

# DESIGN FOR SIX SIGMA IN THE CHARTING OF A CUBAN TRANSITION

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De Dulcinea, en ansias de la muerte,  
!di que siempre será la más hermosa!  
Del soneto "La más hermosa"  
Enrique Hernández Miyares

This paper follows-up on earlier work (Romeu, 2007); we refer the reader to this material for background on Six Sigma and for an in-depth discussion of the need for a peaceful transition to pluralism in Cuba. Here, we develop a variant of Six Sigma, known as Design for Six Sigma, and we continue discussing the problems surrounding said event.

There are two good reasons for using the Six Sigma methodology. It is a tool from our professional arsenal, one that we know well and have used successfully to improve or redesign service and industrial organizations. A national government is just a huge service organization. Six Sigma provides a framework and roadmap for implementing change, with a well-defined and tried sequence of steps or phases. However, if the Six Sigma nomenclature gets in the way of the reader not familiar with this approach, just ignore it. This should not prevent understanding the main concepts and ideas developed here. For those interested in learning more about Six Sigma, see Gryna et al. (2007).

The Cuban transition has already started. Fidel Castro, who headed the Cuban government for almost fifty years under various titles (Commander in Chief,

Prime Minister, President of the Republic, First Secretary of the Communist Party, etc.) has officially retired. After a year-long hiatus when, due to his serious illness, the elder Castro delegated the daily running of the government to his brother Raúl, Fidel announced that he would not run for re-election as President. The Cuban National Assembly, a rubber-stamp parliament that meets for a few days every year and signs the bills submitted to it by the Council of State, elected Raúl, then Minister of the Armed Forces, as the new President, thus opening up a new chapter in the history of Cuba.

General Raúl Castro has headed the extensive Cuban military apparatus (the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias, FAR) for nearly fifty years. The FAR include many large and varied organizations, in diverse economic areas such as tourism and agriculture. Thence, Raúl brings a wealth of management experience, something that Fidel always lacked. In turn, Raúl lacks the charisma of his brother. In fact, they represent two very different styles, and it shows.

Raúl Castro started his presidency by announcing several important economic changes. These include that idle lands in state farms and cooperatives will be turned over to private farmers willing to work them. These farmers will be able to buy farm equipment,

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1. Many friends and colleagues, in ASCE, ASA and other organizations, have contributed to our work with information, suggestions, criticism, etc. We thank them all. ASCE has always provided us with an open forum to present our ideas, no matter how different from that of others these may be. We pride ourselves of its membership, for that. Finally, we thank our discussant, Armando Linde, ASCE Proceedings Editor, J. Pérez-López, and ASCE colleagues A. Cuzan, M. Reyes, R. B. Romeu, J. F. Alonso, P. Saavedra, and so many others for their comments, suggestions, and often, much needed criticism.

tools, and supplies from government stores. And their farm products may be sold in free markets to the general population. Raúl also said that some salaries and pensions would be raised, and that workers would hereon be compensated according to their productivity. So much for the egalitarianism fostered by the elder Castro. Cubans are now allowed to buy (with convertible pesos) consumer items such as cell phones and computers, hereto restricted to government officials. These changes have serious consequences, some negative and some positive. Among the negative ones, only Cubans with convertible pesos, obtained via dollars from tourism or foreign remittances (*remesas*), will enjoy these products. This only widens the already-deep differences among them. On the positive side, some civil society organizations have been able to use the Internet and have create discussion lists and Web Pages, providing its members a broader access and contacts with others, both inside Cuba and abroad. Such contacts have been widely used, for example, for requesting badly needed humanitarian aid and information after Hurricane Ike devastated the island in September.

There have also been opportunities lost, on both sides. For example, a European Union organization recognized Yoani Sánchez, a young Cuban woman, for her work as a blogger. However, the Cuban government did not allow her to travel abroad to receive the award. And even while releasing a small number of political prisoners, the Cuban government still keeps in jail the majority of dissidents detained in 2003. Meanwhile, the 48-year-old U.S. embargo and other economic constrains regarding traveling to Cuba and sending *remesas*, archaic remnants of the Cold War era, remain in place just as before Raúl's access to power.

The European Union has also softened the political and economic measures imposed on Cuba after it jailed 80+ dissidents in 2003. For example, the *cocktail war*, whereby Cuban dissidents were invited to some European diplomatic events, and government officials boycotted them, seems to have ended.

Summarizing, we believe that Cuba is now in a position akin to that of Spain in the early 1960s, when General Franco appointed Laureano López Rodó and his *Opus Dei* team, to lead the country out of its eco-

nomical malaise. Such economic opening created objective conditions for Spain's peaceful transition to pluralism just a few years later. We believe the same may occur in Cuba if Raúl becomes another modernizer.

The alternative (i.e., if all sides stay the present course) could lead to a situation akin to that of the Soviet Union in 1981, at the death of Leonid Brezhnev. For Cuban leaders from the Castros' generation are also in their late 70s and 80s, and hence may serve for an additional five or ten years. Then, as it occurred in the Soviet Union, it may be too late for a Cuban Gorbachev to stop an institutional collapse, produced by the faltering socioeconomic conditions in the island, yielding disastrous results for everyone, in particular for the Cuban people, the exile community, and the U.S. government.

Turning to the transition event itself, there are those, on both sides of the argument, who will go to any length to obstruct or prevent it—because it hampers their interests. And there are those who would like to see it happen, but for very different reasons. Among the latter there are at least three groups.

One group sees a transition as an opportunity to obtain some breathing space, thus using it to maintain the present situation, under some cosmetic or minimum change. Then, there are others who want to use the transition to destroy the regime and punish its leaders. Finally, there is a group, to which this author subscribes, that sees a transition as the way for Cuba to return to its natural course, heal its wounds and become, as José Martí said, a country “con todos y para el bien de todos.” Whenever in this study the collective “we” is used, it definitely refers to this third group.

In the rest of this paper, we apply the Design for Six Sigma methodology to analyze the current Cuban situation as well as its prospects of developing a peaceful transition.

## BACKGROUND

In Romeu (2005 and 2007) we discussed in-depth some reasons for, and the international problems related to, the development of a successful Cuban transition. We enumerated and analyzed a number of successful transitions that occurred during the XX Century. And we derived some common characteris-

tics they exhibited. For its importance, we summarize them again. They tell a very vivid story.

Among the successful Ibero-American transitions we can mention:

- Colombia, after Rojas Pinillas, in 1957;
- Venezuela, after Pérez Jiménez, in 1958;
- Spain, after Franco's death, in 1975;
- Portugal, after Salazar-Caetano, in 1973;
- Chile, after Pinochet's retirement, in 1989;
- Brazil, after the Generals' retirement, in 1980; and
- Mexico, after the PAN succeeded the PRI, in 2000.

Some unsuccessful examples of Ibero-American transitions are

- Venezuela, after General Juan V. Gómez' death, in 1936;
- Brazil, after both of President Getulio Vargas' terms, in 1945 and 1954;
- Argentina, after both of General Perón's terms, in 1955 and 1973;
- Argentina, after the military dictatorship and the Malvinas war, in 1985;
- Mexico, after General Porfirio Díaz' exodus, in 1911;
- Dominican Republic, after Rafael L. Trujillo's death, in 1961;
- Nicaragua, after the Somoza dynasty was overthrown, in 1979;
- Nicaragua, after the Sandinistas lost the elections, in 1990;
- Honduras, after General Carias Andino was deposed, in 1954;
- Guatemala, after General Jorge Ubico was deposed in 1944;
- El Salvador, after the military regime lost control, in 1979;
- Haiti, after the Duvalier dynasty was overthrown, in 1986;
- Cuba, after President Machado and the revolution of 1933;
- Cuba, after both of General Batista's exodus, in 1944 and 1959; and
- Paraguay, after General Stroessner was overthrown, in 1989.

Examples of other transitions that occurred in other parts of the Third World:

- Turkey, after Kamal Atatürk's death, in 1938;
- China, after the death of Mao Tse Tung, in 1976;
- Soviet Union, after Stalin's death, in 1953;
- Soviet Union, after the Brezhnev gerontocracy, in 1985;
- Viet Nam, after the death of Ho Chi Minh, in 1969;
- North Korea, after the death of Kim Il Sung, in 1994;
- Angola, after Agostino Neto and successors;
- Mozambique, after FRELIMO; and
- Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde.

We found that all successful transitions had in common the factors outlined below. And we also found that unsuccessful transitions lacked pre-existence of one or more of them:

- Existing, even if embryonic civil society;
- Internal opposition cooperation and civility;
- Lack of intervention from super-powers;
- Arbitration and cooperation from peer nations;
- Arbitration and cooperation from international blocs;
- Prior governmental economic opening;
- Degree of internal peace and stability;
- Environment for future economic growth; and
- Size and location of a country, regarding super-powers.

The most recent transition, in Zimbabwe, has President Mugabe finally sharing power with the opposition. President Mbeki of neighboring South Africa, brokered the agreement.

#### SIX SIGMA DMAIC VERSUS DESIGN FOR SIX SIGMA

In our earlier paper (Romeu 2007) we used the traditional DMAIC Six Sigma methodology (Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, and Control) to study the Cuban transition process. Hence, we implicitly approached the problem as a *modification* of the current system.

In the present paper we implement the Design for Six Sigma (DFSS) methodology, whereby a system is completely designed from scratch. There is no underlying

message here: just a desire to improve this investigation using additional tools. In any case, modified or rewritten from scratch, the long term changes that the Cuban system will require, compared with the characteristics it currently exhibits, will be substantial.

Both Six Sigma DMAIC and DFSS methodologies, share the first three phases (Define, Measure, and Analyze). However, they *define* and *measure* different things, because DFSS builds a new system and there is little to evaluate. The two methodologies also differ in their last two phases. DMAIC *implements* and *controls* the changes made to the existing system, while DFSS *designs* such system, and then *verifies* that it does works.

According to Juran's quality planning road map (Gryna et al., 2007), in an improvement effort we have to implement the following steps, yielding the corresponding outputs:

1. Establish the Project (Transition) => Produce the List of Desired Goals.
2. Identify the Stakeholders (participants) => Produce the List of Stakeholders.
3. Identify the Stakeholders' Needs => Produce List of such Needs/Wants.
4. Develop the Product (Transition) => Design what is such Product.
5. Develop the Process (yielding a Transition) => Design such Process.
6. Develop Process Controls => Mechanisms to Ensure Transition Success.

Such sequence of activities and steps can help create the conditions that foster a peaceful transition to pluralism in Cuba. We will overview them below.

*Step 1:* Define a Transition. For us it means a deliberate (non-violent) change from what we currently have to something different (hopefully better). Define the project mission statement, scope and goals. Define the transition team responsibilities, schedules, etc. There

has been a lot of discussion about this among the Cuban community inside and abroad, within the government, and the opposition, overt and covert. The different parties must now get together and compare notes, negotiate, and reach some consensus.

*Step 2:* Identification of all transition stakeholders is not straight forward. Once this is accomplished, we need to convince such stakeholders that the expense (in time, effort and sacrifices) of the transition exercise is worth their while (i.e., the new system will be better than the current one). Motivation is essential.

*Step 3:* Identifying stakeholder needs is difficult. Different people (stakeholders) would want different things. Their needs and wants are not always: (1) easy to pay for; or (2) consistent with each other (i.e., they may be antagonistic). We need to find areas of agreement and to negotiate them, for the transition to take off. Cubans need to master the art of the give-and-take. To help in this phase, the presence of a mutually acceptable Arbiter is essential.<sup>2</sup>

The results of *Steps 2* and *3* constitute the *Business Case*. In the development of stakeholder needs, their requirements and the processes leading to their fulfillment, DFSS uses the *QFD Matrix Cascade*. The detailed discussion of the Business Case and of the QFD Matrix Cascade constitutes the main objective of this paper.

The main Six Sigma tools used in these activities include Quality Function Deployment (QFD) matrices, Fault Trees, Failure Mode and Effect Analysis, and Pareto, Flow and Ishikawa charts. They have already been defined and illustrated in Romeu (2007), for the current Transition context. They can also be found in Gryna et al., 2007.

Only the QFD matrix cascade, given its importance at the core of the DFSS methodology will be discussed in detail, after seeing how the Business Case is built.

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2. Our discussant recommended that we give additional and specific guidance to Steps 2 and 3. This is difficult at this stage, with the scant information that we have. But based upon the experience gained from studying previous successful transitions, we have designed a flowchart for developing such activities. It is shown in an Appendix. Steps 4, 5 and 6 of Juran's improvement methodology are beyond the problem scope, at this time and with the current information, and will be developed at the proper moment.

## MAKING THE BUSINESS CASE

Change is always stressful, whether in the personal or in the organizational realm. To accomplish successful change, we must start by convincing all those involved that change will result to their benefit. Otherwise, change will not occur; or it will only be cosmetic. Such *convincing* is what is known as *making the business case*.

First, we need to identify the *stakeholders*, i.e., those participants who will be directly affected by change. And we have to make the business case to them. That is, to show unequivocally how the new or transformed system will improve conditions for them. The readings upon which we base the business case for this research are included in the references of this paper, as well as in those of Romeu, 2005 and 2007.

There are at least five different groups of stakeholders to whom we must make a very strong business case if we want to have a peaceful transition to pluralism in Cuba. They are: (1) the current Cuban Government officials; (2) the Cuban people (inside Cuba); (3) the Cuban exiles (diaspora); (4) the U.S. Government; and (5) concerned governments from Europe and Latin America. We overview the corresponding business cases below:

The first group, the current Cuban government administration, inherited a dysfunctional and bankrupt economy that cannot satisfy the needs and wants of the Cuban people. It has implicitly recognized this fact by rapidly moving to institute economic reforms. A compounding factor is the advanced age of the present Administration leaders. Succession crises are a common problem for most one-party and personal political systems. Hence, Cuba may face a similar situation to that of the former Soviet Union with the succession problems created by Brezhnev's death. This would result in a disastrous situation for everyone involved, and must be avoided at all costs.

By actively fostering a paced but effective transition initially to an economically more open system but at the end to a pluralistic one (as it occurred in Spain after Franco, and is occurring in China and Vietnam) the Cuban leaders may ensure their own survival and legacy. Some may find this naive. But as national leaders arrive to an advanced age, *legacy* becomes an important behavior driver.

The second group, the Cuban people in the island, is currently suffering the brunt of fifty years of Fidel Castro's socio-economic and political policies. Daily, ordinary economic needs are widely unfulfilled. Basic individual human rights such as free speech, free press, free political and union organizations, are lacking. Collective economic rights such as free and universal health care, free education, and full employment, which were once the pride of Castro's regime, have significantly eroded.

The Cuban people inside the island want to improve their standard of living, expand their individual human rights, and revamp their collective economic rights. These are very real and complex needs, and must be addressed openly, honestly, and urgently by a transition team before any other, including political and ideological ones. We have received much criticism for holding this position, and will defend it further in the discussion section.

In particular, there is a basic right that everyday Cubans have been missing all along, one which is essential for improving their standards of living as well as all other rights. It is the right to work independently. Currently, most Cubans cannot undertake individual work assignments (e.g., as plumbers, carpenters, electricians, doctors). For, it is either outright forbidden or excessively taxed. Hence, liberalizing private citizen's economic activity must be the first step in any transition. The second step must be to move to a single currency system in Cuba. The current dual currency system is unacceptable, economically as well as ideologically, and is at the root of most Cuban grievances. It is extremely inefficient, as it adversely affects labor markets and price systems as well as the speedy flow of products and services. Freedom to contract work will, simultaneously, help create jobs and raise income for the average workers, while solving shortages and providing inexistent or deficient services. Creating a single currency will help abolish the current two-track system, where haves and have-nots are now those with and without access to convertible peso.

The third group, the Cuban exiles (diaspora), have been absent from the island anywhere from a few to fifty years. Many may want to return, either as visitors and tourists, or to spend part of their retirement years,

or to re-initiate their lives there. The first step must be to reestablish the right to send money and goods to relatives and friends in Cuba, without unreasonable and politically-motivated constraints. The second step must be to reestablish the right of all Cubans, inside and outside the island, to freely enter or leave their country of birth.

Political pluralism is a prime concern of a large part of the exile community. However, Cubans inside the island are primarily concerned with their severe daily economic problems, which must be solved first. Hence, political pluralism will simply have to wait. For, in addition to the stated priorities and resource limitations, there are currently no independently organized political parties, or civil society inside Cuba, no nationally recognized political leaders, no free press, etc., which are necessary pre-conditions to the establishment of a stable and lasting pluralistic society. Even if political pluralism were magically handed to Cubans tomorrow, the many and small internal dissident groups currently active could not take over and run the country. Dissident groups lack administrative experience, cohesion, and nation-wide, grass-root support. Hence, either chaos would arise, or government would fall under the influence and manipulation of extraneous forces.

An economic opening like the one López Rodó promoted in Spain in the 1960s, will incrementally be followed by other openings in all aspects of private and public life, including economic, social and ideological. This would allow the creation of the necessary infrastructure (political parties, civil society, media, experienced, widely recognized leaders) that will make pluralism possible and stable. Pluralism unavoidably follows economic freedom. It just takes time and patience. Trying to hasten it will only result in its delay, as well as in other undesired side effects.

The fourth group, the U.S. Government, would benefit from having a stable and friendly country 90 miles off its shores. One where there are no uncontrolled *balseiro* migratory flows, or one that serves as a transshipment stage for drugs and other illicit operations. Moreover, Cuba's status not only affects U.S. national security but also its relations with the other Latin American countries who are carefully following the

events. The U.S. must choose between two strategies or courses of action regarding Cuba's transition, which correspond to short- and long-term strategies.

The short-term course of action consists in imposing a time table and a short list of conditions for the Cuban government to fulfill. This course of action fails to recognize that, inside the Cuban government as well as in the U.S. and in the exile community, there are some who see a transition as a problem and adamantly oppose it. The short-term course of action would only strengthen their position and either slow or stop a transition. In addition, it would send a questionable signal to Latin America about U.S. policies toward the region.

The long term course of action is consistent with the current American strategy toward China and Vietnam and with the end of the Cold War. It encourages economic change and waits for the social and political changes to follow. This course of action also sends a message to Latin America about the U.S. not imposing its will by strength. Such message creates good will, an important commodity in today's world circumstances (terrorism).

Finally, the fifth group is composed by concerned governments in Europe and Latin America. They understand that stability in Cuba will substantially improve the regional economic and political climate and are willing to serve as Arbiters in the process to achieve it. On the other side of such arrangement, several Latin American countries have legitimate economic and political concerns about a Cuban return to the fold. These must be openly, honestly, and swiftly addressed and resolved by a transition team. Some of the reasons for them are discussed at length in Romeu (2005) and Romeu (2008).

International support is absolutely necessary for a successful transition in Cuba. It is especially important for providing the safeguards and arbitration functions that the Cuban and U.S. governments (two long-time foes) require for such a process to advance.

Summarizing, there exist essentially three positions. A transition can be (directly or indirectly) fostered, hampered, or ignored. We believe that there currently exists a unique window of opportunity that must be seized. If lost by inaction or incompetence, many more

years of unnecessary suffering (for those actively involved) and of undesired secondary effects (for those watching from the side lines) will ensue.

### THE QFD MATRIX CASCADE

In this section we discuss some technical aspects of the Quality Function Deployment or QFD matrix. Also known as “the House of Quality,” the QDF matrix is one of the most powerful and useful Six Sigma improvement and design tools. It was explained and illustrated in the current transition context in Romeu (2007).

A Matrix Cascade consists of a sequence of concatenated QFD matrices, each one stemming from the prior matrix. Through them we define the entire change paradigm. It comprises at least four successive matrices that relate (1) stakeholder with stakeholder requirements; (2) stakeholder requirements with transition features; (3) transition features with transition process features; and (4) transition process features with transition process controls. Once the components of these four matrices and their relationships have been identified and defined, the matrix cascade permits us to go from one to the next, in a complete and precise way.

In the case of a Cuban transition, the stakeholders include: current government leaders, communist party members, the military, police and secret services, Cuban workers, peasants and professionals, retirees, unemployed, independent workers, students, women, infants, Cuban exiles, past and present political prisoners, and external participants (i.e., foreign countries), among others. Stakeholders need to be well aware of how they will benefit from the process as well as how this will occur.

- *Stakeholder needs* include: personal safety during and after transition; national stability and peace; economic prosperity, including substantial increase in housing, food and consumer goods; gainful employment, with freedom to work and to sell one’s products; improvements in infrastructure and power, transportation, and communication systems, among others. A rapid and general economic improvement is crucial to the transition.
- *Transition features* facilitate and make it possible. They include: absence of reprisals to former government officers; retirement of prominent ones

and re-incorporation of the remaining to national life; release of all political prisoners and their re-incorporation to national life; return of expatriates and re-incorporation to national life; right for all Cubans to enter and leave the country freely; right to work, to freedom of expression and to the organization of civil society, among others.

- *Transition process features* facilitate the process evolution. They include: revision of current economic and social laws, land and other property provisions; of the judicial system, civil society, newspapers and media, political associations; banks, unions and professional organizations; pension plans and public services (education, health, unemployment), among others.
- *Process control* helps enforce the process development. They include: reorganization of the police, army and security apparatus, popular representation system, independent radio and TV stations, newspapers, and civil society organizations, among others.

The above lists are not exhaustive by any means, but clearly illustrates how the transition will affect most activities and institutions. Precisely because of this, changes have to be made at a deliberate pace, integrating rather than dislocating the composition of the social fiber, perfecting rather than disrupting it, and through open discussion and consensus, rather than through back-dealing and imposition. Changes will require the cooperation of all segments of Cuban society and of the political spectrum coupled with a lot of give-and-take and good will. But foremost, the changes will require time. Rome was not built in a day—and neither will the Cuban transition.

To ensure that transition changes are successfully implemented, detailed failure analyses via Failure Trees (FTAs) and Failure Modes and Effects Analysis (FMEAs) should be made. They were described and illustrated in the transition context in Romeu (2007). Anticipating most possible failures and problems, and acting to either prevent them or successfully compensating for them, are essential for project success.

### SOME USEFUL SOURCES OF INCOME

A successful transition requires sizeable sources of income that can finance the desired quality of life im-

provements. These may be obtained from abroad in the forms of loans but they might bring along inconvenient obligations. Alternatively, such income can be (at least partially) generated internally. Below we overview some new revenue sources to consider.

- *Medical tourism* based on Cuba's extensive health apparatus. Such infrastructure, now overhauled and modernized, can be enhanced by the international relations fostered by an economic opening brought about by a transition, adding to the island's current Latin American customers, many more from the EU, U.S., and Canada.
- *Retirement resorts and time share facilities* could be built for those Cuban exiles who would like to spend some time every year in the country of their birth, and also for foreign nationals seeking Cuba's mild climate and lower cost of living. Such time sharing complexes may provide basic medical facilities for the aged. Small apartments could be built in different provinces, and sold or leased for periods of, say, two weeks to two months per year.
- *An international container super-port* could be built in one of Cuba's ample bays (Mariel or Matanzas). Super-ports in the U.S. Eastern seaboard and the Gulf are now at full capacity. A container super-port in Cuba would allow the transferring of merchandise from large ships arriving from Europe and Asia into smaller vessels sailing to U.S. ports, and vice-versa. Cuba's geographical situation lends itself magnificently for this function.
- *A computer programming haven*, based on Cuba's well trained engineers, can be created similarly as in Ireland. Cuba is much closer to the U.S. than India, facilitating the needed face-to-face work contacts over the Florida straits, easier than over the Pacific Ocean.
- *A high tech haven* for industrial production, such as the one currently operating in the Dominican Republic, can also be created, taking advantage of the well-trained Cuban labor force and the island geographical proximity to the U.S.
- *The reconstruction of Old Havana*, declared *Patrimonio de la Humanidad* by UNESCO, can be achieved through a procedure similar to the one used in Venice during the 1960s. Small houses can be leased or sold to Cubans willing to repair them

and live in them. The larger palaces can be leased to international businesses and organizations interested in transferring and lodging their Latin American offices in Historic Havana.

The proceeds from such sources will pay for revamping public education, health care, the reconstruction of Cuba's infrastructure (roads, railroads, airports, ports; water and power networks; phone and postal service; army, police and government installations, etc.). The employment generated will compensate for jobs lost to modernization of many inefficient organizations that will have to disappear.

## DISCUSSION

Many of the premises and conclusions of our present paper have been criticized by our discussant, as well as by several other colleagues. They essentially disagree with our position regarding transition priorities—economic reconstruction first, political considerations later—and the treatment of current Cuban leadership and institutions.

We believe our critics confuse the issues here. We are proposing a *peaceful transition* in Cuba. Such process is defined as a *negotiation* between those currently out of power and those who hold it. They would share power in order to modify the course of events because, as it stands, things are not working. This is the way transition was stated in Spain, in 1975. What our critics propose is not a transition; it is an *unconditional surrender* of the current power holders, such as it occurred in Germany, in 1945, or more recently in Irak (2003). We find this alternative course of action both unreasonable and unsustainable. To begin with, we would never want to see something like that occurring in Cuba. Then, we would like to know where our critics plan to find the army to impose such conditions to the Cuban government and the resources to support the ensuing occupation.

The only forces behind our current transition proposal are those of reason and history. We offer President Raúl Castro's administration the example of Portugal, in the 1970s. There, illness incapacitated Dr. Salazar, as it has incapacitated Fidel Castro, after 40+ years of holding absolute power in the country. In Portugal, Marcelo Caetano inherited the position, just as Raúl Castro did in Cuba. Caetano failed to move as fast as

needed, and in the direction the country required, and was overthrown by Portugal's own younger military, product of the same Portuguese system, who finally instituted a pluralistic democracy in the country. Let this be a historical lesson to consider in Havana.

This said, we strongly believe Cuba is entering a period similar to that of Spain around 1962, when Laureano López Rodó and his *Opus Dei* team lead the country out of its economic malaise. López Rodó's economic changes did not directly address Franco's political framework. But it fostered Spain's peaceful transition to pluralism years later. We have seen economic transitions occur in China and Vietnam, after the deaths of Mao and Ho. Economic liberalization policies have also created opportunities for political and social openings. Historically, economics has had a great part in advancing political rights.

If Raúl Castro's administration fails to liberalize Cuba's current economic and social structure, the country may follow the Soviet Union after Brezhnev's death. For, as it occurred in the Soviet Union, younger leaders may take over anyway. But it may be too late to prevent a collapse, leading to socio-economic and political turmoil (unrest, civil war, massive illegal emigration, and foreign intervention), disastrous for everyone, including the U.S. government and neighboring nations.

On the opposition side, if we want a transition to take place, we need to help bring it about. We need to carefully organize, plan and prepare conditions for its development. And *we must start by becoming the change we want to see* (Mahatma Gandhi). If we want an open society in Cuba, we must provide an example of such open society abroad. One that openly and frankly discusses all political alternatives in its press, TV and civil society organizations, and not only those alternatives that it espouses. We need to become more tolerant with those, among our own ranks, whose opinions differ from ours. We need to substitute unconstructive name-calling by a civil and open-minded exchange of ideas, and to drop the obsolete Cold War rhetoric. We need to objectively evaluate the consequences of the different alternatives proposed, under the light of what is best for the long-term future of the Cuban na-

tion. Then, we have to convince others that our ideas and approaches are better and take into consideration the suggestions, corrections, changes, etc., that those others may provide.

We also need to take adequate action. Some times, the best action consists in doing nothing, letting others take the lead and supporting them as best we can. The Cuban government must accept just criticism without accusing its critics of being traitors or foreign agents. We must all find common ground, and we must then proceed by building on them.

Exiles must recognize that our role is not a leading one, but a supporting one. There are Oscars for supporting roles, too. Inside the island, all must acknowledge why we left, and recognize that we are still part of the Cuban nation. Thus, we have not only the right but also an obligation, to participate in the reorganization and chartering of Cuba's future.

Finally, the international community must recognize that a stable and pluralistic Cuba is more beneficial in the long run, than a Cuba that can, at any moment, implode. They can help the transition by serving as honest brokers, and by encouraging, supporting and proposing ideas that foster change. But never by imposing schedules, conditions or specific courses of actions that will, in the final analysis, only delay any possible change.

## CONCLUSIONS

A transition to pluralism in Cuba (or anywhere else) is not an easy task. But, especially in the Cuban case, and for the reasons discussed in this paper, it is a necessary one. At this time history presents a unique window of opportunity (akin to that of German reunification in 1991). We must seize the moment! As the old Franciscan saying goes: we must have the wisdom to accept what we cannot change, to change what we cannot accept, and to distinguish between these two. And finally, we need to have the courage and intelligence to start working for change. Change takes time and patience. It will require stamina, good judgment and faith in the final result. But if we have faith, and do all that is needed, success will come in due time.

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## APPENDIX

### Example of Transition Process Guidance Flowchart

