

# A CENTURY OF CUBAN DEMOGRAPHIC INTERACTIONS AND WHAT THEY MAY PORTEND FOR THE FUTURE

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Reviewing Cuba's demographic past and what it may portend for the future is quite appropriate at a time when economic reforms are being debated, as reform proposals must be evaluated taking into consideration medium- to long-term population trends. This paper seeks to contribute to this debate by highlighting two basic characteristics of demographic developments: some are gradual and difficult to influence in the short-term, whereas others are highly responsive to economic changes and policy interventions. Both can result in major population structure changes with potentially significant economic, social and cultural ramifications.

Recent demographic developments in Cuba and the release of the United Nations 2012 global population assessment and prospects for the island<sup>1</sup> have focused attention on what appear to be dire demographic prospects for a nation already battered by decades of mismanagement and faulty economic policies. As currently foreseen, the anticipated demographic evolution will only aggravate deep economic and social problems Cuba will face in the future, irrespective of economic system. The United Nations projections (fifth column of Table 1) suggest Cuba has entered a population contraction period that—unless altered—will see its present day population decline

by half by 2100, reverting to its 1950 approximate size.<sup>2</sup> While in the contemporary world population decline is not unique, in Cuba's case it could prove to be more significant than in most other nations.

## EVOLUTION OF THE CUBAN POPULATION

Cuba's long-term population growth path can be readily ascertained from its rich census history. Since 1776, when Spanish colonial authorities conducted the first enumeration, Cuba has had 18 censuses, the most recent in 2012. As shown in the first three columns of Table 1, over the decades (and centuries) population growth has been uneven yet sustained: intercensal periods of relatively slow growth (e.g., the late 1880s and early 2000s), alternating with periods of rapid growth (e.g., the first three decades of the Twentieth Century and the 1953–1970 period). These fluctuations were associated with Cuba's historical dependency on sugar cane production or were influenced, alternatively, by political developments (e.g., high mortality caused by the 1895–98 War of Independence). More often than not, periods of rapid population growth were driven by immigration, while in others (mid 1900s), natural increase (the difference between birth rates and death rates) was the prime determinant.

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1. United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, Population Estimates and Projections Section, *World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision*, <http://esa.un.org/wpp/Documentation/publications.htm>.

2. Population projections usually assume the continuation of present trends, an unlikely development particularly when considering very long term scenarios, as in this case (to 2100). Results are nonetheless useful for assessing the long-term effects of demographic processes. The United Nations projections discussed in this paper refer to the medium variant, that is, the projections by the United Nations that are bracketed between two other projections made by United Nations demographers with alternate assumptions.

**Table 1. Enumerated, Estimated and Projected Total Population (in thousands) and Population Growth Rates (percent): Cuba 1775 to 2100**

Census Year	Census Count	Growth Rate	Estimated and Projected Population Year	Growth Rate	
1792	272.3		1955	6,539	1.99
1817	572.4		1960	7,141	1.76
1827	704.5		1970	8,715	2.15
1841	1,007.6		1975	9,438	1.83
1861	1,396.5		1980	9,835	1.60
1877	1,509.3		1985	10,097	0.82
1887	1,609.1		1990	10,601	0.53
1899	1,572.8	-0.31	1995	10,932	0.97
1909	2,049.0	3.32	2000	11,138	0.62
1919	2,889.0	2.85	2005	11,292	0.37
1931	3,962.3	2.61	2010	11,282	0.27
1943	4,778.6	1.58	2015	11,249	-0.02
1953	5,829.0	2.08	2020	11,162	-0.06
1970	8,569.1		2025	11,019	-0.16
1981	9,723.60		2030	10,847	-0.26
2002	11,177.7		2035	10,597	-0.32
2012	11,163.9		2040	10,267	-0.47
			2045	9,864	-0.63
			2050	9,392	-0.80
			2055	8,876	-0.98
			2060	8,346	-1.13
			2065	7,838	-1.23
			2070	7,379	-1.26
			2075	6,970	-1.21
			2080	6,600	-1.14
			2085	6,257	-1.09
			2090	5,945	-1.07
			2095	5,678	-1.02
			2100	5,458	-0.92

**Source:** Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas, 2012, *Anuario Demográfico de Cuba*, Havana; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision*, CD-ROM Ed.; and Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas, 2013, *Cifras Preliminares del Censo de Población y Viviendas de 2012*, Havana.

To assess the role of natural increase in Cuba's population growth it is useful to review long-term trends in vital rates, as depicted in Table 2. Shown are basic

fertility (crude birth rates, total fertility rates, TFRs, and net reproduction rates, NRRs) and mortality (crude death rates, infant mortality rates, and life expectancy at birth) measures computed by Cuban statistical authorities and the United Nations. All quinquenniums from 1900–04 to 2005–10 are represented in the estimates.<sup>3</sup> As these measures show, Cuba completed its demographic transition to low death and birth rates by the 1970s.

Within this overall context, it is instructive to examine the role played by the interaction of mortality, fertility and migration in Cuba's population change. The large upticks in population growth during the late 1700s and early 1900s, for example, were largely attributed to immigration. During the late 1700s, natural increase was hardly a factor as death rates were quite high. That was not the case in the early 1900s, when Cuba's fertility rates reached their highest historical levels and when, not inconsequentially, mortality began its secular decline due to the expansion of the health care infrastructure, gradual introduction of modern sanitary measures, and economic growth.

Even more telling was the population increase of the three decades following 1931, when despite the high emigration rates of the 1930s and early 1940s, Cuba's population size rose by half (Table 3). The power of natural increase was demonstrated again between 1953 and 1970 when the country gained 2.74 million inhabitants despite the net emigration of half-a-million Cubans, most of them at the historically unprecedented emigration rates that initially followed the 1959 revolution.<sup>4</sup> Such growth was facilitated by the 1960s Cuban baby boom and continued mortality decline.

More recently, fertility, as depicted by TFRs and NRRs, has been well below replacement since the late 1970s, currently at levels comparable to those found in other low fertility national populations.<sup>5</sup> As-

3. Although the labeling of reference periods by two separate entities is different and changed after the 1950–54 quinquennium, they are assumed and in fact should be equivalent.

4. Emigration rates during the 1960s, as shown in Table 3, were even higher than during the 1930s.

5. The TFR provides an estimate of the number of children the average woman will have during her reproductive years, whereas the NRR does the same regarding the birth of daughters exclusively.

**Table 2. Summary Fertility and Mortality Measures: Cuba 1900–04 to 2005–10**

Period	Fertility Measures			Mortality Measures		
	Crude Birth Rate	Total Fertility Rate	Net Reproduction Rate	Crude Death Rate	Infant Mortality Rate	Life Expectancy at Birth
1900–04	47.1	5.95	2.90	24.8	195	37.7
1905–09	48.1	6.03	2.94	25.6	192	38.2
1910–14	44.9	6.05	2.95	24.1	187	39.3
1915–19	42.4	5.92	2.89	22.7	180	40.3
1920–24	40.8	5.72	2.79	21.3	172	41.8
1925–29	38.5	5.47	2.67	19.6	161	43.7
1930–34	36.7	5.17	2.52	18.1	148	45.6
1935–39	35.2	4.86	2.37	16.2	129	48.7
1940–44	34.2	4.53	2.21	14.4	109	52.1
1945–49	32.9	4.18	2.04	12.6	91	55.6
1950–54	30.3	3.81	1.86	10.8	70	59.5
1955–60 <sup>a</sup>	28	3.7	1.58	9	70	62.4
1960–65	35	4.7	2.05	9	59	65.4
1965–70	32	4.3	1.94	7	50	68.5
1970–75	26	3.6	1.65	6	38	71
1975–80	17	2.2	1	6	22	73.1
1980–85	17	1.8	1.05	6	18	74.2
1985–90	18	1.8	1.06	7	13	74.6
1990–95	15	1.6	0.71	7	10	74.8
1995–2000	14	1.6	0.62	7	8	76.2
2000–05	12	1.6	0.61	7	6	77.2
2005–10	10	1.5	0.64	7	5	78.3

**Source:** For 1900–04 to 1950–54, Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas, 2007, *Los censos de población y vivienda en Cuba 1907–1953*, Havana, Table 14, p. 33 and Table 15, p. 34; for 1955–60 to 2005–10, United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision* CD-ROM Ed.

a. Beginning of United Nations estimates.

sumptions of constant below-replacement fertility partially account for the downward population growth trajectory of the United Nations projections, but so do assumptions of continued emigration at 1990s rates throughout most of the projection period. The role of mortality is more modest, as life expectancy is close to the biological ceiling currently supported by modern sanitation and medical developments; it is projected to rise gradually and at a slower pace than in past decades.

### LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS OF THE CURRENT DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

Cuba's current low fertility level and high life expectancy provide only limited scope for future population growth, while leading to significant age structure changes, most notably a considerable expansion in the older population share. While these trends are not much different from those confronted by many European and other Latin American (e.g., Uruguay) and Asian (e.g., Korea) countries, the Cuban situa-

tion differs in two important respects. First is the relative magnitude of the projected population decline. And second that Cuba is unique among countries confronting such a demographic outlook in that it tacitly embraces policies to promote large-scale emigration.

The reasons behind Cuba's emigration-promoting policies are well known and do not require further elaboration. It is generally accepted that Havana has long viewed emigration as a safety valve to release internal pressure, by encouraging or allowing political or economically disaffected individuals who could oppose the regime to settle abroad. Such interpretation is validated by the country's emigration history since 1959, particularly its various emigration surges (e.g., early 1960s, Freedom Flights), and most dramatically manifested during the chaotic 1980 Mariel outflow, when some 125,000 Cubans departed the country. The saliency of the migration safety valve became just as apparent with the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the end of its economic subsidies to Cu-

**Table 3. Net International Migration and Migration Rates: Cuba 1900–04 to 2005–10**

Period	Net Migration (in thousands)	Migration Rates (per thousand)
1900–04	55.3	6.80
1905–09	96.1	10.2
1910–14	79.3	7.2
1915–19	157	12.4
1920–24	232.9	15.7
1925–29	32.6	1.9
1930–34	-95.8	-4.9
1935–39	-48.3	-2.3
1940–44	-38.1	-1.7
1945–49	-17.1	-0.7
1950–54	-4.2	-0.2
1955–60 <sup>a</sup>	-55	-2
1960–65	-205	-5
1965–70	-250	-6
1970–75	-190	-4
1975–80	-160	-3
1980–85	-257	-5
1985–90	-67	-1
1990–95	-114	-2
1995–2000	-156	-3
2000–05	-143	-3
2005–10	-190	-3

**Source:** For 1900–04 to 1950–54, Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas, 2007, *Los censos de población y vivienda en Cuba 1907–1953*, Havana, Table 17, p. 37; for 1955–60 to 2005–10, United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision* CD-ROM Ed.

a. Beginning of United Nations estimates.

ba. Since, the émigré community increasingly has been regarded as an essential economic lifeline that, according to some estimates, provides a higher volume of foreign revenues than tourism.

What is apparent is that the current demographic scenario of below-replacement fertility and high emigration is unsustainable over the long term. That the Cuban authorities have come to this realization is suggested by several recent developments, such as frequent official press references to the looming demographic crisis. Even more telling was the June 2013

announcement by the authorities that the implementation of measures to promote increased fertility by encouraging Cuban women to bring to term pregnancies by reducing the country's extraordinarily high induced abortion rates is under consideration.<sup>6</sup> These measures may be but a first salvo in what are likely to become even more aggressive pro-fertility policies, such as providing childbearing incentives like financial subsidies to potential mothers (or households), increased child care options, etc. In other countries the effectiveness of such policies has been rather meager, even in wealthy nations with the wherewithal to offer very substantial financial incentives. Given Cuba's economic situation and the weight of so many other accumulated social and economic demands on national resources, the prospects for offering sufficiently generous fertility enhancing incentives is not promising.

A more subtle accommodation policy to deal with the growing population dilemma—anchored within the broader context of capturing some of the financial resources of its émigrés through remittances and, Havana someday hopes, investments—would be a framework designed to facilitate the consolidation of a bi-national, circulating Cuban community, akin to that established by many other countries, some in the Caribbean Basin, between homelands and their diasporas. Elements of this evolving policy include the enactment of revised regulations (Decreto-Ley No. 302 of 2012) to ease travel restrictions and allow Cuban nationals traveling overseas to stay abroad for longer periods of time without incurring additional costs or domestic penalties (e.g., confiscation of their homes).<sup>7</sup>

While the financial benefits of this policy framework are evident, and already visible in the increasing number of Cubans traveling to and from the country and in an estimated rise in remittances, the demographic benefits will be more modest and limited to partially anchoring more citizens on a seasonal basis to their country of birth. Whether or not that trans-

6. De Armas Padrino, Iris. 2013. "Cuba Takes Steps to Increase Birth Rate," Granma web site, June 27.

7. *Gaceta Oficial de la República de Cuba*, Ministerio de Justicia. 2012. Decreto-Ley No. 302, Modificativo de la Ley 1312, "Ley de Migración" de 20 de Septiembre de 1976, October 16.

lates into a slowdown in the population decline rate will hinge on many factors, including the future fertility behavior and preponderant abode of circulators and where their children choose to reside.

Barring an unlikely fertility upturn in the future, few options are left to Cuba to handle its inauspicious population prospects. While the situation seems to be graver in Cuba than in other countries given the country's high emigration rates, many countries beyond the low mortality/low fertility demographic transition are also groping with similar dilemmas. Prognoses regarding what this post-demographic transition world will bring are uncertain, although few analysts predict significant fertility rises. A desirable scenario would be a steady state, low to zero growth population equilibrium—absent international migration for particular national populations—harmonized around narrowly fluctuating fertility rates and continued and very gradual mortality declines. Most analysts anticipate, however, a prolonged below-replacement fertility environment in most developed countries that will gradually extend to other nations as they embrace economic and social attributes typical of liberal and consumer oriented societies.

Debates tend to center instead on the need to forge novel institutional mechanisms to allow societies to accommodate the demographic paradigm of slow or negative growth, aging populations and rising elderly dependency ratios. Japan, a country well along this path, is experimenting with ever-more-creative technological innovations to further automate production processes and facilitate the care of elderly citizens. In China, where decades of the one child policy resulted in highly unbalanced sex ratios at birth to the detriment of female babies, initiatives are underway to increase the cultural value of daughters as a means to safeguard societal cohesion. In the United States, seldom a day goes by when the public is not exposed through the media to newer and ever more elaborate institutional arrangements to care for the elderly. In still other countries, immigration is seen as a temporary palliative. The gamut of pro-immigration policies is wide, with many rich countries, such as Canada, emphasizing selective immigration—to

the detriment of family reunification—to attract skilled immigrants. Most comprehensive immigration policy frameworks also make provisions for limited permanent or temporary unskilled manpower flows to satisfy labor demands in agriculture and other sectors, sometimes on a seasonal basis. Considerations such as these are at the center of the ongoing United States immigration policy reform debate.

### **IMMIGRATION AS A FUTURE POLICY OPTION FOR CUBA?**

Immigration may serve as a medium- to long-term answer to Cuba's population dilemma, as suggested by the country's own demographic history. Attraction of immigrants would presuppose a reversal of the economic malaise that has gripped the country for decades. It would entail, by definition, a new economic model that releases the power of market forces to usher an era of growth in which investments, both domestic and foreign, are welcomed and rewarded, and Cuban workers allowed to achieve their production potential. Whether the ongoing timid economic reforms currently underway will be capable of doing so is questionable. However, one way or another, sooner or later, the country will inevitably acquire a more accountable and responsive political and economic system, resembling less the actual police state.

Over the long-term, it is reasonable to be optimistic about the country's economic prospects, given Cuba's adequate, if deteriorated, physical infrastructure, as well as its relatively well-educated workforce. The presence of a significant and relatively wealthy émigré community in the United States and Cuba's privileged geographical location augur well for the future. It is far from unreasonable to anticipate that Cuba will someday become the dominant Caribbean international tourism destination, develop a vibrant seasonal export agricultural sector, or become a leading regional provider of health, finance, and transportation services. Were this to happen, the country would be well placed to begin addressing its pressing demographic issues. With improved economic prospects, Cuban couples might be predisposed to have more children and fewer native workers would consider emigration as the most desirable choice.

**Table 4. Immigrants Admitted, and Entering and Departing Passengers: Cuba 1903 to 1933**

Year	Immigrants admitted	Entering passengers	Exiting passengers	Net Difference
1903	12,651	35,822	37,737	-1,915
1904	19,817	45,723	36,214	9,509
1905	40,560	85,337	45,359	39,978
1906	34,556	68,148	55,847	12,301
1907	32,436	70,725	56,628	14,097
1908	27,999	63,817	53,653	10,164
1909	31,286	67,322	57,505	9,817
1910	37,764	77,744	57,224	20,520
1911	38,053	80,921	65,411	15,510
1912	38,296	79,482	62,318	17,164
1913	43,507	92,534	68,315	24,219
1914	25,911	69,135	67,814	1,321
1915	32,795	79,233	65,433	13,800
1916	55,121	111,582	71,599	39,983
1917	57,097	108,947	71,198	37,749
1918	37,321	65,870	50,363	15,507
1919	80,488	128,283	80,531	47,752
1920	174,221	232,746	120,654	112,092
1921	58,948	116,326	124,667	-8,341
1922	25,993	76,217	82,877	-6,660
1923	75,461	144,211	77,941	66,270
1924	85,288	159,842	88,056	71,786
1925	55,904	128,389	92,769	35,620
1926	32,269	112,594	107,285	5,309
1927	31,414	101,246	108,087	-6,841
1928	27,314	117,716	109,618	8,098
1929	17,179	110,655	119,926	-9,271
1930	12,219	98,470	114,621	-16,151
1931	2,796	77,800	109,229	-31,429
1932	1,892	57,082	78,687	-21,605
1933	2,837	39,547	57,637	-18,090
<b>Total</b>	1,249,393	2,903,466	2,395,203	508,263

**Source:** Secretaría de Hacienda, Sección de Estadística, *Immigración y Movimiento de Pasajeros*, Havana, 1906–07 to 1932–33 (23 issues).

Modestly rising fertility and lower emigration rates would be welcome but insufficient to reverse the population contraction trend. Cuba could again consider immigration to redress its population needs, as it did in the past, consistent with what the United States and other countries do currently. Under proper economic conditions—and given its small population size and therefore quantitatively limited required immigration inflow—Cuba could well attract immigrants again. The questions will be what types of immigrants would Cuba want to attract and which potential migrants would be willing to relocate in

Cuba? Preliminary answers to both questions may be evaluated by reviewing selected features of Cuba's immigration history during the early Twentieth Century; by considering ongoing debates regarding the role of immigration policies in countries welcoming new arrivals; and potential immigrant source countries that may deem Cuba to be a desirable destination option.

#### CUBA'S EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY IMMIGRATION EXPERIENCE

Between 1903 and 1933, the most recent period of mass immigration to Cuba, close to 1.25 million immigrants were admitted, as shown in Table 4. The actual number that settled permanently, net of those dying in Cuba, was far fewer, as suggested by the foreign-born counts recorded in the various Cuban censuses (Table 5). Consistently during the first third of the Twentieth century, close to 11% of Cuba's population had foreign origins. Not surprisingly, the vast majority of migrants were male. By 1953, the foreign-born population had declined by nearly half from its 1931 peak, to 230,000, while as a share of the total population it had fallen by two-thirds. A sharp contraction of the Cuban economy before and following the Great Depression, restrictive immigration legislation (the "50 Percent Law") in the 1930s, and Cuba's role as a transit point for European migrants seeking to reach the United States following passage of the 1924 U.S. National Origins Act, led to the departure of hundreds of thousands of former immigrants. That the ebb and flow of migrants was considerable is suggested, in the absence of emigration statistics, by entering and departing passenger data, also shown in Table 4.

Particularly illuminating are the statistics in Table 5 regarding the immigrants' national origins. While those from Spain led the annual flow for nearly the whole period, their dominance became less pronounced by the late 1910s as substantial contingents of Caribbean migrants, recorded in the table as from "Other America," began reaching Cuban shores.<sup>8</sup> Demand for labor from these countries grew with the expansion of the sugar industry and the limited supply of European migrants (mostly Spanish "golondrinas") willing to engage in back-breaking, low-pay ag-

**Table 5. Total, Native and Foreign-Born Population; Population Growth; Sex Ratios and Origin of the Foreign-Born: Cuba, Census Years 1899 to 1953**

Census Year	1899	1907	1919	1931	1943	1953
Total Population	1,572,797	2,048,980	2,889,004	3,962,344	4,778,583	5,829,029
Absolute Population Growth	-58,890	476,183	840,024	1,073,340	816,239	1,050,446
Percent Population Growth	-3.6	30.3	41.0	37.2	20.6	22.0
Percent Annual Growth Rate	-0.3	3.3	2.9	2.6	1.6	2.1
Native-Born	1,400,262	1,820,239	2,549,922	3,525,447	4,532,032	5,598,598
Foreign-Born	172,535	228,741	339,082	436,897	246,551	230,431
Percent Foreign-Born	11.0	11.2	11.7	11.0	5.2	4.0
Sex Ratio Natives	932	961	994	1,020	1,049	1,017
Sex Ratio Foreign-Born	4,253	3,993	3,257	2,813	2,615	2,380
Foreign-Born in:						
Spain	129,240	185,393	245,644	257,596	157,527	74,561
Other Europe	3,558	4,539	27,587	16,707	14,557	19,990
United States	7,552	9,631	13,005	7,195	3,800	6,503
Other America	3,736	6,909	31,442	121,695	47,240	32,139
Asia	14,880	11,217	10,300	31,376	20,203	15,405
Africa	12,953	7,948	2,700	861	1,296	117
Unknown	616	3,104	8,404	1,467	1,928	612
Total Foreign-Born	172,535	228,741	339,082	436,897	246,551	149,327
Percent Foreign-Born in:						
Spain	74.9	81.0	72.4	59.0	63.9	49.9
United States	4.4	4.2	3.8	1.6	1.5	4.4
Other America	2.2	3.0	9.3	27.9	19.2	21.5
China	8.6	4.9	3.0	5.6	6.4	7.9
Africa	7.5	3.5	0.8	0.2	0.5	0.1
Other	2.4	3.4	10.7	5.7	8.5	16.2
Total Foreign-Born	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

**Source:** Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas, *Los censos de población y viviendas en Cuba, 1907–1953*, Havana, Table 13, p. 32; Anexo II, Table 18, p. 196 and Table 19, p. 197.

gricultural labor. By the 1920s, the adverse effects of the Great Depression on the demand for Cuban sugar in international markets reduced to a trickle the formerly vigorous immigration flows, regardless of migrants' national origins or skill levels.

### THE SITUATION TODAY

Could Cuba become a magnet for future immigrants? Earlier it was briefly discussed what would be necessary for such an unlikely development to occur in the future given today's situation. Next to the archipelago is a potential source of migrants that given even modest economic improvements in Cuba

would be willing, if allowed, to contribute their labor to the national economy. For most Haitians, the home situation is dismal and only likely to improve marginally in decades to come: unemployment is rampant, wages low and social conditions, such as housing and nutrition, amongst the worst in the Western Hemisphere. Even today, for most Haitians, conditions in Cuba compare favorably to what they face at home. The only reason they do not emigrate to Cuba presently is because of the restrictive controls Havana implements—hardly ever noted—to impede such flows.<sup>9</sup> Absent such controls, it could be safely assumed that Cuba would have a sizable Hai-

8. According to immigration statistics not separately shown in Table 5, between 1912 and 1933, 190,670 Haitians and 121,051 Jamaicans were admitted as immigrants to Cuba. The entry and departure of many other seasonal migrants, mainly from Haiti, are likely to have gone unrecorded as they entered and departed Cuba through poorly monitored ports in sugar-producing regions in Eastern Cuba.

9. For decades, Havana has mercilessly repatriated Haitian boat people or assisted them in their passage to reach the United States.

tian presence, even under subsistence living standards. Had it been possible, many others would have come to Cuba with the expectation of utilizing the country as a bridge to eventually reach the United States as undocumented migrants.

This potential pool of Haitian immigrants could be tapped by Cuba someday to cope with what—from a contemporary perspective—seem to be the untenable dependency ratios implied by the 2012 United Nations projections.<sup>10</sup> Such migration, mostly of unskilled workers, would help relieve pressing needs in certain labor intensive sectors such as elderly care, or relieve worker shortages in economic sectors such as agriculture, construction and tourism, that are heavy users, or partially rely, on physical labor. Under improved economic conditions such jobs presumably will not attract the better educated Cuban workers.

It is unlikely, however, that the labor requirements of a more prosperous but demographically challenged Cuba could be solely satisfied by unskilled immigration. The needs of a more complex economy will require technically qualified workers. Cuban-American

return migration may help fill some skilled labor demand niches as the bi-national nexus linking Cuba with South Florida is consolidated. Should the economic recovery be robust enough, return migration may not suffice to alleviate skilled labor shortages. Were that to be the case, Cuba may have no recourse but to design and hopefully implement an immigration policy capable of attracting skilled workers from other countries.

Vagaries about future developments are unpredictable, but from today's optic it appears that not much could be expected regarding European immigration, as was the case during the 1920s. More promising would be policies oriented to entice skilled workers to come to Cuba from other relatively-developed Latin American and Caribbean countries, or from countries such as India that have assigned priority to technical education. The design of such immigration policies must be carefully calibrated to effectively address labor market demands and immigrant integration issues.

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10. The 2012 United Nations projections assume that from about 2050 to the end of the projection period (2100), Cuba will have about one dependent for every person of working age.