

# Documento de Trabajo

## Working Paper

**The Attitude of the European Union and Spain  
Towards Cuba: An Assessment A Year After  
Castro's Illness (WP)**

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4/9/2007

*Working Paper 38/2007*

# The Attitude of the European Union and Spain Towards Cuba: An Assessment A Year After Castro's Illness (WP)

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## Summary

One year after the 31 July announcement regarding Castro's health, not much has changed in essence, details and spirit in the peculiar relationship between Europe and Cuba. In spite of specific moves implemented by Madrid, the same assessment can be applied to the current chapter of the 'special relationship' between Spain and Cuba.<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

A year after the dramatic announcement of Fidel Castro's illness and temporary cession of power to his brother Raúl, the relation between the European Union (EU) and Cuba has returned to a level of normality, matching a previous cycle of freezing by the Cuban authorities and an attempt by European actors to influence or persuade Havana to open up and implement political and economic reforms.<sup>2</sup> After a prolonged period of 'waiting and seeing' by Brussels and some of the most active European governments in the relationship with Cuba (led by Spain), some initiatives were taken with the result of an ambivalent response by the Cuban government, distinguishing between what was perceived as a positive move from certain governments and what has been interpreted as an aggressive attitude from others. However, when the special EU Council's critical conclusions were issued in June 2007, including an offer to the Cuban authorities to meet in Brussels, the answer from Havana was violently and publicly negative, topped by a column written by Fidel Castro. In sum, one year after the 31 July announcement regarding Castro's health, not much has changed in essence, details and spirit in the peculiar relationship between Europe and Cuba. In spite of specific moves implemented by Madrid, the same assessment can be applied to the current chapter of the 'special relationship' between Spain and Cuba.

## A Wider Context

The bold move executed by the Spanish government during the Easter week towards Cuba surprised European and US observers as a major turn in Spain's policy since the Socialist Party's (PSOE) electoral victory in March 2004. When most observers expected the impasse caused by Castro's illness and his temporary absence from the public scene to last longer and invite an extended period of inaction and caution from an array of foreign actors, Spain decided to act. The risky trip taken by the Foreign Minister Miguel Ángel Moratinos to Havana has to be seen within a wider context regarding the European perception of the Cuban scene that deserves to be considered.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Paper presented in a summarised version at the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) congress held in Montreal, Canada, on 5-9/IX/2007. This document is a follow-up to a previous report made in the aftermath of Castro's illness and temporary cession of powers on 1 August 2006: 'From stubbornness and mutual irrelevancy to stillness and vigil on Castro's crisis: The current state of European Union-Spain-Cuba relations', Occasional Paper, Jean Monnet Chair/European Union Center. Special August/September 2006. Reproduced by Real Instituto Elcano <http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/documentos/253.asp> Available at website of Fundación Alternativas (Madrid): [http://www.falternativas.org/base/download/bc80\\_28-08-06\\_vigil-EN-paper.pdf](http://www.falternativas.org/base/download/bc80_28-08-06_vigil-EN-paper.pdf). Gratitude is extended to María Lorca for assistance in systematizing the trade and debt figures in the graphs included in appendix.

<sup>2</sup> For a review of the year see 'La UE y Cuba, un año después', El Nuevo Herald, 21/VII/2007, [http://www.elnuevoherald.com/noticias/mundo/columnas\\_de\\_opinion/story/68600.html](http://www.elnuevoherald.com/noticias/mundo/columnas_de_opinion/story/68600.html)

<sup>3</sup> For a reaction to the events made by the author, see these columns: 'La nueva actitud de España hacia Cuba', IPS 070405, La Opinión de los Angeles, 8/IV/2007, <http://www.laopinion.com/comentarios/?rkey=0000000000001466950>; 'Entre Bruselas y La Habana', Nueva Mayoría, 9/IV/2007, <http://www.nuevamayoria.com/ES/ANALISIS/?id=roy&file=070404.html>, El Nuevo Herald, 9/IV/2007, <http://www.elnuevo.com/211/story/28719.html>, 'Cuba no necesita presiones', Cinco Días, 21/X/2006,

This setting is basically composed of a reading of the string of events that have taken place since the announcement of Castro's illness and his cession of power, in addition to an in-depth analysis of general trends and dimensions of the Cuban fabric. The conclusion of this search will reveal that not much substantial has happened regarding potential epoch-making events, or at least at the level of what was expected from Castro's serious medical condition and the proximity of his eventual death. However, the impasse has strengthened the conviction that Cuba's structural survival specificities and endemic shortcomings are still dominating the scene and will continue to influence the future development of the regime and the country at large, affecting Europe's attitude. Although the overall attitude of the US towards Cuba did not change in a noticeable way since the crisis developed by Castro's illness, some events initially revealed internal contradictions, erratic decisions and ambivalence towards the desires of different sectors of the Cuban exile community.

On the strictly US front, the signals emanating from Washington when Castro's illness was announced were cautious and continued to reaffirm the Administration's wish for a return of democracy to Cuba, controlled by the Cuban people.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, the US government warned the Cuban exile community not to rush towards a strategy of pushing for the return of the properties confiscated by the Cuban revolution. Then a call by Secretary of Commerce Gutiérrez for a referendum by the Cuban government was interpreted as a willingness to cooperate with a transitional regime, but still with Raúl Castro in command, a thought that enraged the hardliners in the Cuban community and the US congressional representation.<sup>5</sup> Statements of moderation by the Under Secretary of State for Hemispheric Affairs Thomas Shannon contrasted with predictions of an imminent death of Castro made by his superior, the Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte.<sup>6</sup> Castro apparently answered this exchange by appearing in videos and photos with visitors.<sup>7</sup> When in November 2006 an extended period of time had passed without Castro showing up, while US publications stated he had cancer,<sup>8</sup> a new video dispelled rumors but confirmed his weak condition.<sup>9</sup> However, he did not appear in the proceedings of the Non-Aligned Movement gathering in Havana nor in the celebrations held on 2 December 2006 for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the landing of the 'Granma' on Cuba's shores, as the foundation of the new Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR). This event was heralded in August as a delayed Castro 80<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration.<sup>10</sup>

Verbal confrontations were interlaced with continued behind-the-scenes cooperation between Havana and Washington in certain sensitive fields such as migration. The US has the world's only migratory agreement with Cuba. It has a ceiling of 20,000 per year and it was crafted as a result of the 1994 new *balseo* crisis that threatened to turn into a second Mariel boat lift. Although the agreement has proceeded smoothly over the years (it benefits both sides), the recent animosity

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[http://www.cincodias.com/articulo/opinion/Cuba/necesita/presiones/cdsdci/20061021cdsdiopi\\_5/Tes/](http://www.cincodias.com/articulo/opinion/Cuba/necesita/presiones/cdsdci/20061021cdsdiopi_5/Tes/), El Nuevo Herald, 9/IV/2007, <http://www.elnuevo.com/211/story/28719.html>

<sup>4</sup> EFE, 'McCarry: Cuba debe decidir sin injerencias', Diario las Américas, 29/IX/2006.

<sup>5</sup> P. Bachelet, 'Proponen que la OEA prepare referendo en Cuba', El Nuevo Herald, 15/IX/2006; Pablo Bachelet, 'U.S.: Allow Cubans to vote on Raúl', The Miami Herald, 15/IX/2006; Otto Reich, 'Don't fall for regime's manipulation of public opinion', The Miami Herald, 15/IX/2006; Pablo Bachelet, 'Reaction to Cuba proposal split', The Miami Herald, 16/IX/2006; Rui Ferreira, 'Rechazan la propuesta de referendo en Cuba', El Nuevo Herald, 16/IX/2006.

<sup>6</sup> Nestor Ikeda, 'Negroponte afirma que a Castro le quedan meses', El Nuevo Herald, 16/XII/2006.

<sup>7</sup> Frances Robles, 'Castro says his recuperation is going well but will be long', The Miami Herald, 6/IX/2006; Nancy San Martín, 'Animated Castro shown in new video', The Miami Herald, 2/IX/2006; Rui Ferreira, 'Muestran un nuevo video de un frágil Fidel Castro', El Nuevo Herald, 2/IX/2006; Isabel Sánchez, 'Castro aparece parado en video con Chávez', El Nuevo Herald, 15/IX/2006; Isabel Sánchez, 'Hasta la Victoria siempre, venceremos', dijeron Castro y Chávez en TV', Diario las Américas, 3/IX/2006.

<sup>8</sup> Pablo Bachelet, 'Castro has 18 months to live U.S. believes', The Miami Herald, 13/XI/2006; EFE, 'Castro tiene cáncer terminal, afirma Time', El Nuevo Herald, 8/X/2006; Mauricio Vicent, '40 días sin noticias de Fidel Castro', El País, 27/X/2006; EFE, 'Castro tiene Cáncer, según Times', Diario las Américas, 10/X/2006; Rally B. Donnell y Timothy J. Burger/Washington, 'Castro is reported to have a cancer', Time, 7/X/2006.

<sup>9</sup> Pablo Bachelet y Frances Robles, 'Dudan que Castro vuelva a gobernar', The Miami Herald, 3/XI/2006; Pablo Bachelet y Frances Robles, 'Castro video shows illness is serious', The Miami Herald, 3/XI/2006.

<sup>10</sup> EFE, 'Preparan un desfile militar para Castro', El Nuevo Herald, 21/X/2006; Agence France Presse, 'Esperan a mil personalidades en cumpleaños de Castro', 17/X/2006; Isabel Sánchez, 'Alimenta las dudas ausencia de Castro en homenaje', El Nuevo Herald, 30/X/2006; Agence France Presse, 'Comienzan en Cuba los homenajes a Castro sin su presencia', El Nuevo Herald, 29/X/2006; Frances Robles, 'Castro a no-show for his 80th birthday party', The Miami Herald, 29/X/2006; Isabel Sánchez, 'Dan una fiesta... y los Castro no aparecen', Diario las Américas, 30/X/2006.

between the Bush Administration and the Cuban government has produced a policy of limiting the number of US staff and Cuban employees working in the interest section in Havana, in retaliation for the US strategy of criticising human rights abuses. On 18 July 2007, the US government announced it could not meet the quota for lack of staff resources, caused by the Cuban restrictions, an accusation rejected by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>11</sup>

It should be recalled that just months earlier a full US congressional delegation visited Cuba while US governors held trade meetings with Cuban officials and called for an end of the embargo and travel restrictions.<sup>12</sup> President Bush maintained a hard-line approach and vouched for a veto in the event of Congress voting for an end to the sanctions. Discoveries of new cases of Cuban spying in the US<sup>13</sup> kept the tension between the two countries high while the Cuban leadership made offers of negotiating, demanding mutual respect.<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, the stalemate continued and all has been reduced to the usual exchange of barbs across the Florida straights. Meanwhile, in the annual vote held at the UN, the US was again censured for the continuation of the embargo, giving Cuba a renewed excuse for its own shortcomings.<sup>15</sup>

In the US-Cuban exile theatre, foreign observers and especially European analysts were fascinated by the spectacular demonstrations of joy in Miami when Castro's illness was announced and then by the plans to hold a party at the Orange Bowl to celebrate his eventual death. While wide sectors of the Cuban community showed signs of moderation and revealed the evolution of their political views in the polls, the hard-line attitude remained well anchored in the congressional representation. The number of Cuban exiles supporting the continuation of limitations on travel and sending funds to relatives has notably diminished over the recent years.<sup>16</sup> Divisions over the effectiveness of the embargo and its eventual dismantling have divided the core of the Cuban community, a trend that became notorious when the crisis of Castro's illness erupted.<sup>17</sup> In this setting, scandals mired the performance of enterprises that were the result of the impressive lobbying work of the 80s and 90s carried out by the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF). Radio Martí and TV Martí were questioned by investigative reports.<sup>18</sup> The Miami Herald conglomerate was discovered to house staff working for these two government-sponsored media entities, which resulted in firings, reinstatements and resignations of both American and Cuban

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<sup>11</sup> 'Cuba niega ser la Cuba/EEUU.- Cuba niega responsable de que EEUU no vaya a alcanzar la cuota de 20.000 visados anuales para cubanos', Europa Press, 20/VII/2007.

<sup>12</sup> Pablo Bachelet, 'U.S. congressional delegation arrives', 16/XII/2006; Granma, 'Llegó a Cuba delegación de diez congresistas norteamericanos', 18/XII/2006; Mauricio Vicent, 'EE UU y Cuba tratan de abrir una nueva etapa en sus relaciones', El País, 17/XII/2006; Vanessa Arrington, 'Fidel doesn't have cancer, Cubans tell U.S. delegation', The Miami Herald, 18/XII/2006; José Luis Paniagua, 'Congresistas regresan con las manos vacías', El Nuevo Herald, 18/XII/2006; José Luis Paniagua, 'Cuba no admite nueva era', Diario las Américas 19/XII/2006; EFE, 'Opiniones distintas en la disidencia por visita congresistas', Diario las Américas, 21/XII/2006; Mauricio Vicent, 'La delegación de EE UU concluye su visita a Cuba sin esperanzas de cambio', 18/XII/2006.

<sup>13</sup> Jay Weaver, '2 in spy case to accept plea deal', The Miami Herald, 16/XII/2006; Jay Weaver, 'Cambian cargos a ex profesor de FIU y su esposa', El Nuevo Herald, 16/XII/2006; Jay Weaver, 'Couple strikes plea deal in Fidel Castro 'spy' case', The Miami Herald, 20/XII/2006.

<sup>14</sup> For a sample of press reports: Europa Press, 'La Casa Blanca considera confirmadas sus sospechas de transición en Cuba', El País, 6/XII/2006; Frances Robles, 'Raúl sits in at big party', The Miami Herald, December 2, 2007; Juan Benemelis, 'La larga marcha de la sucesión en Cuba', El Nuevo Herald, 17/XII/2007; Diario las Américas, 'Fidel no aparece', 3/XII/2007; José Manuel Calvo, 'EEUU aguarda el final del pulso', 3/XII/2007; Frances Robles, 'A party without Castro', The Miami Herald, December 3, 2007; Gladys Amador, y Elías López, 'Ausencia de Castro no da esperanzas a exiliados cubanos', El Nuevo Herald, 3/XII/2007; Rui Ferreira, 'Fidel Castro no aparece', El Nuevo Herald, 3/XII/2007.

<sup>15</sup> Reuters, 'La ONU condena el embargo de EEUU a Cuba en una votación récord', 11/VIII/2006; Edith M. Lederer, 'End Cuba ban, U.N. urges U.S.', The Miami Herald, 9/XI/2006; The Miami Herald (editorial), 'Don't blame embargo for Cuba's problems', 11/XI/2006.

<sup>16</sup> Diario las Américas, 'Panel discutirá encuesta de FIU', 2/IV/2007; Uva de Aragón, 'Cómo piensan los cubanos en Miami', Diario las Américas, 12/IV/2007; Pablo Bachelet, 'Una encuesta revela cambios', El Nuevo Herald, 2/IV/2007; Pablo Bachelet, 'Fewer support sanctions', 2/IV/2007.

<sup>17</sup> EFE, 'Exilio cubano a favor de diálogo de EEUU con Cuba, según sondeo', 2/X/2007; Rui Ferreira, 'El exilio piensa que Castro no vuelve al poder', El Nuevo Herald, 2/X/2006.

<sup>18</sup> El Nuevo Herald, 'Acusan de actividad ilegal a funcionario de TV Martí', 18/XI/2006; Oscar Corral, 'TV Martí executive indicted', The Miami Herald, 18/XI/2006; Oscar Corral, 'By far the most expensive among U.S.-financed broadcasts, Radio and TV Martí now face another government audit of their operations at a critical juncture in U.S.-Cuba relations', The Miami Herald, 18/XII/2006.

journalists.<sup>19</sup> A disgruntled *El Nuevo Herald* caricaturist held hostage the staff of the newspaper with the result of community embarrassment.<sup>20</sup> Meanwhile, programmes run by USAID<sup>21</sup> for the promotion of democracy in Cuba were deemed to be ineffective and to benefit domestic interests and individuals. The case of Luis Posada Carriles, an alleged accomplice of the bombing of a Cuban airliner in 1976, who was arrested in Miami in 2006 on charges of illegal immigration, contributed even more to the erosion of the influence of the Cuban exile views. This loss of face was renewed when he was released in April 2007. The Cuban government has exploited this case world-wide in the context of the US fight against terrorism. Furthermore, this case has served to neutralise the arresting and sentencing of five alleged Cuban spies in Miami, converted into 'the five heroes' and used in numerous demonstrations, marches and commemorations.

It is no surprise then that the Cuban regime has enjoyed renewed backing in Latin America, not only from staunch allies such as Venezuela's Chávez, who has become an official spokesman for Cuba in the world, but also from additional partners (Bolivia, Nicaragua and Ecuador) that claim to share the revolutionary views of Caracas and Havana. The rest of the continent has remained generally silent (with the notable exceptions of Costa Rica's Oscar Arias<sup>22</sup> and El Salvador's Antonio Elías Saca) in criticising Raúl Castro's leadership.

In this setting, Cuba managed to moderately pass the test of holding the meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement,<sup>23</sup> while cracking down on dissidents, imposing tougher rules on the foreign press, expelling selective reporters and banning others from coming. Reinforcing its control over media and communication, the government declared a wave of harassment against the 'illegal' use

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<sup>19</sup> Oscar Corral, '10 Miami journalists take U.S. pay', *The Miami Herald*, 8/IX/2006; Gerardo Reyes y Joaquim Utset, 'Los pagos a periodistas son una practica común', *El Nuevo Herald*, 14/IX/2006; Casey Woods, 'Report: U.S. paid many other journalists', *The Miami Herald*, 14/IX/2006; Carlos Alberto Montaner, 'Respuesta de Montaner', *El Nuevo Herald*, 9/IX/2006; Carlos Alberto Montaner, 'Mi defensa contra la difamación', *El Nuevo Herald*, 17/IX/2006; Jesús Díaz Jr, 'Una prensa libre puede requerir decisiones penosas', *El Nuevo Herald*, 18/IX/2006; Jesús Díaz Jr, 'A free press can require painful choices', *The Miami Herald*, 17/IX/2006; José Ignacio Rasco, 'Fusilamiento moral de periodistas', *Diario las Américas*, 20/IX/2006; Alejandro Armengol, 'Causa y Verdad', *El Nuevo Herald*, 27/IX/2006; Tom Fielder, 'An apology over my words', *The Miami Herald*, 5/X/2006; Tom Fiedler, 'Disculpas por mis palabras', *El Nuevo Herald*, 5/X/2006; Douglas Hanks, 'A column, a quarrel and change at the top', *The Miami Herald*, 4/X/2006; John Dorschner, 'Miami native accepts challenge', *The Miami Herald*, 4/X/2006; Jesús Díaz Jr, 'Herald publisher will resign', *The Miami Herald*, 3/X/2006; Pablo Alfonso, 'Carta abierta a los electores', *El Nuevo Herald*, 8/X/2006; Oscar Corral, 'Fired writer: Radio Martí ties no secret', *The Miami Herald*, 12/IX/2006; Joe Strupp, 'Preview of Hoyt's report on flawed Herald coverage', 18/XI/2006; Sam Terilli, 'Keep media independent of the government' *The Miami Herald*, 19/IX/2006; Christina Hoag, 'Gyllenhaal to succeed Fiedler as top editor', *The Miami Herald*, 16/XII/2006; Christina Hoag, 'Nuevo director The Miami Herald', *El Nuevo Herald*, 16/XII/2006. Ironically, Oscar Corral, the *Miami Herald* reporter who inaugurated the media coverage of this conflictive episode, was arrested by Miami police for allegedly soliciting prostitution services on the street: 'Reporter charmed for soliciting prostitute', *The Miami Herald*, 7/VIII/2007. The reporters and columnists who were fired or criticised for their double media activities denounced the mild coverage of the *Herald* and demanded the firing of the reporter.

<sup>20</sup> David Ovalle y Martín Merzer, 'Man with submachine gun arrested standoff at Miami Herald', *The Miami Herald*, 24/XI/2006; Rui Ferreira, Joaquim Utset y Alejandro Chaparro, *El Nuevo Herald*, 'Se entrega caricaturista atrincherado en *El Nuevo Herald*', 24/XI/2006.; Rui Ferreira, 'Sale en libertad bajo fianza caricaturista José Manuel Varela', *El Nuevo Herald*, 28/XI/2006. Rui Ferreira, 'Caricaturista de *El Nuevo Herald* se atrincheró en el periódico', 24/XI/2006; Rui Ferreira, 'Sale en libertad bajo fianza caricaturista José Manuel Varela', *El Nuevo Herald*, 28/XI/2006; Rui Ferreira y Joaquim Utset, 'Horas de tensión en el *Herald*', *El Nuevo Herald*, 24/XI/2006; David Ovalle, Alfonso Chardy y Martín Merzer, 'Standoff at *Herald* ends with surrender', *The Miami Herald*, November 25, 2006.

<sup>21</sup> *The Miami Herald* (editorial), 'U.S. Plan ineffective by design', 19/XI/2006; Ana Méndez, 'Now fighting Fidel Castro: Hello Kitty', *The Miami Herald*, 19/XI/2006; GAO, 'U.S. Democracy assistance for Cuba needs better management and oversight', November 2006; GAO, 'What GAO found', November 2006; O. Corral y P. Bachelet, 'Cuestionan el uso de fondos para la democracia en Cuba', *El Nuevo Herald*, 15/XI/2006; Gerardo Reyes, 'Serios fallos con fondos para la libertad de Cuba', *El Nuevo Herald*, 15/XI/2006; Oscar Corral, 'Is U.S. aid reaching Castro foes?'. *The Miami Herald*, November 15, 2006; Pablo Bachelet, 'Bajo la lupa programas para promover el cambio', *El Nuevo Herald*, 16/XI/2006; Oscar Corral, 'Cuba thwarts U.S. efforts to help dissidents', *The Miami Herald*, 16/XI/2006; David Adams, 'Informe pone ayuda a Cuba bajo el microscopio', *Diario las Américas*, 17/XI/2006; EFE, 'Disidencia dividida sobre fondos de EE.UU', *Diario las Américas*, 18/XI/2006.

<sup>22</sup> EFE, 'Oscar Arias aboga por cambio político en Cuba', *Diario las Américas*, 15/IX/2006; Oscar Arias Sánchez, 'Cuba's dictatorship is ripe for transition', *El Nuevo Herald*, 29/VIII/2006; EFE, 'Arias denuncia campaña contra Costa Rica', *El Nuevo Herald*, 10/X/2006.

<sup>23</sup> Andrés Oppenheimer, 'No alienados y petropopulismo', *El Nuevo Herald*, 14/IX/2006; Frances Robles, 'Will Castro be a no-show host?', *The Miami Herald*, 12/IX/2006; Anita Snow, 'Castro likely won't host summit dinner', *The Miami Herald*, 11/IX/2006; Miriam Leiva, 'Las paradojas de la cumbre', *El Nuevo Herald*, 9/IX/2006; Eduardo Castillo, 'Raúl Castro estrena su cargo en la cumbre de NOAL', *El Nuevo Herald*, 16/IX/2006; Marc Frank, 'Non-aligned nations nudged toward anti-US stance by Cuba', *The Financial Times*, 16/IX/2006.

of TV antennas and further curtailed the private capacity and use of Internet and digital communications, giving Cuba an unfavourable report in this field in the context of the developing world.

Regarding the relationship with Europe in general, the Cuban government reaffirmed the cool approach that it experimented with even after the lifting of the EU's special measures in 2005. The government continued to place selective difficulties to the access of certain foreign representations to the higher echelons of the regime. Meanwhile, the government-run media sporadically made veiled or explicit attacks against certain European governments and then the EU as whole, accusing it of 'conspiracy' with US policy. The EU's Common Position, in operation since 1996, has been systematically equated with the standing US embargo.

Within this general scenario, one EU member state was consistently singled out: Spain. In part, this is explained because of Spain's historical and undisputedly intimate links with Cuba. A selective poll taken with EU officials and European diplomats with Cuban interests and duties place Spain in the first place in a ranking of EU Member States having influence in EU-Cuban affairs.<sup>24</sup> Its leadership in the context of the European-Cuba relationship was either scrutinised or questioned, while receiving encouragement and pressure to take action in one direction or another. In general terms, over the recent years the most decisive measures taken by EU institutions reflect in one way or another the impact of the actions taken by the Spanish government or the representations of its leading parties. When, for instance, the Popular Party (PP), led by José María Aznar, took over the helm of the Spanish government, the call in Brussels was to approve the Common Position on Cuba in 1996. In turn, when the PSOE regained power, then the general script changed in the direction proposed. Most of the partners in the EU follow the lead, constructing a consensus. Resolutions taken by the European Parliament frequently reflect the imprint of the conservative majority led by the PP.<sup>25</sup>

In spite of its role in the 2005 lifting of the special measures imposed in 2003, the Spanish diplomatic representation in Cuba continued to suffer a mixed treatment from the Cuban authorities.<sup>26</sup> Internally, the Spanish government has been consistently harassed by the PP in the domestic context, its favourable media and in international forums such as the EU's institutions, especially the Parliament. PP representatives and critics of the PSOE's policy towards Cuba have frequently visited Washington (former Premier Aznar,<sup>27</sup> most prominently) and Miami, making declarations and giving interviews to receptive audiences and media.<sup>28</sup> The consensus that existed in the 80s and 90s between the two major Spanish parties was terminated once the policy towards Cuban became one of confrontation after the arrival of José María Aznar to power, with the result that diplomatic relations between Madrid and Havana were reduced to a minimum.

While the PSOE never questioned (and even endorsed) the PP-sponsored award of EU honours to Cuban dissidents and contributed to make the Brussels-Havana link minimally effective, the stalemate created by the temporary imposition of measures in 2003 convinced the new Spanish government that they were counterproductive. Lack of effective communication between European governments and the Cuban authorities were the norm, while the condition of the dissidents remained the same. Hence, the change of EU policy in early 2005 was executed without a fight

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<sup>24</sup> Spain is followed by France, Germany, the UK, Italy, the Czech Republic, Belgium, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden and Portugal (for its coming presidency of the EU).

<sup>25</sup> From EU sources in Brussels and Madrid (June 2007).

<sup>26</sup> ATB, 'Cuba-IU-ICV critica que el representante de España en la Cumbre de los No Alienados se reuniese con disidentes cubanos', 22/IX/2006; Mauricio Vicent, 'Cuba rebaja la presencia oficial en la fiesta nacional celebrada en la embajada española', El País, 14/X/2006; ATB, 'Cuba-España 'refuerza' los contactos con miembros del Gobierno y la disidencia ante la situación de Fidel Castro', 15/X/2006.

<sup>27</sup> See also his participation in the Heritage Foundation conference held in Philadelphia: Cristina Ozaeta, EFE, 'Rechaza Aznar 'sucesión en la tiranía para Cuba'', Diario las Américas, 29/IV/2007.

<sup>28</sup> Ariel Remos, 'Ofrece PP español alternativa de centro liberal y reformista', Diario las Américas, 24/IV/2007.

from the minority that opposed the consensus. However, the expected substantial changes failed to come about and then the crisis of Castro's illness put the relationship on hold.

But Spain seemed to be destined not to disappear from the scene. It is no coincidence that explicit declarations regarding Castro's medical condition would not come from the Cuban government, that labelled the issue a 'secret of state'. News correcting the near-death assessment made by US officials would come from Venezuela's Chávez and from a Spanish doctor who had the chance of examining Castro, making the unusual declaration that he did not have cancer, predicting that he would recover soon and be ready to resume power.<sup>29</sup>

## **A Standing Assessment**

Any consideration of the EU-Cuba relationship, based on an analytical reading of the different options open to European action and approach in a changing Cuba, must be placed in the setting of a minimum cluster of parameters regarding the EU's perception of Cuba's political and economic situation. This European view offers few surprises and contrasts with other analytical frameworks by Latin American and US observers. Some basic dimensions can be outlined, extracted from different opinions and studies emanating directly or indirectly from the EU's institutional establishments, as well as from independent sources.

Regarding the economic scene, the first concern expressed by European analysts, a feeling shared by international experts, is that the data on an endemic dysfunctional economy, as officially provided by the Cuban authorities, are unreliable. The figures that are officially provided are considered outdated. Their much needed renewal and updating are subject to an extremely difficult and cumbersome task. The unilateral decision of the Cuban government to reformat the standard GDP formula has added more confusion and suspicion to the existing concerns. The Social Sustainable Gross Domestic Product (SSGDP) was announced in 2005 to have a growth of 11.8%, clearly the highest in the world. The difference between this figure and the predicted ECLA's 5% is due to the benefits rendered by the medical services provided by Cuba to Venezuela.<sup>30</sup> According to Cuban sources, the SSGDP reflected an increase of 12.5%, with an expected 10% in 2007. According to well-founded rumours, the Cuban government plans to end the double use of local currency, claiming that 57% of the population already receive hard currency.<sup>31</sup>

With respect to the political evolution, the European analysis is similar to the one emanating from Latin America and the independent scholarly and think-tank community in the US. It contemplates three distinct scenarios that could develop in stages at the same time. Considered as a set, these possible chapters of the new historical Cuban era may have subtle spill-over effects according to the pace of the events derived from the crisis of 31 July 2006, with the announcement of Castro's illness.

The first scenario is the one that has survived over the months since August 2007. It has the potential to extend into the rest of 2007 (and spilling over into 2008), depending on the evolution of Fidel Castro's health. The power structure is what can be labelled, adapting a French expression that has become part of the terminology to describe the equilibrium of the European institutions, a 'ménage a deux'. With Fidel apparently recovering and periodically reappearing in video clips in the company of Chávez, while alleged details of his health are filtered to the international press,

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<sup>29</sup> EFE, 'El jefe de cirugía del Gregorio Marañón viaja a La Habana para operar a Castro', *El Mundo*, 24/XII/2006; J.D., 'Un hombre optimista', 27/XII/2006; Pablo Bachelet, 'U.S. holds to claim Castro is dying', *The Miami Herald*, 6/I/2007; Reuters, 'La recuperación de Castro es lenta pero progresiva, según un médico español', 19/I/2007; John Dorschner y Nancy San Martín, 'Report may mean Castro has little chance of recovery, experts say', *The Miami Herald*, 16/I/2007; Oriol Güell y Ana Alfageme, 'Castro optó por someterse a la técnica quirúrgica que luego causó complicaciones', *El País*, 17/I/2007; Editorial, 'Fidel, Menos secreto', *El País*, 17/I/2007; Oriol Güell y Ana Alfageme, 'Una cadena de actuaciones médicas fallidas agravó el estado de Castro', *El País*, 16/I/2007.

<sup>30</sup> From various EU sources.

<sup>31</sup> Andrea Rodríguez, 'Estudian en Cuba poner fin a la doble circulación de moneda', *El Nuevo Herald*, 29/IV/2007.

something is certain regarding political control. The reins of government, at least pertaining to day-to-day functions, have been under the control of Raúl and his collaborators, as delegates of precise duties. In essence, this analysis has corrected to a certain degree the assessment made right after the announcement of Castro's illness that nothing would be the same in Cuba.<sup>32</sup> For that, one will have to wait for a more drastic biological change.

In the European analysis, the balance of Raúl Castro's performance is that in this first stage he has been an equal at the leadership level and that he no longer appears to be merely a nr 2. However, this does not mean that he has had the elbow room he will have once his brother physically disappears from the scene. The 'presence of Fidel's absence' (to use a metaphor developed by insiders) is too strong to consider his brother's role autonomous and decisive.

There is no clear consensus in the European analysis to interpret Raúl's scant words in his infrequent appearances and addresses. It is not difficult to believe that Fidel has systematically contacted the different Ministers handling portions of the authority delegated by him on 1 August. But no one seems to be able to correctly interpret the real meaning of Fidel not calling his brother 'too often', and that he does not 'interfere' [his own words given in an unusual rushed interview while visiting the book fair in Havana] with the day-to-day business of state.

The reality offered by this scenario is that European observers must recognise that they know the same as US analysts do: not much. The Cuban government has given few signals to Brussels to take a new approach and speed up the implementation of new measures, offer new alternatives and announce new incentives or pressure. The only clear detail has been that Raúl Castro has reaffirmed during all this time his intention of tackling what he calls the system's imperfections and violations, a threat that was denounced a year earlier by his brother as the most dangerous challenge posed for the survival of the Revolution.

As a remedy, there has been the perception present in the European analysis that Raúl might try to test certain options for opening up the economy following the Chinese or Vietnamese models. However, this is no guarantee. Nonetheless, European observers have already noted that the modest 'opening up' of a renewed cultural debate is not an isolated event and that it has to be placed in a wider setting of at least testing the water.

### **Dealing with the US and the rest of the Americas**

In any event, the other available variable is the odd double relationship with two much closer actors: the US and Venezuela. In this respect, as mentioned above, it is a fact that Raúl Castro offered, at least on two public occasions (and possibly also behind the scenes), a deal for an accommodation with the US, subject to mutual respect. The most spectacular example of this was given within his speech at the ceremony and parade to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Granma's feat. Washington, at least in public, has rejected this overture, but it is suspected that talks have been under way.

However, the bulk of the previous commercial and political understanding has continued with no noticeable changes. On the one hand, the US has become Cuba's second most important economic partner, thanks to the steady pattern of purchases of US food and medical supplies. On the other hand, both countries have continued to respect the migratory and security arrangements.<sup>33</sup>

Meanwhile, Brussels and many other European capitals have noted that in the short term Cuba does not need a reinforcement of the US relationship –Raúl has enough with the strategic alliance with

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<sup>32</sup> See Roy, 'From stubbornness...'

<sup>33</sup>For a review of recent trends and a consideration of the future, see: William LeoGrande, 'Las relaciones futuras de Cuba con Estados Unidos', Pérez-Stable, 305-334.



Venezuela-. Hence, he does not miss any other additional disadvantageous accommodation with the EU. Although few expect a hardening in the public confrontations with the EU and some European governments that were the norm before the lifting of the temporary measures in early 2005, the EU institutions have been predicting a continuation of the stalemate of a relationship that is best described as 'mutual irrelevancy' –both parties have come to the conclusion that they cannot influence each other-. So, the logic has been: why bother too much with more than the usual requests?

This situation, which existed before Castro's illness crisis erupted, has continued while the willingness to continue with the overall approach of 'constructive engagement' has been respected and passively recorded by Havana. A ranking of EU states exercising this policy shows Spain in the first place, followed by Belgium and Italy.<sup>34</sup> Only one important correction to this trend has been perceived: a deepening of the opposition by some Central European governments (notoriously, the Czech Republic, which leads the ranking of EU Member States perceived as hard-liners on Cuba).<sup>35</sup> This has generated an aggressive verbal response by the Cuban government and its media, blaming the EU for allegedly caving in to this pressure and mirroring the strategy of the US.

In any event, the result of all this is that EU observers are in good company with US leadership and analysts –Europe is not needed by the Castro duo-. This perception and its empirically proved evidence were confirmed when Cuba reacted bluntly to a mixed offer of cooperation in June 2007, inviting a Cuban delegation to visit Brussels to discuss a wide agenda. While some years ago this rejection might have been dictated by ideology and the need to construct an additional 'enemy', today there is an empirical economic factor added to the equation. Chávez, for the moment, has filled the vacuum of alternative dependency. Moreover, the evolution of events and the prospects of a second scenario (an effective succession from a deceased Fidel to Raúl) have advised the EU's observers to reconsider the reality of European involvement and interests in Cuba.

### **From Opening Up to the Unknown**

There has been very little ground to envision what kind of options Raúl might devise. In Europe's view there are two important dimensions that are worth considering, both connected with the role of military. On the one hand, European interests are eager to know what kind of new role will be played by nationalism in this period.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, attention is given to the sense of professionalism that the Revolutionary Armed Forces claim to have and to what degree they will be willing and able to perform once the full succession takes place.<sup>37</sup> In this scenario, the enigma will be if in a first stage of the system's opening up there will be a return of the limited private initiative experiments of the first part of the 90s. How this will be connected with a further incentive for renewed and more aggressive European investments is a variable whose outcome is difficult and cumbersome to evaluate.

The impact of a decisive opening up of the economic and political system as a result of an effective transition is a panorama with a high level of uncertainty. A more than realistic (pessimistic, for some) evaluation of Europe's chances considers that the limited economic investments made in Cuba, added to the special historical interests of some members (Spain), will be unable to confront an overwhelming US involvement. During the first transitional stages under the cover of a modest

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<sup>34</sup> Next in the reputational list taken in interviews with EU institutions and EU Member States officials are: France, Sweden (in development assistance), United Kingdom (in banking operations), Germany, Netherlands (investments in nickel), Austria, Denmark, Finland (as result of its EU presidency in the second part of 2006).

<sup>35</sup> The Czech Republic is followed by Poland, Lithuania, Slovakia, and Hungary.

<sup>36</sup> Rafael Rojas, 'Ideología, cultura y memoria, Dilemas simbólicos de la transición', in Marifeli Pérez-Stable, 'Cuba en el siglo XXI: ensayos sobre la transición', Colibrí, Madrid, 2006, p. 289-304.

<sup>37</sup> For a useful analysis on this line, see Jorge Domínguez, 'Las relaciones entre civiles y militares en Cuba desde una perspectiva comparada: hacia un régimen democrático', in Marifeli Pérez-Stable, 'Cuba en el siglo XXI: ensayos sobre la transición', op. cit., p. 67-94.

economic opening, European investment would have a comparative advantage over the US's financial energy. But the risk for medium and smaller-sized European enterprises, once the system becomes openly competitive, will be impressive. That is why numerous European voices have been pressing for the preparation of a common strategy to confront the new situation.

A third scenario resulting from a difficult and confrontational succession (although this has a low probability in Europe's calculations) would be a struggle between factions within the Armed Forces, while part of the population tries to settle old accounts and attempts to capture sectors of political and economic influence. With no known plan as to what the US government might do, several European governments might design an exit strategy for families and non-essential personnel, using the varied means available. Among them is the geographical closeness of European sovereign, colonial or semi-colonial territories in the Caribbean (France, the UK and the Netherlands) and an increase in the air connections maintained by several national carriers (Spain, France and the UK). Unless a considerable maritime lift is implemented, there are no clear resources to accommodate a sudden transatlantic migration of European nationals.

In any event, a scenario such as this would also represent a sorry failure of the efforts made during the last two decades by Europe to facilitate a peaceful transition. Nonetheless, this violent outcome would be beyond the reach of the capability of European resources and calculations. The EU's efforts were never designed to influence any given scenario, but to facilitate the most positive background and context that would avoid this type of negative environment.

### **Two Cuban Communities in Transition**

European observers are concerned by the fact that two key sectors that would have a say in the future evolution of Cuba do not seem for the moment to show the cohesiveness and capacity to influence the outcome of either a violence-free succession or a peaceful transition. One is the domestic 'dissident' sector; the other is the exile community.

On the other hand, analysts may note that as a response to the prudence of the European consensus (only broken by the selective individual actions taken by some governments), the Cuban regime has only freed selective prisoners on account of illness,<sup>38</sup> while sentencing others,<sup>39</sup> and with the provocation of publishing notes in the government press expressing extremely harsh criticism of the EU's standing policy. In this setting, European observers have certified the fragility of Cuba's social fabric, where dissidents are extremely divided and their organisations heavily infiltrated by the regime's intelligence services. Simultaneously, the different attitudes of the Cuban exile community do not seem to be in synch with the stalled situation in Cuba. They are also perceived not to have a clear influence on the restructuring of the embargo parameters beyond the prevalent inertia.

On this domestic Cuban scenario, the consensus European analysis is that the Cuban population is roughly divided into 80% that dedicate themselves to the daily routine of *resolver* and *inventar*, approximately 20% who engage in one way or another in trying to leave by legal or illegal means and a tiny 1% who act under the cover of one of the dissident units. This dissident 'movement', in the European vision, is highly divided, uncoordinated and infiltrated by the Cuban state security services. As a whole, it lacks a clear strategy, although all groups try their best. Observers in Europe consider that the exceptions to the rule are the Varela Project presented by Oswaldo Payá, whose group is backed mainly by Christian-Democratic sectors, and Arco Progresista, of the Social-Democratic dissident Manuel Cuesta Murúa, who have a vision for the future beyond a frontal peaceful opposition to the system. This latter group, along with the one led by Eloy Gutiérrez Menoyo, who left his exile in Miami to reside in Cuba, is the one favoured by Europe's

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<sup>38</sup> EFE, 'Antúnez dispuesto a seguir actividad disidente en Cuba', *Diario las Américas*, 25/IV/2007; EFE, 'Insuficiente liberación de presos en Cuba', *El Nuevo Herald*, 25/IV/2007.

<sup>39</sup> AFP, '12 años de prisión', *Diario las Américas*, 24/IV/2007.

socialist parties, especially the PSOE.<sup>40</sup> It is predicted that the moment the political transition gets into motion these circles will be transformed into political parties.

In Brussels and in influential European Ministries of Foreign Affairs it is believed that a possible lifting of some of the codified conditions of the embargo could come from a combination of two other factors. On the one hand, it will be difficult to sustain the pressure of US commercial interests that do not want to miss the opportunity of selling food and medicines to Cuba, sectors that have made the US its second most important trade partner. On the other hand, the hardliners of the Cuban exile community will lobby to maintain their influence to oppose the lifting of the embargo as such without an explicit compensation from the Cuban regime. However, at the same time, this sector, in alliance with the White House and certain members of Congress, will not be able to maintain indefinitely the limitations imposed on the remittances to families and visits to Cuba, a recent policy implemented by the US government whose sole victims are the sectors with limited incomes in the exile community and the families they left behind.

The European perception of the exile community has not changed dramatically in recent months.<sup>41</sup> A considerable evolution towards coordinating efforts (Consenso Cubano) and a moderating movement (the change of attitudes in emblematic organisations such as the Cuban American National Foundation) have been detected. However, the international perception of the most vocal and publicity-making circles is still of one dominated by resistance to a compromise and accommodation to the evolving circumstances. When explored as to what the Cuban exile community should do to facilitate a peaceful transition, even at the price of tolerating a solid succession in Cuba, the EU's consensus advice (with the exception of the minority opposing a diplomatic attitude) has been one of developing a special variety of the European approach of 'constructive engagement', with due adaptations and specificities.

On the one hand, the leading proactive groups that are members in the Consenso coalition consider that the US federal government does not speak for them, and that their actions and designs differ from Washington's framework. On the other hand, EU observers judge that what is needed is a certain degree of clarification regarding the embargo and what should be the relationship between 'the two active Cubas' (the dissidents and the most innovative exile sectors). This should be done bearing in mind that the ultimate beneficiaries (or victims) of future actions will be the 10 million-plus Cubans living on the island and the almost two million residing in a world-wide diaspora.

Regarding the embargo, while the EU's opposition is based on principles and the defence of its own interests threatened by extraterritorial codifying laws (CDA and Helms-Burton), the steady European message is that it only benefits the Cuban regime, reinforcing its political excuse for the system's shortcomings. The inertia in maintaining the embargo for historical reasons and the rationale that its unconditional lifting after 45 years would be a victory for Raúl, are not arguments worthy of counteracting the negative balance of its empirical failure in obtaining its principal goal – the regime's sudden collapse-. In Brussels' analysis, there is a flagrant contradiction in stating that the poor US-Cuba relationship (embargo included) is not international, but a domestic issue (Florida electoral clout), while at the same time claiming not to speak for the US government, and ultimately demanding to deal directly with Cuba's population, leaving them the monopoly of initiative.

This argument sidelines the fact that the codification of the embargo, by taking away US presidential executive power and giving it to Congress, was a direct result of the impressive lobbying of influential Cuban exile groups.<sup>42</sup> If it is true that US policy towards Cuba depends on

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<sup>40</sup> From EU and Spanish sources.

<sup>41</sup> For a recent analysis of the changing exile from an insider, see: Lisandro Pérez, 'La comunidad emigrada cubana y el futuro de Cuba', Pérez-Stable, p. 267-288.

<sup>42</sup> For a recent analysis of this issue, see Patrick J. Haney and Walt Vanderbush, 'The Cuban embargo: the domestic politics of

domestic issues, this dependence does not seem to have been affected by the current frustration that Washington's policy does not speak for the exiles.<sup>43</sup>

Reflecting on the banning of official EU aid in Cuba, under the claim that it mirrors the 'imperialistic' intromission practiced by the US, Brussels insiders share with Cuban exiles the need not to connect (at least publicly) the aid resources intended for the dissidents with US official policy. That connection serves the Cuban regime to discredit the movement as taking its cue from Washington. Official plans designed for a transition in Cuba only add more fuel to the fire, raising fears in the majority of the population exclusively engaged in *resolver* its daily survival.

Brussels has noted with keen interest that some of the ingredients of Europe's 'constructive engagement' are present in the new attitude of exile groups that in the past were considered to be 'fundamentalist' in their approach to the Cuban regime. For example, EU observers have noted the opposition recently expressed by the Cuban American National Foundation to the limitations imposed by the US government on the level and periodicity of remittances channeled by Cuban exiles to their relations in Cuba.<sup>44</sup> This kind of people-to-people engagement is the most productive way of establishing a direct relationship that lessens the hardships endured by a sector of the Cuban population, with considerable spill-over effects touching not only the immediate family as beneficiaries but also others. The fact that this position contrasts with the US government's official policy might result in a much better attitude from the Cuban government.

### **From Prudence to Bold Action**

Since the crisis produced by Fidel Castro's illness and the temporary and limited cession of power was announced, most predictions regarding a new European (and especially Spanish) strategy towards Cuba were fulfilled for over eight months. The expert and governmental recommendations that were then issued had been accepted with a certain degree of resignation and wisdom.

The institutional machinery of the EU and of leading Member States (by their historical legacy and other influence-making factors) reaffirmed a cautious attitude in their policies towards Cuba. Innovative political and economic frameworks were frozen since Raúl Castro took over the conditioned control of government. In spite of the array of events and incidents outlined above, life seemed to be business as usual. The only difference was that Fidel was not officially on the scene, occupying centre stage, as he had done for 47 years.

All things considered, it was not the right time for risky moves. In consequence, Europe considered during that time that the circumstances were not the most propitious to execute a considerable gear shift either in its explicit general policy or in the individual lines of action.

On the one hand, the European Ministries of Foreign Affairs opted for taking into account the subtle language emanating from Havana and for responding to the apparent 'normality' presented by the temporary transfer of power with a nod and an attitude to wait and see. On the other hand, the prevailing consensus (difficult and arduous in its precarious existing state) confirmed the need for not changing the situation in the middle of 2006, before the illness of Fidel Castro. But the impasse has produced a spill-over effect well into 2007.

The two most explicit signals sent to Cuba by the EU had been the lack of action and an intention of changing its policy. On the one hand, the promised drafting of a 'strategy' (a word that has gradually disappeared from the EU's vocabulary) towards Cuba, as prescribed by the Council in 2006, a

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American foreign policy', University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005.

<sup>43</sup> From interviews held in Miami with the leadership of several exile organisations (February-April 2007).

<sup>44</sup> From interviews held in Miami (March 2007).

document that should have been available just after the summer, became frozen.<sup>45</sup> Waiting for better prospects, the actors equipped with stronger influence (Spain in the lead) were energetically opposed to the codification (another potential 'common position'). This would have made more difficult the necessary maneuvering flexibility to act according to the unforeseeable circumstances that are arising, in addition to giving the Cuban regime a new excuse for suffering harassment in the US style.

In addition, the only other explicit declaration has been the semester renovation of the lifting of the 'special and transitory measures' imposed as a reprisal for the serious incidents (the imprisonment of 75 dissidents and the execution of three hijackers), eliminated (but still subject to an annual evaluation) at the beginning of 2005.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, the EU's official attitude as continued to be practically the same as enshrined in the Common Position of 1996, reduced to the conditionality of a cooperation agreement with the collective EU, subject to a political and economic reform, and a criticism of the human rights situation.

Several factors have contributed to this activity (or lack of it). One comes from the lack of substantial changes in the overall political shape of the Cuban regime. In the first place, subtle and explicit signals emanating from the Cuban government in the sense that notable changes were not expected, while Fidel Castro continues to make his presence felt in indirect media appearances, reinforcing the perception that he is recovering. This provisionality would only be clarified with his death or full return to power. Secondly, the pacts arranged by Cuba with other actors (Venezuela) indicate that Havana does not urgently need additional support or favours.

The European perception, in consequence, coincides in this aspect with the rest of the international analytical community, including US political and intelligence circles, that have demonstrated during this period a lack of fresh ideas in dealing with the unforeseeable events in Cuba. When Washington does not explore more innovative avenues, why should the Europeans, at least their most influential circles of power, take the risk of damaging the cautionary attitude during this long period of 'constructive engagement'? Without a precise alternative, beyond the insistence in provoking a drastic and instantaneous change that does seem to be on the horizon, what options were to follow? Not many, to the benefit of Spanish interests.

The issue then was to detect the exact motivation for a subtle change of course or a drastic shift in policy. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs made the decision to reestablish full communication with the Cuban government through the public signing of an accord in the fields of economics, investment and a political dialogue including human rights.<sup>47</sup> As an immediate result, commentaries ranged from silence and prudence to overt criticism and finger pointing on the underlying motivations.<sup>48</sup> Resentment was mainly felt by the dissident community that was humiliated by Moratinos' refusal to meet the dissidents during his visit (leaving, as an alternative, the scheduling of interviews with a lower level representation).<sup>49</sup> Commentators close to the views of Spain's PP

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<sup>45</sup> See Roy, 'From stubbornness', op. cit.

<sup>46</sup> For details, see Roy, 'From stubbornness', op. cit..

<sup>47</sup> EFE, 'Cooperación y Derechos Humanos entre temas agenda visita Moratinos', 1/IV/2007; Luis Ayllón, 'España prepara su posición en una Cuba llena de incertidumbre', ABC, 23/III/2007; Mauricio Vicent, 'Moratinos intenta asegurar en Cuba el papel de España ante el cambio', El País, 1/V/2007; EFE, 'Visita de Moratinos a Cuba', Diario las Américas, 1/IV/2007; Mauricio Vicent, 'En este momento delicado Cuba necesita diálogo, no presión', El País, 1/V/2007; Roberto Díaz, 'Canciller español inicia visita a la Habana', El Nuevo Herald.com, 2/IV/2007; Roberto Díaz, 'Moratinos llegó a Cuba en la primavera visita de un canciller de la UE desde el 2003', Diario las Américas, 3/IV/2007; Mauricio Vicent, 'Moratinos anuncia en la Habana el inicio de una 'nueva etapa' de entendimiento con Cuba', El País, 3/V/2007; Granma, 'Cuba y España inician nueva etapa de diálogo firme y abierto', 3/V/2007; Andrea Rodríguez, 'Spain, Cuba aim for better relations', The Miami Herald, 4/IV/2007; EFE, 'Moratinos optimista tras encuentro con Raúl Castro', Diario las Américas, 5/IV/2007.

<sup>48</sup> Diario las Américas, 'Critica el exilio visita de Moratinos a Cuba', 5/IV/2007; Agence France Presse, 'La disidencia frustrada tras visita de Moratinos', El NuevoHerald, 5/IV/2007; Andrew Rettman, 'Spain keen to bury EU pro-democracy ideas on Cuba', EU Observer, 4 April, 2007; Luis Ayllón, 'Moratinos logra un vago compromiso de Cuba sobre derechos humanos', ABC, 4/V/2007.

<sup>49</sup> EFE, 'Embajada española lamenta ausencia de disidentes cubanos', Diario las Américas, 6/IV/2007; Agence France Presse, 'La disidencia frustrada tras visita de Moratinos', El Nuevo Herald.com, 5/IV/2007.

expressed a similar critical evaluation.<sup>50</sup> Media analysts questioned the future effective impact of the move.<sup>51</sup> Voices in the exile sectors pointed out that the move had an explanation that was predominantly economic<sup>52</sup> –Spain was tending to its investments, seeking protection for current operations and expecting devolution or compensation for past terminated partnerships.<sup>53</sup> Significantly, the frustration over Moratinos' visit and the lack of a scheduled interview with the dissident community prompted some of these groups to sign a commitment of unity, although they denied the link between the visit and their decision.<sup>54</sup> Subsequently, a timely conference was held in Berlin, under the sponsorship of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba, in which former Prime Minister Aznar expressed a renewed critical view of the Spanish government's policy in Cuba.<sup>55</sup>

The Spanish move also gave new grounds for the Spanish political opposition to attack the foreign policy of Premier Rodríguez Zapatero.<sup>56</sup> In addition, the measure generated protests from Spanish commentators usually situated on the moderate left, producing critical editorials from the normally favorable press, most especially the Madrid daily *El País*.<sup>57</sup> This influential newspaper awarded its Ortega y Gasset Prize to the exiled dissident Raúl Rivero, who was liberated in 2005 thanks to the role played by the Spanish government.<sup>58</sup> When the PP presented a motion in Congress asking the Spanish government to demand from the Cuban authorities the release of 134 political prisoners,<sup>59</sup> the Minister of Foreign Affairs answered that a strategy of dialogue would be the most effective and expressed his commitment to the dissidents.<sup>60</sup> Elena Valenciano, the PSOE's Secretary for International Relations insisted that the Spanish government has specifically mentioned what is expected from the Cuban authorities regarding the prisoners, reminding critics that in the past Spain was not in the position to exert pressure and obtained no results.<sup>61</sup>

Finally, it raised questions from the US government,<sup>62</sup> that alluded to a lack of consultation<sup>63</sup> and was replied to by the Spanish government with terse and blunt statements. Significantly, Spain's partners in the EU made no public announcements, while the Commission reaffirmed its commitment to keeping the lines of communication open with Cuba, even though Havana confirmed its rejection of collective cooperation.<sup>64</sup> The EU-US summit held in Washington included a brief reference of support to the Cuban people and to human rights.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Soeren Kern, 'Spanish Foreign Policy Hits Rocks Over Cuba', Strategic Study Group, July 17, 2007.

<sup>51</sup> Andrés Oppenheimer, 'Spain's new opening to Cuba a risky gambit', The Miami Herald, July 16, 2007.

<sup>52</sup> The delay in Cuban payments for trade activities is notorious, with the result of frequent critical references in the Spanish press. An example: Luis Losada Pescador, 'Fidel Castro no paga las facturas', *Epoca*, 8-12/IV/2007. For a summary of the figures of European Union-Cuba and Spain-Cuba trade, see graphs and tables 1, 2 and 3 in the Appendix.

<sup>53</sup> *Diario las Américas*, 'Crítica el exilio visita de Moratinos a Cuba', 5/IV/2007; Andrés Reynaldo, 'Mano a mano', *El Nuevo Herald*, 6/IV/2007; Pablo Alfonso, 'España estrena en Cuba diplomacia del arrepentimiento', *Diario las Américas*, 4/IV/2007.

<sup>54</sup> EFE, 'La disidencia firma la declaración de unidad', *El Nuevo Herald*, 16/IV/2007; EFE, 'EEUU pide que Moratinos diga por qué no se reunió', *Diario las Américas*, 15/IV/2007; AP, 'Cuban dissident groups issue message of unity', *The Miami Herald*, 18/IV/2007; EFE, 'Organizaciones del exilio apoyan unidad de la disidencia interna de cuba', *Diario las Américas*, 18/IV/2007.

<sup>55</sup> EFE, 'Aznar y Havel apoyan cambio en Cuba', *Diario las Américas*, 25/IV/2007.

<sup>56</sup> Antonio Rodríguez, 'Aznar arremete contra la política hacia Cuba del gobierno español', *Diario las Américas*, 12/IV/2007; EFE, 'PP: sólo se justifica si consigue liberación de presos políticos', *Diario las Américas*, 30/III/2007; Luis Ayllón, 'España prepara su posición en una Cuba llena de incertidumbre', *ABC*, 23/III/2007.

<sup>57</sup> *El País*, 'Cuba prohibida', 11/IV/2007; Amaya López Núñez, 'Un test para la política exterior', *El País*, 9/IV/2007; María Dolores Masana, 'Los 24 de Cuba', *El País*, 12/IV/2007; Antonio Elorza, 'España/Cuba: antidemocracia', *El País*, 14/IV/2007; Rosa Montero, 'Víctimas', *El País*, 10/IV/2007; Pilar Rahola, 'Cuba, triste asignatura pendiente', *El País*, 6/V/2007.

<sup>58</sup> AP, 'Exile Cuban journalist honored', *The Miami Herald*, 28/IV/2007.

<sup>59</sup> The reason for this precise number is unknown, because reliable calculations raise the figure to over 270.

<sup>60</sup> EFE, 'PP español pide exigir a Cuba libertad de 134 presos políticos', *Diario las Américas*, 1/V/2007.

<sup>61</sup> EFE, 'Dirigente socialista dice Gobierno mantendrá el diálogo con los disidentes', 2/V/2007.

<sup>62</sup> EFE, 'Funcionaria de EEUU pide explicación a Moratinos', *El Nuevo Herald*, 17/IV/2007; EFE, 'EEUU pide que Moratinos diga por qué no se reunió', *Diario las Américas*, 15/IV/2007.

<sup>63</sup> Antonio Caño, 'Estados Unidos critica el viaje del ministro español a La Habana', *El País*, 14/IV/2007; Antonio Caño, 'Estados Unidos critica el viaje del ministro español a La Habana', *El País*, 14/IV/2007; EFE, 'Moratinos dice que informó a EEUU de su viaje a Cuba 'antes, durante y después', *Diario las Américas*, 19/IV/2007; A.M.-F., 'Moratinos dice que no tiene por qué explicar a EE.UU. su viaje', *ABC*, 18/IV/2007.

<sup>64</sup> Andreu Missé, 'Bruselas afirma que la visita no contradice UE', *El País*, 3/V/2007.

<sup>65</sup> Declaration, 1/V/2007. AFP, 'Aluden a Cuba en cumbre EEUU y UE', *El Nuevo Herald*, 1/V/2007.

However, more acute analysts reminded the drafters of simplistic explanations based solely on trade and investment arguments that the Cuban operations are in fact of minor relative importance for the Spanish economy as a whole. There is also a very small political return, in terms of a considerable shift of the vote towards the PSOE from the business sector, whose inclinations largely favour the PP. Despite the public acrimony over the Cuban issue, its actual impact on election results is insignificant. Undecided voters (those tipping the scale) are motivated by unemployment, the cost of living and housing, education, immigration and ETA terrorism, not by attitudes towards Cuba. This sensible argument is mirrored by the fact that US policy towards Cuba is not driven by the desire to recover property.<sup>66</sup> There must be a more credible motivation –the feeling that Spain was losing ground in Cuba, where its presence has been felt for half a millennium-. To maintain this status in a scenario where the only change can come from within, the only alternative is to stay put, as the US does with any other country, with the exception of Cuba.

So Spain was left with the unnerving prospect of subjecting its policy to a never ending (in view of the standing impasse of the Cuban regime) annual review (it used to be on a semester basis before 2005) of the EU's Cuba policy, with the Czech Republic and other governments 'cheered on by US-supported groups operating in Europe, pressing for a common position that would result in diplomacy similar to that practiced by the US Interests Section in Havana'. That is, 'a diplomacy based on extensive contacts with dissidents and scant contact with officials, academics and others who are not formally part of the opposition'. Rational logic must consider that 'given all that, it is little wonder that Madrid decided to set its own course and not to subordinate its diplomatic strategy to a Euro-debate twice a year'.<sup>67</sup>

Spain then decided to lead the pack of those who, for lack of means or influence, consider that the best strategy is to exploit the windows of opportunity that the Cuban system permits. The 'bilateralisation' method has prevailed over precarious 'multilaterality'. For these reasons, the different lines of culture, development cooperation and political dialogue with the government in Cuba are to be seen as the pillars that maintain communication with Cuba's 'civil society', if such a thing exists. This strategy will ultimately be endorsed, at least tacitly, by responsible partners. The claims made by other actors with no alternative arguments will fade away.

This attitude does not lack risks, because fast and tangible results are demanded. However, it has to be taken into account that Spanish and European expectations and strategies are geared towards the medium-term future, once there has been a peaceful and reconciliatory transition. In order to contribute to this scenario, the Spanish analysis came to the conclusion that one has to be present directly on the scene.

An extreme realist view in EU and Spanish circles has evaluated this strategy as an apparent message of accepting to pay any price for maintaining an open line of communication with the Cuban government. At the same time, this approach attempts to be present in wide sectors of the economy and culture (with the possible reopening of the Spanish cultural centre, closed down by Castro in 2003). Although this might not be that important, considering the low importance of Cuban issues in EU institutions, some loss of confidence might be the result of the Spanish move in Havana. It is estimated that the final report card given by the rest of the Member States (especially the most critical and sceptical) will depend on how many imprisoned dissidents will be liberated in the coming months. In other words, Spain might have been placed in a state of dependency –it is up to the Cuban regime to respond and evaluate how important a new relationship is before offering some concessions. In the metaphorical expression of EU insiders, the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs took a direct dive in the Cuban swimming pool... that was half empty. Then, the Cuban government might or might not provide the necessary water.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Phil Peters, 'Eight months and counting', Cuba Policy Report, 17/IV/2007.

<sup>67</sup> Peters, *ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> EU sources.

Last, but not least, an additional factor must be considered in the context of the Spanish decision. Although Spanish officials would deny it, it is conceivable that Spain's intelligence services –one of the best in Cuban affairs- and private sources, such as medical services, must have known of the contradictions and high expectations regarding the apparently significant improvement in Castro's health, as shown at the end of April 2007 when he appeared in the company of Chinese officials.<sup>69</sup> Speculation then centred on the resumption of some of his duties. This improvement in Castro's capacity to keep a better control over Cuba's political machinery might have dictated the logic of the Spanish move to deal with a prolonged transition or the absence of it.<sup>70</sup> US sources remained sceptical.<sup>71</sup> However, the expectations raised by predictions (most especially by the Bolivian President Evo Morales) that Castro would reappear in public and resume power on 1 May turned out to be disappointing. He did not attend the celebration at the Plaza de la Revolución, limiting his exposure to publishing one of his columns in *Granma*.<sup>72</sup> No reference was made to his health, declared a 'state secret' by the government, since the announcement of his illness in August 2006.<sup>73</sup> Castro's absence prompted comments regarding his weak condition, taking into account the occasion's importance.<sup>74</sup>

Meanwhile, the balance of the mild economic reforms that were optimistically expected and apparently implemented by the temporary tenure of Raúl Castro were either not confirmed or the plans eliminated.<sup>75</sup> In sum, the prospects of a continuation of the stalemate or a situation of 'business as usual' made the alternative of not making any moves a dubious proposition.

### **An Expected New EU Disappointment?**

When the end of the first semester of the EU calendar was approaching in June, a fraction of the EU establishment paid attention to a topic that comparatively could not compete with the daunting task faced by the German Presidency for crafting a compromise to rescue the basics aspects of the failed constitutional treaty, Cuba has never been a major issue for the EU and has never crossed the border of creating notable difficulties with the exception of the polemic created by the passing and potential implementation of the Helms-Burton law in 1995. Nonetheless, as we have seen above, the evolution of the Cuban regime after the announcement of Castro's illness has occupied the attention of major actors in the EU setting and has generated considerable polemics. The pending business of the temporary measures taken against Cuba in 2003, provisionally lifted in 2005, and the standing validity of the Common Position approved in 1996, became the centre pieces of the decisions to be made at the closing of the semester. Not to the full satisfaction of all parties involved, a new compromise was reached with the result of the expected continuation of a stalemate and ambiguity in the relations between the EU and Cuba.

First, expectations were high over the prospects of a permanent lifting of the measures approved in 2003, as retaliation for the serious incidents that took place in Cuba (the imprisonment of 75 dissidents and the execution of three highjackers). Spain and other member states were pressing for permanent suspension on the grounds that they had not in fact been implemented and that they had become a cause of irritation for the Cuban regime.<sup>76</sup> Opposing members and sectors of the dissident

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<sup>69</sup> Granma, 'Reciben Fidel y Raúl a delegación china de alto nivel', 21/IV/2007.

<sup>70</sup> EFE, 'Preparan actos por el primero de Mayo', Diario las Américas, 29/IV/2007.

<sup>71</sup> Pablo Bachelet, 'U.S. doubts full recovery', The Miami Herald, 25/IV/2007.

<sup>72</sup> 'It is imperative to immediately have an energy revolution', Granma, 1/V/2007,

<http://www.cuba.cu/gobierno/discursos/2007/ing/f010507i.html>. Previous articles: 'Respuesta brutal', Reflexiones del Comandante en Jefe, 10/IV/2007; 'La internacionalización del genocidio', 3/IV/2007; 'Condenados a muerte prematura por hambre y sed más de 3 mil millones de personas en el mundo', 28/III/2007.

<sup>73</sup> EFE, 'Raúl Castro, y no Fidel' preside las celebraciones', El País, 1/V/2007.

<sup>74</sup> Mar Marín, EFE, 'Castro ausente', Diario las Américas, 2/V/2007; Andrés Oppenheimer, 'May Day absence means Castro may be more ill than we thought', The Miami Herald, 2/V/2007.

<sup>75</sup> Frances Robles, 'Raúl's reforms put on hold', The Miami Herald, 2/V/2007.

<sup>76</sup> EFE, 'Europa estudia eliminar sanciones', El Nuevo Herald, 9/VI/2007.



movement were advocating the re-imposition of the measures.<sup>77</sup> The confrontation was also set in the context of the visit of US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to Madrid, where she expressed opposition to Spain's engagement in Cuba. The Spanish authorities politely responded that Spain had the right to conduct its own foreign policy, especially with Cuba, and that the confrontation between the US and Cuba was a thing of the past.<sup>78</sup>

Ultimately, the EU Council decided to uphold the suspension of the measures, without making any move towards their permanent dissolution. The compromise reached (thanks to an unprecedented deal made by the Spanish and the Czech governments, labelled by insiders as a lesson for future compromises) avoided mentioning the measures. This rather unexpected (in comparative historical terms) consensus between Madrid and Prague, considering the standing colliding arguments of both governments, was so strong that the document composed by the German Presidency could at any time resist requests from delegations. Consequently, it was adopted without a change, since its main protagonists (Spain and the Czech Republic) warned that the slightest modification could run the risk of a text not being produced. It should be noted that the EU Council context is very complex, with at least three distinct groups as regards their attitude towards Cuba: the hardliners, the centre and the moderates. The Czechs have recently played the role of the 'good cop', neutralising the radical approach expressed by the Poles, with the results that Prague has become an ally of Madrid. The Cuban representatives in Brussels know very well who their real enemies and 'friends' are, and act accordingly, without making it clear in public declarations –the only official discourse is the script given by Havana-.<sup>79</sup>

Moreover, the thorny topic of the Common Position suffered the same treatment. The document that was drafted included the customary serious demands made by the EU for Cuban political and economic reform, calling for the liberation of political prisoners.<sup>80</sup> In closing, the EU offered the Cuban government to send a special delegation to Brussels to discuss all matters of mutual concern.<sup>81</sup> At the same time, the Spanish government invited the Cuban dissident community resident in Madrid to a meeting to explain the current policy.<sup>82</sup>

The complex background of the deal included the difficult consensus to avoid any reference to a re-evaluation of the controversial Common Position set in 1996. However, it had to include a call for the Cuban government to release unconditionally all political prisoners, an offer of support to Cuba's civil society towards peaceful change and finally the confirmation of the EU's invitation to Cuba to send a high-level delegation to Brussels to resume a comprehensive dialogue, including the conflictive topic of human rights. Nonetheless, important disagreements over the policy towards Cuba persist regarding the measures taken in 2003. Despite intensive discussions, it was not possible to reach an agreement on the state of the pending 17th re-evaluation of the Common Position, with a possible lifting of the measures. There was also no agreement in including an explicit reference to the continued suspension. Re-evaluating the Common Position without mentioning the measures meant, according to legal calculations, that they were in fact enforced, something that a majority of states opposed. That is the reason why the text does not make any reference to a re-evaluation. It is a skilful way to circumvent trouble. The final consensus implied that the Common Position is still valid, but that the conclusions are not to be considered a re-evaluation of the Common Position. The agreement also means that the 2003 measures remain

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<sup>77</sup> EFE, 'Piden a Europa que restablezca sanciones', *El Nuevo Herald*, 8/VI/2007.

<sup>78</sup> Debate 21, 'De la Vega dice que Estados Unidos tiene que comprender', 5/VI/2007.

<sup>79</sup> From EU circles and EU member states sources.

<sup>80</sup> Council of the European Union, EU Policy on Cuba, 15/VI/2007. See text in Appendix 4.

<sup>81</sup> EFE, 'UE mantendrá su actual política hacia Cuba', 14/VI/2007; Beatriz Navarro, 'La UE tiende la mano a la Cuba de Fidel Castro', *La Vanguardia*, 19/VI/2007; Luis Ayllón, 'España da un año de plazo a Cuba para que responda a la política de diálogo', *ABC*, 17/VI/2007; AP, 'Europa invita a Cuba', 16/VI/2007; Ricardo Martínez de Rituerto, 'la UE invita a Cuba a discusiones políticas y sobre derechos humanos', *El País*, 15/VI/2007; Pablo Bachelet, 'European sanctions against Cuba upheld', *The Miami Herald*, 15/VI/2007.

<sup>82</sup> EFE, *La Vanguardia*, 'Exteriores convoca a la disidencia cubana', 17/VI/2007.

suspended. In the event that the Cuban authorities do not accept the invitation to meet, the pending 17th re-evaluation of the Common Position will be executed in June 2008.<sup>83</sup>

Baring in mind that member states would have certain difficulties in explaining this elaborate, cumbersome compromise, the EU officials advanced some points to be addressed to media and other actors. To start with, government officers are advised to bear in mind that the consensus was a successful serious initial agreement. The EU would strengthen its future position by showing a semblance of unity. It would lose leverage if it showed any sign of infighting. A reopening of the complex text meant the risk of destroying the agreement. With the invitation of the EU to meet the Cuban government, the ball was in Cuba's court.<sup>84</sup>

Most media observers in Spain greeted the solution as the best possible outcome, given the circumstances.<sup>85</sup> In contrast, the compromise did not meet the expectations of the dissidents or of sectors of the Cuban exile community. The Cuban government's reaction was first a cool silence. It was followed by a declaration laced with animosity and visible irritation.<sup>86</sup> The crowning was a column published by Fidel Castro in his series of articles in the newspaper *Granma*.<sup>87</sup> Harsh words were similar to the speech made in 2003 on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the attack on the Moncada Barracks, when Castro responded to the imposition of restrictive measures. He then qualified what he called 'sanctions' as 'unenforceable and unsustainable'. He labelled the Common Position a draft written by the State Department and the Czechs as 'US pawns'. The conclusions of the EU Council were labelled as 'calumnious' activity in Cuba's 'internal affairs'. In sum, the EU is acting with a 'persisting and humiliating subordination to the US', as illustrated by 'the EU questioning at the US-EU summit'. It is 'up to the EU to make corrections in its policy towards Cuba'. He also regretted the appointment of the UK's former Prime Minister Tony Blair as representative for the Middle East peace process and he pointed out the 'demoralised state of the EU' over its difficulties to agree on a constitutional treaty.

Cuban diplomats offered to explain or 'translate' these otherwise clear statements to EU officials, a move that was politely considered useless.<sup>88</sup> The EU establishment knows very well that the apparently solid Cuban front conceals different levels of 'hardness'. The most moderate, predicted by Brussels (and Madrid and other European capitals) to be the reliable interlocutors in the transition are not the most vocal now.<sup>89</sup>

Confirming predictions, Castro limited his publicly visible activity to the written media, without appearing on TV recordings or in photos. In consequence, he did not accompany his brothers and the military leadership in the 26 July 54<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the attack on the Moncada barracks held in Camagüey. While the European media recalled Cuba's precarious economic situation and took note of the signs of a correction to be made by Raúl Castro and the reiteration of an accommodating deal with the US,<sup>90</sup> Fidel remained in seclusion on his 81st birthday on 13 August, fuelling rumours about his deteriorated health and state of near death, while commentators stressed the impressive

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<sup>83</sup> From EU Council reports and documentation.

<sup>84</sup> From EU reports and documents.

<sup>85</sup> *La Vanguardia*, 'Cuba, España y la UE', 21/VI/2007; *El País*, 'Diálogo con Cuba', 19/VI/2007.

<sup>86</sup> *BBC Mundo*, 'Cuba: la oferta europea es insuficiente', 29/VI/2007; Mauricio Vicent, 'Castro critica con dureza a la UE por su 'entreguismo' a EE.UU. en relación a Cuba', 26/VI/2007. See text of official reaction in *Granma*, 27/VI/2007, transcribed in Appendix 5.

<sup>87</sup> Fidel Castro, 'Reflexiones del Comandante en Jefe: una respuesta digna', 28/VI/2007. See text in English: <http://www.granma.cu/ingles/2007/junio/juev28/an-honorable-response.html>, transcribed in Appendix 5.

<sup>88</sup> From EU sources.

<sup>89</sup> From Spanish sources.

<sup>90</sup> Mauricio Vicent, 'Cuba toca fondo', *El País*, 14/VII/2007; 'Hasta la vieja guardia habla de las necesidad de cambios', *El País*, 27/VII/2007; Fernando García, 'Raúl Castro anuncia grandes cambios', *La Vanguardia*, 27/VII/2007; Mauricio Vicent, 'La transición invisible', *El País*, 29/VII/2007.

survival record of Cuba's leaders, avoiding 476 plans and 167 attempts on his life, and opposing nine US presidents.<sup>91</sup>

As predicted by most of the more acute observers, and sincerely expected in private by government officials and EU staff, the official Cuban response to the EU message set back the situation to what it was when Spain made a bold move to open up towards Havana. In addition, Cuba received a combination of good and bad news. On the one hand, the Cuban government was reprimanded by a resolution by the European Parliament, in a plenary session attended by only 73 of its 785 members.<sup>92</sup> On the other hand, the UN Human Rights Council decided to discontinue the position of the special rapporteur on Cuba, relieving the Cuban regime of the pressure to investigate abuses on its own citizens.<sup>93</sup> In spite of the expected triumphant interpretations in the Cuban press,<sup>94</sup> EU circles explained that the rapporteur's position was discontinued as part of a political deal to obtain a consensus. However, the potential of introducing single resolutions remains open, with the requirement of gaining substantial support (from at least 15 countries). There is also the possibility of reintroducing a new special rapporteur, an unlikely prospect in the case of Cuba. Nonetheless, Cuba has not avoided monitoring per se.<sup>95</sup>

With all this setting in the international background, Spain's perception of Cuba's economy in recent months has ostensibly deteriorated, raising serious concerns over the viability of the success of Raúl Castro's government in providing the necessary resources and reforms to make the living conditions of ordinary Cubans more passable. Reality shows that most Cubans can barely cover their basic needs for a half a month with existing salaries. Tourism services, which some time ago became the solution to fill the vacuum left by the disappearance of Soviet subsidies, have deteriorated in quality, causing a decrease in the number (16% less in 2006 than in 2005) of visitors, with the result of a 50% occupancy in most urban facilities.<sup>96</sup> The latter was 55% in 2005 and 63% in 2004.<sup>97</sup> Fuel charges produced by the increase in world prices have augmented the cost of a trip to Cuba considerably, with the result that a number of Cuban citizens that survived with jobs related to tourism have seen this labour alternative disappear.<sup>98</sup> Cuba has a debt with Spain that amounts to €1,703 million, or around 17.82% of the total external debt owed to Madrid. Unpaid loans and other obligations amount to €1,698.81, 51% of the total, a level that experts consider it impossible to pay ever.<sup>99</sup> This financial scenario has changed the attitude of European investors and diplomats into a serious concern over the immediate prospects of Cuban society without the implementation of some drastic changes made by the government, a prospect that, a year after the temporary cession of power by Castro, has not been confirmed.

Finally, it is significant to note that the meaning of the Common Position of 1996 has been subtly changed and manipulated by a variety of actors. What originally was simply a set of conditions presented to Cuba to enjoy a cooperation agreement similar to the deals made with the rest of Latin America, it has been 'sold' by the Cuban exile community and the US government as 'sanctions', an adjective that has been expanded to refer to the measures taken in 2005. The Cuban government has gladly accepted the term and its spirit. In the background of the discussions over the decision to lift

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<sup>91</sup> Juan José Aznárez, 'Castro cumple 81 años', *El País*, 13/VIII/2007.

<sup>92</sup> ABC, 'La eurocámara vota hoy si endurece la postura de la UE con Cuba', 21/VI/2007; R.M. de R., 'La Eurocámara supedita el diálogo con Cuba a los derechos humanos', *El País*, 22/VI/2007; Europa Press, 'El PP califica de 'fracaso' del ejecutivo español la resolución emitida por el Parlamento Europeo sobre Cuba', 21/VI/2007.

<sup>93</sup> EFE, 'Elena Valenciano cree que la decisión de la ONU sobre Cuba es "razonable"', 20/VI/2007; Prensa Latina, 'Destaca cancillería cubana victoria en Consejo Derechos Humanos', 19/VI/2007.

<sup>94</sup> See Prensa Latina, 'Destaca cancillería cubana victoria en Consejo de Derechos Humanos', Granma, 19/VI/2005.

<sup>95</sup> From EU and member states sources.

<sup>96</sup> It is not surprising that very attractive travel offers are inserted in major newspapers, advertising 9-day stays (including air fare) for less than €1,400 in 4-5 star hotels in Havana and the Cuban keys.

<sup>97</sup> Maite Rico, 'El maná del turismo se agota', *El País*, 14/VII/2007.

<sup>98</sup> Mauricio Vicent, 'Cuba toca fondo', *El País*, 14/VII/2007.

<sup>99</sup> Source: Spain's Ministry of Economy and Finance. See alarming report in Luis Losada Pescador, 'Fidel Castro no paga las facturas', *Epoca*, 6/IV/2007.

the measures in 2003, the Cuban government -through its representatives in Brussels- sent an unequivocal message indicating that there was no chance of an agreement unless the Common Position was lifted.<sup>100</sup> EU circles know very well that there is a double language –one for use in private with the European power circles, and another for use in public in response to orders from Cuba-.

Although it is a cumbersome dimension which is difficult to be understood by outside observers, there is a sort of 'procedural trap' as an obstacle to the lifting of the Position and the measures. On the one hand, it would be actually easier to eliminate the Position because, as a legal act, not all members of the Council have to say 'yes'. It is enough not to say 'no'. This is the special 'unanimity' in such legal acts as the Common Position, as a special case of 'constructive abstention' that makes it possible to reach difficult deals in the EU structure. In contrast, something the Cuban authorities apparently do not want to accept, the 'measures' are a political act, decided by the Council as a temporary policy. As such, they can only be eliminated by consensus. In essence, all Member States have to respond 'yes'. Ironically, while they remain 'suspended', the measures (mild by any standards) are 'permanently' dead, called 'zombies' in EU corridors, and void of any impact.<sup>101</sup>

Besides, the measures are mild by any standards and testimonial in many aspects. For example, the custom of inviting members of the opposition to national celebrations is quite ordinary in Europe. Consequently, the Cuban government should not make a big issue out of it. The ambiguity and the difficulty in profiling the actual level of official visits by EU Member State representatives is also a sign of weakness in these measures. So the high cost of the lack of communication generated by the Cuban government was not worth the trouble. Hence, Spain's decision to lead a change in approach (but not in the policy's essence).<sup>102</sup>

In this respect, some analysts judge that the Cuban regime is actually not interested in the ending of the Common Position, a logic that parallels its attitude towards the US embargo. As frequent declarations of Cuban officials -including Fidel Castro- have illustrated, the Position has been equated to the US policy. The Cuban government then skillfully applies the same treatment to both, interpreting them as examples of economic and political imperialism, blaming them for the economic shortcomings of the Cuban system. It needs to be stressed when dealing with this comparative dimension that the EU Common Position does not plan to bring change to Cuba by coercive means, not even at the height of Aznar's influence, disproving Cuban claims. The question is for how long this nationalist approach will continue to be valid in dealing with the perception of Cuban citizens. That has been the main reason why Spain and other EU partners have been opposed to a strategy that is interpreted as the imposition of 'sanctions'.

## Conclusions

In any event, when transition ultimately gets in motion, but not before, the moment of truth will be to see what kind of new influence Spain -and its EU partners that share the same basic approach to Cuba- might have. Meanwhile, the rest of the EU (with the exception of possibly the standard protests from the hardliners) will probably have the attitude of 'waiting and seeing' that has been the trend until now, responding to whatever kind of pragmatic priorities that are contemplated. Neither Spain nor its EU opponents on the Cuban issue have the capacity to drastically change the current official position and the re-imposition of temporary measures, unless Cuba makes a reckless move by expanding its arrests.

Nonetheless, the Brussels establishment, reflecting a consensus of the prevalent feeling in the most influential capitals regarding the Cuban issue, has increasingly become more concerned, if not

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<sup>100</sup> From EU sources and European media in Brussels.

<sup>101</sup> From EU sources.

<sup>102</sup> From Spanish government sources.

irritated, by the unusual language used by the Cuban authorities, echoing the expressions used by Fidel Castro in his writings.<sup>103</sup> The offer to meet in Brussels received, in the view of EU officials, a provocative and an unfriendly reply with a less than respectful tone. The EU representatives are not happy with what is perceived as a 'deliberate misreading' of the EU texts, or relying on an unrepresentative minority. Brussels would hope that the Cuban declarations would properly take notice that the Common Position explicitly excludes coercive means, so that it should be differentiated from the US attitude,<sup>104</sup> to which it is frequently compared.<sup>105</sup>

In sum, unless the PSOE is defeated in the 2008 elections and the PP retakes an aggressive policy towards Cuba, and then redesigns the status quo in the EU setting, no further drastic changes are expected. But then Cuba might be immersed in its path towards a real transition -or maybe not-.<sup>106</sup> Only then, provisional or final judgment on the EU and Spain's policy of 'constructive engagement'<sup>107</sup> towards Cuba will be rendered and dutifully evaluated.

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*University of Miami*

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<sup>103</sup> For a sample, see the article included as appendix 5.

<sup>104</sup> This identification is not exclusive to Cuban sources, but is also prevalent in left leaning circles in Europe. See Jean-Michel Caroit, "Castro light" peut-il changer Cuba ?, *Le Monde*, 16/VIII/2007. More elaborate analysis using a table listing show the differences of the goals, methods and expectations of the policy followed by the EU and the US. See, for a recent evaluation, the last chapter of the book by Cristina Xalma, 'Cuba ¿Hacia dónde?', Icaria, Barcelona, 2007.

<sup>105</sup> From EU sources, confronted with selective perceptions of a number of EU member states governments.

<sup>106</sup> For a review of the past of the Cuban regime and a speculation about its future, see Jorge Domínguez, 'Cuba hoy: analizando su pasado, imaginando su futuro', Colibrí, Madrid, 2006.

<sup>107</sup> For a comparative, comprehensive review of this approach to deal with difficult regimes, see Miroslaw Nincic, 'The logic of Positive Engagement: Dealing with Renegade Regimes', *International Studies Perspectives*, 2006, 7, p. 321-341.

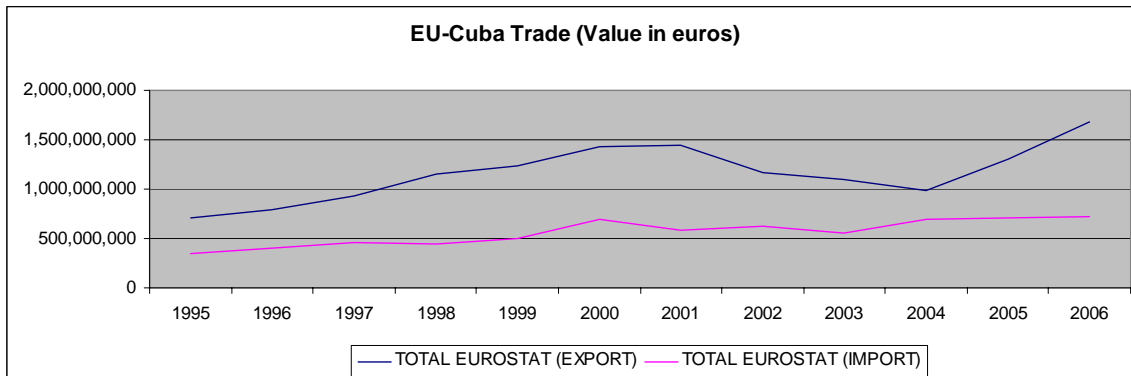
<sup>108</sup> Lic. Law (University of Barcelona, 1966), Ph.D. (Georgetown University, 1973), Jean Monnet Professor of European Integration, Director of University of Miami European Union Center and Co-Director of the Miami-Florida European Union Center of Excellence. He has published over 200 academic articles and reviews, and he is the author, editor or co-editor of 25 books, among them *The Reconstruction of Central America: the Role of the European Community* (North-South Center, 1991), *The Ibero-American Space/ El Espacio Iberoamericano* (U.Miami/University of Barcelona, 1996), *Cuba, the U.S. and the Helms-Burton Doctrine: International Reactions* (University of Florida Press, 2000), *Las relaciones exteriores de la Unión Europea* (México: UNAM, 2001), *Retos de la integración regional: Europa y América* (México: UNAM, 2003), *La Unión Europea y el TLCAN* (México: UNAM, 2004), *The European Union and Regional Integration* (EU Center, Miami, 2005), *La Unión Europea y la integración regional* (CARI/U, Buenos Aires, 2005), *Towards the Completion of Europe* (EU Center, Miami, 2006) and *A Historical Dictionary of the European Union* (Scarecrow Press/Rowman & Littlefield, 2006). He has also published over 1,300 columns and essays in newspapers and magazines. Among his awards is the Encomienda of the Order of Merit bestowed by King Juan Carlos of Spain.

<sup>108</sup> For a review of the year see 'La UE y Cuba, un año después', *El Nuevo Herald*, 21/VII/2007, [http://www.elnuevoherald.com/noticias/mundo/columnas\\_de\\_opinion/story/68600.html](http://www.elnuevoherald.com/noticias/mundo/columnas_de_opinion/story/68600.html)

## Appendix

### Appendix 1

Graph 1. European Union-Cuba Trade, 1995-2006

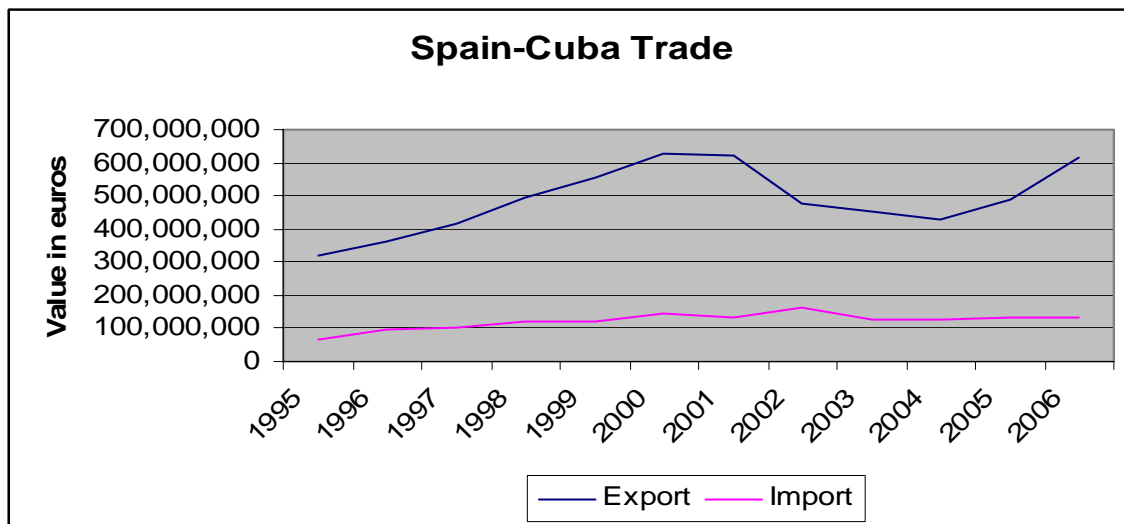


Source: the author from Eurostat data.

### Appendix 2

Table 2 and Graph 2. Spain-Cuba Trade, 1995-2006

	Exports	Import
1995	317,724,383	67,511,486
1996	364,998,347	94,159,783
1997	418,209,241	103,576,059
1998	495,528,033	119,177,900
1999	554,974,011	118,417,648
2000	629,251,920	143,079,580
2001	623,743,110	133,169,364
2002	475,385,689	160,250,588
2003	453,903,022	127,057,815
2004	430,297,599	124,486,237
2005	485,959,609	131,737,788
2006	617,273,695	132,636,360



Source: the author from EU data.

## Appendix 3

**Table 2. Cuban External Debt**

<b>Creditors (by country)</b>	<b>Debt (in US\$)</b>
Venezuela (in bn)	5,970
Japan (in bn)	2,229
Spain (in bn)	1,974
Argentina (in bn)	1,967
China (in bn)	1,770
France (in bn)	1,468
Russia (post Soviet)	819
UK	388
Italy	384
Germany	351
Mexico	325
Czech Republic	265
Iran	256
Netherlands	232
Belgium	225
Panama (Colón Free Zone)	200
Canada	99
Vietnam	98
Austria	59
Brazil	40
Trinidad & Tobago	30
Uruguay	30
Sweden	16
Portugal	5
Switzerland	1
Undisclosed Foreign Financing	752
<b>TOTAL (in billions)</b>	<b>19,953</b>

Sources: EU, US and Cuban government sources.

## Appendix 4

### *EU POLICY ON CUBA*

*Council conclusions, 14 June 2007*

- (1) Although the political, economic and social system in Cuba remains essentially unchanged, the Council has registered the first temporary transfer of power in 48 years from Fidel Castro to a collective leadership led by his brother Raúl Castro which constitutes a new situation. The Council urges the Cuban Government to undertake the necessary political and economic reforms for improving the daily life of the Cuban people.
- (2) The EU is following political developments in Cuba, including the human rights situation, very closely. The Council deplores that the human rights situation has not fundamentally changed, despite a decrease in the number of political prisoners and acts of harassment. The Cuban Government continues to deny its citizens internationally recognized civil, political and economic rights and freedoms. The EU once again urges the Cuban Government, also in Cuba's capacity as a member of the Human Rights Council, to release unconditionally all political prisoners, and reaffirms that this issue constitutes a key priority in its policy towards Cuba. The EU also reiterates its call on the Cuban Government to grant freedom of information and expression and invites the Cuban Government to cooperate on this matter.
- (3) All those peacefully committed to freedom, democracy and respect for universal human rights may be assured of the solidarity and continued support of the EU. The EU will continue to pursue its dialogue with Cuba's civil society and to offer to all sectors of society practical support towards peaceful change in Cuba. In this context, the Council stresses the EU's worldwide policy of support to Human Rights Defenders according to the respective EU Guidelines.
- (4) The EU recognizes the right of the Cuban citizens to decide independently about their future and remains ready to contribute positively to the future development of all sectors of Cuban society, including through development cooperation instruments.

- (5) While equally maintaining its intensive dialogue with civil society and the peaceful opposition, the EU would be ready to resume a comprehensive and open political dialogue with the Cuban authorities on all topics of mutual interest. This dialogue should include the whole range of potential fields of co-operation, including in the political, human rights, economic, scientific and cultural spheres. It should take place on a reciprocal and non-discriminatory basis. In the context of this dialogue, the EU will outline to the Cuban Government its views on democracy, universal human rights and fundamental freedoms. For sounding out this, a Cuban delegation will be invited to Brussels.

## **Appendix 5**

*It is the European Union that must rectify errors committed against Cuba  
Statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on conclusions reached by the European Union's  
External Relations Council regarding Cuba*

The European Union's Council of Foreign Ministers adopted several decisions on June 18 regarding Cuba.

A document published by the European Union (EU) titled 'Conclusions on Cuba' contains a proposal for 'comprehensive and open political dialogue with the Cuban authorities on all topics of mutual interest,' which the Cuban Foreign Minister has noted, considering it a much-needed rectification.

However, the abovementioned document does not refer to the so-called sanctions that the EU attempted to impose on Cuba, unjustly and rashly, in 2003 and which for two years, out of arrogance, it maintains as 'suspended' only.

With Cuba, the only dialogue possible is one between sovereign and equal parties, without any conditions or pending threats. If the EU wants a dialogue with Cuba, it must completely eliminate those sanctions, which have been inapplicable and unsustainable.

The 'Conclusions' also do not mention the so-called 'Common Position' reached hastily by the financial ministers of the EU in 1996, under pressure by Aznar and based on a draft written in the U.S. State Department.

After so many errors and failures, the only obvious conclusion the EU should reach is that its so-called 'Common Position' should disappear, because there neither was nor is any reason whatsoever for its existence, and because it is an obstacle to normal, mutually respectful relations of common interest with our country.

It should be acknowledged that a group of influential European nations has made efforts to change this ridiculous situation. Others, like the Czech Republic, have devoted themselves to being U.S. peons on the European map.

In addition, the 'Council Conclusions' meddle, in a slanderous way, in strictly internal Cuban affairs; they issue judgments and announce interventionist and hypocritical actions that Cuba considers to be offensive and unacceptable and rejects energetically.

We do not recognize any moral authority whatsoever on the part of the European Union to judge or advise Cuba.



If, in alluding to President Fidel Castro's temporary delegation of duties to comrade Raúl Castro and calling it 'a new situation,' they are expressing the illusion that contradictions or differences exist between the Revolution's leaders or that Cuba's revolutionaries are divided, they are wrong again. The Revolution is more solid and more united than ever.

Our country has risked its very existence; it has waged heroic resistance and has fought tirelessly for more than a century to defend its independence. Cuba is an independent and sovereign country, and the European Union is mistaken if it thinks that it can treat Cuba in any way other than as an equal.

The European Union has shown persistent and humiliating subordination to the United States, rendering it incapable of holding positions based on European interests and making it an accomplice — though it says otherwise — to the criminal and inhumane blockade imposed by that country on the Cuban people, something about which the 'Conclusions' does not dare to say a single word. In a statement from the summit it held in April with the United States, the European Union bowed down, questioning Cuba and accepting a motion that gave legitimacy to the 'Bush Plan.' Its secret meetings with messengers from the empire are well-known, including with the illegitimate administrator appointed for Cuba by the United States, and its officials are often present in anti-Cuban events in Miami or held in Europe but budgeted in Washington.

The European Union is shamefully hypocritical when it unjustly addresses Cuba but remains silent about the torture carried out by the United States on its illegal naval base in Guantánamo, which usurps Cuban territory, and Abu Ghraib, which is even used against European citizens. It remains silent, with impunity, about the kidnappings of individuals by the U.S. special services in third countries, and it has provided its territory for collaborating with secret CIA flights and for sheltering illegal prisons. It has not said anything either about the dozens of people who have disappeared under those circumstances, nor about the hundreds of thousands of civilians murdered in Iraq.

It is the European Union that must rectify errors committed against Cuba. Every step in the right direction will be appropriately welcomed. But there is no hurry: we have all the time in the world.

Havana, June 22, 2007

Translated by Granma International

## **Appendix 6**

*Reflections of President Fidel Castro*

*An honorable response*

EVENTS follow each other at an incredible pace. Sometimes, several occur simultaneously. Their inherent significance and usefulness as examples is what I wish to, or, better, feel compelled to comment on. I am not referring, today, to what occurred in Geneva, which is considered a well-deserved revolutionary victory for Third World nations. Rather, I shall refer to Cuba's response to the European Council on Foreign Relations, published last Friday, June 22, on Granma's front page.

The statement was a response worthy of our Revolution and its high political leadership. One by one, all points calling for an immediate response from Cuba were addressed and clarified. Allow me to enumerate and go over them again:

'A dialogue between sovereign and equal partners, devoid of any conditions or impending threats, is the only possible dialogue with Cuba. If the European Union wishes to engage in any form of dialogue with Cuba, it must definitively eliminate those sanctions, which have since proved impracticable and unsustainable'.

'The 'Conclusions' also failed to mention the so-called 'Common Position', hastily agreed upon by EU Ministers of Finance in 1996 under pressures from Aznar and on the basis of a draft drawn up by the US State Department'.

'After so many mistakes and failures, the only obvious conclusion that the European Union should fittingly draw is that the so-called 'Common Position' must disappear, since there were and there are no reasons whatsoever for its existence and because it hinders any normal, mutually respectful relationship of common interest with our country'.

'A group of influential European nations have tried to change this ludicrous situation. Others, such as the Czech Republic, have confirmed to be American pawns on the European map. The 'Conclusions of the Council' slanderously meddle in matters that are of Cuba's strict concern, pass judgment and announce intrusive and hypocritical actions that Cuba regards as offensive and unacceptable and strongly repudiates'.

'Cuba is an independent and sovereign country and the European Union is wrong if it believes it can treat it as anything other than an equal'.

'The European Union has shown persistent and humiliating subordination to the United States, of a kind that renders it incapable of holding positions based on European interests and turns it into an accomplice, despite all talk to the contrary, to the criminal and inhuman blockade that the US imposes on the Cuban people, and about which the 'Conclusions' did not even dare say a single word'.

'In the European Union Summit with the United States last April, it stooped to questioning Cuba and accepted a reference that acknowledges the legitimacy of the 'Bush Plan.' Known are its collusion with the Empire's envoys and even with the spurious inspector for Cuba appointed by the United States'.

'The European Union is shamelessly hypocritical when it unjustly points its finger at Cuba while it remains silent about acts of US-coordinated torture at the illegal Guantánamo Naval Base, which encroaches upon Cuban territory, and at Abu Ghraib, where these are even administered to European citizens'.

'It impudently remains silent about kidnappings by US Special Forces in third countries and has offered its territory to cooperate with the CIA's secret flights and to harbor illegal prisons. Nor has it said anything about the hundreds of persons who have disappeared as a result of these actions or about the hundreds of thousands of civilians murdered in Iraq'.

'It is the European Union which must rectify the mistakes it has made with respect to Cuba'.

At the risk of turning this into an extensive reflection, I wish to add a number of facts. The European Union has been led by Washington to a mighty cul-de-sac. The Cold War ended with the triumph of the real consumerism of developed capitalism, and the frantic impulse to consume that had been awakened in broad sectors of the populations of the socialist block and Soviet Union. They had lost the battle of ideas. The Russian people, the main moving force behind the October Revolution, were violently deprived of important commitments which encompassed agreements and guarantees for its security and sovereignty: Europe was stripped of over 400 SS-20 missiles, as NATO described them. These mobile missiles, fitted with three nuclear warheads each, were pointed to every corner in Europe where US military bases and NATO forces were located. In its triumphalist intoxication, the aggressive military alliance had taken under its wing many former socialist republics of Europe, a number of which, seeking economic benefits, have made the rest of

Europe a hostage of their foreign policy, which unconditionally serves the strategic interests of the United States.

All European Union members have the right to veto a decision. This system is politically dysfunctional and curtails, in practice, the sovereignty of all members. The European Union is today in worse shape than the former socialist block ever was. The vain Tony Blair, manufacturer of sophisticated submarines and a friend of Bush, is already being announced as a potential future candidate to chair the European Union. The cables bring the news today that he was appointed special envoy for the Middle East, where he so amply contributed to that disastrous war unleashed by the United States.

In the energy sector, we see European governments beg for oil in the few regions in the world where the empire has not forcibly appropriated this resource, in much the same way it purchases, with worthless bills, any European company it pleases.

The euro, however, is a stable currency, much more than the dollar, which is constantly being devalued. Even though the dollar is defended by the holders of US bonds and bills, the empire faces the risk of an economic disaster of dramatic repercussions.

Europe, on the other hand, would be one of the areas most severely affected by global warming. Its well-known and modern port facilities would end up underwater.

Today, it desperately proposes free trade agreements with Latin America which are worse than Washington's, in search of raw materials and bio-diesel. We are beginning to hear criticisms about this. But Europe's money is not in the hands of the Community, it belongs to transnational corporations which may relocate to countries where labor is cheap in search of profits.

Cuba's proud and honorable response has underscored the essentials.

Though every good strategy includes a good tactic, neither of the two are sound if arrogance and smugness are tolerated.

Europeans themselves will one day come to understand the absurd situation they were led to by imperialism and will realize that a Caribbean country pointed out some necessary truths for them. The wild horse of consumerism cannot continue to gallop madly ahead, for such a race is unsustainable.

The last European Union meeting held to address the future community treaty was further proof of the demoralization of Europe. Last Sunday, June 24, the AFP reported that Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi expressed his 'bitterness' over the Brussels summit, where he accused European Union leaders of staging the spectacle of an emotionless Europe, in an interview for La Repubblica newspaper.

"As a European, allow me to be embittered for the spectacle I find myself in front of", Prodi, ex-chairman of the European Commission, said.

"The doggedness of some governments to negate every emotional aspect of Europe has hurt me", he added, referring to Poland, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands and Great Britain.

"And then these are the same governments that rebuke Europe for being far from citizens", he affirmed. "But how can you involve citizens without involving their emotions? How can you give them pride to be European if the symbols of its pride [such as the flag and hymn] are negated?" he asked.

'Prodi lambasted [Tony Blair] for 'conducting a battle' against the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights'.

'He criticized Polish President Lech Kaczynski, who said he could not share his stances because Italy and Poland were 'very different nations'.

'Prodi concluded by saying that 'never before had Eurosceptics expressed themselves so explicitly and programmatically' as in the last Summit'.

At the last G-8 meeting, Bush had sent Europeans a chilly message.

At this decisive point in time, the number of enemies one has, which will be fewer and fewer with time, is of no importance. What is important is 'the stars we carry on our foreheads.'

*Fidel Castro Ruz*

*27 June 2007*