its training and gain access to the latest weaponry and supplies. Over the preceding decade the primary mission of the FAR had been to provide national defense and to suppress internal challenges, while actively participating in the mobilization of the population in areas as diverse as construction, education, and health. Priorities now shifted, and the scope of its involvement in the civilian arena declined. Primary responsibility for internal security went to the Ministry of the Interior. National defense remained the focus for the FAR, but with the United States otherwise engaged in Vietnam and with Cuba increasingly aligned with the Soviet Union, the external threat had substantially declined. The FAR thus became the vanguard of Cuban internationalism and initiated its transition into a world-class fighting force.

The modernization of the FAR led to a substantial (initial) reduction in the size of the regular army (from 200,000 in 1970 to 100,000 in 1975),⁵ the dismantling of the militia forces, and the introduction of a new system of ranks to instill. The quality of military education was also enhanced by reforming the curriculum in military academies and staff and command schools and also by encouraging senior officers to enhance their professional credentials by studying at Soviet military and staff academies. During this period, the FAR received more than \$5 billion worth of sophisticated military equipment and replacement parts from the Soviet Union. The new FAR was the creation of Minister of Defense, Raul Castro, who became its patron and chief advocate.

Institutionalization became the new buzzword. The Communist Party held its first congress in December 1975 and proposed a new national Constitution that was approved by popular referendum in February 1976. Its Article 5 enshrined the party as “the highest leading force in the society” and even Fidel Castro referred to the PCC as the “soul of the Cuban Revolution.”⁶ The results of the 1975 Congress reflected the continued hegemony of veterans from the *sierra* and the 26th of July Movement. Of the 13 members of the new Politburo, ten were from this historic *fidelista* core. A similar situation obtained in the Central Committee where nearly sixty percent of its members were in the FAR or had military experience, thus confirming the presence of the “civic soldier” contingent in the highest policy-making bodies. At the same time, the 1970s and, even more, the 1980s saw a diminution in the numbers of military personnel in provincial and municipal party organizations. With FAR on a war footing, its officers were on overseas assignment.

The institutionalization of economic reforms, the accompanying reorganization of the state, and the re-direction of military energies toward foreign missions – all had important effects on the PCC and FAR. Each organization became more professional within its own sphere of action. PCC members increasingly monopolized the domestic political arena, while the FAR, now externally directed, saw its (relative) autonomy and role as the vanguard of proletarian internationalism reinforced. In sum there developed a *reparto de labores* between the two organizations that lasted until the mid-1980s.

As both the PCC and FAR digested the consequences of institutionalization, there was no decisive shift in the balance of the relationship. Both remained joined under the umbrella of a *partido fidelista* whose central figures remained Fidel Castro and the rest of the *sierra* generation. Institutionalization did not bring an end to the military or warrior culture of the Cuban Revolution. Instead, the strategic partnership with the Soviet Union gave freer rein to the combative and internationalist dimensions of the Cuban Revolution. Africa became the new Sierra Maestra. It was not guerrillas who carried this battle forward, however. It was the FAR, the new *Ejército Rebelde*, which became the vanguard of proletarian internationalism.

During the 1970s and early 1980s, the PCC expanded its presence throughout Cuban society. With its membership growth came enhanced capacity to influence a reorganized state apparatus. Provincial and municipal party structures also gained new organizational momentum. But the *homologación* of the Cuban and Soviet systems was tenuous and fragile. Fidel Castro had never been happy with the conservative bent of Soviet foreign policy. He was also disenchanted with a stagnant economy and had become convinced that Soviet-inspired reforms were responsible for creeping capitalism, lax social discipline, and growing corruption. Declining sugar prices and growing debt had also generated a hard currency pinch. By the late 1970s, the Soviet leadership was increasingly conscious of how expensive its support for client states in the Third World was, and it certainly did not want to place those interests over and above détente with the United States. This was the message Raúl Castro received on the occasion of his visit to Moscow in early 1980. The April 1980 Mariel exodus had shown a vulnerable side of the Revolution, and the prospect of a more militant Reagan Administration did not reassure the Cuban leadership. These events led Fidel Castro to reconsider the Soviet-Cuban partnership and to anticipate a worst-case scenario: in the event of a direct threat from the United States, his erstwhile Soviet allies might leave him in the lurch. A drive for self-

reliance led to the promulgation of a new military doctrine (the *Guerra de Todo el Pueblo* – the War of all the People) and the reconstitution of the militias (*Milicias de Tropas Territoriales* – Territorial Military Troops).

THE GREAT TRANSFORMATION (1986-1991)

The great transformation consisted of two distinct but interconnected crises that tested -- as never before -- the *partido fidelista* and its two leading actors, the PCC and the FAR. First came the “rectification” process announced by Fidel Castro in February 1986 (it would continue until 1990) whose aim it was to correct the “errors and negative tendencies” exhibited by the PCC. The second crisis was far more dramatic -- it resulted in the execution of General Arnaldo Ochoa and four other officers in July 1989 and shook the very top ranks of the FAR and the Ministry of the Interior. There followed extensive purges within the military and security commands over the next half year. Added to this explosive mix was the rise of Mikhail Gorbachev and the implications *perestroika*, *glasnost*, and a “new thinking” in foreign policy had for the “special” relationship with Cuba.

Fidel Castro launched the “rectification” campaign in February 1986, but the winds of change had been evident already in late 1984 when he placed Osmani Cienfuegos in charge of the Grupo Estatal Central and charged it with adjusting the current Five-Year Plan. “Rectification” signaled Castro’s intention to restructure the *fidelista* coalition and to eliminate the influence of Soviet-oriented technocrats (and former PSP members) who directed JUCEPLAN, the Central Bank, and other major economic institutions. “Rectification” represented an effort to seize control of the emerging bureaucracy and to identify a scapegoat for the downturn in the Cuban economy.⁷ The national debt had increased substantially, the interest rates Cuba paid on loans had risen, and so had the budget deficit. The decline in the value of the US dollar had reduced the income generated by the re-sale of (Soviet) oil on the international market. By the mid-1980s, the shortage of foreign exchange had become severe. Among the more significant measures the government undertook to acquire hard currency was the decision to set up a network of trading companies and to create Department MC (for *moneda convertible*) within the Ministry of the Interior.

Rectification came to a head at the 3rd PCC Congress in December 1986 where the new Central Committee showed a turnover of nearly 40 percent. Among those who lost the most ground were the technocrats responsible for implementing the Soviet-style planning and economic reforms. The most prominent of these Humberto Pérez who was relieved as vice president of the Council of Ministers and minister-president of the Central Planning Board in July 1985, and though he remained an alternate member of the Politburo, eventually he lost that position. Numerous provincial party secretaries, many of them old members of the PSP, also fell by the wayside. The *sierra* core recovered lost ground at the 3rd Congress, though one of the veterans, Ramiro Valdés, was ousted as Minister of the Interior in 1985, presumably for his failure to combat corruption. Ultimately, Fidel Castro employed rectification to underscore what to his mind were the serious deficiencies that affected the political and ideological work of the PCC. The latter was supposed to be the “vanguard” of the Revolution, but it was not yet quite up to the task.

The FAR was near the zenith of its influence in the mid-1980s. It had never tasted defeat; it had acquired great prestige from the fulfillment of its internationalist missions; it was a true people's army and admired throughout Cuban society. That Raúl Castro ranked second in the revolutionary hierarchy and was also its titular head hurt neither the FAR's corporate identity nor its (relative) autonomy within the *partido fidelista*. Even as the PCC technocrats came under criticism for their management of the economy, Raúl Castro had implemented his own set of management initiatives (known as *perfeccionamiento empresarial*) at the flagship Empresa Militar "Comandante Ernesto Che Guevara." The latter became a laboratory where Western-style management methods, later to be applied throughout the country, were studied and implemented.⁸ During this period, the FAR was also at the peak of its resources. It had nearly 300,000 men and women under arms, and in relative terms, its budget was one of the largest in the world, representing nearly 4.2 percent of the GDP. Members of the armed forces had also made important inroads into the top leadership ranks. General Abelardo Colomé became a full member of the Politburo, while his colleagues Generals Senén Casas Regueiro and Ulises Rosales del Toro were named as alternates. All told officers from the FAR made up nearly 27 percent of the new Central Committee – the highest percentage since 1965.⁹

Less than three years after the "rectification" congress, the Cuban leadership and the *partido fidelista* felt the tremors of an extraordinary political earthquake. The crisis went far beyond the arrest and execution of General Arnaldo Ochoa, division army general, veteran of numerous proletarian internationalist missions in Africa and Latin America, and one of two general-rank officers with the title of "Hero of the Revolution." The Ochoa affair touched the very core of the revolutionary project. Its backdrop was the Cuban intervention in Angola. Begun with the dispatch of an expeditionary force in November 1975, it had led in the ensuing fourteen years to the rotation of approximately 400,000 Cuban soldiers there. By the mid-1980s there were no fewer than 50,000 Cuban troops stationed in Angola, and Cuban forces had become involved in an apparently interminable civil war. The Cuban government would eventually acknowledge that the FAR suffered more than 2,100 combat fatalities in Angola.¹⁰ These casualties (to which should be added an unspecified number of wounded and non-combat deaths) undoubtedly contributed to the rise in the number of cases of desertion and draft evasion. Angola gave its name to a syndrome, both within Cuban society and among the ranks of the military as well.¹¹ One knowledgeable observer, himself sympathetic to the Revolution, described the situation in the following terms: "(T)he returning officers, used to a degree of autonomy and prestige and many of them Soviet-trained, might (have) become frustrated at finding not a 'land fit for heroes' but a crisis-ridden and again besieged Revolution."¹²

Upon his return to Havana in early 1989, Ochoa had been appointed commander of the Western Army with jurisdiction over the national capital. Just a few months later, in late May 1989, he was arrested in late May 1989, released, and then re-arrested in mid-June at which time a *Granma* editorial accused him of corruption and negligence of duty.¹³ Yet more explosive charges were leveled against him some ten days later, by which time he was accused of "exceptional ...disloyalty to the people, ethics, and the principles of the Revolution" and charged with drug smuggling. By this time, the accusations against Ochoa had been merged with those against Colonel Antonio de la Guardia, head of a hard-currency department within the Ministry of the Interior.

The charges of drug smuggling grabbed the headlines in the Ochoa affair.¹⁴ Far more explosive were its political ramifications. Gorbachev had visited Cuba in April 1989, and by then, there was little doubt he was moving firmly to change the basic coordinates of Soviet foreign policy and also pressing for the removal of hard-liners within the CPSU and its East European counterparts. There was something akin to *perestroika* fever on the island, though we do not know if it had spread within the FAR or involved Ochoa. At the time of the crisis, in a speech to the senior officers of the Western Army, Raúl Castro referred to the advocates of *perestroika* and to those “who congregate against the figure of our commander in chief.”¹⁵ By the time the dust had settled, Ochoa and four accused co-conspirators had been executed; 14 ministers, vice-ministers and heads of enterprises had been ousted; more than 5 percent of the members of the Central Committee had been expelled; the Minister of the Interior had been jailed (where he died from a heart attack) and eighteen of his Ministry’s high-ranking officers had been imprisoned; and, probably, an additional several thousand officers from the FAR and the Ministry of the Interior had been relieved of their positions,¹⁶ given the option of jobs with the national police or retirement.¹⁷

Even twenty years later, it is difficult to render a definitive judgment about the events surrounding the arrest and execution of Ochoa. The case involved a combination of drugs and high-level political intrigue. Rivalries between the Ministries of Defense and Interior may well have exacerbated the situation, and so might have latent tensions between combat officers and those who held more staff or political positions, or even more narrow personal rivalries. Had the highest levels of the Cuban government known about or authorized contacts with drug-traffickers as part of the drive to gather hard currency? Was Ochoa framed? Did the Ochoa affair involve a conspiracy against Fidel Castro? We simply do not know.

The great transformation (1986-1994) brought crisis and tremendous changes to the *partido fidelista*. The reaffirmation of Fidel Castro’s authority coincided with the onset of the deeper systemic crisis provoked by the disintegration of the Soviet Union and which had its most visible result in the collapse of the Cuban economy. Viewed from an institutional perspective, both the PCC and FAR experienced dramatic changes in both organization and personnel. We have mentioned the events that shook the FAR. Though not as dramatic, the PCC underwent its own set of purges. “Rectification” was the first. There followed a purge of those who were sympathetic to *perestroika*. Ultimately, according to one account, 400,000 party members were interviewed, 6,000 were sanctioned, and 2,000 were excluded from the PCC in 1989-1990.¹⁸

SURVIVAL, THE END OF AUTARKY, AND REGIME TRANSITION (1991-2006)

The Cuban Revolution stood on the verge of collapse in the early 1990s. With the suspension of oil deliveries, the collapse of trade, and the end of the extensive program of Soviet subsidies came a 40-45 percent decline in the GDP. The disintegration of the Soviet Union ended the Cuban experiment in autarky and introduced what Fidel Castro called the “special period in a time of peace.” Survival required major adjustments in economic policies, including “dollarization” and the introduction of a dual currency (July

1993), the granting of permits to engage in limited self-employment, the re-opening of farmer's markets, the search for foreign capital and the creation of numerous joint venture companies (many of them run by the armed forces), the encouragement of tourism and remittances from immigrants, and the re-direction of investment away from social programs (with their corresponding decline in quality and access) and toward those sectors that would attract foreign investors. Fidel Castro bluntly expressed his deep dislike for these reforms: "This bipolar world," he said in 1993, "obliges to do that which we would otherwise never had done."¹⁹

The reforms of the "special period" allowed the Cuban Revolution to survive the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Much as the leaders claimed it was not happening, they also transformed the structure of the economy and reintroduced capitalism back into the Cuban economy. Of course, capitalism had never entirely disappeared on the island. As in all other state-centered economies, it was visible in the informal sector or underground economy. Following an older Marxist tradition, it was also evident that, while expropriation had effectively ended entrepreneurial capitalism, the new structures had created a system of state monopoly capitalism where the perks of ownership passed to those who controlled economic enterprises through the state. The reforms of the "special period" accentuated these tendencies, while adding foreign investment into the mix. In creating joint venture companies, it created enclaves of (protected) capitalism. Foreign enterprises paid the Cuban state in dollars for the workers they hired, while the workers received their compensation in undervalued pesos. The strategy of enclave capitalism and reliance on remittances from immigrants (or exiles) deepened social inequalities and led to a deepening stratification of society. The reforms of the "special period" also increased the discretionary power of the state. Not only did it extract profits from the joint venture sector, these companies provided jobs and benefits to "worthy citizens vetted and approved by the PCC and mass organizations."²⁰ That the FAR administered most of these joint venture companies only added to the perception of an interlocking elite involved in a "protection racket."

The PCC and FAR played complementary, if uneven, roles in the implementation of the survival strategy of the regime. Institutionalization, rejuvenation, and ideological legitimacy became the principal tasks of the PCC. The party underwent a dramatic makeover with an infusion of younger leaders at the provincial party level and in the Central Committee. Its other task was to find a replacement for Marxism-Leninism whose credibility had collapsed, along with the Soviet Union. The tack here was to re-emphasize national symbols and history. Marx, Engels, and Lenin now took a back seat to Jose Martí, Julio Antonio Mella, and Antonio Maceo. National myths of resistance and martyrdom, never far from the surface of the revolutionary ethos, came to the forefront. Fidel Castro thrust the slogan *socialismo o muerte* onto the national consciousness in 1989. The new PCC program (1991) and national Constitution (1992) eliminated numerous references to the Soviet Union, proletarian internationalism and scientific materialism, while recognizing religious freedom and separation of Church and State. If the Revolution and the PCC needed national heroes, however, it also needed enemies. Raúl Castro described dissidents as "people for whom the concept of fatherland and independence mean nothing...(They are) traitors and accomplices of the enemies of the fatherland."²¹

Rejuvenation was the order of the day at the 4th PCC Congress in October 1991. Only 8 of the 14 members from the previous Politburo were re-elected; more than two-

thirds of the Central Committee was new; the Secretariat was abolished; half of the Central Committee departments and 50 percent of the party staff were eliminated. The perennials from the *sierra* generation (Fidel Castro, Raúl Castro, José Ramón Machado Ventura, Juan Almeida) remained, but other historic figures lost their posts on the Politburo. There was an infusion of younger leaders into the senior ranks, among them Carlos Lage, Roberto Robaina, and Carlos Aldana.²² The new Politburo also contained a strong number of current, former and future provincial party first secretaries, most of whom represented a younger age cohort. In addition to Raul Castro, the new Politburo also included four senior FAR officers – Generals Abelardo Colomé, Ulises Rosales del Toro, Julio Casas Regueiro, and Leopoldo Cintra Frías, each representing a distinct sector within the armed forces. Casas was MINFAR Vice Prime Minister and CEO of the joint venture company GAESA; Colomé was Minister of the Interior; Cintra was head of the Western Army; and, Ulises Rosales del Toro was a former armed forces chief-of-staff who became Minister of the Sugar Industry in 1997.

A new pattern of authority developed within the *fidelista* coalition during the 1990s. Fidel Castro remained the undisputed leader and arbiter of the Revolution, but his interests lay more in the exercise of moral leadership and in setting the boundaries beyond which reforms could not go rather than in the actual implementation of policy.²³ More and more he turned to this brother. The latter had a reputation as a pragmatic and no-nonsense manager²⁴ who was interested in Chinese-style reforms.²⁵ Raúl Castro assumed major responsibility for the implementation of the economic reforms of the “special period” as well as the rejuvenation of the *partido fidelista*. By the 5th PCC Congress (1997), he was making the major personnel decisions.

The tasks now entrusted to the FAR went far beyond the military arena. While the PCC focused its efforts on the political and ideological arenas, the FAR was charged with implementing the new system of enterprise management (the *sistema de perfeccionamiento empresarial*) and the establishment of joint venture companies with foreign investors. Opening the lucrative export sector to the armed forces provided a source of jobs and privileges to active duty and retired officers whose families had otherwise not been immune from the harsh effects of the “special period.” This was a way of rewarding and cementing loyalty. There was no independent oversight of FAR economic operation, and this did not change when the Ministry of Audit and Control was established in 2001. There were over 300 enterprises associated with the FAR; and, according to official figures (which must always be taken with a grain of salt), they accounted for nearly 90 percent of Cuban exports, 60 percent of hard currency transactions, 60 percent of tourism earnings, and employed 20 percent of state workers.²⁶ The most important of the FAR enterprises was the aforementioned holding company GAESA whose subsidiaries (among them Gaviota, Cubanacan and Agrotex), operated hotels and hard currency shops (the nearly 400 *tiendas de recuperación de divisas* catering to foreigners or Cubans with dollars or euros) and were involved in aviation, mining, and the citrus industry. Once the vanguard of internationalism, the FAR (or at least some of its officers) had become the privileged interlocutors with foreign capital and a potential proto-capitalist class.

The *sistema de perfeccionamiento empresarial* involved the FAR in the application of Western business methods, greater enterprise autonomy, and wages linked to productivity in an effort to render socialist enterprise management more efficient. *Perfeccionamiento* was initially applied in the more than 200 factories of the Union de la In-

dustria Militar (UIM), but in 1997 Fidel Castro announced it would be extended to non-military enterprises. Decree-Law 871 (1998) gave this notion legal sanction, and within two years, nearly of the 3,000 state enterprises had begun to apply the model.²⁷ In a country where economic reforms had been tepid (certainly compared to China and Vietnam), *perfeccionamiento* seemed to hold out the prospect of deeper changes but under the “steady” hand of the military. To many outside observers, SDPE seemed little more than a mechanism to ensure greater administrative control and productivity. Moreover, just because an administrative method worked in enterprises under military control where a quasi-monopoly obtains, did not mean it would perform equally well in the civilian sphere, even in a country where there is no labor mobility and trade unions do not view it as their job to represent and protect workers. Progress on the SDPE was, in any case, slow. Even Raul Castro, who was its champion, declared in May 2001 that “the process of enterprise improvement...had not advanced with the dynamism we had hoped for.”²⁸ A few years later, Colonel Armando Pérez Betancourt, head of the Enterprise Management Commission, gave a more optimistic assessment, claiming that profits, wages, and productivity had increased in the more than 800 companies that applied the methods of *perfeccionamiento*.²⁹ Productivity in those enterprises, he said, was 42.4 percent above other state companies, wages were 22.5 percent higher than the non-participant average, and only 7 percent of the SDPE enterprises operated at a loss compared to 38 percent in other state-run enterprises.

BEYOND EXCEPTIONALISM – A CONCLUSION

This essay has analyzed the dynamics and evolution of the relationship between the PCC and FAR. They have been the two dominant institutions in revolutionary Cuba, and they are the interlocking and, occasionally, interchangeable core of what we have called the *partido fidelista*. The latter did not have statutes or a formal organization, but its members were characterized by their fierce loyalty to the *comandante en jefe*, owed everything to him, and followed where his radical instincts and vision led them. Neither the PCC nor the FAR is entirely what its name would suggest. The Communist party was the so-called “vanguard” of the revolutionary movement, but every one knew who really defined the direction and the shape of the Revolution. Though the PCC was initially quite weak, its institutional presence and capabilities developed over time. Its members filled the administrative structures of the state, new cadres replaced PSP holdovers, and a new generation, handpicked by Fidel and Raúl Castro, entered its top ranks and wielded power through the provincial and municipal party organizations. The decisive turn occurred in the early 1990s when, in the wake of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, a new generation of leaders was thrust into the top echelons of the party. By the time Fidel Castro turned power over to his brother in July 2006, provincial party secretaries carried real weight in national party bodies (Politburo and Secretariat), while party organizations throughout the country were active in enterprises and mass organizations and worked closely with military units in their districts.

The FAR has been the other pillar of the *partido fidelista*. Heir to the *Ejercito Rebelde* that won the war against Batista and made the Revolution, the Revolutionary

Armed Forces are beyond doubt the most prestigious institution in Cuba. The FAR has never been defeated on the battlefield, and its personnel have done whatever regime leaders have asked -- whether it was literacy campaigns or agricultural production, internationalist missions or running ministries and other administrative agencies.³⁰ When the cataclysm of the late 1980s and early 1990s occurred and survival was at stake, it came as no surprise that the FAR, rather than the PCC, was called upon to be the entrepreneurial backbone of the Cuban version of the developmental state. The armed forces had practical experience; they were organized and disciplined; they had a “socialist” ethos and were used to taking orders. The FAR was, in short, the ideal vehicle for controlled capitalist innovation. This entrepreneurial role also led to new characterizations. One analyst described the emergence of the technocrat-soldier – a “manager and administrator, (who was also) a soldier...and implement(ed) modern organizational and technical business practices and methods to enhance productivity of military and civilian industries.”³¹ Another advanced the idea of the “entrepreneur-soldier” whom he viewed as an extension of the “technocratic soldier” albeit with “greater autonomy and greater access to the international dollar economy.”³² Yet a third analyst, who had the advantage of knowing the Cuban system first-hand, argued that the Revolution had produced a fused organism, at least at the leadership level. For him, party and military are the same thing -- a “un-cellular organism, each with a separate function.”³³

Although Fidel Castro can still be heard from the sidelines through his *reflexiones*, it is his brother who now leads the *partido fidelista*. Since assuming power, first on a temporary basis and then more formally in February 2008, Raúl Castro has given a clear sense of his priorities. In speaking of the need to “change concepts and methods which were appropriate at one point but have been surpassed by life itself,” he set the tone for his administration. By no stretch of the imagination did the phrase signal his intention to jettison the revolutionary project or engage in political liberalization. It did, however, suggest a disposition to reform the administration and to address the very serious problems of the Cuban economy. The younger Castro often sounds more like a manager than a politician, and his speeches are replete with references to “systematic rigor, order and discipline” and calls for “rationality and efficiency.”³⁴

Raúl Castro may not have his brother’s charismatic personality or his oratorical skills, but he has decisively begun to shape the ruling coalition. His power base is still the core of the *partido fidelista* (the *sierra* veterans, the FAR, and the provincial party secretaries), but he has put his own stamp on the group.

First, upon assuming the presidency, he named close allies to the highest government and party policy-making bodies. In the Council of State, he named fellow septuagenarian and pillar of orthodoxy, José Ramon Machado Ventura, as First Vice President, thus visibly passing over Carlos Lage whom many had assumed would get the job. He also named General Julio Casas as Minister of Defense and also named him a vice president of the Council of State. Just a few months later, at the April 2008 Central Committee plenum, the younger Castro proposed *sierra* veteran (and occasional rival) Ramiro Valdés as well as his *protégé*, General Alvaro López Miera, join the PCC Politburo. Representatives of the armed forces now held two of the six vice-presidencies of the Council of State and six (seven, if we count Raúl Castro) of the 23 seats on the Politburo. As if to show that not even the FAR was exempt from orderly renovation, Raúl Castro replaced the commanders of the Western, Central, and Eastern armies (each of whom had

been in place since the early 1990s), promoting them to new jobs at the Ministry of Defense in Havana.

The second set of initiatives involved the dismantling of the “parallel government” known as the *Grupo de Coordinación y Apoyo al Comandante en Jefe*. Fidel Castro had first organized this group in the mid-1970s, and it operated directly out of presidential office and independently of ministries and other institutions. Its members were an elite of *jóvenes lobos* recruited from among the most active and visible student and Communist Youth leaders. Many young leaders had launched their political careers through this vehicle, most notably Carlos Lage and Felipe Pérez Roque, both of whom had served as chiefs of staff. Soon upon taking office, Raul Castro took aim at the *Grupo de Apoyo* and others who operated outside the formal institutional structures. He quickly replaced Hassan Pérez (head of the Communist Youth), demoted Otto Rivero (he was responsible for Fidel Castro’s pet project, the “battle of ideas”), and in October 2008 dismissed Carlos Valenciaga on charges of corruption. In this context, many wondered what would happen to Pérez Roque whose high public profile went hand in hand with the status of heir apparent. In effect, Pérez Roque had staked a claim for leadership in a December 2005 speech at the National Assembly. With Fidel Castro present, he had identified the “premises” for the continuity of the regime, affirming the need for “moral authority” based on “austere conduct, dedication to work” and the “absence of privileges.”³⁵ Undoubtedly, there were some in the audience who were not amused. Pérez Roque’s downfall eventually came in March 2009 when, along with Carlos Lage, he was ousted from all government posts after Cuban state security had taped the two of them making jokes about Fidel Castro’s infirmities and the incompetence of Raul Castro and Jose Machado Ventura.

The third step in the consolidation of *raulismo* came with the March 2009 Cabinet reshuffle where more than a dozen ministers lost their jobs. This was the largest shake-up the Cuban government had ever experienced. What animated the changes was the sorry state of the economy – reduced foreign exchange reserves, a growing trade deficit, weak productivity of all sectors, not least in agriculture. Out went the economic team that had managed the economy since the 1990s. In came a new version of the PCC-FAR coalition committed to the implementation of *perfeccionamiento* in the general economy. The new Minister of the Economy, Marino Murillo, was a former FAR officer who had been Minister of Domestic Trade and had headed an anti-corruption drive. Colonel Armando Pérez Betancourt, the architect of *perfeccionamiento*, joined the government as Vice-Minister of the Economy. General Salvador Pardo, former head of the Union of Military Industries (UIM), became Minister of Heavy Industry. General Ulises Rosales del Toro kept his portfolio as Minister of Agriculture. Those who saw in the new Cabinet a reinforced FAR were only half right. Holding up the other side of the equation was a cohort of younger PCC leaders, virtually all of whom had served as provincial party secretaries and sat on the Politburo. Among these were Jorge Luis Sierra (Minister of Transport), Lina Pedraza (who, having established the Ministry of Audit and Control and served as its first head, was now appointed Minister of Finance and Prices), Miguel Diez-Canel (named Minister of Higher Education in April 2009), and Maria del Carmen González (Minister of Food Industry). The jury may still be out on whether *perfeccionamiento* can revitalize the Cuban economy, but there can be little doubt that the PCC-FAR tandem remains a pillar of the Cuban political order.

Significant changes to the PCC-FAR relationship are unlikely while Raul Castro and the other *sierra* leaders are still in control. Once this generation passes from the scene, however, tensions within the leadership and between these two institutions are more probable. Hopefully, as the normalization of political life, heightened institutionalization, and greater citizen access to the public space takes hold in Cuba, scholars will be able to focus on the specific policies and strategies civilians might use to establish democratic control over the armed forces.

¹ See Angelina Rojas Blaquier, "El Partido en los Nuevos Tiempos" in *Cuba Socialista* (www.cubasocialista.cubaweb.cu/textp/cs0238.htm) for an official version of the contacts between the PSP and the 26th of July Movement.

² Enrique Baloyra, "Twelve Monkeys: Cuban National Defense and the Military," *Cuban Studies Association Occasional Paper Series 1*, No. 4 (1996), p. 2.

³ Jorge I. Domínguez, *Cuba, Order and Revolution* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1978), pp. 312-313.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 342.

⁵ Rafael Fermoselle, *The Evolution of the Cuban Military, 1492-1986* (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1987), p. 299.

⁶ *Op. cit.* (Domínguez), p. 338.

⁷ Susan E. Eckstein, *Back from the Future: Cuba under Castro* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 73.

⁸ Among others, see Domingo Amuchastegui, "FAR: Mastering Reforms" *Cuba in Transition*, ASCE, 2000, pp. 433-441 and Frank Mora, "Generations in the FAR General Officer Corps: Backgrounds, Experiences and Interests," *Cuban Affairs* Vol. 1 (April 2006), pp. 1-29.

⁹ Juan Del Aguila, "The Cuban Armed Forces: Changing Roles, Continued Loyalties" in *Cuban Communism*, ed. Irving L Horowitz and Jaime Suchlicki (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 2003): 415 - 427.

¹⁰ See Fidel Castro's speech (December 2, 2005) on the 30th anniversary of Cuban troops landing in Angola.

¹¹ *Op. cit.* (Fogel and Rosenthal), p. 141.

¹² Anthony Kapcia, *Cuba - Island of Dreams* (Oxford, Berg, 2000), p. 206.

¹³ *Granma*, June 12, 1989.

¹⁴ See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KS2wcFn9uHM&feature=related>. There has been speculation that senior Cuban government officials were involved in or authorized drug smuggling operations or, at the very least, provided cover for drug smugglers flying over the island or making drop-offs within Cuban coastal waters during the 1980s. See http://blogs.abcnews.com/theblotter/2006/08/RaúlRaúl_castro_coc.html for an article describing a Department of Justice decision not to indict Raúl Castro on drug charges in 1993. See also *op. cit.* (Fogel and Rosenthal), pp. 53-69.

¹⁵ *FBIS-LAT-89-117* (June 20, 1989), p. 17.

¹⁶ According to one estimate, nearly 70 percent of the officers of the Western Army were transferred or retired after July 1989. See Richard Millett, "Cuba's Armed Forces - From Triumph to Survival," *Georgetown University Cuba Briefing Paper Series*, No. 4 (September 1993).

¹⁷ Op. cit. (Fogel and Rosenthal), p. 29.

¹⁸ Op. cit. (Fogel and Rosenthal), p. 238.

¹⁹ See Fidel Castro's speech in July 1993.

²⁰ Javier Corrales, "The Gatekeeper State: Limited Economic Reforms and Regime Survival in Cuba, 1989-2002," *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 39 No. 2 (June 2004), p. 50.

²¹ Raúl Castro in his speech on the 41st anniversary of the assault of the Moncada barracks. FBIS-LAT-94-144, July 27, 1994, p. 4.

²² Aldana was ousted from the Politburo in 1992 for alleged financial improprieties. Robaina was named Foreign Minister, but was then replaced and ousted from the Politburo in 2002.

²³ Elsewhere one of the authors has labeled the regime of the "special period" as charismatic post-totalitarian. Eusebio Mujal-León and Joshua Busby, "Much Ado about Something? Regime Change in Cuba," *Problems of Post-Communism*, XLVI, (November-December 2001), pp. 6-19.

²⁴ The best source for information on the relationship between the two brothers is Brian Latell, *After Fidel – The Inside Story of Castro's Regime and Cuba's Next Leader* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005)

²⁵ Yinghong Cheng, "Fidel Castro and 'China's Lesson for Cuba': A Chinese Perspective," *China Quarterly* No. 189 (March 2007), pp. 24-42 and 35-36, as well as Domingo Amuchástegui, "FAR: Mastering Reforms," *Cuba in Transition* (Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy, 2000), p. 436.

²⁶ For additional details, see "The Cuban Military in the Economy," Staff Report of the *Cuba Transition Project* No. 46, August 11, 2003 and also "Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias, S.A.," *El Universal* (Mexico), February 23, 2007.

²⁷ Juan Hermida, "Perfeccionamiento Empresarial a lo cubano," *Tribuna de la Habana* (1999), www.tribuna.islagrande.cu/economia.htm cited in Juan Carlos Espinosa, "'Vanguard of the State' – The Cuban Armed Forces in Transition," *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 48, No. 6 (November-December 2001), pp. 19-30, see Footnote 33.

²⁸ Raúl Castro, *Granma*, May 18, 2001.

²⁹ Reuters dispatch, January 23, 2007.

³⁰ As General Ulises Rosales del Toro put it: "(T)here are no armed forces in the world that look like ours, ours are unique." Luis Báez, *Secretos de Generales* (Havana: Editorial Si-Mar, 1996), p. 513.

³¹ Frank Mora, "Raulismo and the Technocrat-Soldier: The Economic Role of the FAR and its Implications for the Transition in Cuba," (paper delivered at the conference on "The Politics of Military Extrication in Comparative Perspective: Lessons for Cuba," Arrábida, Portugal, September 21-22, 2000), p. 10.

³² Ibid. Juan Carlos Espinosa and Robert C. Harding, "Olive-Green Parachutes and Slow-Motion Piñatas: The Cuban Armed Forces in Comparative Perspective," (paper delivered at the conference on "The Politics of Military Extrication in Comparative Perspective: Lessons for Cuba," Arrábida, Portugal, September 21-22, 2000).

³³ Domingo Amuchástegui, "Cuba's Armed Forces: Power and Reforms" *Cuba Transition Project*, Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies (Miami: University of Miami, 1999), p. 110.

³⁴ For a general discussion of the present situation in Cuba, see Eusebio Mujal-León, “Can Cuba Change? Tensions in the Elite,” *Journal of Democracy* Vol. 20, No. 1 (January 2009), pp. 20-35.

³⁵ Speech by Felipe Pérez Roque to National Assembly on December 23, 2005. See www.cubaminrex.cu/Archivo/Canciller/2005/FPR_231205.html