

## EDITORIAL

## THIS ISSUE

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This edition of the journal addresses five themes of importance to contemporary Cuba, which are shaped by, and/or shaping, the current economic reform process. These themes are as follows: democracy and the Cuban electoral system, corporate social responsibility (CSR) in new Cuban enterprises, demographic changes leading to an ageing population and declining younger generation, and the older generation and their attitudes to the current reforms and patterns of migration to the United States from the perspective of the ‘educational self-selection problem’. Together, these articles give interesting insights into modern Cuba as it faces change and the challenge of managing the revolution through these unprecedented times.

### **Arnold August, 'Democracy Still in Motion: The 2013 Election Results in Cuba'**

Arnold August has been the most assiduous analyst of the Cuban electoral process for a decade and a half. His first book entitled *Democracy in Cuba and the 1997-98 Elections* (1999 – Editorial José Martí) was the first serious foreign study of this aspect of the Cuban political system. Drawing from his words at the beginning of this article, he challenged the ‘disinformation and misinformation’ of the advocates of ‘regime change’ based on ‘clichés and ignorance’ and replaced it with ‘facts, figures and a balanced analysis’ of the Cuban electoral process. This article continues in the same vein and seeks to develop trends identified in a more recent book by the author entitled *Cuba and its Neighbours: Democracy in Motion* (2013 – Zed Books), particularly the electoral processes surrounding the February 2013 elections to the National Assembly of People’s Power (ANPP). A contested issue in the Cuban electoral system is the slate vote (*voto unido*), in which a list of candidates is drawn up by a candidacy commission and voters are encouraged to select the whole slate, that has prompted one Cuban analyst

to speak of an ‘electoral straight jacket’. However, in the 2013 election, and perhaps in response to popular pressures, this was less in evidence. This has had an impact on the number of votes traditionally received by individual ANPP deputies and will influence the change of leadership in the Council of State. Similar to the Cuban analysts of the economic reforms in the previous issue of this journal, the author does not envisage a Cuban transition but a necessary modification of the existing model leading to ‘an evolution of the political system’. This position is well argued in both cases, but analysts inside and outside Cuba still have to consider the wider implications of introducing market socialism in Cuba in ‘socialist’ terms, which is a wholly separate debate to the one that prevails and seems to assume that markets, economic performance with equity and democracy are comfortable bedfellows.

### **Denise Baden and Stephen Wilkinson, ‘Socially Responsible Enterprise in Cuba: A Positive Role Model for Corporate Social Responsibility?’**

Baden and Wilkinson address in this article a common topic in Western business literature, ‘corporate social responsibility’ (CSR), but set their investigation in an extraordinary, if not unique, context. Before the current round of limited marketisation of the Cuban economy, CSR, rather like ‘civil society’, was not an issue that was raised, at least in any form recognisable to the Western mindset, because it was embedded within the functions and value system of the state. Now, however, such market-related issues are gaining a dynamic of their own and becoming more relevant and open to analysis and interpretation by both external observers and Cubans themselves. What is of special interest in this process, the authors note, is the question: Are practices that promote fairness, equity and social responsibility in the socialist system being transferred to the new state and para state enterprises? A second important question that stems from the first is, can Western business practice learn from the Cuban experience? The authors set out to objectively answer these questions through interviews with Cubans and external observers and by analysing Cuba’s unique institutional environment in contrast to the recognised contexts and practices of CSR in the West. After presenting numerous interesting examples of Cuban attitudes to CSR-related areas of activity, the authors indicate that the evidence they have gathered suggests Cuba is a ‘positive role model of CSR, showing how strong State regulation and internalised pro-social norms enable business to be a positive force in society’ and that ‘CSR as practiced in Cuba appears to be truer to the spirit of CSR than the capitalist interpretation’. However, they make two very important points in their conclusion, which places serious questions on the possibility of policy transfer of such practices to the West. First, their findings

suggest that the Cuban mindset is based on a different ontological structure than especially the neo-liberal business model in the West; the former prioritising social welfare and values and the latter individual self-interest. The second issue takes the form of a question: As Cuba moves closer to the market and the values it generates, will it still be able to sustain its social orientation, or will this new economic direction alter the socialist consciousness? Therefore, while logic and objective analyses suggest the possibility of policy transfer, ontological incompatibility may render the two positions to be irreconcilable.

### **Judith Hernández and Guillermo Foladori, 'The Population Dynamic Challenge to Cuban Socialism'**

The aim of this article is to demonstrate how Cuba had shifted since the 1960s from a Third-World demographic structure with a growing young population to having a population distribution which resembles a developed country where it is the older generation that is expanding. This is clearly the result of Cuba's comprehensive health care which has led to a life expectancy which is equal and in some cases higher than in the developed countries. Added to this is a good education system whereby women can expect to enter careers, delaying or making less attractive the desire to have children. While these are common factors influencing First-World population dynamics, the author argues that in Cuba's case, the problem of a declining young population is exacerbated by migration with tens of thousands of younger members of the society seeking their futures abroad. Migration in fact moves Cuba's population dynamics from a low growth rate to a decline. Intensifying this problem is the increasing number of young Cuban women who become educated and then emigrate during their reproductive years, which negatively impacts on the birth rate and the 'growth of the youth segment in the population'. While remittances from abroad have significantly risen with the expansion of emigration of the young, educated and qualified Cubans, there has not also been an increase in industrialisation and labour productivity. The Cuban state's successful social, health and welfare policies are extending life expectancy and therefore the 'dependency' of their people. The author concludes that the demographic trends indicate that the decreasing 'economically active population' will have to bear a growing responsibility for their ageing fellow Cubans, becoming a 'population time bomb'.

### **David Strug, 'Older Persons and the Cuban Reform Process'**

Like the previous article, Strug deals with demographics in Cuba and specifically in this case the issue of the growing elderly section of the population and their

response to the current market-orientated reforms in Cuba. As pointed out by the author, this demographic issue and the pressure it places on the working population may indeed have been one of the reasons why such economic measures have been deemed necessary. Based on interviews with 35 older individuals in Havana between January 2012 and January 2013, the author seeks to learn how this group perceive the changes that are taking place, especially since they include a reduction in social benefits and a raising of the retirement age. Given these direct consequences, and not being well placed as entrepreneurs because of their age, one is surprised to find that most of this social group generally accept the reforms in economic and revolutionary terms, following the – ‘updating of socialism’ – position offered by the government. The prime concerns they expressed in the interviews were the following: inadequate pensions, lack of food security, difficulty in maintaining their homes and obliging some to engage in the market, despite their age, to supplement their income. The author concludes that the older generation could provide an important interface between themselves and the younger generation by helping them to understand and maintain the desire to retain those worthwhile elements of the revolution, while moving towards a future with many new challenges.

### **Aleida Cobas Valdes and Ana Fernández Sainz, ‘Cuban Migration to the United States and the Educational Self-Selection Problem’**

This article seeks to explain how higher education increases the likelihood of Cubans emigrating – ‘self-selection’ defined as ‘rational agents optimise their decision to participate in different markets, work, education, migration etc’. The authors begin by introducing the point that while for much of its history Cuba has been a country of immigrants, during the last 30 years this situation has reversed and now more people leave the island than enter it. Of this number, a large proportion lives in the United States. Based on a mathematical analysis and relevant formulae and data inputs, excluding those Cubans living in the United States who were educated there, the author seeks to reveal the strength of the educational incentive for Cubans migrating to the United States. The conclusions reached from the analysis are that individuals in the age group 41–49 have the highest migration opportunity, almost four times more than those under 25. Regarding professional categories, it is skilled workers who demonstrate the best migration opportunity, approximately three times more than professionals in category 1 (University Directors and Executives) and category 2 (Technical workers). This situation becomes an increasing problem for the state as the loss of ‘human capital’ and ‘non-recoverable educational investment’ is not sufficiently mitigated by the émigré’s remittance from abroad or their investment in Cuba.