

WHO'S ON FIRST?: THE STRUGGLE FOR SUCCESSION IN FIDEL CASTRO'S CUBA¹

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On January 1, 2004, Fidel Castro marked his forty-fifth year as the president and dominant ruler of Cuba, one of the world's few remaining communist states. Aged 78 as of August of 2004, he is the longest serving head of government in the world, and only the Queen of England can claim a longer term as "head of state." Although Castro continues to remain an active and visible leadership presence and faces no serious challenges as Cuba's chief decision-maker, his exceptionally long tenure in office has provoked considerable interest in whether his eventual passing will result in the emergence of a communist successor government or instead produce a process leading to greater political opening and democratic reform. While it is too early to predict what form Cuba's post-Castro politics will take in the long term, an internal succession process remains a viable outcome in the short term. There are several reasons for this, including an authoritarian organizational structure, the perseverance of a powerful state apparatus, a population that has grown accustomed to political disenfranchisement, and the limitations of international efforts to usefully facilitate political change in Cuba.

Although the emergence of a stable democracy in Cuba is almost universally viewed as the preferred

post-Castro outcome, it is far from a foregone conclusion. Indeed, some analysts have argued that Cuba is better positioned to achieve a communist succession than Eastern Europe or the former Soviet Union, and is likely to incorporate the lessons of the Chinese experience.² Even if Cuba does move rapidly towards democracy, many members of the current government may be able to successfully reinvent themselves to compete in an electoral process, as occurred in many formerly communist countries in the Soviet bloc. Against that backdrop, this paper seeks to assess the prospects for Cuba's future leadership by examining the key players that occupy top posts in the country's current organizational structure.

It is no secret that Fidel Castro's aging has important political implications for the island's future. Indeed, the state of his health is a subject of constant rumor and conjecture. In a well-known incident on June 23, 2001, Fidel Castro fainted from heat exhaustion in the middle of speech. In December of that year, he disappeared from public view for nearly two weeks, reportedly to recover from an infected bug bite on his leg. More recently, the left-wing mayor of Bogotá, Colombia, sparked a media firestorm when he reported that the Cuban leader appeared ill during

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2. Jaime Suchlicki, "Cuba After Castro," *The World and I*, January 2004.

their meeting, and there have been other accounts of fading lucidity. However, these types of observations are relatively few and far between when one considers the active, public schedule maintained by the aging *comandante*. He continues to travel widely and is a visible presence in daily Cuban life. He often manages to exhaust aides even half his age. While his infamous multi-hour speeches have become less common than they were a decade ago, they still occur with surprising frequency.

Yet the need to respond to inquiries about his health has become increasingly apparent. In Oliver Stone's documentary "Looking for Fidel," Castro interrupted a hospital visit by hopping on a table for an impromptu EKG, in an apparent effort to squash suspicions about his health. In another media interview, Castro's personal physician stated that the Cuban leader remains extremely fit and may live until 140.³ Nevertheless, other members of Cuba's senior leadership have conceded that advancing age has become the most implacable foe facing the island's revolutionary vanguard. In an interview in the spring 2004, Ricardo Alarcón, head of Cuba's National Assembly, stated that "the fact is that the generation which took power 45 years ago is retiring and dying off. People like Fidel, Raúl, and myself are getting older every year. Unfortunately, I haven't found a way out of that one yet."⁴

Thus, Cuba's political system is caught in the crux of an unenviable dilemma. Despite the authoritarian institutional structure supported by many levels of popular organization, Cuban communism is inherently dependent of the bulwark of Fidel Castro's charisma and his embodiment of the national identity. The island's top policymakers have led their entire professional lives in a system where politics consist of lobbying a single decision-maker and implementing

his decisions. Although Cuba entered a period of limited economic experimentation following the economic crisis triggered by the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, the last several years have witnessed a return to increasingly orthodox policies. As a result, the risks of internal dissent remain high at a time when gathering economic troubles have increased the costs of adherence to Marxist policies.

This has resulted in a great degree of caution and conservatism within Cuba's inner political circles, especially among people who are positioned to occupy key roles in a post-Castro government. There is little incentive to push aggressively for greater reform today and risk losing a key position, only to find oneself on the outside looking in when the post-Castro moment finally arrives. Similar fates befell former head of ideology Carlos Aldana in 1992 and former foreign minister Roberto Robaina in 2002, both reform-minded rising stars in the Cuban hierarchy, who were expelled from the Communist Party when they fell from Castro's favor.⁵ Although the risks of deviating from the party orthodoxy will remain high for the foreseeable future, it is important to remember that Castro will leave behind him an authoritarian political structure that will be inherited by the country's top decision-makers. This institutional framework will undergird any future succession process.

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Cuba's highly centralized governmental structure does not merely result from the charismatic power of Fidel Castro, nor from the fact that he controls certain portions of Cuba's political system in ways that allow him to influence other structures not under his direct authority. Power in Cuba does not flow from the bully pulpit or from popular support. Rather, Fidel Castro and his close supporters are at the center of multiple, overlapping power structures, including the Politburo of the Communist Party, the Council

3. "Fidel Castro can live to 140, doctor says," *Associated Press*, May 19, 2004.

4. Larry Luxner, "An Exclusive *Cuba News* interview with Ricardo Alarcón," *Cuba News*, May 2004.

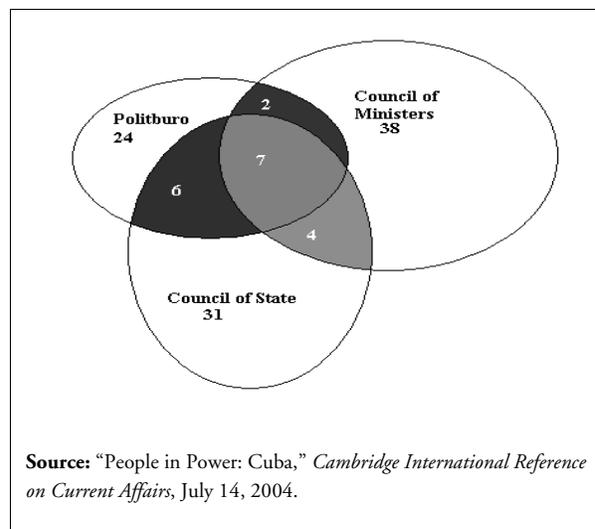
5. "Cuba's Communist Party Expels Robaina," *Miami Herald* on-line edition, August 1, 2002.

of State, and the Council of Ministers.⁶ Cuba's military, the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias* (FAR), is a powerful institution in its own right and is closely blended with the political structure of the country. As President of Cuba, Fidel Castro serves as the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. His brother, Raúl Castro, is minister of defense. Many other top military officers serve in key roles in the Politburo, Council of State, and Council of Ministers, and the army exercises disproportionate influence in Cuba's largest state-owned enterprises. Most key figures are also represented in Cuba's 609 member National Assembly, which, in practice, lacks the capacity to arrive at decisions contrary to the top decision-making bodies.

If the institutional framework around Fidel Castro persists after his passing, then Cuba's next leader will be able to exercise significant institutional authority by fulfilling these multiple roles at once. If Cuba instead begins to practice a division of labor among the highest posts—for example, if the posts of first secretary of the Politburo and the president of Council of State are held by two different individuals—then this would presage the establishment of competing power centers within Cuba's government. Managing those tensions would be an unprecedented challenge for communist Cuba. As illustrated in Figure 1, there is significant overlap between the Politburo (24 members), the Council of State (31 members), and the Council of Ministers (38 members), with 19 people serving in at least dual capacity and 7 people serving on all three organs of state. Put another way, only

67 members of Cuba's current government serve in all three of these state organs combined.

Figure 1. Membership in Cuba's Government Structures



Cuba's political organization is modeled on the former Soviet Union, and finds its basis in the 1976 constitution that was heavily modified in 1992. Due to the overlapping leadership in all of the main organs of the party and state, the Cuban government is essentially devoid of checks and balances, although procedures do exist that mimic normal oversight functions. The National Assembly must ratify all high-level appointments, and members of the Council of Ministers can be hired and fired by the Council of State, which also provides legislative approval for measures when the National Assembly is not in session, which is most of the time. (A full list of the

6. The information used to describe the functioning of Cuba's political system—and the related membership in the country's governmental structures—comes from a variety of sources. While there are several sources that list the memberships in key groups, and others that provide brief bios of key figures in the Cuban system, the available data often conflicts or does not take into account more recent changes. The information regarding the Council of State, Council of Ministers, and Politburo presented here uses the following core sources: "People in Power: Cuba," which is released by the *Cambridge International Reference on Current Affairs*; as well as *Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular: VI Legislatura: Miembros del Consejo de Estado*: <http://www.asanac.gov.cu/espanol/legislatura6/legislatura6.htm>; *Gobierno de la Republica de Cuba: Miembros del Gobierno*: <http://www.cubagob.cu/gobierno.htm>; and *Cuba On-line*: <http://cuba.sis.miami.edu/search.asp>. The first two web pages are Cuban government sources that list the members of the Council of State and Council of Ministers, including biographical information. These pages were updated in 2003 and 2004, respectively. The last source is the online database of the Cuba Transition Project at the University of Miami. It contains biographical information on most of the people considered here and is current to at least 2001. The sources do not always agree, but all information in this paper is supported by at least two of the sources, and reflects any credible news about changes in the Cuban government and Communist Party in the last several years.

members of Cuba's Council of State can be found in Appendix A.) The Council of Ministers is the largest of the ruling bodies, consisting of a cabinet-like group of administrators plus the executive leadership of the country. This body has wide-ranging powers to run the country, manage the budget, and set foreign policy. Members of the executive committee of the Council of Ministers are also part of the Politburo of the Communist Party. Under the Cuban system, the president of the Council of State is "head of state," the president of the Council of Ministers is "head of government," and the executive secretary of the Politburo heads the Cuban Communist Party. All three posts are currently occupied by Fidel Castro, although there is no constitutional provision mandating that all three bodies must be led by a single person. One possible succession scenario could result in a division of labor between these multiple roles, thereby moving away from the seamless authoritarian control established by Castro.

RAÚL CASTRO: THE HEIR APPARENT

Best known as Fidel Castro's younger brother and the general in charge of Cuba's armed forces, Raúl Castro has been elevated in recent years as the next in line in Cuba's communist hierarchy. Aged 73 in June 2004, the younger Castro is the longest serving defense minister in the world, yet he remains an enigmatic figure for many Cuba watchers, despite the fact that he has been repeatedly identified as Fidel Castro's immediate successor. During the fainting incident in 2001, Cuba's Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque stepped forward to calm the crowd by announcing "Viva Raúl! Viva Fidel!"⁷ Once he recovered, Castro remarked to reporters that "If they tell me tomorrow morning, 'You're having a heart attack' ... and I go to sleep for eternity, Raúl is the one with the most experience."⁸

Yet Raúl Castro's potential ascension to the top spot is not merely a product of fraternal loyalty. He occupies the number two position in the three principal bodies of the Cuban hierarchy, as first vice president of the Council of State, vice president of the Council of Ministers, and second secretary of the Cuban Communist Party. As the head of Cuba's armed forces, he oversees both one of Cuba's most respected and powerful institutions as well the leading economic powerbroker on the island. As such, Raúl Castro has institutional influence that is disproportional to any other government minister. The military is widely viewed to be the guarantor of any succession process in Cuba, and, as such, its leader will inevitably play a crucial role. Nevertheless, the differences between the Castro brothers have been well documented, with Raúl often suffering in the comparison. He is seen as lacking the charisma and vision of his older brother, instead playing the perennial role of second banana. Some former Cuban officials have cited strong disagreements between the Castro brothers driven by a big communication gap. Raúl is said to feel undervalued by Fidel, despite the fact that he has played a key role in organizing the structures of the Communist Party and has faced down many internal rivalries during his long career.⁹ One of Cuba's Vice Presidents, José Ramón Fernández, describes him as follows: "He is a hard worker, very systematic and demanding with himself and others. ... Maybe because of those qualities people who don't know him think he's unreachable, but that's not so."¹⁰ Fidel Castro's own daughter, Alina Fernández, has written a scathing critique of her father that describes her uncle Raúl as one of the few genuinely nice people in the Castro family. U.S. General Charles Wilhelm, who spent twenty hours with Fidel and ten hours with Raúl during three visits to Cuba, summarizes the differences between the two brothers using the following word association in Table 1.

7. Vanessa Bauzá, "Looking at Cuba's Future: Who is Raúl Castro?," *Florida Sun-Sentinel*, July 1, 2001.

8. Andrew Chang, "Post-Castro Cuba," *ABC News*, August 13, 2001.

9. Alcibiades Hidalgo, presentation made at seminar on "Raúl Castro and Cuba's Armed Forces: Perspectives and Prospects," Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C., March 20, 2003.

10. Bauzá.

Table 1. The Castro Brothers: Comparisons and Contrasts

Raúl Castro	Fidel Castro
Checkers	Chess
Structural thinker	Anticipates challenges
Enters a room	Fills a room
Seeks to inform	Seeks to influence
Can send and receive messages	Sends messages only—doesn't listen
Unimaginative	Free-wheeling
Management oriented	Leadership oriented
Raulista	Fidelista
Cuba-centered	Global outlook
Soldier first, politician second	Politician first and second
Deifies Fidel	Patronizes Raúl
Pragmatic and focused	Intellectual and theoretical

Source: General Charles Wilhelm, presentation made at seminar on “Raúl Castro and Cuba’s Armed Forces: Perspectives and Prospects,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C., March 20, 2003.

This perception of a brother dwarfed by the shadow of Fidel Castro has led many analysts to write of Raúl Castro as a purely transitional figure in any succession scenario. Indeed, his closeness in age to Fidel means that he has little chance of securing a lengthy tenure as Cuba’s president in the future, and even raises the possibility that he may predecease his elder brother.¹¹ Nevertheless, there is no question that Raúl Castro has emerged as a key figure in his own right, and a pattern of evidence has accumulated that suggests he deviates from his brother on several important matters of economic policy that will prove crucial for any successor regime. In 1986, he oversaw the partial liberalization of several small enterprises under army control, giving them some autonomy over productive decisions and allowing them to lay off employees. The positive results gave him ample evidence to argue for greater reform during the economic crisis at the turn of the decade.¹² During Cuba’s Fourth Party Congress in 1992, Raúl Castro

emerged as an unexpected ally of reformist factions, arguing that “what worries me is what will happen if we don’t make much-needed changes now, and if we don’t make them under Fidel.”¹³

But other signs indicate that Raúl Castro remains deeply committed to the political primacy of the Communist Party, even if he is open to alternative views on economic management. In a 1994 interview with a reporter from *Prensa Latina*, Raúl Castro said, “I am firmly convinced that we are going to solve our problems united under the direction of the [Communist] Party and Fidel.” More recently, in April 2001, Raúl reiterated that the Communist Party would maintain control in the post-Castro era. “Many other comrades and I will have authority. However, we want the party to have it, which is the only thing that can guarantee continuity, the unity of the nation. Within that unity we can have differences and everything we might want to air.”¹⁴ Many consider Raúl to be the more traditional communist of the two Castro brothers, yet he also backed many of the economic and agricultural reforms that helped to partially revive the failing Cuban economy in the mid-1990s. As a result, some have posited that Raúl Castro has a greater tolerance for economic reform than other members of the communist hierarchy.¹⁵

If Raúl Castro does indeed possess the loyalty of key military officers as well as a penchant for economic reform, then this may indeed prove sufficient to sustain a Raulista successor regime for some years. Any small economic opening would be a welcome development for much of the Cuban population if it represented a step towards alleviating the stark scarcity facing most of the island’s citizenry. Some analysts have posited that loyalty to Raúl is a necessary prerequisite for management of the state-owned enterprises controlled by Cuba’s armed forces.¹⁶ Indeed,

11. Brian Latell, “The Cuban Military and Transition Dynamics,” Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies, 2003, p. 6.

12. Andres Oppenheimer, *Castro’s Final Hour* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), p. 300.

13. Oppenheimer, p. 386.

14. Bauzá.

15. Hidalgo.

16. Latell, p. 19.

with the apparent blessing of Cuba's maximum leader, the familial and institutional advantages of being both a Castro brother and head of Cuba's Armed Forces, and a lifetime of tutelage at the elbow of Cuba's shrewdest politician, Raúl Castro is well-positioned to see off any rival for Cuba's future leadership. But the question remains—do his ambitions include assuming the post of maximum leader of Cuba? Perhaps in the absence of his brother, Raúl Castro would be content to spend his final years as the “chairman emeritus” of his beloved armed forces, while leaving the politics, once again, to the Cuban politicians.

THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT'S HIGHEST RING

While Fidel and Raúl Castro are the most visible members of the Cuban government to occupy top positions in the Council of State, Council of Ministers, and the Politburo, they are joined by five other men at the apex of Cuba's power structure: Carlos Lage Dávila, Abelardo Colomé Ibarra, Marcos Portal León, Pedro Miret Prieto, and José Balaguer Cabrera.¹⁷ Taken together, these individuals represent the second highest level ring of power in Cuba. Yet, with the exception of Carlos Lage, most are virtually unknown outside of the island except to a rarified group of Cuba watchers. They are the most reliable partners of the Castro brothers and the only members of the government seen as fit to serve in all of the country's overlapping power centers. Any effort to contemplate a future succession process in Cuba must consider the personalities that make up this ruling group.

Carlos Lage was appointed to the powerful post of secretary of Council of Ministers in 1990 and be-

came a vice president of the Council of State in 1993. Only 53 years old, Lage is the youngest member of this group, but his resume consists of a succession of high ranking posts in some of the country's most visible and influential organizations. He became the president of the Federation of University Students (FEU) in 1975 and was elected as a delegate to Cuba's National Assembly the following year. Lage was named first secretary of the Union of Communist Youth (UJC) in 1982, at the age of 31, and he joined Fidel Castro's special assistance and support team in 1986, the same year that he became a member of the Council of State. As with many younger members of the Cuban government, Castro is said to have a close “father-son” relationship with Lage.¹⁸ During Cuba's Fourth Party Congress in 1992, Lage was reported to be the intended beneficiary of a plan for “controlled political opening” that was to transfer significant political power to the office of prime minister, a position for which he was the leading candidate.¹⁹ Although the plan was eventually nixed, Lage has subsequently served in what many perceive to be a prime ministerial role, with a more visible policy presence than any other member of the top cabinet, including Raúl Castro.

Lage has long been considered one of the leading civilian figures in Cuba's hierarchy, frequently visiting and negotiating cooperation agreements with other countries and playing a key role in formulating economic policy. He is perhaps the most visible member of what many analysts consider to be the “reform faction” within the Cuban government. However, in June 2004, Lage appeared to have his wings clipped by the military when responsibility for the tourist sector was officially moved under the Revolutionary

17. The analysis of who composes the “inner circle” is principally taken from the July 14, 2004, briefing of the *Cambridge International Reference on Current Affairs*, with two exceptions. The first case is Felipe Pérez Roque, whom the CIRCA document lists as a member of the Politburo, a fact which conflicts with several other reputable sources that simply identify him as on the organizing committee of the Communist Party. Thus, I have excluded him from this group. The second case is General Pedro Miret Prieto, whom the Cambridge document does not list as a member of the Politburo. However, both *Cuba On-line* and the *Asamblea Nacional* page include him as a member of that body since at least 1983, and I have included him in this group. Both of these cases are ambiguous in part because the Cuban government has not published a current list of Politburo members online. Whether members of that body in 2004 or not, both men continue to hold positions on the Council of Ministers and the Council of State—an influential subset in its own right.

18. Leicester Coltman, *The Real Fidel Castro* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 316.

19. Oppenheimer, pp. 383-387.

Armed Forces, prompting speculation that his influence is on the wane.²⁰ In a recent book, one former Mexican Ambassador to Cuba has written that Fidel Castro may have sown the seeds of this power struggle by increasingly favoring Lage when an internal government poll found most Cubans disapprove of the decision to turn power over to Raúl Castro.²¹ Nevertheless, Lage remains a visible presence within Cuba and has—correctly or not—given some sectors of Cuban society the impression that his penchant for economic reform is accompanied by a greater tolerance for political and civil liberties. A physician with no military experience who is several decades younger than most of his colleagues in Cuba's inner circle, Carlos Lage remains one to watch.

Another leading figure in Cuba, General Abelardo Colomé, comes from a professional military background that sharply differs from Lage's. Colomé joined Castro's rebel army in 1957 and became the chief of counterintelligence in 1970. He later led Cuba's Armed Forces in Angola, served as Vice Minister of Defense in the mid-1970s, was elected to the National Assembly in 1976, and joined the Council of State in 1986. Colomé emerged as Minister of the Interior in 1989, following the drug trafficking scandal that resulted in the execution of General Arnaldo Ochoa. Today, as a vice president of the Council of State and the head of the powerful and feared Interior Ministry, Colomé is a major powerbroker within the Cuban government and second only to the Castro brothers in terms of the political influence he controls. Colomé was the first army general to be honored as a "Hero of the Republic of Cuba," and he is the most likely successor as defense minister in the event that Raúl Castro is elevated to the top spot or is no longer able to serve in that capacity.

As the Minister of Basic Industries since 1983, Marcos Portal León is another major figure in Castro's inner circle with a profile more similar to Carlos Lage than to the older members of Cuba's revolutionary

vanguard. Born in 1945, Portal was trained as a chemical engineer and first rose to prominence as the secretary general of the University of Havana chapter of the Union of Communist Youth (UJC) in 1972. He later married a niece of Raúl Castro, and in the early 1980s, served on the personal logistics and support team of Fidel Castro until he assumed the leadership of the Ministry of Basic Industries. During the 1990s, Portal was among the few civilians to become involved with "Perfeccionamiento Empresarial," the enterprise rectification process led by the Cuban military. In this capacity, Portal redesigned the Ministry of Basic Industries to incorporate greater market mechanisms, mixing greater autonomy with economic incentives based on performance. This experience helped him to emerge as a key player in the process of economic reform, and he has negotiated deals with major international companies including Sherritt, Petrobas, Repsol, and other foreign partners.²² He is widely considered to be one of Cuba's most efficient and competent ministers.

The final two members of Cuba's top team are veterans of Castro's rebel army in the 1950s, and they rank among the oldest members of the Council of State. Born in 1927, General Pedro Miret Prieto was an original participant in the 1953 assault on the Moncada Barracks and in the subsequent Granma expedition that launched the revolution in the island's Sierra Maestra. Appointed to his first ministerial post as head of agriculture in 1959, he later became Minister of Mining in 1969. Another seasoned veteran, José Balaguer Cabrera, aged 72, served as the Chief of Ideology from 1985 until 2003, when he moved to the Ministry of Public Health to oversee an influx of investment in health services planned by Castro as part of the "Battle of Ideas" intended to shore up support for the Cuban Revolution among the island's increasingly frustrated populace. Although they are ensconced at the apex of the Cuban government, the advanced age of both of these men means that neither is likely to be a contender for suc-

20. Pablo Alfonso, "En duda el futuro político de Carlos Lage," *El Nuevo Herald*, June 19, 2004

21. Tracy Eaton, "Power Struggle Within Cuba?," *The Dallas Morning News*, July 18, 2004.

22. Cuba Transition Project Database.

cession in Cuba. Indeed, faced with the eventual absence of Fidel Castro, it is unclear whether their elevated positions will give them significant influence in future decision-making processes.

The five men who serve below the Castro brothers in the overlapping power centers of the Council of State, the Council of Ministers, and the Politburo reveal an interesting contrast between the dominant influences in the Cuban government. Lage and Portal are younger civilian technocrats, elevated to their current status by Fidel Castro, who have demonstrated leanings towards economic reform that reach back for two decades. Balaguer, Colomé, and Miret are veterans of the 1959 Cuban Revolution, and the latter two are generals in the Cuban armed forces. Taken as a whole, these groups are representative of the two major trends that are likely to shape a future Cuban government—the increased prominence of the military balanced against an openness to experiment with greater economic reform than has been possible under the rule of Fidel Castro. Despite their privileged position, however, this rarified subset is far from the only ones who will have a say in—and, in some cases, compete for—the top spot in an eventual Cuban succession. While the odds are undeniably tilted in Raúl Castro's favor as the heir apparent for all of the top roles, the increasingly visible role of the Cuban military may elevate the need for a civilian prime minister, in effect revisiting the concept for a political opening first discussed by at the Fourth Party Congress in 1992. The next section discusses other figures of note that may rise to prominence or pull strings behind the scenes during a succession scenario.

THE DIPLOMAT, THE PROTÉGÉ, THE HATCHET MAN, AND THE WASTREL SON

In addition to the Cuban policymakers who sit at the highest seat of authority in Cuba, there are a number of ministers and government figures that have distinguished themselves through their lengthy service and the ability to balance the need for economic reform against the political limitations imposed by Fidel Castro. However, many of these presumed reformers have suffered setbacks as of late. José Luis Rodríguez, the minister of the economy who backed many of the

reforms implemented during the mid-1990s, has been removed from the Council of State and lost four of his six vice ministers in a mini-purge that occurred in 2003. Roberto Díaz Sotolongo, the justice thought to be open to reform, also lost his seat at the highest table in 2003. Meanwhile, the Cuban government has engaged in a series of elite personnel changes, appointing new heads for the department of ideology and the ministries of finance and transportation. Although it is difficult to predict how roles will develop in the post-Castro future, there are four people who merit additional attention, although for vastly different reasons.

The Diplomat

The first member of this group is Ricardo Alarcón Quesada, the president of Cuba's National Assembly of People's Power, the 609-member unicameral legislature that theoretically serves as the highest governing body of Cuba, but is more aptly described as the rubber-stamp parliament that ratifies decisions made by Castro and his ruling clique. The National Assembly meets once or twice a year in Havana's Convention Palace, lacking even a permanent meeting spot for its deliberations. Serving as President of this body seems an unlikely role from which to achieve prominence, but Ricardo Alarcón has succeeded in positioning himself as one of the leading contenders for the top job in post-Castro Cuba.

Born in 1937, Ricardo Alarcón served as the president of the Federation of University Students (FEU) in 1961-62, a post that has served as a stepping stone for many of the top members of Cuba's hierarchy. Beginning in the mid-1960s, he embarked on a diplomatic career that spanned more than a quarter century. Alarcón served as Cuba's ambassador to the United Nations from 1966 to 1978, and was subsequently appointed as vice minister of foreign relations, a post he held for 14 years. In 1992, he was briefly elevated to Minister of Foreign Relations, and in 1993 he was elected president of the National Assembly, a role he has now held for more than a decade.

Alarcón is best known as the lead point man for U.S.-Cuban affairs, a role for which he is uniquely qualified by living for more than a decade in New

York City in the 1960s and 1970s, an extremely rare experience for any member of Cuba's ruling class. He has played a central role in several sensitive U.S.-Cuba negotiations, including the 1994 migration accords and the 1999-2000 custody battle over young Elián González, the Cuban boy who washed ashore in Florida and was informally adopted by Miami relatives before eventually being returned to his family in Cuba. Alarcón's star rose dramatically during the González affair, and he was subsequently tasked with the thankless chore of trying to secure the return of five Cuban spies sentenced to long prison terms in the U.S., known in Cuba as the "Five Heroes of the Republic." Despite an extensive publicity and media campaign in Cuba to rally support for this case, many Cubans are underwhelmed by the cause of five mustachioed, middle-aged men who were admittedly conducting espionage on Cuban-American groups in Miami. As a result, Alarcón's star has dimmed somewhat in the eye of the Cuban public, both due to the dubiousness of this effort as well as the apparent fruitlessness of the task at hand. Nevertheless, as a trained diplomat at the head of what passes for Cuba's legislature, Alarcón is equipped with shrewd political skills, deep knowledge of the United States, and a potential political power base that will make him a formidable contender for a prime ministerial position in post-Castro Cuba. Although a member of the politburo, he is also one of the few top leaders not deeply engaged in the economic management of the country, a fact that has left him with relatively little baggage during previous battles over economic reform, and makes him a less threatening presence for Cuba's deeply entrenched economic interests.

The Protégé

Cuba's government has produced another dynamic figure in Felipe Pérez Roque, the brash, young foreign minister who has forged a powerful relationship with Fidel Castro. Born in 1965, Pérez Roque is the youngest member of Cuba's Council of State. He quickly emerged as a leading figure of his generation, elected to the National Assembly at the age of 21 and later serving as president of the FEU during his mid-

twenties. In 1990, Pérez Roque was named to the special support team of the Commander-in-Chief, an experience he shares with Carlos Lage and Marcos Portal. Married to the daughter of Jaime Crombet, who serves as Alarcón's deputy as the vice president of the National Assembly, Pérez Roque was appointed foreign minister in 1999 following the dismissal of Roberto Robaina. In the past five years, he has emerged as one of the most visible and outspoken members of the Cuban government. He is one of only four individuals to serve on both the Council of State and Council of Ministers. Further, having previously served as Castro's private secretary, Pérez Roque has accrued valuable political capital in Cuba by being seen as a protégé of the supreme leader. His loyalty to Castro is unquestioned. *Vanity Fair* reporter Ann Louise Bardach cites a Cuban source that has said that "Felipe is so loyal to Fidel, that on the day his wife gave birth to his first child, he remained at Castro's side for ten hours. Then he went to see his newborn baby."²³

While this level of devotion has led some to dismiss Pérez Roque as merely Fidel's lapdog, he is perhaps better described as the sentry who both supports Castro's revolution and has become its most public defender in international circles. His over-the-top anti-U.S. rhetoric in international forums such as the United Nations has repeatedly provoked the ire of American officials. In the fall 2001, Pérez Roque lashed out at the U.S. invasion of Iraq. During another heated exchange at the U.N. in November 2003, the Cuban delegation had proposed a resolution urging Washington to end the trade and travel sanctions against the island, a non-binding measure that has passed with overwhelming support for the last twelve years. The U.S. representative replied that "Cuba's best day is when the Cuban people have terminated Castro's evil Communist dictatorial regime and said to him, 'Hasta la vista, baby.'" In response, Pérez Roque departed from his prepared text to explicitly rebuke the U.S. assertion. "I am sorry to say that the representative of the United States will never in his entire lifetime have the slightest possibility of

23. Ann Louise Bardach, *Cuba Confidential* (New York: Random House, 2002), p. 282.

saying 'Hasta la vista, baby,' to the people of Cuba. It is the people of Cuba, with the support of the international community, who will say 'Hasta la vista to the blockade.'" Pérez Roque also emerged as the public face of the regime following the mass arrests of dissidents in the spring of 2003, when he held an international press conference to promote the Cuban government view that the opposition figures were in cahoots with the U.S.

Unlike Alarcón, Pérez Roque is an unlikely candidate for succession in Cuba in the short term. Yet he is one of the few members of his generation to hold a high level position in the Cuban government, and he has also shown the potential for outreach to some sectors in the Cuban-American community. Further, Pérez Roque is among an extremely limited group of high officials to show occasional bits of personal charisma in public view. Although his high profile public relations role in handling the recent dissident crackdown may make it difficult for him to remain politically viable if Cuba were to undergo a democratic transition, his brand of fiery youth politics will likely remain a quantity in demand by the less telegenic members of Cuba's aging gerontocracy.

The Hatchet Man

If Cuba's foreign minister represents Castro's effort to impart his ideology to the next generation, then the re-emergence of the feared Ramiro Valdés reflects an increasing reliance on the traditional hardline. A veteran of the 1953 assault on the Moncada barracks, Valdés served as the Minister of the Interior from 1961 to 1968, during the years of greatest upheaval following the triumph of the Cuban Revolution. Valdés later served as vice president of the Council of State from 1976 until 1986, and remained as a member until 1997, when he was rotated off Cuba's highest governing body. Yet in 2003, Valdés was once again elevated to a position in the Council of State, a move that may have presaged the crackdown on internal dissent and the increasing political rigidity that characterizes the Cuban government. As the president of Cuba's Electronics Group, Valdés is among a

number of high-ranking officials with substantial economic interests in the island's state owned enterprises.

Castro has turned to Ramiro Valdés during difficult times in the past, most notably in 1979, when he re-primed his role as Minister of the Interior to help repress rising domestic opposition.²⁴ Only slightly younger than Raúl Castro, Valdés has little hope in emerging in a top role during a successor government, but his perennial role as hatchet man may prove useful to a regime struggling to chart troubled waters during a period of likely domestic dissent. As the proverbial bad penny that keeps turning up, Valdés' long experience with the repressive instruments of the state may allow him to retain influence in a post-Castro government.

The Wastrel Son

In authoritarian regimes long dominated by a single personality, kinship has often played a surprising role in shaping the leadership of the successor government. Although this is certainly the case with Raúl Castro, it is worth considering that power often passes to the sons of the chief leader once he passes from the stage. While this is certainly true in monarchical societies, it has also occurred in countries with a secular authoritarian tradition. In some instances, the sons have spent decades training at the sides of their fathers, such as the cases of Kim Jong-Il, the reclusive son of North Korea's founding leader Kim Il-Sun, who has now ruled that country for more than a decade. In the authoritarian democracy of Azerbaijan, the death of founding president Heydar Aliev led to the ascension of his son Ilham Aliev, through an appointment process that was widely criticized. In other instances, the progeny gained power when barely out of childhood, as occurred with Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier, who assumed the leadership of Haiti at the age of 19 following the passing of Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier in 1972. He went on to rule the country for another 14 years. In yet other examples, the sons of ailing leaders have lived their lives outside the political system, only to be recruited back

24. Robert E. Quirk, *Fidel Castro* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1993), pp. 794-5.

to take the helm at the moment of transition, as occurred with Bashar Assad, the London-based ophthalmologist who suddenly assumed the presidency of Syria in 2000 when his father, the late Hafez Assad, was on his deathbed.

It is worth keeping these examples in mind when one turns to the case of Félix Fidel Castro Díaz Balart, the eldest son of Fidel Castro. Born in September 1949 and known by the nickname “Fidelito,” the younger Castro has long had a difficult relationship with his overbearing father, who soon separated from his mother. In the fall of 1956, the elder Castro left his son behind with friends in Mexico as he launched the Granma expedition that would ignite the rebellion in Cuba’s Sierra Maestra. This decision was one incident in a custody battle over Fidelito between Fidel Castro and his ex-wife, Mirta Díaz-Balart, that would extend over many years. At the time, he explained that “I do not make this decision through resentment of any kind, but only thinking of my son’s future. ... And I leave my son also to Mexico, to grow and to be educated here in this free and hospitable land.”²⁵ Castro later gave his 7-year old son a pistol as a farewell present. The two were reunited nearly three years later on the outskirts of Havana in January 1959, and Castro’s newfound authority allowed him to triumph in his efforts to keep Fidelito with him in Cuba, while his ex-wife moved to the U.S., and eventually, Spain.

It is perhaps not quite accurate to describe Fidelito as a wastrel son. Félix Fidel Castro Díaz-Balart studied in Cuba and then attended school in the Soviet Union, eventually earning a doctorate in physics and marrying a Russian woman. They were later divorced and today he lives in Havana with a Cuban wife and their three children.²⁶ He served as executive secretary of the Cuban Atomic Energy Commission from 1980 to 1992, until he was dismissed during the country’s profound economic crisis in an event that seemed to end any speculation that he was being

groomed for an important role in the country’s future. When asked about Fidelito’s resignation, the elder Castro replied: “There was no resignation. He was fired for incompetence. What’s the problem? We don’t have a monarchy here.”²⁷

Today, Fidelito lives in Havana and is a consultant to the Ministry of Basic Industries. He is said to have an estranged relationship with his father and clearly has no role in any of the major power centers in Cuba. Yet, it is not inconceivable that he could play a role in a future succession scenario in Cuba. He is younger than many members of Cuba’s old guard, and he may be able to derive some legitimacy as the bearer of the Castro name. Further, he is not seen as playing a key role in the struggles between the economic reformers and the ideological hardline that is presumed to have influenced Cuba’s economic policymaking over the last decade, a fact that may elevate his chances as emerging as compromise candidate. Would Cuba really tolerate another Castro generation? It seems unlikely, yet historical experience indicates that when all else fails, blood ties sometimes emerge as a surprisingly powerful determinant of future leadership. The history of authoritarian politics is filled with examples of sons who could never measure up to their fathers in life, yet somehow are able to fill their shoes when the opportunity presents itself.

CONCLUSION

Admittedly, it is a bit soon to predict what sort of succession or transition process might emerge in post-Castro Cuba. Some analysts argue that whatever process evolves will likely be based in the institutions and personalities that exist on the island today, while others believe that the Cuban system will undergo a rapid democratic evolution that will allow new and independent actors to fill important leadership positions. Nevertheless, it seems likely that the Revolutionary Armed Forces, the Politburo, the Council of State, the Council of Ministers, and even the National Assembly will retain significant influence in the is-

25. Quirk, p. 115.

26. Bardach, p. 49.

27. Coltman, p. 315.

land's future politics. If succession occurs, then Cuba's future leaders are likely to seek continued political stability, marginal improvement in economic performance, the containment of popular dissent, and an image of international legitimacy. While Raúl Castro and other members of the armed forces may be capable of achieving the first three parameters, they may well need a civilian face to prevent the government from being seen as an entirely military regime. In this sense, civilian leaders such as Carlos Lage, Ricardo Alarcón, Marcos Portal, and Felipe Pérez Roque are potential candidates for the prime minis-

terial role that was initially envisioned in the Fourth Party Congress of 1992. Even in the event that the regime quickly transitions towards a democratic government, many of these politicians may be able to reposition themselves as representatives of democratic socialism, much like what occurred in the formerly communist countries of Eastern Europe. One way or another, the influence of Fidel Castro's communist regime will persist into the next era, irrespective of whether Cuba's next leaders are elevated through succession or elections.

**APPENDIX A:
CUBAN COUNCIL OF STATE AS OF 2003**

Name	Title	Date of Birth	Year Appointed	Career Highlights and Notes
Executive Committee^a				
Fidel Castro Ruz	President; President of the Council of Ministers; Commander-in-Chief of Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR)	Aug. 13, 1926	1976 ^b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Led the July 26, 1953 attack on Moncada Barracks, attempting to overthrow Batista regime. • Organized and commanded Rebel Army that overthrew Batista on January 1, 1959. Continues as Commander-in-Chief of Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR). • Named Prime Minister of Revolutionary Government in February 1959, First Secretary of Cuban Communist Party (PCC) at its creation in 1965. • Elected President of Council of State and Council of Ministers upon their creation in 1976.
Raúl Castro Ruz	First Vice President; Vice President of the Council of Ministers; Minister of Defense	Jun. 3, 1931	1976	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participated in assault on Moncada and the Granma expedition. Named Commander in Rebel Army in 1958. • Named Minister of Defense upon creation of Ministry in 1959. • Named Second Secretary of PCC in 1965. • Elected First Vice President of Council of State and Council of Ministers in 1976.
Juan Almeida Bosque	Vice President	Feb. 17, 1927	1976	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participated in assault on Moncada and the Granma Expedition. • Elected Vice President of Council of State in 1976. • Has held various positions in Ministry of Defense since its creation; served as an advisor to Minister of Defense since 1990.
Abelardo Colomé Ibarra	Vice President; Minister of the Interior	Sep. 13, 1939	1986 (est.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joined Rebel Army in 1957. • Became Chief of Counterintelligence in 1970, Chief of Cuban Forces in Angola in 1975, and Vice Minister of Defense upon returning to Cuba. • Elected to National Assembly in 1976; Vice President of Council of State in 1992. • Named Minister of Interior in 1989 after drug-trafficking scandal reaches highest ranks of military and Ministry of Interior. Since his appointment, the Ministry of the Interior has been under the control of the Ministry of Defense.
Carlos Lage Dávila	Vice President; Secretary of the Council of Ministers	Oct. 15, 1951	1986	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Became President of Federation of University Students (FEU) in 1975. • Named First Secretary of Union of Communist Youth (UJC) in 1982. • Named to Commander-in-Chief's assistance and support team in 1986. • Elected member of National Assembly in 1976, Vice President of Council of State in 1993. • Named Secretary of Council of Ministers in 1990.

APPENDIX A:
CUBAN COUNCIL OF STATE AS OF 2003 (CONTINUED)

Name	Title	Date of Birth	Year Appointed	Career Highlights and Notes
Esteban Lazo Hernández	Vice President; First Secretary of Provincial Committee of Cuban Communist Party (PCC), Havana	Feb. 26, 1944	1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Served as First Secretary of PCC Provincial Committees in Matanzas, Santiago, and Havana from 1981-present. Elected to National Assembly in 1981 and Vice President of Council of State in 1993. Serves as President of Provincial Council of Defense for Havana. Replaced José Balaguer as PCC Chief of Ideology in 2003.
José Ramón Machado Ventura	Vice President	1930	1976	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joined Rebel Army in 1957. Served as Secretary of Public Health, 1960-1967. Elected to National Assembly in 1976, Vice President of Council of State in 1992. Organized pro-government rallies during crises in the 1990s.
José M. Miyar Barrueco	Secretary	Aug. 3, 1932	1980	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joined Rebel Army in 1958. Served as Viceminister of Public Health. Elected to National Assembly in 1976, named Secretary of Council of State in 1980.
Members				
José Ramón Balaguer Cabrera	Chief of International Relations and Public Health for PCC	Jun. 6, 1932	1986 (est.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joined Rebel Army in 1958. Elected to National Assembly in 1976. Named Chief of Departments of Ideology and International Relations in 1985, left Department of Ideology and became Chief of Public Health in 2003.
Iris Betancourt Téllez	Delegate of Ministry of Science	Aug. 20, 1951	2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has been active in Cuban Women's Federation (FMC) since 1967 and in PCC since 1978. Elected to National Assembly in 1993.
Julio Casas Regueiro	First Vice Minister of Defense; General (FAR)	Feb. 18, 1936	1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assisted Rebel Army activities beginning in 1957. Occupied various positions in Ministry of Defense, 1960-present, during which time he was promoted first to Captain and then to General. In charge of economic activity at Ministry of Defense, very involved in the military's tourist enterprise, Gaviota S.A.
Vilma Espín Guillois	President, Federation of Cuban Women	1931	1976	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key collaborator with Rebel Army from 1956 through 1959. Elected President of Federation of Cuban Women (FMC). Wife of Raúl Castro.
Roberto Fernández Retamar	President, Casa de las Américas	Jun. 9, 1930	1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Served as Coordinating Secretary of National Union of Cuban Writers and Artists (UNEAC), 1961-1964. Named President of Casa de las Américas, Cuba's official Cultural and Literary Organization and Publishing House, 1986.
María Teresa Ferrer Madrazo	Vice Dean, Salvador Allende School of Medical Sciences	Jun. 5, 1947	2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Served as delegate to the National Assembly since 1986, President of Commission for Education from 1994-2001. Named Vice Dean of Salvador Allende School of Medical Sciences, 2002.
Roberto Ignacio González Planas	Minister of Information Technology and Communications	1944 (est.)	2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Served in Ministry of Basic Industries and Ministry of Information Technology from 1974-present.

**APPENDIX A:
CUBAN COUNCIL OF STATE AS OF 2003 (CONTINUED)**

Name	Title	Date of Birth	Year Appointed	Career Highlights and Notes
Armando Hart Dávalos	Director, Office of the Martí Program	1928	1976	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborated with Rebel Army 1956-1959. • Served as Minister of Education, 1962-1965, shifted to Ministry of Culture. • Served as Minister of Culture until 1997.
Marta Hernández Romero	Provincial Director of Education, Santiago	Mar. 19, 1958	2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rose from Chief of Primary Education in Santiago, 1992, to Provincial Director of Education there, 2002.
Luis Herrera Martínez	Director, Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology	Nov. 27, 1943	2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiated Cuba's first work on Recombinant DNA in 1977. • Named Director of Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, 1999.
Julio Christian Jiménez Molina	First Vice President, Cuban Institute of Sports, Recreation and Physical Education (INDER)	1954 (est.)	2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Named Director of International Relations at Cuban Institute of Sports, Recreation and Physical Education (INDER) in 1976, and First Vice President in 1999.
Orlando Lugo Fonte	President, National Association of Small Agricultural Producers (ANAP)	1936	1986	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborated with Rebel Army, 1956-1959. • Elected to National Assembly in 1976. • Named President of National Association of Small Agricultural Producers in 1987.
Nidia Diana Martínez Pití	Director, William Soler Pediatric Hospital	Feb. 24, 1945	2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Served as Director of Holguín Provincial Pediatric Hospital. • Promoted to Director of William Soler Pediatric Hospital. • Elected to National Assembly in 1993, Council of State in 2003.
Pedro Miret Prieto	Vice President, Council of Ministers	1927	1976	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participated in assault on Moncada and the Granma expedition. • Named Minister of Agriculture in 1959 and Minister of Mining in 1969.
Felipe Pérez Roque	Minister of Foreign Relations	Mar. 28, 1965	1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Served in FEU National Secretariat from 1986, becoming President of FEU in 1990. • Elected to National Assembly in 1986. • Named to Commander-in-Chief's assistance and support team in 1990. • Named Minister of Foreign Relations in 1999. • Married to daughter of Jaime Crombet.
Marcos Javier Portal León	Minister, Basic Industry	Oct. 7, 1945	1993(est.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Became Secretary General of Union of Communist Youth (UJC) at the University of Havana in 1972. • Served on Commander-in-Chief's assistance and support team from 1980-1983. • Named Minister of Basic Industry in 1983, where he has played a large role in economic reforms. • Married to niece of Raul Castro.
Otto Rivero Torres	First Secretary, Union of Communist Youth (UJC)	1971 (est.)	1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Served as President of FEU from 1993-1995. • Elected to National Assembly in 1993. • Named First Secretary of UJC in 1997.
Pedro Ross Leal	Secretary-General, Council of Cuban Workers (only official labor union)	1939	1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected Secretary-General of Council of Cuban Workers in 1989. • Elected to National Assembly in 1986.
Pedro Sáez Montejo	First Secretary, Provincial Committee of the Cuban Communist Party (PCC) in Havana.	Aug. 13, 1953	2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Named First Secretary of Provincial Committee of the PCC for Havana, 1997, replacing Esteban Lazo Hernández.

APPENDIX A:
CUBAN COUNCIL OF STATE AS OF 2003 (CONTINUED)

Name	Title	Date of Birth	Year Appointed	Career Highlights and Notes
Rosa Elena Simeón Negrín	Minister of Science, Technology and the Environment	1944	1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elected to National Assembly in 1980, Council of State in 1993. Named Minister of Science, Technology and the Environment in 1994.
Francisco Soberón Valdés	President-Minister, Central Bank of Cuba	Apr. 19, 1944	2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-founded Union of Communist Youth (UJC). Named President-Minister of National Bank in 1995.
Ramiro Valdés Menéndez	President, Electronics Group, Ministry of Information Technology and Communications	1932	1976-1997; 2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participated in assault on Moncada and the Granma Expedition. Served as Minister of Interior from 1961 to 1968, then becoming Vice Minister of Defense. Named Vice President of Council of State in 1976, demoted to normal membership in 1986, left Council of State between 1997 and 2003. Became President of the Electronics Group.
Carlos Manuel Valenciana Díaz	Executive Assistant to Fidel Castro	Sep. 16, 1973	1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Named President of FEU in 1997. Named Chief of Executive Support Group to Fidel Castro.
Ricardo Alarcón Quesada ^c	President, National Assembly	May 21, 1937	N/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Served as President of FEU from 1961-1962. Served as Cuban Ambassador to the UN from 1966-1978. Named Vice Minister of Foreign Relations in 1978 and Minister of Foreign Relations in 1992. Elected President of the National Assembly in 1993.
Jaime Crombet Hernández-Baquero ^c	Vice President, National Assembly	Apr. 3, 1941	N/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Named President of FEU in 1964. Served as First Secretary of UJC from 1966-1972. Was Vice President of the Council of Ministers from 1990-1993. Elected to National Assembly in 1976.

Selected Indicators	Female Proportion of Total	Average Birth Year	Non-white (mestizo or black) Proportion of Total
Council Of State	18%	1942	27% (est.)
National Assembly	36%	1956	33%
Cuban Population	50%	N/a	62%

Source: "Afro-Cubans under the Castro Regime," *Cuba Transition Project: Staff Report*, Issue 42, June 4, 2003; "Fidel Castro Plots Cuba's Course to 2008," *Cuba Transition Project: Staff Report*, Issue 38, March 13, 2003; Gail Reed, *Island in the Storm: The Cuban Communist Party's Fourth Party Congress* (Melbourne: Ocean Press, 1992); Juan M. del Aguila, *Cuba: Dilemmas of a Revolution* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988). *Cubapolitdata*: <http://www.cubapolitdata.com>; *Asamblea Nacional de Poder Popular*: www.asanac.gov.cu. *Cuba On-line*: <http://cuba.iccas.miami.edu/search.asp>; *CIA World Factbook 2004 Online*: <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/cu.html>.

- All members of the current Executive Committee are also members of the Politburo except José M. Miyar Barrueco.
- The National Assembly and Council of State were created by the Cuban Constitution of 1976, which reorganized Cuba's political structure. All members appointed in 1976 are original members.
- Ricardo Alarcón and Jaime Crombet are considered important political figures in Cuba, though they are not members of the Council of State. They are considered as part of the Council of State for all calculations included here.