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**Transitions from Charismatic Rule:  
Theories of Leadership Change  
and Cuba's Post-Fidel Succession**

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## **Transitions from Charismatic Rule: Theories of Leadership Change and Cuba's Post-Fidel Succession**

### **Abstract**

For theories of political succession and charismatic authority, the almost half-century long rule of Fidel Castro presents an extraordinary test case since Fidel in July 2006 handed over power 'temporarily' to his deputy and brother Raúl. On the background of Max Weber's work on charismatic rule, the paper analyzes the way in which the Cuban leadership has responded to the succession question and identifies four aspects in which it differs from the succession problems typically attributed to charismatic rule: Cuba's longstanding exceptionalism regarding the 'second man' behind the leader; the succession during the life-time of the leader with a sui generis modus of 'cohabitation' between the outgoing and the incoming leader; the routinization of charisma which domestically allows a bureaucratic succession model with the Communist Party, rather than any individual, being postulated as Fidel Castro's heir; and as a correlate to the latter, the ritual transmission of Fidel's charisma to a heir beyond the nation-state, Venezuela's Hugo Chávez, as the new charismatic leader to continue Fidel Castro's universal revolutionary mission.

Key words: political succession, leadership change, charismatic authority, Max Weber, Cuba

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## **Zusammenfassung**

### **Übergänge von charismatischer Herrschaft: Theorien zum Wechsel politischer Führung und der Fall der Amtsnachfolge Fidel Castros**

Für Theorien politischer Nachfolge und charismatischer Herrschaft stellt die fast ein halbes Jahrhundert währende Herrschaft Fidel Castros in Kuba einen denkbar prominenten Testfall dar, seit Fidel Castro im Juli 2006 die Amtsgeschäfte „vorübergehend“ an seinen Vize und Bruder Raúl übergab. Max Webers Werk über charismatische Herrschaft aufgreifend, analysiert der vorliegende Artikel, wie die kubanische Führung auf die Nachfolgefrage geantwortet hat und identifiziert dabei vier Aspekte, die den kubanischen Fall von den typischerweise charismatischer Herrschaft zugeschriebenen Nachfolgeproblemen unterscheiden: Die Ausnahmerolle in Bezug auf den „zweiten Mann“ hinter der Führungsperson; die Amtsnachfolge zu Lebzeiten mit einem ungewöhnlichen Modus der „Cohabitation“ zwischen scheidendem Führer und designiertem Nachfolger; die Routinisierung des Charismas, die auf nationaler Ebene ein bürokratisches Nachfolgemodell ermöglicht, bei dem die Kommunistische Partei an Stelle eines individuellen Politikers das Erbe Fidels antritt; und schließlich, als Korrelat des vorangehenden, die rituelle Übertragung des Charismas Fidels zu einem Erben jenseits der nationalen Grenzen in Gestalt des venezolanischen Präsidenten Hugo Chávez, der als neuer charismatischer Führer zum Träger der universellen Revolutionsmission Fidel Castros erhoben wird.

# Transitions from Charismatic Rule: Theories of Leadership Change and Cuba's Post-Fidel Succession

Bert Hoffmann

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## 1. Introduction

Succession in the highest political office marks a moment of crisis in any political system. While in democracies electoral mechanisms bear the brunt of resolving the problem of leadership change, even here manifold examples attest to the uncertainties involved (cf. Calvert 1987). However, it is in strongly personalized regimes that leadership change proves a particularly thorny challenge. When Max Weber introduced the concept of 'charismatic authority' into the social sciences he immediately pointed to the particular difficulties it faces at the moment of leadership succession<sup>1</sup>.

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1 See Max Weber's essay on 'The Pure Types of Legitimate Authority' originally published in his *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* in 1922 (published in English as *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*); all citations in the following are taken from Weber 1968, particularly pp. 46-65.

The present paper analyzes this succession challenge in what is widely regarded as one of the most emblematic cases of charismatic leadership in recent history: the rule of Fidel Castro, who has governed Cuba ever since 1959, that is, for almost half a century. In July 2006, before undergoing emergency surgery, Castro signed a proclamation (*proclama*) in which he handed over power – temporarily, as was stressed – to his brother Raúl Castro, who is his formal deputy in office in the state, the Communist Party and the military. Since then – for more than a year by now – Raúl and the group of leaders around him have been running the country in what has been a rather unexpected scenario: the beginning of the political succession still in the lifetime of the Cuban Revolution's historic leader.

For Third World countries, scholars of comparative politics have been giving much more attention to the issues of regime change rather than to the topic of leadership succession within a given system (Goeva/Holm 1998: 131). Regarding Latin America, in the 1980s and 1990s the analysis of 'transitions from authoritarian rule' (O'Donnell/Schmitter/Whitehead 1986) and the prospects of democratization became a dominant strand in political science research. In this literature, up to 1989 Cuba was largely neglected as it neither fell into the typical patterns of bureaucratic-authoritarian rule elsewhere on the continent nor was there any major expectation of regime change as long as the island's ties with the Soviet Union and the state-socialist countries of Eastern Europe remained in place. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and Cuba's subsequent economic crisis, the issue of regime change and democratization became the object of quite some scholarly literature. This, however, remained largely prospective or prescriptive, while on the island political continuity prevailed against considerable odds (Hoffmann 2000).

With Fidel Castro's failing health, the issue of regime change has newly resurfaced in the international debate as a function of the succession question. While history does hold plenty of examples in which political succession of charismatic leaders kicked off political dynamics that eventually led to regime collapse or systemic change, this is by no means a foregone conclusion. Instead, the succession crisis can also be mastered, resulting in gradual or selective change and different degrees of regime continuity. It is not the interest of this paper to add to the 'Cuba after Fidel' scenarios that have been an ever-green in the scholarly literature on Cuba over the past<sup>2</sup>; it does not try to sketch future developments but instead to empirically analyze the succession process effectively under way since 31 July 2006. As a consequence, rather than 'transition to democracy' the subject of this study is 'transition from charismatic rule'. In this endeavor, the present paper's aim is less to ask what these events

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2 An illustration is the case of Edward González (1976) who more than three decades ago argued that '(...) the fact that Castro is now entering middle age (he will be fifty later this year) reminds us that Cuba may someday confront a succession problem' to then sketch different scenarios of succession.

might mean in practical political terms for Cuba but rather something that the author considers to be very much a still pending task: to insert the empirical case of Cuba's post-Fidel succession into the broader theoretical and comparative debate on charismatic authority, leadership change and political succession.

The paper unfolds as follows: Following this introduction, section 2 will review some of the key concepts of the debate on charisma and political succession, and against this background reflect on the nature of the Cuban case. While this paper is not designed as a comparative study, it will draw on other succession experiences to explore commonalities and differences. We will then turn to the empirical analysis of the Cuban succession. The paper will highlight four aspects: the role and character of the regime's 'second-in-command', which becomes of vital importance in the process of succession (section 3); the interplay between charisma and the institutionalization of rule through the Cuban Communist Party (section 4); the changing nature of the 'highest office' in the course of the succession, in particular the *sui generis* form of power-sharing arrangement between Fidel Castro, in partially recovered health and dedicated to 'special tasks', and the acting government led by Raúl Castro (section 5); and finally, the two-fold nature of the Cuban succession: the domestic handover of power to a bureaucratic-institutionalized successor (Raúl Castro), parallel to an emphatically staged transfer of charisma beyond the nation's borders, with the designation of Hugo Chávez as the heir to Fidel Castro's charismatic leadership and global projects. The concluding section then sums up the findings, provides an outlook on the issues of Cuba's succession still to come, and underscores the specific contribution the analysis of the Cuban case can make to the research on leadership succession and the 'transitions from charismatic rule'.

Finally, a caveat is in place: If we speak of the post-Fidel succession there may be an obvious objection against doing so at a moment when Fidel officially remains the head of state and Raúl Castro's leadership is, in formal terms, merely a temporary caretaker government. However, a year is a very long time to be out of active office for a charismatic leader who had been at the helm of his country without interruption for more than four and a half decades. Moreover, as Fidel himself admitted having been 'between life and death' when undergoing his various medical interventions (Castro, F. 2007), for all political actors the death of the Cuban Revolution's leader was a distinct possibility which shaped their calculations and behavior. As a consequence, even in the case that Fidel Castro's recovering health should permit him to return to exercise his formal offices at some moment, we will have been witnessing a dry-run of succession under the most real-life conditions worthy to be analyzed as such in its own right. Moreover, any return to office, if it were to happen, would by all likelihood signal less an end to the succession issue but rather form part of a prolonged succession period involving, as we will argue, complex power-sharing arrangements

between the outgoing and the incoming leadership. If the owl of Minerva takes flight at dusk, as Hegel postulated, any research on current politics is problematic. But in our case, Minerva's owl does have a good day of empirical evidence to look back at by now. Moreover, this paper has no ambition to be conclusive, but rather to put forward findings which may prove helpful for further research. Minerva's owl, certainly, will have many more turns to take on Cuban skies.

## 2. Charisma and the Cuban Experience: Rethinking a Classic Case

For Weber, charismatic authority is one of three types of legitimate authority, besides legal and traditional authority. He defines charismatic authority as 'resting on devotion to the specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of normative patterns revealed or ordained by him' (Weber 1968: 46). The charismatic leader 'is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities' (ibid: 48). However, unlike physical characteristics, a leader's charisma can never be a mere personal quality, but only comes into existence in the interaction with his audience. While the psychological approaches guiding much research on charisma led to overemphasize the individual traits of the leader (Beyer 1999), Weber himself is sufficiently clear that charisma by definition is a relational category: 'It is recognition on the part of those subject to authority which is decisive for the validity of charisma.' (Weber 1968: 49).<sup>3</sup>

Scholars from very different backgrounds and approaches have emphasized the charismatic character of Fidel Castro's authority (e.g. González 1976, Domínguez 1978, Eckstein 1994, Skierka 2000): the heroic example and extraordinary qualities displayed in the guerilla war and as the military *Comandante en Jefe* of the Revolution; his profound sense of mission and his leadership by example; his oratorical skills and emotional appeal in the communication to the people; his personalist style of leadership and, on the part of his followers, the primacy of personal loyalty over ideological definition (as embodied in the slogan of the early 1960s that read: '*Si Fidel es comunista, que me pongan en la lista!*' – 'If Fidel is a communist, then sign me up, too!'); and finally, as a functional equivalent to the 'divine grace' (the literal translation of 'charisma', a term taken from the vocabulary of early Christianity), Fidel's recourse to legitimacy through a 'higher authority', with History taking the place of the Divine, as most emblematically spelled out in his famous 1953 trial defense terminating in 'Condemn me, it does not matter to me. History will absolve me'.

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3 See also Lindholm 1990, pp. 7 and 23-27.



Weber was more concerned with the effects of charisma than with how it originates<sup>4</sup>. But if charisma is not just a personal quality but a relational category, we need to look at both sides. As the Weberian category is drawn from the religious sphere, in much readings the 'followers' were associated with irrational worship and hardly taken in consideration as conscious actors in their own rights. This is untenable. Instead of seeking semi-pathological causes for the charismatic leader's supporters, Eisenstadt (1968: xxviii) points to the importance of 'communicative situations' which facilitate charismatic relations. Particularly when the existing order is shattered, societies are more ready to respond to people who are –as Fidel was in post-revolutionary Cuba – able to endow them with new meanings, new symbols and orientations regarding the new rules, which allow 'to relate the individual to collective identification, and to reassure him of his status and his place in a given collectivity' (Eisenstadt 1968: xxviii).

Eisenstadt develops his interpretations in the context of modernization theory. But its main idea – that charisma depends on the material conditions, interests, and expectations of the group the leader appeals to – is easy to transfer to more historical-structural and even Marxist approaches. In current leadership studies, Jones takes up this line of thought when he argues that follower response depends upon the leader's provision of an answer to a situational need; charismatic leadership occurs only when followers believe that the leader does provide a solution to the problems they are confronting (Jones, 2001: 763). Similarly, Beyer stresses that in the study of charismatic leadership the contextual factors need to move from the periphery to the very center of the research agenda (Beyer 1999, see also Latkin 2006).

Such an understanding connects with Max Weber's pointing to charisma as 'the greatest revolutionary force' (Weber 1968: 53), which certainly does not hinge on the leader's character traits alone: The leader's charisma stems precisely from embodying a radical, revolutionary break with the past which popular hopes see as a remedy to their problems. Fidel's charismatic appeal was not only due to his flamboyant rhetoric on the *Plaza*, but also to the redistributive measures his government enacted and which to many Cubans proved the credibility of his commitment to radically depart from a past associated with corruption and social exclusion. Seen in this perspective, Weber's category can be pretty much cleared from its aura of the 'super-hero' (or 'super-villain', as the case may be). The leader, despite his extraordinary status, appears as much a product of circumstances as the motor of their change. In his work on charismatic authority, Max Weber (1968: 55f.) offers a number of possible types of solution for the inevitable problem of succession at the moment of the leader's de-

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4 Precisely where his text touches on the conditions for charisma receiving recognition, this is cut short: '[the recognition of charisma] lasts only so long as the belief in its charismatic inspiration remains. The above is scarcely in need of further discussion', (Weber 1968: 52) – a sentence that certainly sounds strange in the work of a scholar who spent not little energy on accurate definitions for numerous sociological concepts.

mise. While some are essentially limited to religious or historic movements (e.g. revelation in oracles), for 21<sup>st</sup> century politics such as the case studied in this paper four options have to be considered: the designation on the part of the original charismatic leader of his own successor; the conception that charisma is a quality transmitted by heredity, particularly to his closest relatives; the transmission by ritual means; and designation of a successor by the charismatically qualified administrative staff – a process, as Weber stresses, not to be interpreted as modern ‘election’ (ibid: 55), but yet with blurring lines to institutionalized forms of transfer of power.

If we so far have discussed the concept of charisma and emphasized the charismatic aspects of Fidel Castro’s rule we need to remember that Weberian ideal types are not to be mistaken for descriptions of empirical cases. The German sociologist himself noted that over time routinization of charisma was inevitable if charismatic authority were not to remain a purely transitory phenomenon: ‘Indeed, in its pure form charismatic authority may be said to exist only in the process of originating. It cannot remain stable, but becomes either traditionalized or rationalized, or a combination of both.’ (Weber 1968: 54). The charismatic dimension at its origin, then, becomes just one *element* that co-exists and combines with others to legitimize political rule.

If the conceptual framework of charismatic leadership has been helpful in explaining Cuban politics it has, however, been so only to the degree that scholars have been aware of its limitations and the combination of charisma with other sources of power and legitimization at the same time. For instance Jorge Domínguez’s *opus magnum* on Cuba’s political order lists charisma as one of four elements in the legitimization of revolutionary rule, the others being political deliverance, distributional performance and nationalism (Domínguez 1978: 201). Susan Eckstein (1994) is particularly explicit in making the point that Fidel Castro, while being ‘in many respects a textbook case of a Weberian ideal-typical charismatic leader’ (ibid: 20), ‘turned to traditional and especially to rational-legal bureaucratic forms of legitimation and authority as well’ (ibid), to use the two other categories of Weber’s typology<sup>5</sup>. As a result, to some extent Fidel Castro was bound in historical and structural limits to leadership, and had to accept institutional considerations and constraints in steering the Revolution’s course (ibid: xi-xii, 3). In the moment of succession, this combination of different sources of authority tends to be subject to rearrangements; with the concentration on change in the top leadership position, it is the element of charisma that comes once again to the very forefront of the political agenda.

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5 We may add that to some degree he did so also before the triumph of the Revolution: As to legal authority: One of the political banners of his 26<sup>th</sup> of July Movement was the reinstatement of the 1940 Constitution which Batista had dispensed. Another most important recourse was to traditional authority: the identification of the Revolution as the culmination of Cuba’s century-old struggles for independence.

### 3. Escaping the Succession Dilemma: Cuba's 'second man' exceptionalism

In his outline of a theory of succession, Burling (1974) formulated the general 'succession dilemma' as follows: 'When the successor is too clearly designated, weak leadership is often the result. When he is not designated clearly enough, the result may be a destructive succession struggle.' (260) The underlying reason for this he sees in the 'second-in-command problem': a man or an office with an unambiguous second position is as rare as an unambiguous first position is usual, Burling (1974: 256) argues. This is so because anyone holding an undisputed second position for a sustained period of time poses a potential threat to the man on top: 'If a man occupies a clear second place, every opponent of the top man will tend to rally around him, and he will then become a serious rival to the man on top' (ibid).

The historic experience of state-socialism shows that it did not have an antidote to this virus. This is illustrated by the case of Mao Zedong, the other great Third World revolutionary leader of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with extraordinary charismatic qualities at the helm of a Communist Party-based system, but who never had an undisputed second-in-command for any longer period of time and whose death was followed by the fierce infighting of rival factions in the Cultural Revolution (Sandschneider 1987). But also where state-socialism was of a more bureaucratic brand, succession remained an often highly conflictive issue, as the power struggles on these occasions in the USSR and other Eastern European countries attest (Taras 1989). Not only was there no formalized set of rules in place that would provide a transparent mechanism to resolve the leadership question, but, as a rule, Soviet-style state-socialist rulers shied away from having an individual cadre in an undisputed second position for long for fear of him becoming a rival to the leader.

Cuba has been crucially different in this regard. Accounts vary when precisely Fidel declared his younger brother Raúl as his designated successor: Valdés (2004: 243) speaks of May 1, 1960, in the face of assassination attempts on Fidel, others like Thomas locate this act even earlier in the very first days after revolutionary takeover (Thomas 1971: 1087). In the following, Fidel's '*mando único*' (unified command) became replicated in Raúl who became his deputy in all formal offices. The 'Sovietization thesis'<sup>6</sup> so prominent in the analysis of the institutionalization process of the 1970s tended to overlook how strongly in this key aspects Cuba departed from the Soviet mould, where the top offices of party, state and military affairs tended to be not united in one hand<sup>7</sup>, and certainly not their deputy positions. The towering figure of Fidel easily led to overlook his importance, but Raúl Castro as the undis-

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6 E.g. González (1976); for a critique see Bengelsdorff (1988).

7 As Breslauer points out, in the post-Stalin USSR 'norms have developed against excessive power concentration the general secretary, as reflected in a written but secret rule against the same person occupying the post of CPSU general secretary and chairman of the Council of Ministers' (Breslauer 1989: 35).

puted number two was a crucial part of Cuban exceptionalism<sup>8</sup>: for four and a half decades he immunized Fidel's rule against the typical instabilities stemming from the power struggle around the second-in-command position.

While Fidel Castro and the Cuban leadership are keen to avoid any positive reference to the kinship relation between Fidel and Raúl, seeking all distance possible to any endorsement of hereditary or dynastic rule, it is this position of Raúl Castro as the formal 'second man' that becomes crucially important in the current succession. There is some irony in that even Fidel seems to ignore the full dimension of this aspect. In the book-length interview with Ignacio Ramonet, carried out shortly before he had to undergo surgery and delegate his powers temporarily, he was asked: 'If you disappeared, for whatever circumstance – would Raúl be your undisputed substitute?' Fidel replied: 'If something happens to me tomorrow, I am absolutely certain that the National Assembly will gather and elect him, without the slightest doubt. The Politburo will meet and elect him' (Ramonet 2006: p. 563).<sup>9</sup> None of this occurred, neither the National Assembly nor the Politburo came together. Nor did they have to. Article 94 of the Cuban Constitution stipulates: 'In case of the absence, illness or death of the President of the Council of State, his duties will be assumed by the First Vice President'.<sup>10</sup> Hence, Raúl Castro was fully designated to take Fidel's place as head of state in case of his inability or death, with no handwritten *proclama* by Fidel nor any electoral act needed before the end of the full term in office Fidel Castro and Raúl as his deputy had been elected for by the National Assembly in 2003.

Recalling the Weberian terms of succession from charismatic rule, however, there was some need for the handwritten *proclama* on other grounds: It serves as the symbolic signal that succession to Fidel Castro is not left either to the legal-institutional process (the deputy takes over) nor through designation by the corresponding administrative staff (the National Assembly) but is enacted as 'the designation on the part of the original charismatic leader of his own successor' (Weber 1968: 54).

#### 4. Charisma, Succession and Institutionalization: 'Fidel is the Party, Raúl is the Party'

It seems all too plausible that for personalistic rule the question of leadership succession represents a more serious challenge than for regimes with institutional one-party rule (Burnell 2006: 552). But what if Cuba under Fidel has had both? Regarding the Weberian ty-

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8 On the debate of 'Cuban Exceptionalism' see the recent volume by Hoffmann/Whitehead (2007).

9 Author's translation. Orig.: Ramonet: 'Si usted, por cualquier circunstancia, desapareciera, ¿Raúl sería su sustituto indiscutible?' Fidel: 'Si a mí me pasa algo mañana, con toda seguridad que se reúne la Asamblea Nacional y lo eligen a él, no le quepa la menor duda. Se reúne el buró político y lo eligen.'

10 Translation by author; orig.: En caso de ausencia, enfermedad o muerte del Presidente del Consejo de Estado lo sustituye en sus funciones el Primer Vicepresidente (República de Cuba 1992).

pology, charismatic leadership seems sharply antithetical to bureaucratic authority, as it strives on its role of being above the everyday administrative routine. At the same time, however, Weber noted that a 'routinization of charisma' is indispensable, giving birth to new traditions and new institutions endowed with 'charisma of office', if it is to prevail over time (Weber 1968: 61).<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, the relation between the leader and the institution he creates tends to be typically one of tension and conflict (ibid).

Again, empirical reality does not conform fully to any given ideal type. Fidel Castro organized a guerrilla force in the Sierra Maestra mountains not as an ad hoc gang of fighters following their leader but with differentiated institutional structures which made possible that after the triumph of the Revolution it could effectively serve as the nucleus of key institutions, the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias* and the Security apparatus. Similarly, also the Party was not a mere result of a routinization of Fidel's charisma but as much a product of circumstances. In the polarized post-1959 Cuban politics the victorious guerrilla fighters needed to strike alliances, and the new party came into being as a fusion of the three revolutionary political organizations fighting Batista, including Cuba's pre-'59 communist party, the *Partido Socialista Popular*, to whose youth organization Raúl Castro was affiliated before joining the 26<sup>th</sup> of July Movement led by his brother.

However, some key patterns can be recognized. *The Communist Party, founded under the name of Partido Comunista de Cuba (PCC) in 1965, became dominated by long-standing associates of Fidel from the guerrilla days. It was meant to spread Fidel's charisma by embodying moral principles and exemplary behavior, more than by functional efficiency or vanguard knowledge in the interpretation of the writings of Marx and Lenin (Domínguez 1978: 337). And true to Weber's diagnosis, the tensions between the leader and the Party marked Cuban politics ever since its creation. In his memorable essay on the *The History, Structure and Ideology of Cuba's Communist Party*, Hans Magnus Enzensberger wrote in 1969 after spending a year in Cuba:*

'With great pertinacity Fidel escapes the avant-garde that he conjured up. It will never catch up with him. He wants it and he does not want it. The dilemma of Fidel is also that of the PCC, an institution that has now been in the process of being built and destroyed for many years' (Enzensberger 1969: p. 215; author's translation).

The duality of personal and institutional leadership remains reflected in Fidel Castro's titles: While he acquired the titles of the state-socialist nomenclature and in official declarations

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11 Eisenstadt (1968) has pushed this point even further with his emphasis on the intrinsic interrelation between charisma and institution-building: While charisma has a great transformative capacity and can be highly creative in the provision of new order and meaning, it is the routinization of charisma that transforms these innovations into more continuous social organization and institutional framework (ibid: xxi).

boasts the long list of First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party and President of the Council of Ministers and of the Council of State, his foremost title remains that of the *Comandante en Jefe* of the Cuban Revolution, even though this title is nowhere to be found in the country's Constitution.

The pendulum of institutionalization has swung back and forth. Rather than being an absolutist ruler, Fidel has been moderating the shifting balances of forces, eventually weighing to one or the other side. The 1970s saw the 'process of institutionalization', when the Party finally celebrated its first Congress and the new 1976 Constitution enshrined the Communist Party as the 'leading force in state and society', as elsewhere between East Berlin and Vladivostok.<sup>12</sup> It also was then enthroned as the ultimate answer to political leadership succession, when in 1973 the Party newspaper *Granma* for the first time launched the slogan 'Men die, but the Party is immortal' (cited in Leogrande 2002: 17).

In the second half of the 1980s, the so-called 'process of rectification' undid much of the economic administrative mechanisms introduced in the course of the bureaucratization of Cuban socialism in the previous decade and brought back some of the economic voluntarism typically associated with Fidel's personal leadership. In the crisis years of the early 1990s, again pragmatism prevailed, economic reforms were introduced, the Constitution was reformed, and Party Congresses held in 1992 and 1997.

Parallel to economic recovery, in the latter half of the 1990s the pendulum swung back again and a gradual erosion of the institutions of Party and State set in. Three aspects shall be highlighted as they become political testing grounds in the current succession:

- 1) Although Party statutes require a Congress to be held every five years, none has been called for in nothing less than ten years by now. Still one year after Fidel's operation, the date of the next Party Congress – which could be the occasion to formalize Raúl Castro as Fidel's successor – remains a subject of speculation in Havana.
- 2) The designation of Felipe Pérez Roque to foreign minister in 1999 highlighted Fidel's personalist politics: Pérez Roque, aged 34 at that moment, had been the chief of staff of the *Grupo de Apoyo al Comandante*, Fidel's personal support group. The announcement of his nomination signed by the Council of State explicitly underscored the importance of political legitimacy derived from personal and unmediated ties to Fidel, stressing that Pérez Roque 'has worked very closely at Fidel's side' and is 'familiarized with the ideas and the thoughts of Fidel Castro as few others are' (Consejo de Estado 1999).

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12 Article 5 states (in its 1992 revised version): 'The Communist Party of Cuba, a follower of Martí's ideas and of Marxism-Leninism, and the organized vanguard of the Cuban nation, is the highest leading force of society and of the state, which organizes and guides the common effort toward the goals of the construction of socialism and the progress toward a communist society.' (República de Cuba 1976: orig.: 'El Partido Comunista de Cuba, martiano y marxista-leninista, vanguardia organizada de la nación cubana, es la fuerza dirigente superior de la sociedad y del Estado, que organiza y orienta los esfuerzos comunes hacia los altos fines de la construcción del socialismo y el avance hacia la sociedad comunista.')

- 3) A return to mass mobilizations and idealistic campaign-style politics under the slogan of the 'battle of ideas' (*batalla de ideas*) since 2002, which encompassed just about everything from organizing public marches against U.S. migration laws to repairing health centers on the island. The charismatic bond between the people and the leader, however, had become a poor copy of earlier days. The government was still able to achieve mass mobilizations, but the people hardly followed due to 'complete personal devotion', but rather as routine behavior corresponding to their political socialization and the regime's structures of incentives and sanctions for everyday behavior. The 'battle of ideas' itself became quickly routinized and institutionalized, with an 'office for the battle of ideas' as a quasi-super ministry headed by young cadres whose authority was derived directly from Fidel and which de facto sidelined the formally established competencies of party and state organs.

However, once again the pendulum has been swinging back. It did so even before Fidel underwent surgery, as the Executive Secretariat of the PCC's Central Committee, dissolved in 1991, was re-installed – a step interpreted by many observers to show the handwriting rather of Raúl than Fidel Castro. Raúl, since assuming office at the end of July 2006, has missed no opportunity to reposition the Communist Party as the one and only center of Cuban politics. He reaffirmed its pre-eminence above all other political institution, be it the state bureaucracy or the *batalla de ideas* (whose public visibility has declined dramatically since Fidel's departure from center stage) or even the armed forces – using precisely the 2 December 2006 military parade to reaffirm that their mission is to be the PCC's 'most loyal, disciplined, humble and staunch follower' [R. Castro 2006b]<sup>13</sup>.

This discursive readjustment includes the very nature of Fidel Castro's leadership role, with evident implications for its succession. In this, the public statements by Pérez Roque and Raúl Castro mark two clearly competing positions. As early as in 2002 Fidel's long-time personal aide Pérez Roque publicly contemplated on the time after Fidel, and he did so by celebrating Fidel's extraordinary (if not to say 'superhuman') qualities in terms that Weber would have been delighted to put into a list of illustrations for charismatic rule:

'What will we be doing (...) once Fidel's mastership is absent, his far reaching sight, which sees where we others don't see yet, the instinct, his abilities and ethics, the rigour and the experience' (Pérez Roque 2002, emphasis added)<sup>14</sup>.

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13 Orig.: 'su más fiel, disciplinado, humilde e incommovible seguidor'.

14 Author's translation; orig.: 'qué haremos nosotros (...) cuando no esté el magisterio de Fidel, la vista larga, que ve donde los demás no vemos todavía, el instinto, la habilidad y la ética, el rigor y la experiencia (...)'

More remarkable still was his programmatic speech at the National Assembly in December 2005, which was widely seen as Pérez Roque profiling himself as Fidel's chosen crown-prince well before his acute health problem. In what he called 'the first premise', he defined the people's blind faith in its leader as the Revolution's 'greatest treasure':

'The way by which we understand this authority is the following: 'I don't understand quite well, but if Fidel said so, I am sure that this is how it is.' How many people do we find who say: 'If Fidel said so, he knows, we will come to understand later.'<sup>15</sup>

And as if to paraphrase Weber's definition of charismatic authority as resting on the exemplary character of the leader, Pérez Roque then programmatically and repeatedly invoked 'the authority that comes from the example', even backing this up by an old Fidel quote stating that 'socialism is the science of the example.' He then went on, pointing to the post-Fidel era, to call for a charismatic, example-based succession to the charismatic leader rather than an institutional one: 'As long as this country has a leadership based on the example (...) it is invincible' (Pérez Roque 2005).<sup>16</sup>

While publicly the leadership has unconditionally closing files and rejecting any idea of internal differences, it is Raúl Castro who has most clearly countered such an emphasis on the inherently charismatic character of Cuba's leadership and the corresponding implications for succession. This becomes evident in both of his emblematic and programmatic appearances after the transfer of power. In both he cites Fidel explicitly not as all-powerful leader, but instead he makes a point of putting the Communist Party *ex post* not only above all other institutions but even above the leadership role of Fidel. In carefully drafted wording Fidel is cited in his function as the Party's first servant: as the person reading or reaffirming the resolutions of the Party Congress or reporting to it. So in Raúl Castro's first public statement after assuming office, an interview in *Granma* from 18 August 2006, he states: 'Recently rereading Party Congress documents, I found ideas that seemed to have been written today. For example, this excerpt from *the Central Report presented by Fidel to the Third Congress* in February 1986...' (Castro, R. 2006a, emphasis added)<sup>17</sup>; and again a paragraph later: 'Simi-

15 Author's translation; orig.: 'Nosotros, la manera en que entendemos esa autoridad es esta: 'Yo no lo entiendo bien, pero si Fidel lo dijo, yo estoy seguro de que eso es así.' Cuánta gente en el pueblo encontramos que dice: 'Si Fidel lo dijo, él sabe, ya entenderemos.'

16 Orig.: 'Nosotros, la manera en que entendemos esa autoridad es esta: 'Yo no lo entiendo bien, pero si Fidel lo dijo, yo estoy seguro de que eso es así.' Cuánta gente en el pueblo encontramos que dice: 'Si Fidel lo dijo, él sabe, ya entenderemos.' Ese valor, ese tesoro, esa confianza, o esta otra: 'Si Fidel lo dijo, es porque es así, porque Fidel le habla claro al pueblo.' ¿Cuántas veces nosotros hemos visto eso y nos han dicho eso? Ese tesoro no se puede perder: la autoridad que viene del ejemplo. Por eso Fidel dijo en la rectificación (...) 'el socialismo es la ciencia del ejemplo'. (...) Legitimidad basada en la autoridad, autoridad basada en el ejemplo. Mientras este país tenga un liderazgo basado en el ejemplo (...), será invencible; hay ahí una premisa.' (Pérez Roque 2005; no official English translation available.)

17 Orig.: 'Releyendo recientemente los documentos de los congresos del Partido, hallé ideas que parecen escritas hoy. Por ejemplo, este fragmento del Informe Central presentado por Fidel al Tercer Congreso, en febrero de 1986 ...'



lar formulations are contained in the documents from the other Party Congresses and *have also been reaffirmed by its first secretary on diverse occasions.*' (Castro, R. 2006a)<sup>18</sup>. The second key intervention was Raúl Castro's speech at the 2 December 2006 military parade which he presided, in absence of Fidel. In postulating the primacy of the Party over the armed forces, he used the exact same discursive construction to put the Party above Fidel:

'This is a perfect time to reaffirm the full validity of the words spoken by comrade Fidel in his *Central Report to the First Congress* of the Communist Party, 31 years ago, as he said...' (Castro, R. 1996b, emphasis added).<sup>19</sup>

Between the lines, the message is clear. The answer to the succession question given by Raúl Castro is: institutionalization, in the form of a resounding reaffirmation of the centrality of the Communist Party. Challenged by Pérez Roque's 'socialism is the science of the example', Raúl Castro needs this *ex post* definition of Fidel's role to add legitimacy to his competing claim which could be paraphrased as 'socialism is the Party'. As of this writing, the position of Raúl Castro has carried the day. A provincial Party paper, 'Guerrero' from the PCC's Pinar del Río branch, translated this into prose as follows: 'The Party is the heart and brain of the country' (Guerrero 2006). And: 'Fidel is the Party, Raúl is the Party, and be there who may, the historic and revolutionary continuity is based on the multiplied force of its cadres' (*ibid*).

## 5. Changing the Leader, Changing the Office: 'Cohabitation', Cuban style

There is a simplified perception of succession that merely focuses on who fills the place left by the outgoing leader. However, that place itself, the character and function of the office might change in the process. This regards the *de facto* nature of the top leadership position and does not necessarily mean formal changes in its constitutional definition. As Calvert points out, drawing on truly dissimilar cases, the office of the prime minister in Great Britain had no legal standing until 1904, Lybia's Gaddhafi does not hold any formal position, and in states such as the Soviet Union or China, the question of what constitutes the highest office itself has been disputed (Calvert 1987: 3-4).

We noted above that Raúl Castro has occupied the deputy position to Fidel Castro in all offices. This, however, needs one important qualification: It refers to all formal offices in party, state and military, but not to that title that most clearly embodies the charismatic side of Fidel's rule, his title of *Comandante en Jefe* of the Cuban Revolution. There never existed any

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18 'Formulaciones similares recogen los documentos del resto de los congresos del Partido y además han sido reafirmadas por su Primer Secretario en diversas ocasiones.'

19 Orig.: 'La ocasión es propicia para reafirmar la plena vigencia de las palabras del compañero Fidel en el Informe Central al Primer Congreso del Partido, hace ya 31 años, cuando expresó ...'

position such as 'Deputy *Comandante en Jefe*'. This title, never formally defined or anchored in the Constitution, was personal, attachable to Fidel Castro alone.<sup>20</sup> Raúl bid farewell to charismatic leadership by saying that

'the Commander-in-Chief of the Cuban Revolution is one and only one, and only the Communist Party, (...) can be the dignified heir of the trust deposited by the people in its leader'.<sup>21</sup>

Raúl Castro's own leadership style is as uncharismatic as can be – a point he himself has publicly undercored.<sup>22</sup> This goes hand in hand with a turn to collective leadership, in which Raúl Castro is rather a *primus inter pares* than a towering commander-in-chief. The shift from one leader to a group of leaders was already present in Fidel's *proclama* before he underwent surgery in July 2006: it named Raúl as his successor as the head of party, state and military, but went on to list six high-ranking party cadres to take over precise functions, namely the role of '*impulsor principal*' ('*main promoter*') of the programs on education, public health, and energy, plus a three-person commission to oversee the funding for these. As a way of confirmation, coverage in the state media since has given much room to a number of leading figures other than Raúl.

While this type of collective leadership within a state-socialist party apparatus seems quite similar to patterns known from the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe or China, in the Cuban case it combines with a *sui generis* form of power-sharing: a sort of 'cohabitation' between the Raúl-led government and the outgoing leader himself. By all available evidence it seems safe to state that the role of Fidel Castro since July 2006 is not only a dependent variable of his state of health but also reflects a deliberate division of labor, in which he is detached from day-to-day policy-making and instead assumes an as yet un-specified 'elder statesman' style role. (Referring to the two dozen public statements in the first 12 months after his surgery, mostly published under the title '*Reflexiones del Comandante*' in the Party newspaper *Granma*,<sup>23</sup> in the streets of Havana the ironic term of 'Comentarista en Jefe' was coined to describe his new role.)

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20 The same is true for the title of 'Máximo Líder' (Supreme Leader) which had been widely used at earlier times but which has largely fallen out of use in the last two decades.

21 Quote from the 5th Plenary Meeting of the Cuban Communist Party's Central Committee, presented in *Granma*, July 1, 2006.

22 Raúl Castro, in his first and programmatic *Granma* interview after assuming office, included the following: 'As a point of fact, I am not used to making frequent appearances in public, except at times when it is required. (...) Moreover, I have always been discreet, that is my way, and in passing I will clarify that I am thinking of continuing in that way. But that has not been the fundamental reason why I don't appear very often in the mass media; simply, it has not been necessary.' (Castro R., 2006a).

23 All of these are accessible at the official Cuban government website at: <http://www.cuba.cu/gobierno/discursos>.

The analysis of these '*Reflexiones*' shows preoccupation essentially for:

- a) international politics, most prominently the Bolivarian Revolution led by Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, but also the perspectives of other left-wing Latin American leaders and the non-aligned movement;
- b) issues of global concern for humanity, depicting the dangers of climate change, stressing the need for energy saving, or bashing the bio-diesel program of the U.S. government for converting food into fuel; and
- c) historic accounts of the Cuban Revolution's epic struggles and of the frustrated U.S. intents to topple it or assassinate its leader.

But maybe just as important are the issues his interventions do not address: only exceptionally we find a mention of the Cuban Communist Party or of any domestic policy issues beyond general statements such as 'the country works well' (in: Castro/Chávez 2007).<sup>24</sup> This confirms that Castro probably would not come back to his previous political role, but rather be pursuing special tasks, as first cautiously hinted by the Party newspaper merely three months after Fidel's surgery (Bonasso 2006). Fidel Castro ratified this, though implicitly, when speaking on Hugo Chávez's radio program on 27 February 2007 about the need to 'reflect at length' on

'how immensely the world has changed in the past 60 years. (...) I devote time to this (...). Now that I am dedicated to this task (...) I feel I have more energy, more strength and more time to devote to study. I have once again become a student' (in: Castro/Chávez 2007).

He returned to this theme again at the end of his intervention asking 'for tranquility for me to be able to fulfill my new tasks' (ibid).

These 'new tasks' of Fidel appear as a Cuban version of the 'second front' concept once put forward by Mao Zedong. To prepare for succession, the Chinese leader had devised a so-called two-front strategy:

'I was in the second front while other comrades were in the first front (...). Since I was in the second front, I did not take charge of daily work. Many things were done by others and their prestige was thus cultivated, so that when I met with God, the State would not be thrown into great convulsions'.<sup>25</sup>

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24 The most notable exception is the 'Reflection and Manifesto for the People of Cuba', published in Granma on 17 June 2007, which first stresses Cuba's need for developing an efficient weapons industry as part of its self-defense capacities, and then goes on to decry capitalist economic standards such as GDP measures in a way that could be read as stifling the timid economic reform debate on the island URL: <http://www.cuba.cu/gobierno/discursos/2007/ing/f170607i.html>.

25 Cited in Sandschneider 1987: 116.

With hindsight we know that this was insufficient to prevent the Chinese state from ‘great convulsions’ after Mao’s death, as the problem was not a lack of ‘prestige’ or capacity by others, but the fierce fights among these about who was to succeed the Great Chairman and what policy course the Chinese state was to follow. In Cuba, however, a ‘second front’ strategy plays in a different context; the successor has been named and taken office in the lifetime of Fidel, and he is as much legitimized by designation of the charismatic leader – Fidel’s *proclama* – as by the institutional-bureaucratic logic (in which the formally designated deputy takes over in absence of the leader, according to the Constitution responsible statutes of the Communist Party resp. the military hierarchy). Nevertheless, the durability of this ‘cohabitation’ arrangement depends on both parts keeping within the bounds of their role: on the part of Fidel, that he refrains from getting into domestic and everyday decision-making and concentrates on the international projection of the Cuban Revolution and his role as ‘strategic thinker’ on the grand problems of humanity; and on part of the Raúl-led government, that it lends adequate room and support for Fidel’s reflections on these matters, and that it steers a course of broad political continuity that does not challenge what he and others see as his legacy. Fidel has turned from leader to legitimizer, but he also still maintains a ‘second front’ role within the leadership to which the Raúl-led government has to pay its respects. All indications suggest that this arrangement would not even then necessarily change if Fidel Castro was to formally resume all his offices.

The Cuban succession thus illustrates exceedingly well how in the course of leadership succession the definition and character of the ‘highest office’ can be transformed. The succession government to Fidel Castro is one that is embedded in complex power-sharing arrangements. It has been precisely the flexibility to work out and accept these arrangements that has enabled the smoothness of the succession.

## **6. Charisma beyond the nation-state: Fidel’s Transnational Heir**

Political Succession to a country’s leader is usually seen bound to the nation-state. This is quite natural in so far, as the highest office in dispute normally is defined within the framework of the nation-state. However, it is a characteristic of charismatic leadership that its appeal can go well beyond its domestic constituency. As the leader’s sense of ‘mission’ goes beyond the borders of his country, his following is not dependent on formal aspects like citizenship or eligibility to vote in a specific polity. The case of Fidel Castro illustrates this point well: On the one hand, he is the leader of the Cuban state; on the other, he is committed to the global cause focusing on social equality and the Third World’s emancipation from imperialism and capitalism. While being global in principle, Fidel Castro’s charismatic appeal

was most marked in Latin America, where after 1959 for many he came to embody the continent-wide cause of social justice and independence from the USA. And while his charismatic appeal to the domestic Cuban audience has faded, his appearances in Latin America in the past years demonstrated that he indeed continues to provoke profound emotional reactions on the continent. It is this transnational reach of charisma, we argue, that is a crucial element in understanding the Cuban succession.

A key factor in this has become, of course, Hugo Chávez. No other international leader has played so intensively and so successfully on the charismatic appeal of the Cuban *Comandante en Jefe*. The alliance with Venezuela, which is providing the island with oil on highly preferential terms has become a cornerstone of Cuba's economic recovery; in exchange Cuba exports human resources, namely medical staff, teachers, sport trainers and security experts to Venezuela. Probably more important for Hugo Chávez, however, has been the symbolic capital he was able to acquire through his ever more intimate relation with Fidel Castro. While it is beyond the scope of this article to analyze Chávez's rule in Venezuela, it certainly contains strong charismatic elements along the lines sketched out in the second section of this paper<sup>26</sup>. And while it is not to call into doubt that Chávez has charismatic qualities of his own, he greatly benefited from tapping into Fidel's charisma in terms of becoming his designated heir to continue the Latin America-wide project of revolution and anti-imperialism of which the Cuban Revolution of 1959 had been but the beginning.

This designation of Chávez as Fidel's extra-territorial heir has been building up over time parallel to the continuous intensification of Cuban-Venezuelan relations since Chávez took office in 1999. And perhaps more than in any oral or written pronouncement this designation of heir was publicly consummated in Chávez's absolutely central role at the side of Fidel's hospital bed after his operation of July 2006 as staged by Cuba's state-controlled media. All of the first series of officially released videos of Fidel Castro in hospital consistently showed the Venezuelan leader next to him, not his brother Raúl or any other Cuban leader. This bond displayed between the two is not merely one of friendship or of political allies, but of a father-son-relationship. About this point Chávez has been deliberately very explicit, for instance when Fidel called in on Chávez's radio show 'Aló Presidente' in February 2007, the Venezuelan leader ended exclaiming: 'You know that I don't have any complex about it: I call you 'father' in front of the entire world.' (Chávez 2007).

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26 When Chávez in early 2007 called to unite all parties that supported him in the elections into a single party, provisionally called the United Socialist Party of Venezuela, the leader of one of the smaller parties, Lina Ron of the UPV, reportedly agreed to disband her party with the following words so archetypical of the Weberian category that they almost seem caricature-like: 'My comandante gives the order — we obey. Who am I to question the second Liberator of the Republic, the messiah God sent to save the people?' (quoted in *The Economist*, 8 March 2007).

To use the Weberian wording, the hospital-bed scenes are the culmination of a transmission of charisma 'by ritual means' in the process of Fidel Castro passing the relay of Latin American revolution to Hugo Chávez. As in the case of Raúl in domestic politics, here, too by the designation on the part of the original charismatic leader of his own successor (Weber, 1968: 55) is clearly visible. The father-and-son imagery symbolically adds a note of elective familiar lineage to it that evokes a notion of socially constructed heredity – a factor much played on, in contrast to the official rejection of any heredity concept in the case of Raúl's real familiar ties.

If Chávez needs to convey to his followers that they are part of a grand project of liberation writing history, no one may testify the validity of this claim better than Fidel Castro. And if the Raúl-led government feels the need to institutionalize and depersonalize Cuba's state-socialist order, it seems a gift from heaven that someone else is taking it on his shoulders to continue Fidel's grand historic mission. The transfer of the leader's charisma to a heir beyond the borders of his own polity is an aspect not foreseen neither by Weber nor in more recent literature on the issue; but it proves vital for the Cuban succession as it greatly unburdens his domestic successors in a way that is crucial to the viability of their uncharismatic, bureaucratic approach.

## 7. Conclusions

Shakespeare's 'King Lear' is probably the most powerful parable on the dilemma of succession that Western culture has produced. The King, from an unchallenged position, decides to initiate an orderly succession in his lifetime by transferring rule to his daughters, so that he may go into dignified retirement:

'and 'tis our fast intent / To shake all cares and business from our age, / Conferring them on younger strengths while we / Unburthen'd crawl toward death' (Act I, Scene I).

But once the transfer of power to his two elder daughters is completed, the process escapes his hands; the new rulers fail to pay him what he considers due respect, as father and as 'king emeritus', and only a few scenes later the once all-powerful Lear has fallen to the point of asking in anger and despair: 'Doth any here know me?' (Scene IV).

A superficial reading may be content with the explanation of unthankful daughters betraying their father. A more thorough look however will find that Shakespeare's play is about the mechanisms of power: Lear's daughters behave precisely as opportunist and power-greedy as the 'realist' politics of the day had taught them. (It is only the third daughter, who failed to learn the lessons of convention and was disinherited by the King for just this reason,

who escapes this logic and remains loyal to her father.) On this Shakespearean background, the reluctance of personalist rulers to divest themselves in good time 'of rule, interest of territory, cares of state' (Lear, Act I, Scene I) may stem as much from their 'habit of ruling' (Burling 1974: 264) as from an instinctively felt fear of repeating King Lear's bottomless fall.

This brings us to the scenario we are witnessing in Cuba since July 2006 and which indeed few observers, on the island and outside, had thought likely to occur after four and a half decades of Fidel Castro's rule: the political succession in the lifetime of the leader. If this has been possible, and as of this writing indeed quite smoothly so, it is because the outgoing leader was sufficiently insured against the King Lear syndrome by a combination of factors the preceding analysis has shed light on. For one, through Cuba's 'second man' exceptionalism which allowed for an undisputed successor who, based on his brotherly ties, had proven his unwavering political loyalty for half a century. Second, the hybrid character of the Cuban regime: while having a personalist and charismatic component it also includes a strong institutional and bureaucratic side of one-party state socialism, which the successor government can turn to in its quest for maintaining regime stability. Third, it has given the outgoing leader a unique type of participation in the political arena which we have termed as a Cuban version of 'cohabitation'; while in this arrangement Fidel is detached from day-to-day politics, he maintains a non-negotiable presence which binds the government to a course of general political continuity. And fourth, the emergence of radical projects of transformation in Latin America has led to a fruitful 'communicative situation' for Fidel's charismatic appeal beyond Cuba's borders; notably the explicit way in which Hugo Chávez has tapped into Fidel's charisma and has assumed the role of his heir and relay has given Castro the gratifying role of venerated mentor in the grand project of Latin America's revolutionary transformation, detached from Cuba's domestic politics. Finally, we may add, it is of importance that Fidel Castro never formally reneged on his powers to 'unburthen'd crawl toward death' but has been able to maintain a sufficiently strong level of uncertainty as to his potential return to office which, even if this should never take place, greatly strengthened his position.

Thus far we have explained the reasons for the regime's success in managing the succession which, given the centrality and longevity of Fidel's rule, has been remarkably smooth by any standard of comparison. However, a formal return of Fidel to his official functions, should it occur, might put new stress on the 'cohabitation' model. And of course, succession will face a test yet to come in the moment it becomes formalized and stripped of its officially 'temporary' character, either through the death of Fidel or his formal resignation of office. If no Party Congress is convened earlier, at the latest, the national elections scheduled for April 2008 will become a moment to watch as Fidel Castro would have to be formally re-

elected first as deputy to the National Assembly, and then by the National Assembly to his office at the head of state.

Moreover, successful succession is no guarantee for sustained rule; any new government will have to seek legitimacy of its own. Elite cohesion will be as crucial as the role of external actors; economic performance will impact on the government's ability to generate new legitimacy of its own; the emergence of independent or oppositional actors with significant voice and echo in Cuban society would alter the coordinates of the political game in Havana. A major change in U.S. policy, a political demise for whatever reason of Hugo Chávez, the escalation of a refugee crisis – the list is as long as the future uncertain.

But what can be asserted with more certainty is that the successful transition to the Raúl-led government does not establish a role model for future successions. As much as Raúl Castro could not take over Fidel's former role as overarching '*Comandante en Jefe*', there is no 'equivalent Raúl' for Raúl, as Valdés (2004: 251) put it. Fidel Castro himself has emphasized that Raúl, being only four years younger than himself, can be only a transitional figure and that the 'problem is rather a generational one (...) it is generations that will succeed other generations'.<sup>27</sup> Most of the factors analyzed in this paper will not be available to a succession from Raúl to other leaders. As smooth as it was, the transition to the post-Fidel era which we are witnessing is too unique as to provide generalizable rules or patterns of succession for Cuban state-socialism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In more general terms, the analysis of the Cuban post-Fidel succession illustrates the interdependence as much as the tensions between charismatic leadership and institutionalization. It provides new insights into the importance of the 'second-in-command' in this type of political leadership and, in the context of the beginning of the succession in the leader's lifetime, exhibits a *sui generis* modus of power-sharing or 'cohabitation' between the old and the new leaders. If these have served to a certain extent as anti-dotes to the succession dilemmas held to be inherent in charismatic authority they certainly may not be generalized – but they do raise the question of how far any of these anti-dotes can be copied or imitated by other leaders.<sup>28</sup>

A final issue the Cuban case raises are the potential deficits of the 'methodological nationalism' inherent in the common approaches to succession. While this seems quite natural as the

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27 In the interview-based book written by Ramonet (2006: 563-564) Fidel Castro says about Raúl: 'He is almost my age, in a few years he will be, it's already more a problem of generations (...) it's about new generations, because our generation is passing' (Translation by author; orig.: Pero me va alcanzando en años, van llegando, ya es problema más bien generacional. (...); pero ya son nuevas generaciones, porque ya la nuestra va pasando.)

28 For instance, witnessing the recent rise of Hugo Chávez's brother Adán to center stage of Venezuelan politics, it will be worth watching if this aims to establish a similar solution to the 'second man' problem, and if so, how successful it turns out to be.



highest office at stake is defined within the nation-state framework, the Cuban case highlights the transnational qualities of charismatic leadership as its broad sense of mission typically is not bound to specific national interests. While transnationalism has become a forceful paradigm in other areas, in regard to transnational leadership roles there is still much research to be done. And it may be Cuba's unique contribution to the study of 'transitions from charismatic rule' to show how the process of succession to a charismatic leader can be played out in transnational terms in a way which greatly reduces the tensions between the transformative power of charismatic authority and the stabilizing function of institutionalized rule.

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