

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE FROM THE PAST: GENERATIONAL ROLES

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Most attempts to reflect on Cuba's future have relied on the assessments of political scientist and others who, while examining a broad spectrum of political, economic and social variables, place emphasis on the role of leadership figures in the transition (for selected representative views see Horowitz and Suchlicki 2001, 533-660). Another alternative, suggested by Strauss and Howe (1991), based on their study of the American historical experience, gives pride of place to the examination of generational change, and how the juxtaposition of various generational segments at any given point in time can help assess the future course of history.

The foundation of this latter analytical approach rests on the assumption that generational worldviews are shaped by defining events, that these events differentially impact each generation according to the stage of the life cycle at which they are located when the defining events occur, and that, on the bases of their own generational experiences, each generation helps mold the generation to which it gives rise. Strauss and Howe's approach, while sophisticated and innovative, draws on a long scholarly tradition of generational analysis, dating back to the Ancient Greeks (citations to this literature may be found in Strauss and Howe 1991, particularly pages 518 and 519).

A preliminary assessment of how historical events may have shaped the worldviews of different Cuban generations, and what these worldviews suggests about the future, is presented in this paper. It draws heavily from, and applies to Cuba, a simplified ver-

sion of the framework developed by Strauss and Howe. In doing so, it considers seven distinctive Cuban cohort-groups (or generations) from 1850 to the present. A brief presentation of the analytical approach, and of its theoretical premises, is followed by its application to the Cuban case.

It goes without saying that this is a highly speculative, inexact and preliminary exercise intended to illustrate possible analytical paths that could be partially utilized to consider the significance of generational interactions in anticipating the future. Forecasting the future through the development of analytical models, as economists and other social scientists are well aware of, is a rather difficult and challenging endeavor. The model developed by Strauss and Howe is a systematic attempt to apply and contrast some conceptual constructs developed on the basis of the analysis of a wealth of historical information pertaining to American generations that led the authors to the conclusion that specific outcomes were preordained by given events and how different generations were influenced by them. Despite some obvious shortcomings—including critiques that it may simplify far too much complex social, political and economic realities, selectively highlighting some dimensions while minimizing or glossing over others—the approach provides a useful starting point to reflect on how different generations are impacted by common historical experiences and how generational interactions may help shape the future course of developments in Cuba. In this sense, the approach is similar to that followed in disciplines

Table 1. Phase of Life Generations and Central Roles

Elderhood (age 66-87). Central role: Stewardship (supervising, mentoring, channeling endowments, passing on values)	Rising Adulthood (age 22-43). Central role: Activity (working, starting families and livelihoods, serving institutions, testing values)
Midlife (age 44-65). Central role: Leadership (parenting, teaching, directing institutions, using values)	Youth (age 0-21) Central role: Dependence (growing, learning, accepting protection and nurture, avoiding harm, acquiring values)

Source: Strauss and Howe (1991, 60-61.)

that attempt to forecast the future by abstracting from a complex world some specific features worthy of study.

ANALYTICAL MODEL

While it is impossible to do justice to the model here, it is opportune to provide a definition of its most relevant concepts. They include what constitutes a “generation” and what is meant by “peer personality.” The former is said to be a “cohort-group whose length approximates the span of a phase of life and whose boundaries are fixed by peer personality” (Strauss and Howe 1991, 60). Rather than utilizing the term cohort in the conventional way (technically, a set of people identified by a common event as they move through life, a birth cohort being the best example), “generational cohort-groups” are represented in terms of the length of a phase of life, each phase been roughly about 22 years in length (although the variation around the mean could be substantial). The four phases and the central roles within each are presented in Table 1.

Crucial to the model is the assumption that significant events occurring at a moment in history will impact differently each generational cohort-group according to the central roles they are playing, reinforcing separate identities and creating new ones. A good example is provided by a revolution that affects very differently those who live through it according to age and accumulated life experiences, the effects being determined in part by what people at each age can and cannot do, their station, etc. The end result is four age distinct cohort-groups encompassing everyone alive, although of course the relative position (in terms of age) of each individual within a given cohort will determine how s/he is influenced

by a defining event. In Strauss and Howe’s (1991, 61) words:

The decisive event, therefore, creates four distinct cohort-groups—each about twenty-two years in length and each possessing a special collective personality that will later distinguish it from its age-bracket neighbors as it ages in place. If future decisive events arrive when all of these cohort-groups are well positioned in older life phases, then those events will reinforce the separate identities of older cohort-groups and create new and distinct twenty-two year cohort-groups among the children born since the last event.

Peer personality, in turn, is a broad construct that transcends other categorizations, such as sex or ethnicity, but that links all member of a generation in terms of how they are shaped by defining events. As Strauss and Howe (1991, 64) define it, “a peer personality is a generational persona recognized and determined by (1) common age location; (2) common beliefs and behavior; and (3) perceived membership in a common generation.” Not all individuals, of course, internalize experiences or react to events similarly on the bases of experiences, but these experiences influence many generational attributes. Moreover, each generation reinterprets its experiences over time as a result of the occurrence of new defining events at different phases of the life cycle.

Another important element of the model is what Strauss and Howe (1991, 71) call a “social moment.” The relevance of this concept is particularly appropriate for the interpretation of Cuba’s past, as the country has undergone several profound political and socio-economic transformations over the course of a century. And, if the model is robust enough, appreciating the significance of particular social moments may be helpful in narrowing down what may happen

Table 2. Generational Types; Characteristics by Life Cycle Stage

<p>Idealistic</p> <p>Youth—Dominant, inner fixated, indulged, following a Secular Crisis</p> <p>Rising—Inspires a spiritual awakening</p> <p>Midlife—Moralistic, cultivates principles</p> <p>Elder—Visionary guiding next secular crisis</p>	<p>Reactive</p> <p>Youth—Recessive, under-protected and criticized during a Spiritual Awakening</p> <p>Rising—Risk taking, alienated</p> <p>Midlife—Pragmatic leaders during a secular crisis</p> <p>Elder—Maintains respect but less influence</p>
<p>Civic</p> <p>Youth—Dominant, increasingly protected during a Spiritual Awakening</p> <p>Rising—Come of age overcoming a secular crisis, heroic and achieving</p> <p>Midlife—Sustains image while building institutions</p> <p>Elder—Busy elders attacked by next spiritual awakening</p>	<p>Adaptive</p> <p>Youth—Overprotected and suffocated during a Secular Crisis</p> <p>Rising—Matures into risk averse, conformist</p> <p>Midlife—Indecisive arbitrator leaders during Spiritual Awakening</p> <p>Elder—Maintains influence but less respect</p>

Source: Strauss and Howe (1991, 74.)

in the future. A social moment is purported to be “an era, typically lasting about a decade, when people perceived that historic events are radically altering their social environment...history is moving swiftly ... the familiar world is disappearing and a new world is emerging.” Moreover, two types of social moment can be identified: “secular crises, when society focuses on reordering the outer world of institutions and public behavior; and spiritual awakening, when society focuses on changing the inner world of values and private behavior.”

Strauss and Howe postulate that social moments alternate in type and are generally separated by two life phases (40 to 45 years). The alternation comes about as “the growing incongruity between peer personality and age must induce a new social moment and realign social roles back into their original life phases” (Strauss and Howe 1991, 72). A cornerstone notion is that “each generation tries to redefine the social role of older phases of life as it matures through them” (Strauss and Howe, 1991, 72). This means that cohort-groups that internalize a given behavior pattern as children or youth (Youth Phase of Life) would be prone to act accordingly as they enter into Rising Adulthood. Cohort-groups, for example, induced by the mother generation to assume a discrete or not overtly outgoing modal behavior, are prone to become more passive than would otherwise be the case. The opposite is true for more outgoing cohort-groups. The U.S. historical experience suggests, in

fact, that a dominant generation tends to follow a recessive one, and so on.

The alternation of social moments gives rise, finally, to four generational types, “Idealist,” “Reactive,” “Civic,” and “Adaptive,” whose main characteristics are presented in Table 2. These four types recur in the same sequence, caution Strauss and Howe (74), as long as “society resolves with reasonable success each secular crisis that it encounters,” a condition that may or may not apply to Cuba.

“Generational awareness,” in short, “applies not only to where a cohort-group finds itself today, but also to where it is expected to go tomorrow...A generation, like an individual, merges many different qualities, no one of which is definite standing alone” (Strauss and Howe 1991, 68). And awareness of these shared perspectives is what gives the model the ability to present some educated speculations as to what the shared worldviews of the various cohort-groups of Cuba’s population today may portend for the future.

THE CUBA COHORT-GROUPS DEFINED

Table 3 presents a schematic overview of a preliminary attempt to identify Cuba’s cohort-groups according to the Strauss and Howe criteria and encompassing crucial historical periods with well-identified defining events. Each cohort-group is assigned a one-word label to encapsulate those developments that broadly impacted generational worldviews at different stages of the life cycle. Defining events for each historical period, organized primarily by the stage at

Table 3. Schematic Representation of Seven Cuban Cohorts with Defining Events Indicated During the Rising Adulthood Years, 1876 to Present

Cohort-Group	Born	Defining Events	Age in 2003
Colonial	1850-1875	Relations with Spain Role of slavery U.S. Civil War	(not alive)
War	1876-1898	Wars of independence Economic devastation Spanish-American War	(not alive)
Republic	1899-1919	Economic reconstruction Political instability High immigration levels American hegemony	84-104
Crisis	1920-1940	1933 revolution Economic Depression End of Platt Amendment 1940 Constitution	63-83
Transition	1941-1962	1952 Batista Military Coup 1959 Revolution 1961 Bay of Pigs Invasion 1962 Missile Crisis	41-64
Revolution	1963-1985	Radicalization 1970 sugar harvest Cuban internationalism	18-40
Survival	1986-present	General Ochoa execution Soviet collapse Social and economic crisis 2002 U.S. opening	0-17

which each cohort-group was in its Rising Adulthood stage, are shown in Table 4. For purposes of this discussion, seven cohort-groups are roughly identified: Colonial, War, Republic, Crisis, Transition, Revolution, and Survival.

To set the context for the social, economic and political events that shaped these cohort-groups, it is convenient to briefly review some of the historical events that left an indelible mark in the Cuban ethos and that in many ways defined the character of each cohort-group as well as relationships among them.

Colonial Cohort-Group

The first, labeled the Colonial cohort-group (born 1850-1875), came into being during a period in which competing visions of Cuba's future were being debated with eventual outcomes foreshadowed by developments beyond the confines of the then Spanish overseas colony. As Spain's "most faithful" colo-

ny, Cuba remained tightly in the hands of the Iberian metropolis, as most nations formerly included in its American empire gained independence (other than Puerto Rico).

Why Cuba remained a Spanish colony responded to many causes, including among others, its insular character and the fear of many *criollos* (Cuban-born whites) and *peninsulares* (Spanish born Cuban residents) of what would happen to an independent Cuba. Haiti's experience, in particular, was a source of concern for the dominant White elite worried that independence would lead to the establishment of another Black republic. Although by the time this cohort-group was born, the slave trade had been abolished, slavery was not.

Cuba was also regarded as a potential pawn in the resolution of the slavery question in the United States; for the South, an annexed slaveholding Cuba

Table 4. Defining Events during Rising Adulthood Years by Cohort-Groups

Colonial	Dominated by debate about the nature of relations with Spain. Options considered included autonomy, independence or annexation by the United States. Several minor armed upheavals (slave revolts, invasion by annexionist forces) occurred during this period. Victory of the North in the U.S. Civil War weakened the annexation camp.
War	Two major wars for independence (1868-78 and 1895-98) were fought during this period. The country lay in ruins by the time of the Spanish- American War in 1898, followed by a four-year occupation (1898-1902) by American forces.
Republic	Cuba attained independence in 1902, but under widely resented American tutelage (Platt Amendment). Due to return of peace, sanitary campaigns and immigration, a significant increase in population size occurred. Foreign investment in the sugar industry, mainly from the United States, led to rapid economic growth, fueled by the end of the period of high global demand during and following the First World War. Immigration, primarily from Spain (and to a lesser extent from other European origins) and the West Indies (Jamaica and Haiti) had a major impact on the country's ethnic composition. Under the Platt Amendment, U.S intervened in Cuba twice (1909 and 1919).
Crisis	The impact of the Great Depression devastated the Cuban economy. In combination with nationalism, the economic crisis gave rise to Cuba's first major political upheaval during the Twentieth Century: the populist and nationalist 1933 Revolution. During the first term of office of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the Platt Amendment is abrogated. Fulgencio Batista first becomes Cuba's strongman. A national convention drafts the 1940 Constitution, a landmark achievement of the Republic.
Transition	Cuba enjoys twelve years (three presidential terms) of constitutional rule with democratically elected presidents and legislatures. Cycle is broken with Batista's military coup in 1952. Fidel Castro attains national prominence in 1953 when he leads an armed attack on the Moncada barracks in Eastern Cuba. His guerrilla forces assumed power in early 1959, to popular acclaim, when Batista fled the country. Between 1959 and 1962 Castro's government radicalizes and seeks support from the Soviet Union. Upper and middle classes break with the regime and seek exile abroad. Eighteen months after the U.S.-supported Bay of Pigs invasion in April 1961, the world comes to the brink of nuclear annihilation with the 1962 October Missile crisis.
Revolution	Close ties with the Soviet bloc ensure the survival of the Revolution despite disastrous economic policies (e.g., rapid industrialization, attempt to produce ten million tons of sugar in 1970) as the social fabric of Cuban society is radically changed. Deep political cleavages lead to large-scale emigration, as the revolutionary government embarks on the creation of the New Man. During the 1970s and early 1980s, revolutionary Cuba attains its zenith of international political influence, with military interventions in Ethiopia, Angola and Nicaragua, after many failures in promoting revolution in Latin America. The 1980 Mariel boatlift, coming on the heels of visits by exiles in the late 1970s, becomes a very visible manifestation of domestic discontent among some sectors of Cuban society. By the mid-1980s, the economy entered into a crisis with winds of change blowing from the East as a consequence of Glasnost and Perestroika.
Survival	The execution of General Arnaldo Ochoa and three of his subordinates (associates) in 1989 was a major domestic political shock. The end of the Soviet Union and the disintegration of the Communist world brought to Cuba a severe economic crisis (Special Period in Time of Peace) eroding the socialist safety net. The United States strengthens economic pressures (Torricelli and Helms-Burton Laws). Internal opposition, although weak, begins to gain some strength and international recognition. By 2002, signs of a weakening of the consensus in the United States to maintaining the U.S. economic embargo on Cuba.

strengthened its standing within the Union. The Civil War and the North's victory put to rest the annexation issue, but did not quench U.S. interest in a Cuba that provided a potentially rich export market and a profitable destination for investment in the sugar industry. This period saw the beginning of Cuba's first war of independence (the Ten Years War) that lasted from 1868 to 1878.

The colonial cohort-group provided much of the leadership (e.g., José Martí, born 1853) and many of the troops that battled Spanish colonial forces during Cuba's War of Independence (1895-1898), a bitterly fought and bloody conflict that came to an abrupt end after the battleship *Maine's* explosion in Havana harbor and the U.S. declaration of war on Spain. The end of the Spanish-American War left a troubled leg-

acy in U.S.-Cuban relations. While grateful the conflict had come to an end, and pleased that Cuba managed to sever its colonial link to Spain, many Cubans felt bitter about the U.S. imposition of the Platt Amendment on Cuba's constitution as a condition for eventual independence in 1902.

This generation, whose life experiences were shaped by a spiritual awakening (seeds of independence), entered Rising Adulthood during a crisis (Independence wars), and later during their Midlife laid the bases for and ruled the Republic, corresponds quite nicely with Strauss and Howe's description of a Civic generation.

War Cohort-Group

The relatively small War cohort-group born between 1876 and 1898, reduced in size by the low fertility and high mortality of the war years, but whose relative size was later augmented by Cuba's largest ever immigrant influx, entered adulthood in the midst of war, or during the first twenty years of the Twentieth Century. The 1902-1919 period was tumultuous in Cuban history. Independence marked a major social moment as Cuba severed its colonial ties to Spain. The country's politics were dominated by contesting and corrupt political parties led by former insurrectional heroes drawn primarily from the Colonial (e.g. President José Miguel Gómez, b. 1858), and some of the oldest members of the War, cohorts. During this period, American economic and political hegemony was decisive, most domestic disagreements being resolved through American influence under the threat of or actual U.S. intervention.

The period also saw occasional violence. The United States formally intervened in Cuba under the Platt Amendment in 1909 and 1919, whereas a brief racial war erupted in 1916 that caused the death of more than 10,000. Thanks to substantial foreign investment—mostly from the United States—the economy grew rapidly during the first two decades of the century, particularly during and immediately after the First World War.

Cuba's early prosperity began to unravel by the mid-1920s, as the end of the First World War and declining sugar prices gradually unleashed a period of de-

cline that anteceded by several years the Great Depression. It assumed catastrophic proportions by the 1930s. Republican Cuba's first great political upheaval, the 1933 Revolution—associated with what in Cuban history is known as the "1933 Generation"—was intensely nationalistic, some political factions being deeply influenced by radical notions in vogue at the time.

In terms of the cohort-groups being used here, the 1933 Revolution was led by members of the War cohort (e.g., Ramón Grau San Martín), signifying a leadership generational transfer from the Colonial cohort-group, but most of all by the Republic cohort's university students and non-commissioned officers. Defining moments for the latter cohort-group were the early years of independence, ensuing political instability and American oversight over the country's destiny, coupled with the promise of economic prosperity, major social transformations associated with foreign ownership of the national patrimony, and high immigration rates. The 1933 Revolution, led by the Republic cohort-group youth, saw the nation's leadership gradually begin to shift away from the Colonial and War cohorts. The Republic cohort-group would be very much entrusted with Cuba's destiny for the next twenty-five years.

This generation fits relatively well the Adaptive categorization, as it entered Rising Adulthood at a convoluted period of Cuban history dominated by members of the Colonial generation. In their older years, and after the travails of the 1930s, this generation failed to have the influence of the generations preceding and following it.

Crisis Cohort-Group

The dominant experiences of the Crisis cohort-group (born roughly between 1920 and 1940) were political turmoil and economic uncertainty. Members of this cohort-group grew up in a highly volatile political environment brought about by the institutional end economic failures that prevented the realization of the early hopes of the Republic. The fate of this cohort-group was ordained by the nationalistic impulses of the 1930s. This cohort-group witnessed revolution, but also the abrogation of the Platt Amendment and the democratic renaissance that in

1940 led to the participatory constitutional development process, to be followed by a dozen years of democratically elected governments. The Crisis cohort-group was to dominate Cuba's political and economic destiny for the latter half of the century, cutting short the preeminence the Republic cohort-group would normally have achieved had the 1959 Cuban Revolution not ensued. Fidel Castro Ruz (b. 1926), Cuba's unchallenged ruler for the last 44 years, is the leading personality of the Crisis cohort-group.

If anything describes the events that shaped the political evolution of the Crisis cohort-group during its youth, were the aftermath of the 1933 Revolution in the 1940s and the upheaval that followed Fulgencio Batista's 1952 military coup. The 1950s decade was notorious for its violence, although the country's economy performed relatively well. This cohort-group bore the brunt of the fighting between Batista's forces and the many groups that opposed them. Later, following Castro's rise to power, members of this cohort-group were pitted against each other, on one side the Revolutionary army and popular militias, and on the other, guerrilla bands, the urban resistance, and the invading Bay of Pigs landing force. Large-scale emigration and the separation of countless families also impacted this cohort-group. At a later point in life, the leadership for Cuba's internationalist missions between the 1960s and 1980s was largely drawn from the ranks of this cohort.

If any generation fits the Strauss and Howe characterization, it is this one. Members of this generation have dominated the country's political life following a Secular Crisis (the 1950s) since their Rising Adulthood years, and well into their Midlife and Elder years. To the extent that the fervor of the early years of the Revolution can be denoted as reflecting a Spiritual Awakening—the proposed transformation of values and private behavior (e.g., the rejection by many of Republican values, the embrace of Marxism-Leninism and attempts to create a “new man”)—this generation was moralistic. Through its actions, it even set the eventual stage for a Secular Crisis.

Transition Cohort-Group

Beyond doubt, the three most significant defining events for the Transition cohort-group (born roughly between 1941 and 1962) were Batista's 1952 military coup, the 1959 revolutionary victory, the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion, and the October 1962 Missile Crisis. These events, and Cuba's momentous social, economic and political transformation between 1959 and 1962, indelibly marked this cohort-group, a true “social moment” when the structures of Cuban society were radically modified. Politics and the creation of the revolutionary social order of selfless new men and women were the driving forces in their lives, although many retained childhood memories of pre-revolutionary Cuba. This generation was imbued with a historical sense of mission and provided the bulk of the foot soldiers for most revolutionary projects, ranging from the 1961 alphabetization campaign and the 1970 ten million ton sugar harvest, to the rank and file of the armed forces that saw action in Angola, Ethiopia and Nicaragua, among many other countries.

In some respects, this generation, although an active participant in Cuba's Revolutionary transformation and its “heroic” domestic and international missions, has in fact been quite passive and reactive since it has not had a decision-making role; in the totalitarian state, the leadership of the Crisis generation largely determined the course of their lives. Thus, the Transition cohort-group can be characterized as a Reactive, alienated generation. The longevity of the leadership has preempted this generation from achieving the leadership positions it should have occupied as it entered Midlife. Strauss and Howe's model predicts, interestingly, that during their Midlife, leaders of this generation are likely to be pragmatic, but that they will lose influence in their Elder years.

Revolution Cohort-Group

While marked by the many upheavals that characterized the first decades of the Cuban Revolution, the Revolution cohort-group (born between 1963 and 1985) inherited the world created by its elders, with only its older members participating in the “epic struggles” portrayed by the official media. During the 1970s and early 1980s, they were the main bene-

ficiaries of the economic largess of the Soviet Union, growing up under an institutionalized political and economic regime and sheltered by the safety net provided by Cuba's "cradle to grave" social welfare system. This cohort will be Cuba's largest ever since its ranks were swelled by a short-lived baby boom in the years immediately following the Revolution.

Although most members of the Revolution cohort-group were too young to serve in the country's foreign ventures, the most significant defining events for the Revolution cohort included Cuba's long military involvements in Africa, the 1980 Sandinista victory in Nicaragua, the Mariel emigration outflow that same year, and the U.S. invasion of Grenada during President's Reagan Administration. Coming on the heels of the first large-scale authorized *émigré* visits since Castro had assumed power in 1959, the Mariel incident, a likely social moment for the older members of the cohort-group, was a dramatic demonstration of the impact the visits (by bringing outside perspectives) had on some sectors of Cuba's closed society.

Despite this development, during their childhood and adolescence, the members of the Revolution cohort-group grew up in a relatively stable environment where nothing seemed to challenge the prevailing political order. The complacency of this cohort-group was rudely shaken in 1989 by the trial and execution of General Arnaldo Ochoa, a Hero of the Revolution, Gorbachev's reforms in the Soviet Union, and the eventual collapse of the Socialist world after 1991—dramatic social moments certain to have deeply influenced this cohort-group's worldview.

If the cycle predicted by Strauss and Howe is to recur, the Revolution cohort should assume a Civic role and inspire a Spiritual Reawakening. It is interesting that about half of this generation was growing up as Cuba was entering into the economic and political crisis of the late 1980s, produced by the collapse of the Socialist bloc and the beginning of the endless Special Period. Interestingly too is that members of this generation are the ones displaying more displeasure about the penuries of the system. They appear to be at the forefront of those hoping for change, as reflected in the Balsero outflow, emigra-

tion to other destinations, increasing signs of dissatisfaction (reflected, for example, in high rates of school desertion), and by seeking non-conventional employment options, whether legally or illegally.

Survival Cohort-Group

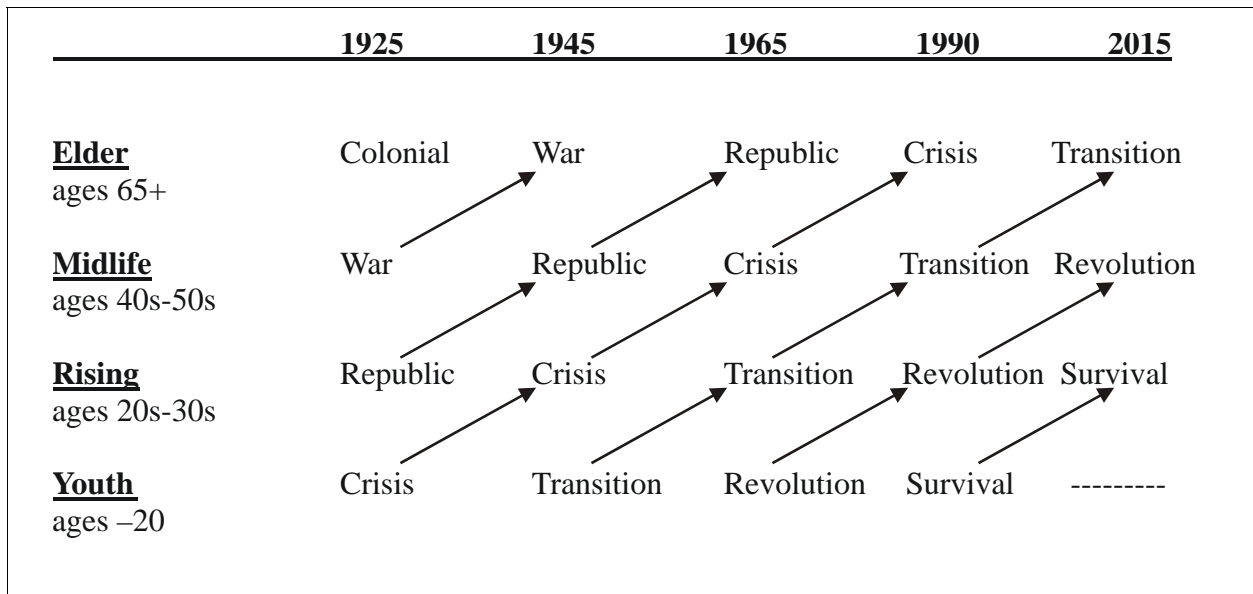
The same experiences of the Revolution cohort-group, magnified by Cuba's opening to the outside world in the form of Western tourists, should have a major impact on the evolution of the Survival cohort-group (born after 1986) worldview. Many observers have commented, in fact, of a major cleavage between those cohort-groups that embraced the Revolution's values in their youth and their children and grandchildren, many of whom have rejected them (see, for example, Rojas 2002; Collazo 2003; Díaz de Villegas 2003).

IMPLICATIONS FOR CUBA'S FUTURE

Figure 1, following Strauss and Howe, shows the generational diagonal for Cuba's five surviving cohorts at the beginning of the current century. The figure should be read according to the designed grid but following the arrows' direction. By 2015, but perhaps much earlier, most members of the Crisis cohort-group that ruled Cuba for nearly half a century will be quite old or dead, and thus no longer governing the country. On the basis of age alone, their places will be taken over by members of the Transition cohort-group that up to now have been largely relegated to secondary leadership positions due to the political longevity of the revolutionary leadership in power since they were in their late 20s or early 30s.

A tantalizing possibility is that the Transition cohort-group may only rule Cuba briefly, and mostly during a transition period, since by 2015 even their younger members will be approaching retirement age. Carlos Lage, one of Cuba's most visible and influential current politicians, considered by some a relative moderate, even if a Castro loyalist, is one of the better known representatives of this cohort-group. Better educated than their predecessors, and with a less extreme peer personality, members of this cohort-group include many of the technocrats gradually easing Cuba into the global market by managing military-run enterprises and joint ventures with foreign partners.

Figure 1. Cuba's Generational Diagonal in the Twentieth and Early Twenty First Century



Economic failure and the evaporation of a political world in which they may have once believed, has instilled in members of the Transition cohort-group a healthy dose of skepticism. After a life spent under a state of perpetual political mobilization and having experienced the collapse of the formerly subsidized Cuban economy, this cohort-group lacks the revolutionary zeal that drove so many Crisis cohort-group Cubans during the early decades of Castro's rule. Among members of the Transition cohort-group there appears to be a yearning for more pragmatic and less confrontational policies and a desire to end Cuba's political isolation. They are fed up with the struggles of daily life in Cuba's economy of scarcity and there are indications (suggested, for example, by focus group discussions among recent emigrants, in-depth interviews conducted in the island, the weakening of the totalitarian mass control organizations, and the eruption of illicit activities) that this cohort has already turned away from politics and ideology.

At the peak of their intellectual ability, they were rattled by the major social moment of the Socialist world collapse. For them, economic motivations are likely to take preeminence over politics; on the basis of generational peer personality alone, it can be posited that once Castro's generation is a memory, younger generations, and hence future governments, will be more accommodating, as the Cuban people will

be more prone to embrace values contrary to those preached by the leaders of the 1959 Revolution. In all likelihood, they will be receptive to more politically open and tolerant political system and a market economy.

It seems predictable that as the Revolution cohort-group assumes the reins of power in the not too distant future, that the political cycle will turn around full circle. Note was already made of the general disenchantment with radical politics within this generation, but socioeconomic circumstances will also force future Cuban leaders to be more pragmatic and to reach an accommodation, if not close linkages, with the United States. Not least among these is the aging of Cuba's population, as the baby boom cohorts of the 1960s and early 1970s begin to retire in droves. With few workers to support the elderly and still reeling from the economic devastation induced by more than 40 years of economic mismanagement, Cuba's future rulers need to be pragmatic.

This generation will be obsessed with the necessity of finding workable solutions to the nation's problems. Closer trade and economic ties with the United States will advance this goal, a trend likely to be accelerated by the regional thrust toward North American and Caribbean Basin economic integration. Cuba's growing median age will also contribute to the

coming conservative wave. Also promoting closer and friendly relations with the United States, once the Castro era is over, will be the Cuban-American community, a natural bridge between the two nations.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Some elements of the Strauss and Howe model seem to fit quite nicely Cuba's historical experience, even though Cuba can hardly be said to have successfully resolved its secular crises. If past concurrence with the model's predicted phases are a good indicator of things to come, then the model suggests that in the next few years, once the chaos of the transition is sorted out, the nature of Cuban politics will be transformed. This will come about, in part, from the exhaustion of more than four decades of revolutionary politics and associated economic difficulties, and partly from the mortal ideological blow caused by the collapse of the Socialist world, and the impact these

developments have had in shaping generational worldviews. Cuba will respond to global challenges just as any other nation. These challenges are making national governments the world over more open and responsive to citizens' concerns.

It appears, as the model predicts, that a process of generational change will be easing this evolution. The differences in formative experiences of Cuba's several cohort-groups over the last century and a half, and particularly during the last 80 years or so, resulted in diverse outlooks and expectations. The proclivities of those coming of age or born since the 1960s—currently in their Rising Adulthood and Midlife life cycle stages that will assume power in Cuba in the next few years—appear to be more consistent with the routine of daily life than with the challenges of revolutionary strife preferred by Fidel Castro and his generational peers.

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