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LOOKING FORWARD

Comparative Perspectives on Cuba's Transition

edited by

MARIFELI PÉREZ-STABLE

Foreword by Fernando Henrique Cardoso

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In memory of my father,

Eliseo Pérez-Stable (1921 – 2005)

share as Morales is doing in Bolivia? When the time comes, the answers to these questions would tell us whether a successor regime has consolidated or a transition is in progress and, if so, whether Cuba is on the road to democratic consolidation or, instead, has settled into a hybrid regime.

TWO

Cuba's Civil-Military Relations in Comparative Perspective

Looking Ahead to a Democratic Regime

JORGE I. DOMÍNGUEZ

- Cuba wins victory at war in Angola in 1975–76 against South Africa's invasion forces.
- Cuba wins victory at war in Ethiopia in 1977–78 against Somalia's invasion forces.
- Cuba wins victory at war in Angola in 1987–88 against South Africa's invasion forces.

Comparable sentences cannot be written about the armed forces of Argentina, Brazil, or Mexico on the eve of their respective moments of political regime change, nor about those of communist Poland, Czechoslovakia, or Bulgaria at a similar juncture. In the last third of the twentieth century, none of the Latin American and Central and Eastern European countries that transitioned from authoritarian to democratic regimes deployed its military to fight and win an overseas war. Argentina invaded the South Atlantic islands in 1982, but it was defeated by the United Kingdom soon after. The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in late 1979, suffered a decade-long war of attrition, and eventually withdrew in defeat.

Cubans think that their country is unique—a trait that they share with citizens of every country. But Cubans are correct in saying that their armed forces differ from those in former communist Europe or Latin America. In the 1970s and 1980s, the level of competence and professionalism achieved by Cuba's victorious armed forces and their long-standing success in projecting military power overseas ranked them among the world's most competent. Cuban soldiers proved effective in fulfilling their wartime missions.

THE LONGER-TERM SOCIAL LEGACIES OF CUBA'S REVOLUTIONARY ARMED FORCES

The success of Cuban arms overseas has significant effects on Cuban society. At least two of those effects are likely to linger: the claims that military veterans will make on the state and the residues of the social prestige of military institutions. These legacies may pose practical problems for a democratic regime, even if such prestige may be tarnished in the future if some officers are shown to have abused power or some managers of state enterprises linked to the military prove to have engaged in corrupt acts.

In Cuba today, with just over 11 million people, more than 300,000 soldiers have served overseas. These soldiers understandably believe that they served their country well as patriotic, dutiful citizens and that they deserve honor and respect for their service even if the government that sent them abroad may have been wrong to do so. No doubt they also believe that the Cuban state owes them pensions, disability payments for those who qualify, and health care treatment for the diseases and other disabilities acquired during their service. They probably believe that the spouses and offspring of comrades killed while in service abroad also deserve the state's protection. In a Cuba marked by open politics, war veterans are likely to form political movements to defend and advance their interests, lobby the government, and run for office.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, veterans of Cuba's wars of independence did so. Veterans of Cuba's most recent wars are likely to do so on their own, or as members of the Communist Party or other parties that back their concerns, perhaps adapting for this purpose the already existing Asociación de Combatientes de la Revolución Cubana.

The military has had social prestige as Cuba's most effective institution. The endurance of such prestige would make it harder to construct a democratic civil society. In early 1988, Cuba's military magazine, *Verde olivo*, published a mother's complaint about her seventeen-year-old son who "is giving me terrible headaches, left school, and is mixed up with a gang that cannot teach him anything good . . . I do not know what to do with him, and so I appeal to you to see whether you can help me: get the draft to take him. I know of other similar cases in the neighborhood and, to everyone's peace of mind, they changed when they became soldiers; now they are more serious and responsible."

Self-serving as this statement might appear, *Verde olivo*'s editors were uncomfortable with some of its implications. They agreed that military service fosters "habits of discipline, organization and good conduct" but they stressed that the military should not be seen as a "reform school for kids in trouble." The government, however, has long promoted the view that the armed forces are the school for the nation precisely for the reasons that motivated this mother to want to have her son drafted, even in the midst of the second Angolan war. She is but one example of many Cubans who have held the nation's soldiers in high regard.

The Cuban armed forces are a direct descendant of the French revolution's *levée en masse* (mass conscription). The nation-in-arms defends the nation, not a highly paid volunteer force. The rate of participation in Cuban military organizations—armed forces and military reserves—has been consistently many times higher than that of any Latin American country in the last forty years of the twentieth century (without counting service in the militia as it was reorganized at the start of the 1980s). Many Latin American countries have military conscription, but with many exemptions to avoid military service. Cuba's conscription laws have included deferment and associated provisions, but they are much closer to the standard of universal military service. It has been a people's army.

The Cuban army has not been used against its citizens. In 1989, units of the Chinese army followed orders and fired on an unarmed crowd of civilians in Tiananmen Square. Nothing like that has happened in Cuba. The closest analogy is a riot that took place near Havana's harbor in 1994, which broke out in response to a foiled attempt at hijacking a boat to emigrate. Interior Ministry special troops—not army units—put down this riot without shooting and with discipline and professionalism.

COMPARATIVE EXPERIENCES: FEW COUPS, RISING CIVILIAN SUPREMACY

Notwithstanding those possible social legacies, the comparative experience is encouraging in terms of the prospects for a peaceful regime transition in Cuba and for the consolidation of democratic civilian supremacy over the military.

Since 1976, the only successful military coups in Latin America have occurred in Peru in 1992 and Ecuador in 2000. *Successful* coups have become extremely rare in countries that transitioned from authoritarian to democratic regimes. Coups remain more common in Africa, where there are few democratic regimes and where institutions of control over the military—even within the military—are weak. Yet even on that continent, successful coups against democratically elected civilian presidents have become less frequent since 2000. Since 1976 in Latin America, Ecuador's Jamil Mahuad was the only constitutional president, elected in free and fair elections, overthrown by a military coup. Even in this case, domestic and international pressure quickly forced military plotters to turn over power to Ecuador's constitutionally elected vice president and Congress. In 1992 in Peru, President Alberto Fujimori led the coup against Congress, the courts, and the political parties. In the fall of 2000, Fujimori's presidency ended in disgrace, and civilian supremacy has made substantial strides in Peru since then. After 1982, moreover, no successful military coup led by the high command took place in Central or South America, even against dictators, except for the overthrow of long-ruling dictator Alfredo Stroessner in Paraguay in 1989.

Unsuccessful coup attempts have been more common. In the first decade following their regime transitions, Argentina, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Panama, and Paraguay each suffered one or more coup attempts. Coup attempts reappeared in Venezuela starting in 1992, three-and-a-half decades after its democratic transition. The first decade of the new century has seen attempted coups just in Ecuador, Paraguay, and Venezuela. In Argentina, the armed forces remained in the barracks throughout the catastrophic economic implosion of 2001–2002.

The news from East Asia is also good. In the 1980s and 1990s, constitutional governments were established in Indonesia, the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand. The military played a role in enacting the transitions in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand. Except for a successful coup in Thailand in 2006, no other coup has succeeded in recent years—not even in 1997 in the wake of the East Asian financial crisis. A constitutional crisis was settled peacefully in the Philippines when Vice President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo replaced President Joseph Estrada. (Latin America has also witnessed congressional impeachments of presidents in Brazil, Ecuador, Guatemala, Paraguay, and Venezuela, and the resignation of presidents in the face of widespread protests in Argentina and Bolivia.)

News from former communist Central and Eastern Europe is just as impressive. The transition from communist regimes retained civilian supremacy over the armed forces in every country. The actual transfer of power was free of military intervention in politics, except in Romania, where the military played a key role in deposing and executing President Nicolae Ceausescu. No coup has overthrown a Central or Eastern European constitutional government. The armed forces learned to comply with civilian authority under communist regimes; those habits persisted in the new democratic regimes.

There is greater variation in the former Soviet Union, but still few coups have been attempted. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania follow the Central and Eastern European pattern: no coups, and civilian authority prevails over the military. In the Central Asian states and the Caucasus region, communist regimes have been replaced with highly personalistic, authoritarian, or semi-authoritarian regimes. In each case, a key politician has held power since the end of the communist regime or, as in Belarus, come to power later and then snuffed out democratic politics. In these regimes, the connections between the president and the top military command are close; it is a conceptual stretch to affirm that there is civilian supremacy over the armed forces. Yet it is no less remarkable that coups or military rule have been rare even in the states that emerged from the former Soviet Union. The most famous failed coup took place in August 1991—a dramatic scene in the final act of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Ethnically divided Moldova has been de facto ruled in part by the military, and war was decisive in ousting Serbia's Slobodan Milosevic. All in all, however, the absence of military rule is impressive. The successors of the Soviet armed forces learned the habits of compliance to civilian authority, and those habits endured past regime change.

Civilian supremacy prevails as well in the four remaining communist countries in East Asia. The armed forces have not prevented the substantial reorientation of economic policy in China or Vietnam, nor have they derailed repeated successions in the top political leadership in these countries or in Laos, or the dynastic succession in North Korea. Communist China has suffered only one (failed) coup attempt, led by Lin Biao in the late 1960s. Military behavior thus far conforms to the worldwide pattern of military compliance to civilian authority.

Central and Eastern European countries and the European successor states of the Soviet Union have also successfully broken the link between the military and the Communist Party. These post-communist states adopted constitutions and legislation to establish civilian supremacy over military and domestic security forces. Most have civilian defense ministers. There are few instances of military officers intruding into civilian politics, except at the behest of politicians in power. President Boris Yeltsin ordered the military to storm the Russian parliament in 1993. In Romania and Hungary, military forces have at times been deployed in connection with labor strikes or other forms of civil unrest; these circumstances remain highly exceptional.

In Latin America, too, the military's ability to enforce its claimed political prerogatives and immunity from prosecutions related to human rights violations has declined. In the late 1980s, the Brazilian military sought to restrict labor's freedom to strike by creating laws and deploying troops against strikes in strategic sectors. The military's share of the budget also increased during the first half of the 1980s. In the second half of the 1980s, however, Brazil's civilian politicians whittled away these military claims, liberalizing strike laws, eschewing the sustained use of troops as strikebreakers, and decreasing the military share of the budget. Despite years of military resistance, in 1999 Brazil established a ministry of defense to exercise civilian authority. The Chilean military's immunity from human rights prosecutions, and its claimed exemption even from providing key information regarding human rights violations, cracked in the late 1990s through a confluence of international legal action against Augusto Pinochet and bold new decisions from Chile's Supreme Court. In the mid-1980s, Chile's military expenditures accounted for 10 percent of gross domestic product (GDP); by the end of the 1990s, that proportion was below 4 percent. Military influence grew in Peru during the Fujimori presidency but was sharply curtailed during Valentín Paniagua's effective interim presidency and subsequently under President Alejandro Toledo.

Across Central America, military budgets and personnel have been cut deeply. Most pertinent is the case of Nicaragua, whose military establishment fell from approximately 85,000 to 15,000 troops during the 1990s. Nicaragua's defense expenditures, which had consumed more than one-sixth of its GDP in the mid-1980s, dropped to just above 1 percent at the end of the 1990s.

Why is there such good news? For the former communist countries —and for others, such as Taiwan and Mexico, with strong and enduring legacies of civilian supremacy—the answer is unexpected but clear. Intrinsic to the professionalism of their armed forces was due obedience to civilian authority. This pattern held across regime transitions. The military did not search for coups in their toolkit to solve the new problems they faced. The Soviet armed forces were once impressive; their top generals, however, did not know how to carry out a successful coup. The same held true elsewhere in the communist and single-party world. Many professional military officers, in fact, welcomed the greater autonomy that came with severing ties with a communist—or any other—ruling party.

Latin America, long the land of the coup and the home of the inept politician, had to learn, and its history of military rule contributed to the learning. After 1980, the frequency of military coup attempts in Latin America has seemed to be related to the level of military professionalization: the lower the level (Ecuador, Guatemala, Paraguay), the more likely the coup attempts. This is also consistent with observable patterns in Africa. Yet for Latin America this breaks the pattern that prevailed in the 1960s and 1970s, when the more professional the military, the greater the likelihood and success of coup attempts. What explains the inversion of this pattern? Their professionalism notwithstanding, for the most part Latin American militaries governed badly, often damaging the military institutions in the process. This also fits the South Korean experience in the 1980s and the closing years of General Suharto's presidency in Indonesia. As a result, most officers were less inclined to attempt coups.

The "supply" of coups dropped. The "demand" for coups fell as well.

Except for General Augusto Pinochet's Chile and, thanks to an oil boom, the Ecuadorian military government in the 1970s, no authoritarian regime that yielded power during the "democratizing moment" (1979–90) managed the economy well. Civilians thus stopped demanding military coups to solve economic problems. Moreover, all authoritarian regimes repressed public liberties; some committed appalling acts of cruelty. The demand for coups also fell thanks to the growing popularity of parties of the right, which meant that many business elites no longer had to rely on coups to advance their objectives. Center-right politicians won many elections after democratization in Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Peru.

International factors also mattered. The end of the Cold War deprived would-be coup makers of anticommunist national security rationales and U.S. support for possible coups. The United States became more likely to support democratic regimes. The European Union took a strong interest in the consolidation of constitutional governments in Central and Eastern Europe. Argentina, Brazil, and the United States helped to stop coup attempts in Paraguay. The Organization of American States, with strong support from the United States and most members, helped to thwart various coup attempts.

On their own, southern South American countries undertook effective steps to greatly decrease the risk of militarized interstate conflict and thus the need to allocate substantial resources to the armed forces. Impressive improvements have occurred in the international security relations between Brazil and Argentina, Argentina and Chile, and Chile and Peru. Peru and Ecuador reached, at last, a peace agreement and border delimitation.

The European Union (including its predecessor entities since the 1957 Treaty of Rome founded the European Economic Community) has helped to sustain civilian supremacy after regime transitions in both southern and Central and Eastern Europe, providing the post-communist armed forces with positive incentives for compliance. Accession to the European Union was open only to democratic regimes, and European patterns of civil-military relations were one test of democracy. In Portugal, Spain, and Greece, democracy benefited substantially from the pull of Europe. Spain suffered only one unsuccessful coup attempt in the first decade after its transition, and none since. Portugal's armed forces were key actors during the transition from authoritarian rule, though it took a decade to reassert civilian authority over the military. And at the start of the twenty-first century, Turkey undertook reforms to subordinate the military to civilian authority in the hope of qualifying for EU membership.

Today, Eastern European states seeking membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) or the European Union are less likely to inflame ethnic issues. In the 1990s, the only exceptions to this were Slovakia and Croatia; by the start of the new century, Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, and the three Baltic states had accepted and were moving toward Western European standards regarding the treatment of minorities and political dissidents. The three Central and Eastern European NATO members (Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary) made the deepest cuts in paramilitary and internal security forces, greatly reducing the prospects of repressing their own citizens; their armed forces, now part of NATO's joint command structure, are for their own and the alliance's external defense—not to be used against their own people. The three next best prospects for

NATO membership—Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovakia—have also greatly cut their internal security troops, to the same democratic effect.

Civilian control over the military is weakest when two factors combine: a low international threat and a high domestic threat, as perceived by the military. Either or both could be exaggerated and still affect military behavior. This combination contributed to the military coup epidemic throughout Latin America in the 1960s and early- to mid-1970s. It also helps to explain why communist Poland and Bulgaria had more internal security forces than they had regular armed forces and why all the communist regimes had very large internal security forces. The threat to these regimes is often greater from within the society. This is why NATO and especially the European Union have developed two related policies. One addresses possible external threats to Central and Eastern European countries by making them part of the Atlantic alliance. The other requires Central and Eastern European countries to reduce their internal security troops and adopt democratic standards for dealing with the domestic opposition and dissidents.

Finally, the logic of democratic politics chips away at military prerogatives and immunities. Electoral competition unleashed by democratization reduces the formal prerogatives of the armed forces, the scope of issues in which they intervene, and the degree of influence they have on these matters. Civilian power may lag or zigzag, but it expands relentlessly. International factors provide incentives to nurture these domestic changes and to support them once they are under way.

COMPARATIVE EXPERIENCES: WEAK CIVILIAN EFFECTIVENESS IN POLICY SETTING AND OVERSIGHT

The comparative evidence is less encouraging regarding the capacity of democratic civilian institutions to set policy and oversee the armed forces. This problem, therefore, requires special attention as Cuba ponders its future.

In Central and Eastern Europe, the development of effective parliamentary oversight over the armed forces, of competent and independent civilian experts within the ministries of defense, and of an informed mass media lag substantially compared to other elements of democratic transition. The severity of these problems varies. The Hungarian parliament has been able to regulate military doctrine and missions, as well as the size and budget of the armed forces. In contrast, Romania's military and security institutions have been vulnerable to politicization because politicians have employed the army to cope with labor and other domestic actors; military promotions and the allocation of resources have also been politicized. In the 1990s in Bulgaria, the military remained more cohesive than in Romania and used that cohesion to resist reform regarding budgets, doctrine, training, and transparency. Central and Eastern Europeans often appoint civilians as defense ministers, but Russia has retained military officers in that post. Yet even in countries with civilian defense ministers, public debate, parliamentary oversight, and civilian executive branches capable of defining and overseeing defense policy are limited. Instead, professional officers carry out these tasks. Civilian supervision often means no more than respect for the authority of the president and prime minister, while the military and security services retain very substantial internal authority. Many "civilians" who work as experts in defense ministries are retired military officers.

The Latin American experience is similar. Throughout the region, and notably so in Central America, civilians lack the expertise and professional capacity to make defense policy, provide effective supervision over the military, or debate defense and security issues responsibly. Neither civilian executives nor parliaments are well equipped to address these fundamental elements of democratic governance.

Brazil lacked a defense ministry until the twenty-first century, hitherto relying on separate ministries for each military service. Even now, most tasks of policy setting, auditing, and supervision remain in the hands of military officers. Brazil's tradition of a strong and highly capable foreign ministry, however, ensures that there is effective civilian leadership for broad international strategy.

In Venezuela, Hugo Chávez, both as coup plotter and subsequently as president, politicized the Venezuelan armed forces. In April 2002, he was nearly deposed when military officers supportive of his political opposition acted to overthrow him. Venezuelan civil-military relations under President Chávez are a textbook example of what democratic regimes should avoid: a president who manipulates military promotions, budgets, and the deployment of forces for his political gain, and an opposition movement that hunts for coup makers within the disgruntled officer ranks.

In Latin America, Chile has developed the largest, though still small, set of civilian cadres in its Defense Ministry—which has been headed by a civilian since 1990—to set defense policy, govern the armed forces, allocate resources, and monitor the military. Yet Chile has yet to develop a good parliamentary capacity to complement these executive roles. In short, civilian weakness in military policy-setting and oversight is often the key problem for democratic consolidation in the arena of civil-military relations.

CHANGES IN CUBA SINCE 1990

Significant political and military changes, begun gradually in the late 1980s, could contribute to future democratic politics in Cuba:

1. Cuba no longer has international allies asking it to retain a large military.
2. Since the start of the 1990s, but especially since 2000, Cuba has agreed to militarily significant treaties. It signed the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons treaty, the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America treaty, and treaties prohibiting the wartime use of chemical and biological weapons.
3. President Fidel Castro's government brought back the armed forces from overseas, incurring the political, financial, logistical, and personnel costs of repatriation. In the mid-1980s, tens of thousands of Cuban troops were routinely posted abroad, mainly in Africa. No international obligations require Cuba to retain troops abroad today.
4. Pressured by the loss of Soviet subsidies and the collapse of Cuba's economy, the Castro government cut back the military budget. In 2002, the nominal value (unadjusted for inflation) of Cuba's defense and internal order budget was still 14 percent below the 1985 level. As a percent of GDP, military expenditures dropped from 7.3 percent in 1985 to 4.1 percent in 2002 (the latter level, however, was still about twice that of Hungary and Poland and about a third higher than that of Brazil and Colombia).
5. Since 1990, Cuba stopped obtaining expensive military equipment and decided against the maintenance of much of its older equipment. As much as three-quarters of the equipment of the Revolutionary Armed Forces may be in storage. All of the Cuban navy's larger ships were mothballed. Cuban air force pilots are down to fifty flying hours per year, approximately half the number of flying hours of the Chilean air force and one-third of Venezuela's. The state of readiness of the armed forces as a whole has declined, making fuller demobilization easier.
6. Personnel cutbacks matched budget cutbacks. In 2001, the Cuban armed forces had 46,000 troops, approximately 28.5 percent of their number in 1985. In 2001, Cuba also had 39,000 army ready reserves. The Interior Ministry possessed 20,000 state security troops and 6,500 border guards. The 70,000-strong Army of the Working Youth worked on economic activities, and the one-million-member Territorial Militia provided support functions in emergencies.
7. Cuba's birth rate has remained below the population replacement level since 1978. In 1985, the ratio of soldiers to persons ages 20–24 was approximately 146 per 1,000. In 2001, that ratio dropped to 68 per 1,000. The reduction in the number of troops reflected, but also greatly exceeded, the decline of the 20–24-year-old cohort. Increasing demographic constraints would make it difficult for Cuba to rebuild its armed forces.
8. In the early 1990s, Cuba shortened conscription from three to two years.
9. Cuban officers complied with these cutbacks in military personnel and resources. The supremacy of the party leadership has remained uncontested. In 1989, Division General Arnaldo Ochoa, decorated Hero of the Republic of Cuba for leading Cuban forces in two wars in Africa, was arrested and shot, along with other officers, all accused of participation in drug trafficking, smuggling, and other crimes. Still other officers were imprisoned and dismissed for related reasons. Also in 1989, Interior Minister Division General José Abrantes was

dismissed and imprisoned for dereliction of duty. These events remain murky but seem unrelated to the budget and personnel cutbacks because these were enacted well after those events.

Not every change in Cuba since 1990 augurs well for an eventual democratic civilian governance, however. Cuba has faced a "high military threat" from the United States since 1960, while domestic opposition to the regime has been low since the mid-1960s. Consistent with the comparative pattern, that combination helps to explain the high military subordination to civilian authority in Cuba. In the 1990s, however, the regime's domestic political weakening enhanced the political role of the military. Before 1980, no military officers other than the armed forces and interior ministers belonged to the country's most important political entity, the Political Bureau of the Cuban Communist Party. At the 1980 Second Party Congress, three division generals were added as alternate Political Bureau members. At the 1991 Fourth Party Congress, the post of alternate member was eliminated and the size of the Political Bureau expanded to twenty-five, with three division generals as full members besides the armed forces and interior ministers (although the military's share in the party's Central Committee was cut in half between those two party congresses). At the 1997 Fifth Party Congress, the size of the Political Bureau fell to twenty-four but a fourth division general was added.

Cuba's vast overseas military deployment to Angola and Ethiopia explains the timing of the addition of division generals to the Political Bureau as alternates in 1980, and when the Fourth Party Congress met in 1991, those deployments ended. It is the country's domestic politics that explain the post-1991 additions. As support for the regime weakened, high-ranking active-duty officers played a more active role in the Political Bureau—participating in general political decisions—making it more difficult to disentangle "civilian" from "military" and harder to formulate policies to build democratic civilian supremacy.

In the 1990s, the armed forces also acquired a more significant, albeit indirect, role in the economy. Until the end of the 1980s, the military had exported cadres to run public agencies. The Army of the Working Youth performed various economic tasks, especially in agriculture. In response to the economic slowdown of the late 1980s and the crisis of the early 1990s, the armed forces increased their economic activities. Since then, military-run state enterprises have played a more prominent role in the production of goods and services for both the military and civilian sectors. Retired military officers have been authorized to establish quasi-private business enterprises that operate as if they were private business firms with the state as the sole shareholder. They matter especially in tourism, Cuba's most dynamic economic sector since 1990. The more successful firms already raise their own financing for expansion. They double as a supplementary pension system for retired officers. The prospects for democratic control over the military become poorer once officers possess substantial political power, guns, and wealth—the iron triangle of antidemocratic military power.

As Carmelo Mesa-Lago indicates in chapter 8, the military and internal security forces have their own pension schemes that are financed entirely by the state. After twenty-five years of service, regardless of age, officers collect a full pension that equals the last year of salary—a considerably better deal than civilian pensions.

The military and internal security budget nearly doubled in current prices between 1997 and 2002 (the cumulative 1997–2002 consumer price inflation rate was below 10 percent). Much of that increase is attributable to internal security concerns: combating higher crime rates in Havana, ensuring the safety of 2 million international tourists who visit every year, cowing the political opposition, and containing the vulnerability of police officers to corruption by raising their salaries. Nevertheless, this budget's real purchasing power is difficult to estimate because some of it is spent in pesos and some in dollars. At the parallel market dollar-peso exchange rate, Cuba's defense and internal security budget dropped from about $164 million in 1990 to $28 million in 1997, then rose to $49 million in 2002. In constant pesos, the 2002 military and internal security budget was probably still below 70 percent of its value in 1990.

SCENARIOS FOR THE FUTURE

It is not my purpose in this chapter to speculate about how Cuba might move past a "poof moment"—that historical instance when the old political regime either changes enough or is replaced so that policies characteristic of civilian democracy can be applied successfully. For the purpose of this analysis, assume that moment will happen.

Lessons from the comparative analysis of civil-military relations are pertinent past the poof moment. In the 1980s, democratic politicians, scholars, and ordinary citizens worried about the threat of military coups unless democrats exercised extreme caution. We now know that military coups have become rare. Politicians should not be reckless, but, based on the newer comparative evidence, they need not be timid. International factors helped to ensure this. The strong opposition to coups from governments throughout the Americas, southern Europe, Central and Eastern Europe, and East Asia, and the incentives that wealthy democracies can offer, have contributed to the decline of coups everywhere. The four scenarios that follow start from the premise that coups are unlikely in Cuba's future.

Military institutions everywhere are conservative institutions. They prefer to retain their procedures, organization, chain of command, and relations to the external environment. Military organizations in Central and Eastern Europe and Latin America since 1990 have often resisted reform and, in some Central and Eastern European countries, have become politicized. Yet the comparative evidence also shows that reform is possible. After transitions to democracy, most military institutions have sought political prerogatives and immunity from accountability for past misdeeds. The comparative evidence shows two points. First, it takes time—typically not less than a decade—to chip away at those prerogatives and immunities. Second, democratic politicians can succeed in such endeavors if they persevere.

The most difficult aspect of establishing democratic civilian control over the military has been empowering civilians to perform as decision makers. There are few civilian defense experts in executive branches. Parliamentary politicians often know even less. And the lack of expertise of the mass media in defense and security matters impedes thoughtful public debate. The scenarios that follow focus on this practical problem of civilian capacity to govern the armed forces.

Since 1990, Cuba has shown that it can cut its military budget and the number of its troops. Military compliance has been notable. Cuban officers know that there are no new overseas wars in their future, no vast untapped international or national resources for military rebuilding, and no fancy military weaponry or equipment to protect. They know that the trend is inexorably downward.

Scenario 1

Prior to the poof moment, the most likely, or baseline, scenario for Cuba's near future is a dynastic succession, not unlike North Korea's, from President Fidel Castro to First Vice President Raúl Castro. General of the Army Raúl Castro holds all the formal titles to be the successor. He has been a long-serving, distinguished armed forces minister and the architect of Cuba's most effective institution. He earned respect from professional officers for his management of massive military deployments overseas. Raúl Castro has long been active in the Communist Party's internal organization and has substantial support as a result. His most likely overarching model would resemble that of the People's Republic of China. Military officers would remain in the party's Political Bureau and Central Committee. The Communist Party would retain its political monopoly, but there would be a greater market-oriented economic opening. As in China, military enterprises, or business firms run by retired military officers in collaboration with the armed forces, would be significant. This regime reconfiguration would have little impact on the fundamental aspects of civil-military relations.

Scenario 2

Assume that the armed forces and the internal security forces are abolished, the Ministry of Revolutionary Armed Forces and the Interior Ministries are disbanded, and the mission of the new security forces is refocused on controlling crime. Those circumstances constitute the scenario that best solves the problem of democratic governance over the military.

The key premise behind this scenario is a fundamental rethinking of the threats to Cuban security. Only one state has ever posed a credible international threat to Cuba: the United States. The U.S. government contemplated the annexation of Cuba from the start of the nineteenth century, seized it in 1898, held it as a protectorate between 1902 and 1934, and sought to counter and overthrow its government after 1960. Cuba, an island archipelago, has only maritime boundaries, which have been defined through international agreements or can be so defined through diplomatic negotiation. The main unratified maritime boundary is that with the United States.

Mexico experienced a similar history. It lost the northern half of its territory to the United States in 1848 and was the object of repeated U.S. military intervention in the second decade of the twentieth century. The United States remains an overbearing, intrusive and interfering presence in Mexico even when bilateral relations are good. But in the early 1940s, Mexican leaders reached two conclusions. First, Mexico could not resist a U.S. military invasion, and it was not worth it to build the military establishment required to deter and confront it. Second, Mexico could devise political, economic, and cultural strategies to cope with the United States, mitigating the adverse side effects of the relationship while harnessing the dynamic and liberating growth potential of the U.S. economy and culture. Scenario 2 presumes that Cuban leaders would reach a comparable decision. If a democratic Cuba decides to work with the United States, then this otherwise credible threat to Cuban security disappears.

This scenario would work best if the United States could behave with restraint, repealing the 1996 Helms-Burton Act's call for a U.S. government "protectorate" over Cuba. It would help if the United States, Canada, and Mexico welcomed Cuba into the North American Free Trade Agreement, with a long transition period to enable the Cuban economy to adjust. It would be equally beneficial if the United States offered to renegotiate the treaty that governs its use of the naval base at Guantanamo and agreed to return the base and its surrounding territory to Cuba immediately or on a fixed schedule. (In the latter case, the United States would pay rent at contemporary prevailing rates for U.S. bases elsewhere and fly the flag of the Republic of Cuba over the base.) These suggestions do not require the U.S. Congress to vote for foreign aid to Cuba, though that, too, would help. The European Union, Canada, and the Latin American countries could encourage and constrain the United States

as it learns, for the first time in its history, to behave appropriately with regard to Cuba. It is a tall order because it requires both Cuba and the United States to adjust to each other in ways they never have.

Abolition of the Cuban armed forces would build on existing trends. They have been on a demobilization path for nearly a decade and a half. The standing armed forces are no longer large; the ready reserves are easily demobilizable, which would free its members for productive activities. The costs to Cuba of refurbishing and maintaining its mothballed equipment would be high; Cuba would welcome help in disposing of these weapons and equipment. The abolition of the military would save more than 3 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) at levels prevailing in 2002. The abolition of conscription would free up thousands of young Cubans. Abolition of the armed forces, moreover, addresses the most serious problem that democratic civilians encounter upon the transition from authoritarian rule, namely, how to govern the military in a new democratic context. No military, no governance problem.

Over the centuries, however, Cuba has faced a second international threat, albeit with changing characteristics: pirates. The Caribbean's history of transnational nonstate violence reemerged in the last quarter of the twentieth century as international crime, especially but not limited to international drug trafficking. Cuba's geographic location astride the American Mediterranean makes it a prime target for transnational illegal traffic. Cuba will require police forces to address this threat in collaboration with international institutions and neighboring governments.

How should such forces be structured? The current Interior Ministry is the wrong model. It operates on a military model, headed by Army Corps General Abelardo Colomé; its officers have military rank and organization. Moreover, state security troops define the enemy within—a typical design for an authoritarian regime, not a democratic one. A new ministry of public safety would be headed by a civilian and staffed by civilians. It would create and run a national police force that would possess specialized units to confront well-armed organized gangs on Cuban territory.

One branch of Cuba's new police force would replace the current militarized border guards. Its navy and air force would be disbanded as part of the abolition of the armed forces; Cuba would not need submarines, destroyers, MiG bombers, or combat fighter aircraft. Maritime police would be equipped with fast boats and coast guard cutters, and aerial police with helicopters. The new police would discard dated navy and air force equipment, receive different training, and have new missions defined for them by their civilian superiors. Cuba would need help to obtain and transfer such equipment for its aerial and maritime police.

Scenario 2 requires dismantling the iron triangle of antidemocratic military power: political clout, guns, and wealth. All ties must be severed between the political parties and the personnel in the new security forces. Demobilized soldiers must turn in their weapons to the police. These two steps may be relatively unproblematic if there is a peaceful transition of political regime, as was the case across Central and Eastern Europe, but more dangerous if there are high levels of violence as part of a regime transition or threats of revenge against retired officers. As they did in Central America, the United Nations and the Organization of American States could help complete this military demobilization. State enterprises run by the Armed Forces Ministry should be privatized, but the full privatization of quasi-private business enterprises may present thornier problems. The risk of insider privatization, that is, the seizure of effective ownership of firms by those who have been managing them, is greatest for quasi-private business firms. This has been a key part of Russia's experience; international assistance would help to lower this risk.

Scenario 2 is more likely to become a reality, however, if evidence is uncovered regarding corruption in military-run state enterprises or in quasi-private business firms managed by retired military officers. Such evidence would lower the Revolutionary Armed Forces' legacy of public prestige. An example of such a corruption scandal broke out in late 2003 in the quasi-private firm Cubanacán, which is staffed by many retired officers. The greater the number of such scandals, the more likely Scenario 2 becomes.

Scenario 2 will work best if items already on the agenda of the Cuban transition are addressed. First, democratic Cuba must honor and respect the accomplishments of soldiers who fought on behalf of the Republic of Cuba far from home. Cuba's future iconography must so acknowledge it—a task made easier by the void in according such public honor created by the Castro government's emphasis on celebrating the rebellion of the 1950s and the international guerrilla service in the 1960s more than the sacrifices of Cuban troops in the 1970s and 1980s. Second, veterans of international military service must be guaranteed free lifetime health care, and disability and old-age pensions indexed to the domestic cost of living. The full privatization of quasi-private business firms also makes it imperative to provide reliable pensions to retired officers who might otherwise have expected to work for these firms. Special hospitals and clinics for military and internal security personnel would be incorporated within the national health system. The calculation of pension benefits would also be the same as for the civilian population, though the time to retirement with a full pension (twenty-five years) would remain unchanged. Third, a democratic Cuba must supply the quality of public education and the context of civic life that would lead the mothers of the future to look for nonmilitary ways to build character, a sense of responsibility, and good behavior.

Finally, this scenario expects democratic Cuba to retain, transform, retrain, and reposition—but employ—one of communist Cuba's key resources, namely, a first-rate professional foreign service. Cuban diplomats will need to protect the nation's interests, foremost in relations with the United States but also in international organizations and elsewhere. They will have to work to constrain and harness the United States to assist a democratic, peaceful Cuba committed to economic growth.

Scenario 3

Scenario 2, some may argue, is utopian. Cuba is unlikely to become an instant Costa Rica. Cuba's contentious history may give rise to organizations that employ violence against the new democratic regime. Unhappy demobilized officers and soldiers may become easy recruits for organized crime, as has happened in northern Central America. Cuba will need, therefore, an army capable of defending the democratic state against its expected enemies. The new mission of the security forces would be to maintain public order. The remainder of Scenario 2 would apply, but this diagnosis argues for the creation of an army under a ministry of defense or the location of a new army within the new ministry of public safety. In either case, these forces would be counted in the thousands, not the tens of thousands. They would be well trained and highly professional; international assistance would be welcome.

This scenario calls attention to the possibility that a transition could go astray. High levels of organized crime, armed protest (some criminal, some political) from demobilized soldiers, and sustained social unrest related to a process of economic adjustment could increase the need to retain a military to preserve public order and defend democratic institutions. Under these political circumstances, moreover, the armed forces may be subject to politicization; the capacity of democratic civilian institutions to govern the armed forces may be problematic.

Scenario 4

Scenarios 2 and 3, some may argue, incur needless direct and opportunity costs in forgoing Cuba's international experience, which includes the participation of its highly professional and experienced armed forces in combat and advisory missions abroad. Instead, Cuba may remain internationally active to improve its bargaining relationship with the United States and other countries while fostering citizen pride in the country's new global democratic role. In this fourth scenario, democratic Cuba would become an active participant in United Nations peacekeeping operations. Cuba would retain a small professional army, and possibly a navy and air force, for international service. It would contribute to international peace and security and carve for itself an arena of influence to leverage resources with international actors. These Cuban forces could support the police, a mission foreseen to some extent in scenarios 2 and, especially, 3 when international or domestic criminal threats warrant their deployment. The new mission of the armed forces would be to serve Cuba's international objectives.

The United Nations would pay for Cuba's international military deployments and for the sustenance of Cuba's military capacity for such purposes. Cuba's army would serve under a defense ministry. The standing army may be five thousand troops, with the remainder available from fifteen thousand ready reserves for UN service abroad (Cuba relied mainly on its ready reserves during its three African wars). This deployable military force would be one-quarter of the size of its comparable components as the twenty-first century opened. Such a military establishment would be large enough also to address the concerns noted under scenario 3.

Only three non-African countries have professional armies with the experience and capacity to deploy forces to African countries and perform ably and with discipline in both combat and more traditional peacekeeping functions: the United Kingdom, France, and Cuba. All three have experience in combat and noncombat military activities in Africa. Cuban forces in Angola and Ethiopia fought in combat in three wars but also acquired noncombat experience protecting the rear guard of Angolan and Ethiopian forces. All three countries also have "soft power" in Africa, that is, each has significant influence beyond its military power. In Cuba's case, tens of thousands of Africans from throughout the continent have studied in Cuba and earned their professional degrees on Cuban scholarships. Many Cubans and Africans enjoy aspects of each other's culture, and many have intermarried.

Cuban forces have four advantages in Africa over the British and the French. First, Cuba was not a colonial power, and its presence would carry none of that history. Second, Cuban officers have experience across Africa's linguistic and cultural landscape, having served in English-, French-, Spanish-, Italian-, and especially Portuguese-speaking countries. Third, a large fraction of the Cuban military is composed of Afro-Cubans. And fourth, Cuba has had the largest internationalist civilian advisory presence in Africa, including its health care personnel.

Would Cuban soldiers voluntarily participate in combat and noncombat roles under United Nations auspices? Many Cubans volunteered for internationalist service during the 1970s and 1980s for reasons ranging from patriotism and belief in socialist solidarity, to better prospects of career advancement and material benefits for family, to the search for adventure. The comparative evidence on peacekeeping experiences of personnel from other countries suggests five common cross-national motivations not unlike those of Cubans in the past: adventure, economic gain, humanitarian goals, personal development, and career objectives. Economic gains are often higher for military reservists, which argues for a composition of a future Cuban force reliant on reservists. One concern, corroborated by soldiers of various countries, is that military personnel serving in peacekeeping missions support the mission more at its start than at its end. This was probably true of the Cuban military's experience in Angola and Ethiopia. On balance, however, service under UN auspices serves well both the international community and the sending country and its soldiers.

Argentina's experience may be particularly relevant for Cuba. The Argentine armed forces drastically demobilized after its transition to democracy in the 1980s. A smaller military, starved for funds, was a source of discontent and repeated mutinies. In the 1990s, the decision to participate in UN peacekeeping operations gave the Argentine armed forces a new honorable role, provided new career opportunities, and brought in funds for the military's needs at home. It also upgraded the professional standing and skills of Argentine officers through the development of interoperability with Western European forces deployed in Croatia and Cyprus. This experience contributed to international peace and domestic democratic consolidation.

Scenario 4 requires that Cuban civilians head and staff the Defense Ministry, set defense policy according to instructions from the chief executive and the Foreign Ministry, provide for multifaceted training for international peacekeeping operations, and foster parliamentary and public participation in debates over Cuba's prospective international obligations, budget commitments, recruitment, and training. This has not been easy in most Central and Eastern European and Latin American countries (a major scandal regarding illegal international weapons transfers plagues the Argentine experience) and it may be a principal reason for a democratic Cuba to forgo Scenario 4. In a democratic Cuba, moreover, there may be no political demand or support for such international military roles.

CONCLUSIONS

Cuba's transition to democracy is likely to be slow, marked by phases with varying degrees and speeds of political opening, and constrained by a persistently strong Communist Party and popular suspicion of U.S. policies. Its attitude toward the United States will determine whether it

can abolish or greatly downsize its armed forces. Military demobilization has been under way since the early 1990s, but its continuation may be more difficult for a government not headed by either Fidel or Raúl Castro, who have enjoyed the respect and loyalty of the military high command.

Nevertheless, the comparative experience and Cuba's own since the late 1980s give reasons for hope. Military coups have become very rare. Military resistance to reform can be overcome in due course. The international milieu now favors these outcomes. Cuba has already accomplished significant military demobilization, including deep cuts in budget and personnel, with full military compliance. A future democratic Cuba can build on these experiences to adopt one of the three scenarios that advance civilian democratic rule.