



Europe's Cuba Problem: The Limits of Constructive Engagement

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Abstract

Cuba has long presented a vexing problem for the European Union (EU), which has become increasingly critical of the Castro government but is committed to maintaining political and economic links to the island. European policy towards Cuba is further complicated by the domestic political controversies over Cuba that brew in several key EU member states, the divergent strategies favoured towards dealing with the Castro regime and Cuba's domestic political opposition, and the large number of states (27) engaged in foreign-policy making. Furthermore, the United States of America's embargo of Cuba and the overall American effort to isolate the Castro government and starve Cuba of resources is a source of tension with Europe. In recent years, the European Union and the United States have attempted to paper over their deep policy and political differences regarding Cuba with the assertion that both Washington and Brussels share the same policy goal—a democratic transition in Cuba—and therefore the only disagreement is over whether that objective is best achieved through the engagement favored by Europe or the isolation promoted by the United States.

However, European and American conceptions of Cuba's 'democratic transition' have much less in common than is widely acknowledged. The dominant European vision of change in Cuba is marked by Cuba's gradual evolution to a social democratic model that continues to respect European trade and investment. The United States, by contrast, has sought the rapid collapse of the Castro regime and its replacement by a democratic, pro-free market government that offers compensation for past property expropriations and offers a major role for US-based Cuban exiles in the country's future. The European Union and the United States, therefore, are not offering two different policies to achieve the same result; they in fact have been seeking very different political results regarding Cuba, and this fact is reflected in their preferred approaches. However, the Cuban policies promoted

by Brussels and Washington do have one thing in common—their manifest failure to bring about any democratic change in Cuba. More than 50 years after the Cuban Revolution, it is apparent that the pace of political change in Cuba will be determined by principally by domestic factors. Indeed, while it is difficult to envision either the European Union or the United States having much impact on a future Cuban transition, it is quite plausible that the conflicting strategies pursued by Europe and the United States have only served to further diminish the effectiveness of their democracy promotion strategies.

Summary of Recommendations

The European role in a future democratic transition in Cuba will be limited by the fact that any political or economic change in Cuba will need to be managed first and foremost by the Cubans themselves. Internationally, the United States remains the dominant actor; still, a coordinated effort from Europe would have more weight in influencing the new Cuban leadership. The EU could act in the following areas:

1. Establish a high-level non-governmental forum for multilateral dialogue. The sensitivity of the Cuban issue for the governments of Europe means that official governmental channels are ill-suited to generate constructive dialogue. International and multilateral institutions are similarly constrained.
2. Work with Latin America's progressive democrats to re-engage with Cuba. The hemisphere's political template today presents an opportunity for Latin America's moderate countries to become more active in bringing Cuba into the democratic community of states. One starting point would be to assemble a group of 10-12 current and former Latin American officials with unquestionable democratic credentials at home and a reasonable level of access to the Cuban government to meet with high-level Cubans from all sectors of society, assess the leadership, and suggest next steps.
3. Replace the European Common Position with an approach that better suits the diverse interests and comparative advantages of the member countries. It may be more helpful for EU members to agree to a narrow set of guiding principles, such as support for expanding political and civil liberties, the importance of dialogue, and continued economic engagement, rather than attempt to have a single policy of conditional engagement with the regime. A recast strategy by the European Union would allow it to harness its diversity as a strength in approaching Cuba, rather than a weakness that results in a watered-down approach to Cuba.
4. Encourage the integration of Cuba into the global economic and political system. The EU can develop dialogue mechanisms to explore ways to better integrate Cuba into critical institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and leverage these resources to advance the quality of life for the Cuban people.
5. Provide technical expertise, advice and financing to help Cuba evolve into a politically and economically more open society. The newest members of the EU have made the transition from authoritarian rule to democracy over the past two decades, and these experiences carry important lessons for Cuba's eventual

democratization.

The Current Situation in Cuba

Raúl Castro has served as the president of Cuba since February 2008, following a 19-month period where he held that position on a provisional basis after Fidel Castro's sudden illness in July 2006 forced Cuba's historic leader to step down. Prior to becoming president at the age of 76, Raúl Castro led the Cuban military and was the longest-serving minister of defence in the world. In addition to his brother Raúl, Fidel Castro named six other Communist Party officials known for their loyalty to the system and strong credentials to help manage government operations in the coming period. Fidel Castro's illness gave the new team a taste of the local and international reactions to his future death, and allowed them to conduct a trial run of the post-Castro succession plan, in preparation for Fidel Castro's eventual final day.

So far, Raúl Castro and the top government officials selected by Fidel have managed the transition period in a smooth and competent fashion. Several of his decisions have indicated a tendency to manage by consensus, which would mark a significant departure from Fidel's dominant leadership style. During the first few months of his presidency, Raúl Castro authorized a number of small but significant economic reforms, such as raising wages and pensions, lifting restrictions on the ability of Cuban citizens to purchase cell phones and electronic goods, and implementing market reforms in the agricultural sector. Earlier this year, Raúl authorized a major cabinet shake-up that overhauled the leadership in many government entities, merged several ministries, and led to the widely publicized removal of Vice President Carlos Lage and Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque, who had long been viewed as rising leaders in Cuba.

Cubans have accepted the transition of power away from Fidel Castro without riots or major crises on the island. Apart from a sense of shock following his initial illness, there was a broad level of concern for Fidel's well-being. Most Cubans do not know life without Fidel and his illness served as a reality check that he is, indeed, mortal. But the daily challenges and frustrations of life in Cuba continue to accrue, and an outbreak of civil unrest cannot be discounted. The population is anxious for some type of change, especially in the economic sphere.

However, Cuban dissidents do not appear well-positioned to play a significant political role in Cuba at this stage. Many of the government's most impassioned opponents have fled the island for political or economic reasons, and as a result the situation is not at a boiling point. The government has infiltrated most dissident groups; they are weak and there is little trust among them. Although many Cuban dissidents are well known internationally, most Cubans have not heard of them. It is a remarkable testament to the regime's staying power that no domestic political movement has been able to capitalize on the widespread social frustration that permeates much of Cuban society.

At this juncture, it is almost impossible to imagine a post-succession upheaval unless it is initiated from abroad. Post-Fidel Cuba will not be

ruled by only Raúl, but by a leadership team whose purpose is to stabilize, maintain control, project a sense of confidence domestically, block external intervention, and preserve the system as much as possible. Cuba's next generation of leaders appears to see their political task as inheriting and expanding, not dismantling, Fidel's achievements.

Other Cuban institutions that will play a pivotal role include the military and the socialist constitution. The military will be a key source of guidance for stabilizing the collective leadership: it controls a significant per cent of the island's economy through state-owned enterprises. The younger Castro will be able to mediate between the military and civilian powers while he is alive, but tensions may occur between branches or within the military after his death. In addition, the socialist constitution of 1976 created many structures that may be used in the future, such as the National Assembly and the municipal councils. The collective leadership can legitimize itself through referendum and national assembly, adjusted and tailored to Cuban public opinion. No one should underestimate these channels that will remain when Fidel is gone.

In the short- to medium-term, any change in Cuba is more likely to take place in the economic, rather than the political, sphere. Recent polls conducted by international groups demonstrate that most Cubans are interested in improving their living standards and gaining travel rights; only a small fraction of respondents in these surveys strongly emphasized expanding political and civil rights as a top priority.

Cuba's economic future is increasingly dependent on its relations with trading partners China and Venezuela. Venezuela is Cuba's principal economic partner and has been the island's main supplier of oil since 2000. After Fidel's death, a gradual economic opening may be set in motion, particularly by loosening restrictions on small-scale entrepreneurship to help boost living standards at the household level. These reforms may include the liberalization of the agriculture and services industries, increasing efficiency of state-run enterprises and decreasing dependency on Venezuelan aid.

There could be an accumulation of external shocks after Fidel Castro's demise. These could include Raúl dying soon after Fidel, severe shocks caused by an erosion of Hugo Chávez's position in Venezuela (although this seems less likely given Chávez's recent success in eliminating term limits), or even fiercer-than-expected repercussions from the global financial crisis. In this case, the ideologues, military, and technocrats would have to quickly reach agreement on what to do. If they are unable to maintain cohesion, the military might take on a more dominant role or infighting could lead to social chaos. If a social upheaval occurs, the Cuban military would probably step in, or the United States could intervene to avoid a mass exodus of refugees.

Raúl will likely retain control for the medium-term; he will not have problems with transfer of power, but with building his own source of domestic legitimacy. Raúl Castro will probably eschew a large internationalist role in order to emphasize internal affairs, maintaining the dominance of the Communist Party, and implementing limited practical reforms to increase regime legitimacy and obtain some

popular support.

The View from Europe

The European Union established its Common Position towards Cuba in 1996, which states: 'The main objective of the European Union in its relations with Cuba is to encourage a process of transition to a pluralist democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as a sustainable recovery and improvement in the living standards of the Cuban people.' The main tools of the policy were increased dialogue with Cuban authorities, the provision of humanitarian aid, and an offer of focused economic cooperation. As progress towards democracy was made, the Europeans pledged to intensify support in each area.

The Common Position was conceived to be distinct from US policy; it was an opportunity to show that engagement could work. The Europeans thought that the policy could bring the 'carrots' that the United States had eschewed in favor of punishing the Cuban regime with "sticks." As a major source of trade for Cuba, the European Union could bring economic leverage to bear on its relations with the island. Finally, since no single European country had major interests in Cuba, there appeared to be little danger of any one state hijacking the policy—although over time the Spanish government under José Maria Aznar and later José Luis Zapatero has played a lead role in EU moves to take tougher or more conciliatory stances regarding Cuba.

Still, the EU Common Position to some degree obscures the fact that many European countries pursue different bilateral policies towards Cuba. The bilateral links between Cuba and individual member states have their own dynamics that are influenced but not determined by the Common Position. Yet, there are common features to all European policies toward Cuba and its conflict with the United States. These include European disapproval of the Cuban government's efforts to suppress political liberties; opposition to the US embargo; engaging in dialogue and cooperation with Cuba as part of broader relations with Latin America and former European colonies in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific (ACP); and encouraging market-oriented reforms on the island.

Europe has pursued a policy of dialogue and engagement with Cuba since 1959, taking advantage of the absence of American competition in trade and investment. Europe is not interested in rushing a transition in Cuba, but rather in a consistent movement in the direction of a market-oriented and pluralistic democracy. In both of its policy tracks, Europe tried to appear as part of a broad international coalition in favor of shared principles and autonomy for Cuban actors to set the terms of changes on the island.

European engagement of all kinds—trade, investment, tourism, cooperation assistance, cultural exchanges, and political dialogue—reached an impressive level from the 1990s to the present. While critical of the human rights violations and economic mismanagement of the Castro government, European mainstream politicians and newspapers recognize social achievements of the Revolution and speak favorably about its effects on creating a good business atmosphere. In trade, Europe replaced the Soviet Union as Cuba's

main partner following the latter's collapse in 1991. In 2008 the European Union was, collectively, Cuba's largest trading partner, although Spain is the only European country that is among Cuba's top five trading partners. Forty-two per cent of Cuban exports to developed countries (USD 1.8 billion) go to the EU and almost two-thirds of Cuban imports from developed countries (USD 3.5 billion) come from Europe. Still, Cuba is the only Latin American country without a bilateral cooperation agreement with the EU and also the only member of the ACP outside of the Cotonou Agreement, the preferential trade and aid pact between the EU and 78 former European colonies.

Within Europe, Spain and the Netherlands are Cuba's top trading partners accounting for almost 60 per cent of all EU trade with Cuba, and Italy and Germany are significant partners. Nearly 2 per cent of all beverages and tobacco imported to the EU come from Cuba (Eurostat, 2008). Ten European countries, led by Spain and Italy, signed an investment protection agreement with Havana. In 2005, European countries, led by Spain, accounted for almost 60 per cent of the joint ventures in Cuba. More than 50 percent of the foreign direct investment in the island is European, and 25 per cent of it belongs to Spanish investors alone. The Cuban tourism industry, the most visible emerging sector in post-Cold War Cuba, has been developed mainly through contracts with European partners and serves mainly European clients. The Spanish hotel chain Sol Melia has almost two dozen hotels in Cuba (Res, 2007).

In 2003, before the Cuban government rejected European aid, the European Commission established an office in Havana as part of an effort to improve its development cooperation and shift the focus from humanitarian aid to development projects like agricultural cooperatives. Cuba was a main beneficiary of several programmes offering fellowships and academic exchange with European countries. Following the passage of hurricanes Gustav, Ike, and Paloma, which caused an estimated USD 10 billion in damage on the island, the EU made use of the newly launched cooperation agreements to offer EUR 4 million in aid by January 2009 (European Commission, 2008).

European non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also play a major role in Europe's cooperation with Cuba. European governments do not regulate or limit the contacts of their non-profit sector with Cuban counterparts, in part because they prize the unique role that NGOs can play in developing Europe's long-term relationship with Cuba, and especially its civil society. Several European NGOs have developed cooperation with Cuban experts on projects in Third World countries in areas like immunization, primary healthcare, and HIV/AIDS.

In 2009, the European Union appears well-positioned to have an impact on the development of Cuban democracy. The heart of the EU's foreign-policy strategy towards Cuba has focused on maintaining political and economic engagement while sustaining rhetorical pressure on the Cuban regime to improve political and civil liberties on the island. While the US policy towards Cuba centered on its economic embargo of the island, even the diverse actors within the EU seem to have agreed that economic sanctions are not on the table for Cuba. Since 1996, the EU Common Position on Cuba has stated: 'It is not European Union policy to try to bring about change by coercive

measures with the effect of increasing the economic hardship of the Cuban people.' Despite multiple diplomatic spats in recent years, the economic relationship has remained strong. When the arrest of 75 dissidents in Cuba sparked the EU into action in 2003, the sanctions imposed only stopped development aid and high-level diplomatic visits, but did nothing to address trade, investment, or tourism. Instead, the EU has focused its attention on human rights and democracy, with rhetoric that skirts but does not cross the line enough to severely restrict diplomatic ties between Brussels and Havana. So far, the EU foreign policy strategy has had minimal effect on the development of Cuban democracy, although the EU did notch one modest success when Cuba agreed to sign two United Nations' (UN) human rights agreements in early 2008, though the implementation of these remains in question.

European policy makers see Cuba neither as part of an ideological struggle nor as a matter of domestic politics, but rather within the context of its policy toward Caribbean nations. Part of the reason for this is the fact that Europe lacks a viable and vocal Cuban population. While some EU member states have Cuban populations or interest groups allied with Cuban dissidents, the reality is that the diaspora community in Europe in no way rivals the vibrancy and potency of Florida's Cuban-American community. The role of exiles in European policy towards the island is limited even where Cuban or other Latin American communities are most prominent, such as in Spain or Sweden.

For its part, the Cuban Government remains attuned to European politics and culture, recognizes the importance of European trade, is fundamentally ambivalent about European investment, and finds EU efforts to promote democracy in Cuba to be extremely irritating. Despite Spain's historic link as Cuba's colonizer, the Cuban regime made the United States the primary enemy of the Revolution, but the regime's ire is intermittently directed at Brussels as well. Still, as an influential block of 27 nations, the EU is a key player— although rarely a decisive one—in most major multilateral institutions. Much of the work on Cuba that needs to be done can be undertaken by initiatives within multilateral organizations like the UN or the Organization for American States (OAS).

Europe Responds to the 2003 Crackdown

Cuba's relationship with Europe appeared to be warming up when the European Commission opened its first delegation in Havana in March 2003, but this honeymoon did not last. Weeks later, Cuba arrested 75 leading opposition figures and sentenced them to long prison terms. To make matters worse, in early April Cuban officials responded to a rash of hijackings by executing three men who attempted to commandeer a ferry in Havana. This action elicited a strong rebuke from Europe. In a common statement, the EU foreign ministries warned, 'these developments which mark a further deterioration in the human rights situation in Cuba will affect the EU relationship with Cuba and the prospects for increased cooperation' (Council of the European Union, 2003). In retaliation, Fidel Castro and Raúl Castro led separate marches of hundreds of thousands of protestors outside the Spanish and Italian embassies. The European Commission announced that it would freeze the Cotonou negotiations with Cuba in

May and, in response, Cuba denounced the European position as 'arrogant' and withdrew its application to join Cotonou for a second time.

Both sides continued to downgrade relations throughout the summer of 2003. In June, the EU decided to review its Common Position on Cuba, limited high-level government visits, reduced support for cultural events in Cuba, and invited Cuba's domestic political opposition to official activities at European diplomatic missions. This last policy sparked the so-called 'cocktail party wars' whereby the Cuban government boycotted all diplomatic receptions and many European countries scaled back their embassy events. Spain, Italy, France and Germany began to downgrade diplomatic contacts with Cuban officials, canceled support for Havana's Art Biennial and International Book Fair, and increased contacts with opposition groups. The Cuban Government responded by rejecting all EU humanitarian aid, and announcing on 26 July that Cuba would take control of Spain's cultural center in Havana.

The next year, Spain took on a greater role in leading a rapprochement between the EU and Cuba following the election of socialist Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero in spring 2004. Other members of the European Union followed the Spanish lead in January 2005 and suspended the 2003 diplomatic measures, but relations remained icy as Cuba demanded that the sanctions be lifted permanently. A split soon emerged between Spain, which favoured normalizing ties with Cuba, and the post-communist countries of Eastern Europe, such as the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland, which favoured a tougher approach to Havana and professed solidarity with the island's beleaguered dissidents. While these nations do not support the US embargo on Cuba, they remain some of the strongest non-US allies of Cuban dissidents. During the freezing of relations from 2003 to 2008 the United Kingdom and Sweden also voiced strong support for change in Cuba.

The Spanish Government, in conjunction with Greece, Italy and Portugal, worked to see the diplomatic sanctions fully lifted by June 2008. In particular, the new governments in Italy and Spain proved more disposed to improving European ties with Cuba, brushing aside pleas from the Bush Administration to maintain diplomatic pressure on the island. The process towards normalization took a major step when Cuba's then-Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque went to Europe in March 2007, where he visited Portuguese Foreign Minister Luis Amado and his Spanish counterpart Miguel Angel Moratinos. These meetings were reported to be positive, and the momentum led the vice president of the European Parliament, Miguel Angel Martinez, to visit Cuba in June.

During the June 2007 vote on the EU sanctions on Cuba, foreign ministers voted to maintain the status quo, but offered to have dialogue with Cuba on the issue. In early 2008, the EU's top development aid official, Louis Michel, spent four days in Cuba and reported that, 'In my opinion, the time and moment is right to have a dialogue with Cuba' (Agence France Press, 2008). Spanish Foreign Minister Moratinos visited soon thereafter, and in June 2008, the members of the European Union unanimously called for the sanctions to be removed, with the caveat that this decision was subject to

reconsideration upon a review of Cuba's human rights situation the following year.

Recommendations for the Future

The major challenge of EU policy remains how best to manage its conflicting conditional and constructive engagement strategies. In fact, although EU policy towards Cuba is commonly described as 'constructive engagement', it is perhaps more accurately termed 'conditional engagement' because it does include certain political and human rights conditions. EU policy has been good at promoting change in countries that want to become members of the European Union, but it has not developed the same leverage with states that have no chance of becoming EU member states. Additionally, whereas Cuba had few economic alternatives to Europe in 1996, today it has a wide array of important partners including China, Venezuela, Russia and Brazil. Finally, Cuba is still a marginal issue for most European governments, and the Cuban regime will always be in a position to outmaneuver the EU. This asymmetry makes a conditional policy problematic.

EU policy is thus caught between conditional engagement that has had scant impact and engagement without conditions, an approach that would leave the EU vulnerable to criticism that its Cuba policy has no significant human rights component. One potential way to break the impasse would be to formulate an alternative approach based on several guiding principles for EU member states—such as encouraging democratic reform and economic engagement while maintaining links with the current government—but with an emphasis on countries experimenting with different policy approaches on a national level beyond the EU Common Position. This would allow each individual member country to pursue its own policies according to its national interests and comparative advantages. While every European government will take its own position bilaterally, there can be some 'unity in diversity'; an umbrella set of principles that can guide the work of the EU countries.

European governments should continue to press Cuba on issues related to democracy and human rights, including addressing their concerns in meetings with Cuban officials. EU embassies can be seen as a safe haven for dissidents and the EU can retain contacts with these groups and other opposition groups such as the church. However, the EU does well to avoid supporting these groups financially, in part because this undermines their legitimacy in Cuba and attracts the attention of state security, thereby multiplying their problems.

Economic engagement is another bedrock principle for Europe. Through two-way trade, investment, and tourism, the EU can create incentives for gradual change. But the EU should move beyond these pillars of economic engagement. Through European lending institutions and joint ventures, the EU is well-positioned to advise and encourage the process of 'enterprise perfecting' that Raúl Castro has made a public goal. Additionally, communication and cooperation with European states with strong public service sectors could be beneficial to both parties. Europe has lauded the achievements of Cuban healthcare and education while acknowledging that public oversight in

these sectors often limits efficiency and creates shortages of supplies and personnel. While Europe might not be fertile ground for a Barrio Adentro programme like the one that has placed about 25,000 Cuban doctors abroad in Venezuela, the EU social democracy model might be one that is more appealing to the Cubans than the prevalent US socio-economic model.

At the moment, the EU has relatively high-level contacts with and access to Cuban government officials. This is the primary advantage of the European position and this level of communication should be maintained if not expanded. The EU could seize the opportunity to reach out to Raúl following Fidel's death. Raúl may be inclined to work with European governments. The EU is particularly well-positioned to engage and influence the new government, because, unlike the United States, it is not perceived to be openly adversarial.

However, the European role in a future democratic transition in Cuba will be limited by the fact that any political or economic change in Cuba will need to be managed first and foremost by the Cubans themselves. Internationally, the United States remains the dominant actor for reasons of political and economic weight, proximity, and history, and few European countries (except perhaps Spain) have either the interest or the capacity to play a major role. Still, some sort of multilateral guidelines would be useful for countries as they search for effective policies during the transition period in Cuba. A coordinated effort from Europe would also have more weight in influencing the new Cuban leadership. In order to build a consensus that utilizes the leverage of collective action on the part of all 27 member states but does not compromise the core beliefs of each, the EU could act in the following areas:

1. Establish a high-level non-governmental forum for multilateral dialogue. The wide range of international stakeholders engaged with Cuba—including foreign governments, international development agencies, Cuban diaspora groups, and NGOs—would benefit from a more regular forum for communication. It is clear that the sensitivity of the Cuban issue for the governments of Europe means that official governmental channels are ill-suited to generate constructive dialogue. International and multilateral institutions are similarly constrained—either because Cuba is not a member, as is the case with the Organization of the American States and the main multilateral development banks—or because Cuba's official participation would make frank discussion difficult, as is true in the context of the UN or the Ibero-American Summit process.

2. Work with Latin America's progressive democrats to re-engage with Cuba. Over the past decade, a number of Latin America's historically left-wing parties have won power and carved out a moderate, democratic approach to governance in the region. While Venezuela's Hugo Chávez has emerged as the most visible symbol of the Latin American left, the reality is that progressive leaders with democratic values and moderate economic policies have won power in Brazil and Chile and other democratic left-wing parties are active throughout South and Central America. Many of these leaders favour strong ties with Washington and have gently pressured Cuba to reform politically. However, many of these leaders have essentially ceded the issue of Cuba to the region's left-wing populist leaders with

tense ties with the United States, such as Venezuela and Bolivia. The hemisphere's political template today presents an opportunity for Latin America's moderate countries to become more active in bringing Cuba into the democratic community of states. One starting point would be to assemble a group of 10-12 current and former Latin American officials with unquestionable democratic credentials at home and a reasonable level of access to the Cuban government, who could meet with high-level Cubans from all sectors of society and assess the thinking of the current Cuban leadership and suggest possible ways forward.

3. Replace the European Common Position with an approach that better suits the diverse interests and comparative advantages of the member countries. The European Union's Common Position has outlived its usefulness and has hindered EU member states from developing a more flexible approach tailored to strengths and interests of each nation. It may be more helpful for EU members to agree to a narrow set of guiding principles, such as support for expanding political and civil liberties, the importance of dialogue, and continued economic engagement, rather than attempt to have a single policy of conditional engagement with the regime. Certain European governments can work to identify people in middle-to-senior management in the Cuban Government who might be open to change, especially in the economic sphere. Other governments may be better suited to work with non-governmental institutions such as the church or emerging non-state actors. A recast strategy by the European Union would allow it to harness its diversity as a strength in approaching Cuba, rather than a weakness that results in a watered-down approach to Cuba.

4. Encourage the integration of Cuba into the global economic and political system. Cuba has grown accustomed to operating with diplomatic skill and aplomb within multilateral institutions like the UN and the Non-Aligned Movement and has garnered political capital within those orders as a traditionally shunned entity. But Cuban absence in other crucial bodies, such as the OAS, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Inter-American Development Bank, hinders Cuba's integration into the core institutions of the international community and misses a key opportunity to engage Cuba multilaterally on core political and economic questions. The EU can develop dialogue mechanisms to explore ways to better integrate Cuba into critical institutions and leverage these resources to advance the quality of life for the Cuban people.

5. Provide technical expertise, advice and financing to help Cuba evolve into a politically and economically more open society. The newest members of the EU have made the transition from authoritarian rule to democracy over the past two decades, and these experiences carry important lessons for Cuba's eventual democratization.

In the final analysis, Cuba's post-Fidel transition is likely to be difficult, and the country will face an array of serious problems. Washington has long been at odds with European governments on how to deal with Cuba. US concerns regarding suppression of political and civil liberties in Cuba are shared across Europe, as is US support for democratic politics in Cuba. Still, there is deep unease with

Washington's punitive and restrictive policies, and its desire to shape events in Cuba. While the Obama Administration has given hope to those who seek improved US-Cuba relations, it will not be easy to shift the US strategy away from isolation towards broader engagement with Cuba. However, the modest proposals described above may help to facilitate a more constructive multilateral approach to Cuba's future.

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