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"The Perils to Order and Security in Cuba's Transition to Democracy"

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The Perils to Order and Security in Cuba's Transition to Democracy

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Abstract

Democratic transitions liberalize politics. Political liberalization fragments power, and increases the ability for societies to voice demands. Unfortunately, these factors also tend to weaken political order, as existing institutions are unable to accommodate changing demands in the short-run. In this sense, a nation's initial conditions before a democratization process are fundamental for the success of democratic consolidation. In this paper, we delve into Cuba's current conditions regarding safety, security, and public order. We also consider future outlooks for the Island. This country has a strategic geographical location, economic scarcity, and multiple existing internal criminal structures. Combined, these circumstances place this nation in grave danger of experiencing a significant escalation in crime and violence during the upcoming years, which would negatively affect its chances of a successful transition to democracy.

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A common feature of democratization processes across countries is a decrease in societal order. To understand why, we should look to citizen demands and institutional reach. As political liberalization takes place, there is a significant increase in the number and types of citizen's demands. Previously ignored groups now become relevant to both governments and those wishing to become government. However, existing institutions are not equipped to cope with the new demand. State institutions adapt at a much slower pace than changes in society require them to. The adjustment between society and institutions takes time, and it is precisely at this moment that significant friction arises between actors since the state is either absent, too weak, or simply has outdated institutions which do not cover particular circumstances. The rule of law suffers, opportunistic criminal organizations see openings, and citizens may become disenchanted with liberalization itself (Huntington, 1969; O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986; Dahl, 1971; Diamond, 1999; Ceobanu, 2011; Corbacho, 2012).

We have observed different variations of this same phenomenon in liberalization processes in many countries, such as Latin America and the former Soviet Republics. As many countries in Latin America democratized, they experienced rising crime rates. UNDP found that Latin America and the Caribbean had homicides increase by 12% between 2003 and 2013 (UNODC, 2014). The former Soviet Republics also experienced rapidly worsening domestic security conditions after the fall of Communism. In Russia alone, homicides went from 21,000 in 1990 to 48,000 in 1994. It took the country nearly 20 years to get back to 1990 levels. After the fall of Communism, the *Bratva*, or Russian Mafia, found new spaces in which to grow and expand.

Democratization in Latin America and the former Soviet Republics has been complicated by an inability to enforce the rule of law. In these cases, new governments often found themselves unable to rapidly establish institutions to cope with changing circumstances.

Cuba has entered an era of gradual, and sometimes erratic, liberalization, which may also imply public order will weaken. Among other things, the Cuban government has allowed for increased foreign direct investment, relaxed remittance restrictions, relaxed traveling abroad restrictions for Cubans, and permitted Cubans to own small businesses. On the political and humanitarian side, it has loosened constraints on travel, allowed for NGOs, and is slightly more tolerant on (some) political dissident groups. Admittedly, these are very preliminary steps, since most features of the Cuban regime are non-democratic.

While these measures bode well for its economic future, and are tentative steps towards a more democratic regime, transitions towards democracy are notoriously tricky (Diamond, 1999). In Cuba´s case, there are additional circumstances that may further complicate a normally complex process of liberalization. For the island to have a successful transition to democracy, these need to be understood and addressed.

Cuba already has significant criminal activity (not fully measured, but quite clear). Black markets of all types of goods are in operation: food, clothes, drugs, and prostitution to name a few. Participants in these illicit markets can be independent operators, or part of a criminal network. The criminal organizations that run these black markets are most likely tolerated by the state because of an institutional incapacity to fight them, corruption by state officials, and because of the sad fact that some of them fill the demand for products and services that the Cuban state is unable to supply at the set subsidized prices. As Cuban institutions liberalize, criminal organizations are

likely to face fewer constraints from the state, and more opportunities for illicit businesses will arise from greater diversity and internationalization.

Cuba has a strategic geographical location, ideal for criminal activities (Brown, 2002). This has been true since Spanish colonial times, when pirates and smugglers used the island as a base. A significant potential danger would be the use of the strategic location to smuggle drugs from South America into the United States.

Cuban citizens currently experience poor economic conditions – the take home salary for most Cubans was around $20 a month in 2015 (The Brookings Institute, 2015[2]). In the short-term, many Cubans will not benefit economically from liberalization, providing significant incentives for some of these citizens to engage (or continue to engage) in more lucrative, though illicit, activities.

There is strong evidence of corruption by public officials (Díaz-Briquets and Pérez-López, 2006), although, it seems that not as widespread as in many other countries in Latin America. It would make sense for these officials to stay in politics and government as liberalization takes place, but this provides fertile ground for increased criminal activities.

Our research contributes to the general literature on democratic transitions and public order. We seek to provide answers to questions such as: How does crime change after countries transition from autocratic regimes to more liberal regimes? What factors determine the variations in crime in countries that have transitioned from autocracies to more liberal regimes? Does the type of transition affect the levels of crime that we would subsequently observe?

The absence of accessible and reliable public information and the obstacles to freely collect data in Cuba are significant challenges for this research project. We combine different sources of

[2] https://goo.gl/5CTuK7.

information in our research design: library research, news data collection from official and independent sources, interviews in different cities in Cuba, Miami, and Mexico City, and statistical information from Cuba's statistics agency, and international organizations that unsystematically report on Cuba.

In the next section we explore the existing knowledge on how order is affected as nations democratize. In the second section we briefly outline Cuba's current liberalization processes and the different alternatives for the near future, which would determine how order is affected. We then analyze Cuba's current public order and security conditions.

In the fourth section we analyze the dangers to order and security in Cuba induced by existing circumstances and the processes of political and economic liberalization. We subsequently offer a comparative perspective to countries in the former Soviet bloc. We conclude with a brief review of the main findings and policy prescriptions derived from our research and make suggestions for further inquiry.

1. PUBLIC ORDER AND DEMOCRATIZATION

The core function of a state is to provide order in its territory (Hobbes, 1651; Bates, 2001). Different regimes do not necessarily generate different degrees of internal order. The Soviet Union under Stalin achieved a high degree of order, as has modern Norway. Yet, the first is an autocratic regime, and the second is a democratic regime (here we explore degree of internal order, not it´s character).

There exists a significant body of work explaining the relationship between public order and democratization. There seems to be agreement in the literature that an inverted U shape—violence in the vertical axis and democracy in the horizontal axis—relates these two variables: there should

be order at the extremes of regime type, full autocracy and full democracy, and increasing, then decreasing, disorder as we move from an autocracy to democracy (Huntington, 1968; Dahl, 1991).

There mechanism linking democratization and public order states that as nations democratize, demands from societal groups tend to increase. This is the result of increasing pluralization. These groups were not able to raise their petitions under the previous regime because power distribution was not favorable to them.

The problem—which negatively affects order—is that institutions are slower to change than society is. This gives certain societal groups incentives to attempt to satisfy their demands through informal and, sometimes illicit, means. The state has fewer resources for conflict resolution since more democratic institutions provide fewer incentives to violate individual rights, and more liberal regulatory, judicial and policing institutions have not developed yet.

At the societal level, there are also determinants of lesser order. The most credited explanation is Durkheim's (1897) hypothesis that rapid social change leads to societal deregulation and anomie and, in turn, to higher crime.

Economic liberalization creates new economic classes that increasingly demand different arrangements. It creates tensions, and unsatisfied demands. Business opportunities are taken, both legal and illegal.

Diminished public order is then reflected in a wide range of circumstances, such as weak rule of law and corruption and crime; all of which we know severely affect the wellbeing of societies. The direct effects are obvious, but there are also significant indirect effects that are detrimental to society's development.

In the case of crime, there is evidence showing that it has direct connections to the strength and stability of democracies. High levels of crime raise feelings of personal insecurity and undermine

levels of trust in a society, which in turn undercut the legitimacy of democratic institutions (LaFree 1998).

Crime also exacerbates existing social divisions, overlapping with racial, ethnic, and religious cleavages. Deeper divisions make it difficult to develop and sustain strong democratic institutions. Finally, rising crime rates can directly undercut economic growth and development, which again threatens the stability of democratic institutions. (Karstedt and LaFree, 2006).

These are circumstances that any country in a process of democratization would experience. In the following subsection, I analyze the case of the countries in the former Soviet bloc.

Countries in the Former Soviet Bloc

Although there are multiple dimensions in which Cuba differs from other political and social systems, the case of Cuba is not analytically unique. Many other countries have undergone transitions—which vary on multiple dimensions—from closed authoritarian regimes to more democratic regimes. There is wide variation on the trajectories that different countries take after they liberalize.

These countries suffered rapid and drastic transformations on their social and political institutions, which altered the order that was rigidly enforced by the state during the days of communism. Thus, crime, violence, and corruption worsened. The historical legacy of communism still haunts these countries in various ways (Kitschelt, 2003; Pop-Elches, 2007; Pridemore and Kim, 2006; Welsh, 1996).

The countries that emerged from the breakdown of the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe found themselves between the excitement of a new start in a freer society and the multitude of tasks and decisions required to structure and live under a new regime.

By late 1989 a series of events rapidly unfolded in Eastern Europe, the most symbolic was the fall of the Berlin wall on November 9, which marked the end of the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe.

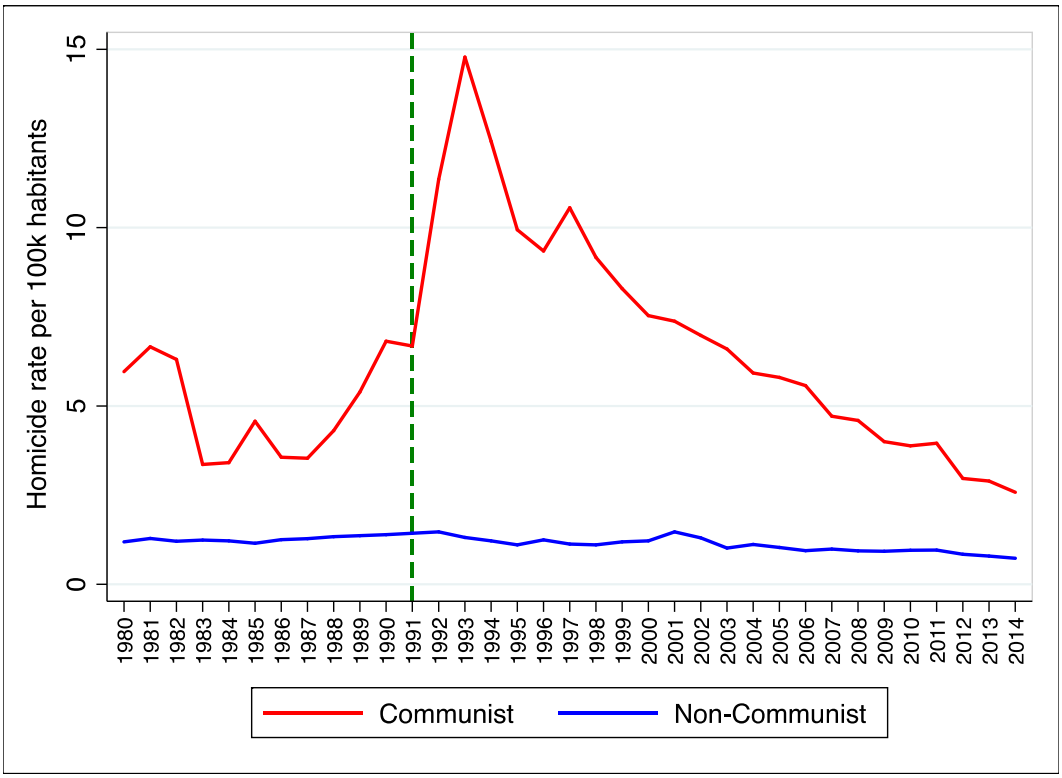
As expected, the sort of order that existed during the communist years was severely disrupted. The existing equilibriums were altered and power and institutional vacuums were opportunistically used by many citizens, public officials, and foreigners seeking illicit rents.

Thus, public order rapidly deteriorated within former communist countries in Europe. Those holding power were incapable of sustaining the institutions of the old authoritarian regime, but changing the whole institutional setting proved tough. In the years after the breakdown of communism, and even nowadays, we observe a blend of institutions and behaviors from the old and new regimes.

One of the main consequences of the lack of a strong state to enforce the rule of law is insecurity. Figure 1 shows the homicide rate per 100 thousand habitants in Europe from 1980 to 2014 divided by countries inside and outside the communist bloc. It can be observed that homicides began increasing in the years immediately before the fall of communism, 1990-1991, resulting from the rapid decline in capacities of state apparatuses in these countries. We then observe a significant increase in homicides with the change of regime in countries from the communist bloc, but not in the rest of Europe.[3]

Figure 1 – Homicide rate in (former) communist and non-communist countries in the Soviet bloc (1980-2014).

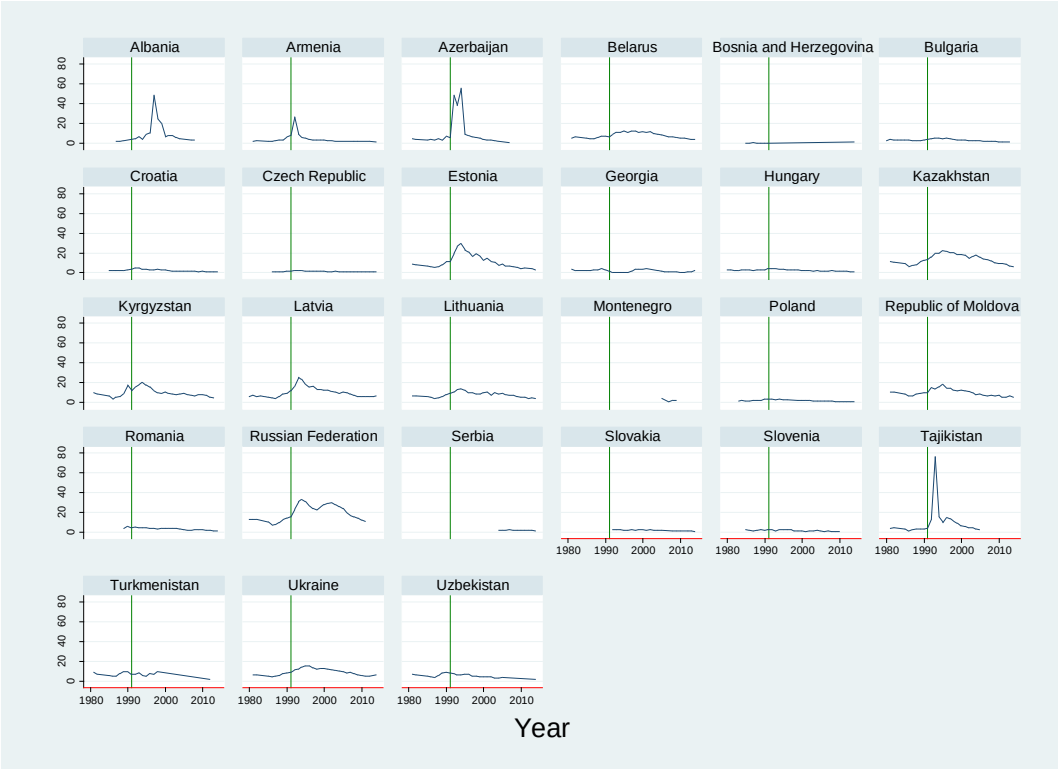
[3] See Holmes (2009) on potential problems with data recording in post-communist Europe.



Source: World Health Organization (http://data.euro.who.int/hfamdb/). SDR, Homicide and assault, per 100000.

Figure 2 shows the homicide rates disaggregated by country for the same time period. There is variance across countries, yet, most countries show an increase in homicides after 1991—the year in which most regimes changed. Some countries were hit especially hard, for example, Azerbaijan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Albania, and only a few show a downward slope or at least not a significant increase, for instance, Slovenia, Croatia, the Czech Republic and Hungary.

Figure 2 – Homicide rate in (former) communist and non-communist countries in the Soviet bloc (1980-2014).



Source: World Health Organization (http://data.euro.who.int/hfamdb/). SDR, Homicide and assault, per 100000.

Table 1 shows the significant average increase in homicides in the two groups of countries in Europe before and after the breakdown of communism. The average homicide rate was already higher in countries in the communist bloc before 1992 as compared to European countries not in the Soviet bloc (5.2 vs 1.3). However, the difference dramatically increased in the 5 years after the fall of the communism. The average homicide in communist nations rate increased from 5.2 to 11.5, more than a 100% increase. In non-communist countries the average homicide rate remained constant in the same time period.

Table 1 – Average homicide rate in (former) communist and non-communist countries. Europe pre and post the fall of communism (1991).

	1980-1991	1992-1996	1992-2014
(Former) Communist	5.2	11.5	7.3
Non-Communist	1.3	1.3	1.1

Source: World Health Organization (http://data.euro.who.int/hfamdb/). SDR, Homicide and assault, per 100,000 habitants. Note: means for the two periods within communist and non-communist countries are significantly different for levels of P<.01.

Studies on specific countries and subsets of countries also show a significant increase in crime. Stamatel (2009) finds that Central East European countries had lower crime rates than countries belonging to the former Soviet Union. Pfeiffer (1999, 289-290) shows a significant increase on juvenile crime in Poland from 1984 to 1996. Clark and Wildner (2000: 375) show how homicides significantly increased in East Germany among males, but not among females, after the fall of the Berlin wall; as opposed to the homicide rate in West Germany, where it remained relatively constant for males and females.

There are also multiple studies reporting a higher incidence of elite crime, many linked to corruption and the privatization of state assets, such as real state and the exploitation of natural resources (Los and Zybertowicz, 2000; Brovkin, 2003; Karstedt, 2003; and Berend, 2007).

There are multiple explanations for the increase in crime in former communist countries in Europe. The most common cover the historical legacies of communism (Pop-Elches, 2007), whether a specific nation is neighbor to a EU-member country, cultural compatibility to democracy, inherited culture of corruption (Rose et al., 1998; Harper, 1999; Brovkin, 2003), Soviet style economic distortions, the natural resources curse, the nature of pre-1989 economic reforms, and inherited institutional structures, especially bureaucracies (Kitschelt 2001).

These are some of the determinants that should be analyzed for Cuba. These countries are a solid reference to delve into Cuba's future. Nevertheless, we should be aware on the differences

between Cuba and former communist countries in Europe. For instance, Cubans already have more experience with some forms of capitalism, as some economic activities are either allowed or tolerated by the Cuban state. Up to now, Cuba does not have valuable natural resources that can be exploited by corrupt elites after a hypothetical transition to democracy, as happened in some former communist countries in Europe, most notably in Russia.

2. CUBA'S TENTATIVE DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS

Specifying the set of attributes that would constitute a situation of "democratization" in Cuba or the conditions under which Cuba could be labeled as a "democracy" is beyond the scope of this research project. For this project, it suffices to establish general conditions under which we should observe variations on levels of public order in Cuba.

By Cuba's "liberalization" or "democratization" we imply movements in either one of two dimensions: less government intervention in citizens' decisions and/or more citizen intervention in public affairs—including electing representatives.

The Cuban regime has had the capacity to gradually adapt to changing circumstances, especially after the fall of the USSR. The measure of success for the ruling coalition has been to remain in power, which they have achieved, although it has come at a significant cost to the well-being of Cubans, whose standard of living has significantly deteriorated in many respects (Rojas, 2015).

As a consequence of the Special Period,[4] minor reforms were introduced in the direction of liberalizing the economy and, only barely, politics, given the negative effects on economic and social disparities (Mesa-Lago, 2002). But the main changes up to date began with the (temporary at that time, but it was permanent after all) transfer of power from Fidel Castro to his Brother Raul on July 31, 2006. In 2008 Raul was named President of the State and Ministers Council, which signaled that power was fully transferred to him. Since then, a series of reforms have taken place, many of which have liberalized specific aspects on the Cuban economy.

A main area of reform has been the size of bureaucracy, mainly because the state was near bankrupt, or bankrupt, in 2011. It was accepted that there were between 1.3 and 1.8 million "unnecessary" state workers, representing 26 to 36% of total employed citizens (Mesa-Lago, 2015, 28-29).

Firing this many employees required opening opportunities in the non-state economy. Thus, some restrictions for small businesses owned by citizens (*cuentapropistas*) were relaxed, especially those related to tourism, like restaurants (*paladares*) and bed and breakfasts (Domínguez, 2013; Mesa-Lago, 2015). A 2013 law reduced the state monopoly on the purchase and sale of agricultural products in 3 provinces (Mesa-Lago, 2015: 26). There is also a new Foreign Investment Law (2015) that opens the door for joint ventures between the Cuban state and foreign firms.

Restrictions for Cubans to travel abroad have also relaxed—except for those identified as part of the political opposition to the regime—which, along with fewer restrictions at Cuban customs, have helped to import a greater deal of consumer goods, especially electronics, like TVs,

[4] The Special Period (*Periodo Especial*) is an extended period of economic crisis that started with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the subsequent end of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON).

cellphones, and laptops. Very importantly, it has also helped Cubans to have a greater exposure to ideas from abroad.

On December 17 2014, President Obama announced the beginning of talks to "normalize" relations between Cuba and the United States. A main change induced by this has been the lifting of the travel prohibition for many Americans to Cuba, and the relaxation of restrictions for remittances from individuals in the United States to Cuba. These measures have significantly helped the Cuban economy.[5]

Yet, not all is good news, and the liberalization process faces some significant challenges.

Liberalization induces inequality. Winners have mainly been whites, males, those living in urban areas, and those earning in CUCs—which are those working in tourism, mixed business, or receiving remittances from abroad (Domínguez, 2013: 16-18).

The death of Fidel Castro in 2016 and the inauguration of Donald Trump as president of the United States in January 2017 are events that could well affect Cuba's prospects for change.

3. CURRENT PUBLIC ORDER CONDITIONS

One of the most fascinating—yet tragic by any means—things about Cuba, is the ability of the regime to keep order, despite the widespread presence of illicit activities in daily life and the lack of obvious police presence on the streets (for an authoritarian regime).

This is not an order based upon democratic principles. Order is kept by intimidation, the perceived need to keep up socially established appearances, and a state legitimacy that has been

[5] https://goo.gl/H8FdDu.

constructed by an exceedingly effective propaganda apparatus. Repression of political dissidents is strongly enforced, yet most illicit acts in the ordinary realm are tolerated to some degree.

Assessing the degree of order in Cuba is not straightforward. Citizens in Cuba live in two dimensions simultaneously: a legal world with multiple restrictions and outdated rules, and an illegal world that adapts to a reality in which the rules do not make sense.

The legal world focuses on keeping a strict and rigid control on all aspects of life in Cuba such as jobs, salaries, businesses, sports, art, and education. The main goal in the illegal world is survival. It allows citizens to make Cuba a more livable place.

Table 2 describes the average day of an (hypothetical, yet likely typical) Cuban.

Table 2 – Average day of a hypothetical Cuban

6:30	Wakes up to the sound of the alarm of a sport watch that a relative visiting from Miami smuggled into Cuba.
6:45	Takes a shower. His home has water thanks to a neighbor´s cousin who works in government, who was bribed to send state workers to repair the water leaking from the old pipeline that takes water to his home.
7:15	Eats breakfast. The coffee was bought from his wife´s friend's relative who works at a restaurant. From every package of coffee that he receives at the restaurant, he takes half for himself and substitutes the coffee taken with roasted green beans (chícharos).
7:45	Goes to work using public transportation. Buses are scare and schedules are unpredictable. Waits for 30 minutes more than expected.
8:30	Arrives late to work. He is lucky enough to be working at one of Havana's best hotels carrying bags at the entrance. He offers his supervisor a share of the day´s tips in exchange for not being reported for being late. His supervisor is also the employees' union representative, which means that he likely works as an informant for the state.
11:00	A Canadian couple asks for his advice on visiting the areas of Regla and Casablanca. He immediately texts his cousin that awaits nearby the hotel. His cousin is an unofficial tour guide (although carries an "official" badge); he runs to the hotel and arrives in 3 minutes. He convinces the Canadians to let him guide them to Regla and Casablanca. Our subject receives 10 CUCs for the contact.

13:00	Lunch time. He is able to eat for free at the hotel restaurant because he became good friend with one of the managers after he introduced him to a friend of his that (illegally) trades auto-parts for Russian cars, the manager owns a Lada.
17:00	Exits work. He must run some errands. In two days it will be his elder son's birthday and he asked to eat a beef steak. But the sale of beef is severely restricted. Yet, his mother has a distant relative from a rural province near Havana that comes to the city once a week smuggling beef meat, which he covertly sells at a house near the train station.
19:00	Arrives home. He had to walk for more than 45 minutes because the bus never arrived. Likely it broke-down and there are no more parts to fix it.
19:15	Dinner time. Today they only have a frugal plate of rice and beans. The family has been rationing food to save enough for the meal at his son's birthday party.
20:00	Exits home to the street to mingle with neighbors. They discuss yesterday's baseball game and complain for the lack of sufficient light at the street. They are not sure on whether they should complain at the CDR, or fix it themselves. A neighbor says that she knows somebody that works at the state's electric company, who can sell them a lightbulb that fits the street lamp. They do not reach an agreement.
22:00	Goes to bed. Sleeping is difficult because some neighbors have very loud music, others have been arguing for hours, and people are coming in and out the communal house all the time. Complaining would not silence the neighbors, they are too many, the communal house is really crowded nowadays.

The Cuban government is aware of the illegal activities that take place. Most likely it decides to tolerate those that support the survival of the current system, and to not tolerate the ones that threaten public order.

As discussed in the previous chapter, it is fundamental to consider that many formally defined illicit activities in Cuba would not be illegal in a democratic regime, or even in many other authoritarian regimes.

Seen from the outside, many legal regulations seem unnecessary (such as the peculiar restrictions on selling beef meat). Ultimately, however, these rules have the goal of exercising control in all areas of life, public and private. They create a permanent presence of the state in citizens' minds.

In the following subsections, I present the few existing official data on crime, and a catalog of criminal activities in Cuba extracted from interviews and electronic news media.

Empirics

Data on public safety in Cuba is scarce and unreliable. Lack of data for Cuba clearly has a political reason. The Cuban Revolutionary state has historically been highly averse to any critique from outside the Island. Thus, the Cuban government is very selective on which data is made accessible and when. For instance, there is plenty of data in the Yearly Statistical Book of Cuba (*Anuario Estadístico de Cuba*) on health, education, sports, and even car accidents, but there is no mention of crime, or data on security.[6]

It is clearly not a question of resources. Countries with fewer resources have significantly more, and less outdated, data than Cuba; for instance, El Salvador or the Dominican Republic. Moreover, there is also the question of the accuracy of the data. Experts on Cuba have serious doubts of its validity.

There is scarce data on crimes reported to the authorities, and even less data on perceptions of security, or victimization surveys.

Homicides, as reported, seem to be rare; nevertheless, other type of crimes, such as robbery and black market activities seem to have a much greater incidence, as we witnessed in our field work in Cuba and was reported in our interviews. However, we don't really know. Cuba's Yearly Statistics reports are silent on the matter[7], and there are not many reports to be found in electronic

[6] Available at www.one.cu ***
[7] Available at http://www.one.cu/.

media either. Electronic newspapers don't have a section covering crime, as it is common in other countries.

To have a closer look at Cuba's security conditions, we gather data from two sources: first, from searches in official and independent electronic media, and second, from interviews to ordinary citizens, activists, and Cuba specialist in Mexico City, Miami, and in different cities in Cuba.

Tables 3 and 4 show the (preliminary) information from a systematic search that we conducted on 8 news sources—4 official and 4 independent—from January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2016. We find a relatively low incidence of crime reported in the media. There is a clear bias in the official media to not report on crime.

Table 3 – News counting on public security by source and affiliation (2016)

Source (Affiliation)	Homicide	Theft / Robbery	Burglary theft	Corruption	Conflict with dissidents	Drug related
Cibercuba (Indep)	0	3	8	13	7	0
Cubanet (Indep)	2	5	1	6	18	6
Diario de Cuba (Indep)	2	7	9	22	39	0
Martí Noticias (Indep)	7	14	0	25	20	0
Granma (Official)	0	3	0	11	0	0
Juventud Rebelde (Official)	0	0	0	1	5	0
Radio Habana Cuba (Official)	0	0	0	1	0	9
Telesur (Official)	0	0	0	0	1	1
TOTAL	*11*	*32*	*18*	*79*	*90*	*16*

Table 4 – News counting by source affiliation (2016)

Source (Affiliation)	Homicide	Theft / Robbery	Burglary theft	Corruption	Conflict with dissidents	Drug related
Independent	11	29	18	66	84	6
Official	0	3	0	13	6	10

Our main source of data on order, or lack of, were interviews. We have interviewed academics in Mexico City, Miami, and Havana, also activists in Miami, and ordinary citizens in different cities in Cuba: Havana, Santiago de Cuba, Santa Clara, San José de las Lajas, Matanzas, and Varadero.

Ideally, we would have conducted a probabilistic survey in Cuba to assess crime incidence and designed interviews to inquire into the mechanisms of each type of crime. Yet, there exist multiple restrictions that make a probabilistic survey in Cuba a risky and very expensive task, beyond the scope of this project. There are few successful attempts of surveys in Cuba, such as the 2016 NORC survey.[8]

There are many impediments. Firstly, there is no publicly available population frame from which to select a proper sample. Asking the Cuban government to grant us access is not a reasonable option since it would imply explicitly asking the Cuban government for permission, which we deem highly unlikely to be granted. Even if we procured the government's authorization, officials would probably want to restrict/shape/determine the questions, and would probably request that our enumerators to be accompanied by a government official, undermining the truthfulness of the responses.

We conducted 68 interviews in Cuba in 2 filed work trips between February and March of 2017. Because conditions are not ideal for conducting regular face-to-face interviews based upon a printed or an electronic questionnaire, interviews were conducted in an informal manner, without any question reading or instant answer registry. Interviewers conducted casual chats with

[8] https://goo.gl/uJppOu.

individuals found while visiting a city. For instance, chats with a taxi driver, with the hotel clerk, or with people sitting on a park bench were carried out.

The conversations were structured around specific questions and topics, in order for the interviewer to construct relatively homogeneous interviews. After the interviews, at a different location, the interviewer recorded the answers in a notebook.

Given that the sample is non-probabilistic, we will not be able to use the results to infer information about the entire population of the cities in sample or to the whole Cuban population. However, we have useful data that provides a general assessment of the security conditions in Cuba, especially if we consider the absence of systematic public information on the topic.

Public Order in Cuba

In 2016, the NORC conducted a survey in Cuba, which provides useful information on security. In the survey, 51% of Cubans considered that the situation regarding crime is very or extremely serious.

However, this number must be weighted by the type of crime to which citizens are exposed. According to information from our interviews, theft and robbery are the main crimes that Cubans suffer. Violence is usually referred to fights among neighbors or family members, and usually do not involve the use of firearms—which are scarce in Cuba—but only knifes or machetes, especially in rural areas.

Discussing illicit activities is a relative matter in the case of Cuba, not because of lack of legislation, but because of the peculiarity of the legislation. In general, if the law is absurd (relative to reality and citizens' incentives), then we will observe many violations to such law.

In the following paragraphs, we will present some of the most common illicit activities in present-day Cuba. The information comes from news reports and the interviews that we conducted.

(a) Stealing from the state. It is a common practice that state employees, illicitly, take home or sell some goods and services from work. Which goods are stolen depends upon the specific job: pens, notebooks, food, paint, and light bulbs, among others. The modus operandi usually involves the complicity of a supervisor (and likely of the supervisor of the supervisor, and so on). But sometimes it is conducted in the shadows. For instance, there exists a market for burnt-out light bulbs. People buy the used light bulb, take it to work, replace a working light bulb with the old one, and take working light bulb home.

(b) Prostitution. There is a significant presence of illegal prostitution. It seems that a significant share of prostitutes work independently, and are not under the control of a criminal organization or a pimp. Instead, they form informal associations with cab drivers, or hotel personnel.

State and social tolerance to prostitution has varied across time in Cuba. The Cuban Revolution stigmatized prostitution, but then, as economic conditions have worsened, it is justified on the grounds of necessity, yet, if necessity is not obvious, it is not socially accepted (Bobes, 2007; Guerra, 2014).

(c) Black market for food. This is probably the most widespread illicit activity on the Island. It all originates with the state's restrictions on production, sales, and consumption. As in the former communist nations in Europe (Los, 2003) in Cuba exists a shadow economy—or "second economy"—in which most goods are traded in parallel to the state-ruled economy.

It takes many different forms. Because of insufficient supply at state grocery stores, and because the state has the monopoly on the sale of most goods, citizens may recur to underground

stores that sell basic goods such as sugar or cooking oil. These goods are usually stolen by workers from state restaurants, grocery stores, and warehouses.

There are also black markets for other goods like vegetables and fruits that are either illegally cultivated and sold, or that are legally cultivated, but not fully reported to the state authorities. A portion of the harvest goes to the state and sold in the authorized stores, and the remaining is commercialized in the black market.

Cuba being an island would make everyone believe that it has plenty of seafood for consumption. But it is not the case. The state-controlled fishermen cooperatives have the quasi-monopoly on fishing, and only a handful of ordinary citizens have permission to sail in motor boats, probably because of concerns about escaping from Cuba. Nonetheless, people do fish in the early mornings at the shore or on piers, and subsequently sell the catch. This activity is usually tolerated by authorities. The supply, however, is clearly insufficient, resulting in high prices.

Owners of *paladares* buy a significant share of their supplies on the black market, mostly out of insufficient supplies and because of quality concerns regarding the goods offered by the state.

(d) Homicides. From the different sources that we investigated, there is not a high incidence of homicide in Cuba. The official homicide rate for 2012 is 4.2 per 100,000 inhabitants. This is quite good as compared to the average of the Americas, 16.3 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants, on par with the United Sates (4.7 per 100,000), and below the global average (6.2 per 100,000) (UNODC, 2014). This rate seems reasonable, and closely matches to what we recorded in Cuba as part of our filed work.

(e)Drug dealing. Cuba, like most countries in the world, is not immune to drug trafficking and consumption. But it should be noted that there is not sufficient information to fully assess the size of this issue.

Regarding trafficking, there is unconfirmed information about agreements at the highest level of the Cuban government with Colombian and Mexican drug cartels. A high profile incident was the execution by firing squad of Arnaldo Ochoa, a high ranked general, who was accused in 1989 of drug trafficking in partnership with the Medellin Cartel. After this episode, there have only been scattered minor episodes.

Of course, if it is the case that all high ranks in the Cuban government are involved in drug trafficking, then we would not observe any convictions, but this is observationally equivalent to any government official being involved in drug trafficking.

There is more evidence of medium level public officials' corruption, especially at custom offices at airports and ports. There seem to be a significant number of drugs entering through airports, according to different testimonies and news reports. It is estimated that only a small fraction of the drugs coming into Cuba are identified, mainly because the technology in Cuba is deficient. Drugs are mostly brought in from South America by Cubans that have gone abroad to visit family, or are perhaps fooled into becoming drug mules.[9]

A key question is whether the deficiency is caused by scarce resources, administrative ineptitude, or because it is convenient for someone within the government.

There are also reports of marijuana being grown in Cuba, the so called *Mariguana Criolla*. But it is unlikely to be in great quantities, because of the control that the state has on rural areas.

On the demand side of drugs, there is consumption in Cuba, both by Cubans and by tourists. Marijuana seems to be consumed by middle class Cubans. Artists and rich people in Cuba consume cocaine.

[9] See https://goo.gl/cZbcvw for a testimony of a former customs office, Ángel Martínez Coca, at Canal América Tevé in charge of a canine unit for drug detection at the José Martí Airport in Havana.

Yet, drug consumption is clearly not as widespread as in the United States, and not as common as in other Latin American countries. In the minds of Cubans, and of foreigners visiting Cuba, there is a credible threat of a strong punishment being administered. Cubans seem to have certain pride in stating that Cuba does not have a serious drug problem like many other countries in the region.

(f) Theft/Robbery. Petty theft is relatively common in Cuba. Likely, the most serious thefts involve burglary, when homes are left alone. Violence related to robbery is usually not present. Being robbed in the street on in public transportation is also infrequent.

(g) Corruption. This is a serious issue in Cuba. Indirect evidence and the mere structure of the regime, suggest that corruption is embedded at all levels of government. Nevertheless, it should be noted that in the perception of many citizens, corruption is an issue related to mid-rank and first-floor government officials. I discuss this issue in the next section.

Because of the ubiquity of the state in Cubans' lives, citizens experience corruption from public official most days of their lives. Cuban bureaucracy is notoriously inefficient and scarcity is high; these are key incentives for corrupt practices. Moreover, the autocratic nature of the current regime inhibits any resistance by citizens to corruption.

The negative impact of corruption disincentives private economic activities, which are just legally emerging in Cuba. Below is a fragment of an interview reported in the media to the owner of a private restaurant, a *paladar*, named La California:

"No creo. Mira, los inspectores cobran un por ciento de cada multa que ponen, los particulares les ofrecemos, a esos inspectores, un porcentaje mayor que el que ellos reciben. Así sobrevivimos todos porque así es el juego en el toma y daca. Puede que La California no haya querido entrar en ese juego, puede que haya aceptado un arreglo de pago en cuotas, puede que se declare en impago y prefiera una fea sanción, puede que decida pelear la multa en los tribunales. Todo puede

suceder. No, los Cuentapropistas no somos delincuentes, somos un grupo social que fabrica hechos y no sueños comunistas ni utopías libertarias; somos la parte de la sociedad civil que más se dedica a trabajar, a generar ingresos, empleos, y aporta dinero a la economía nacional y, aún así, la política del gobierno nos empuja a delinquir".[10]

(h) Money laundering. The gradual liberalization of the Cuban economy allowed for limited private investment in some areas, most related to tourism. Overall, this has been positive for the well-being of Cubans, yet, it has also incentive some negative practices, such as money laundering.

The conditions in Cuba are conducive to money laundering. It is a perfect recipe, a government that desperately needs funds (much better if these are in foreign currency) and criminals seeking to clean money from illicit activities and stay out of jail. There is evidence on the disincentives that governments have to fight criminals in these sort of settings (e.g. Romero, 2015).

There are frequent reports in the media of Cubans committing some sort of fraud in the United States, Miami especially, and then running away to Cuba, where they would invest their dirty money in a restaurant or a bed and breakfast. Many speculate that this is done with the complicity of the Cuban authorities.

4. DETERMINANTS OF ORDER

As we observed in the previous section, despite the perceived order that Cuba gives to a casual visitor, illicit activities are widespread in Cuba. It is true, however, that violence is unusual, except

[10] https://goo.gl/8ohh4j.

for repressing political dissidents—the Observatorio Cubano de Derechos Humanos records 1,809 arbitrary detentions of political dissidents by state officials in the first 4 months of 2017.[11]

Cubans feel proud for the low levels of violence in Cuba. Perhaps, order maintenance is part of the mental justification of Cubans for state control on many aspects of their lives.

Necessity

In Cuba, the moral decision of where to draw the line between the licit and the illicit is not perfectly clear. The limit seems to be determined by survival and need: if it is an activity engaged upon to ensure survival, is tolerated and justified by society

A philosophical account on Cuba's illegality may refer to Saint Augustus idea of a "just disobedience": when laws are not just, citizens can justifiably break the rules.

State tolerance

The Cuban state seems to strategically decide which illicit activities to tolerate. In general, the Cuban state seem to be tolerant of economic activities that help Cubans to survive, and that partially compensate for state inefficiencies at producing and distributing basic goods. But the Cuban state seems to be quite intolerant when political opponents—like human rights activists, or individuals demanding for further democratization—break the regime rules.

From the tolerated activities, Cubans cannot be fully certain that these activities will always be in the category of tolerated. As we stated in the previous section, illicit activities are ubiquitous in Cuba. Yet, from time to time, state officials decide to strictly enforce the law. For instance, a

[11] https://goo.gl/3S27SR.

paladar owner may buy beef meat in the black market and openly offer it in the menu; he may do this for a long time, until one day state officials appear and cancel his restaurant license or demand a high bribe in order to not close the *paladar*.

Thus, tolerance of illicit actions does not imply that citizens can break the law and it would go unnoticed. Many Cubans believe that there exists a quite effective record keeping of citizens' activities. It is common knowledge that there is a file (*un expediente*) for every citizen, which contains all misbehaviors—from political treason to buying beef meat in the black market. Such a file becomes a key instrument for potential state punishment. Most citizens anticipate this, and behave politically as the regime demands. It is not obvious whether this is true, or is just a quite effective psychological tool of the government.

One can also think of this tolerance as a sort of mafia scheme, in which citizens become accomplices of the regime, in the sense that, after executing an illicit action, individuals are not morally superior to a corrupt and authoritarian state.

Culture

There exists a deeply embedded culture of illegality in Cuba: in the current conditions citizens have come to see illegality as part of their daily lives. Bureaucratic red tape and absurd legislation make justifiable for citizens to conduct illegal actions; strictly obeying the law is not a feasible choice in many circumstances. Over time, the distinction between "good" and "bad" regulation has come be blurred. There is evidence that citizens tend to justify corruption and crime under specific circumstances, such as necessity (Bobes, 2007).

The coexistence of the legal and illegal dimensions, and the moral justification for crime, have resulted in a culture of illegality which runs very deeply in Cuba.

Economic regulation

As a result of a state running the economy for almost 60 years, and the mix of politics and the economy, the Cuban economic regulation is full of inefficient rules, some of which make political sense, but many that are only atavisms. This sort of legislation generates many incentives for illegal conduct.

The current controls on the economy induce severe distortions on income. Black markets generate much higher incomes than its legal equivalent. For instance, a prostitute, or a waitress facilitating illicit goods, may earn a much higher income than a high school teacher. Another distortion is the currency that you earn: CUCs or Cuban pesos. This is even reflected in the sort of food that you have access to.

Coercion

A key determinant of order is the state capacity to have the comparative advantage on the use of coercion within its territory. The Cuban regime is quite effective at credibly threating its citizens without having to show a significant police or military apparatus.

As compared to other authoritarian regimes, there is not a wide police or military presence in Cuba. Moreover, the physical presence of the police is not particularly intimidating, physically, they look very much like the rest of the population. Police armament, usually consists of old guns and sticks. However, it should not be forgotten that there are very few arms outside the government, which places the police in clear advantage against citizens, even if their arms are small or outdated.

Yet, police is respected by most citizens. Many citizens consider that the police is effective and reliable when called to solve a problem. There are few reports of corrupt police officials; most people interviewed would not even try to bribe a police official.

The relationship of police with political opponents is quite different. In these cases, repression seems to be the norm.

But the most effective body to maintain order is the secret police (i.e. police officials dressed as common citizens). All citizens strongly believe that the secret police is, or could be, everywhere. If you believe this, then you have incentives to behave all of the time and everywhere. In this equilibrium, it may even the case that there is no secret police, and you will still behave, because of the uncertainty and the high costs of actually facing the secret police.

When discussing the secret police, there are accounts on both extremes. An expert on Cuba argues that the state domestic intelligence apparatus is huge, around 100 thousand public officials, which would probably represent the world's biggest intelligence body with respect to its population. Other analysts are more conservative, and portray the Cuban intelligence apparatus as a sort of Wizard of Oz.

The secret police can usually become observable when repressing political dissidents at public meetings.

A similar mechanism works with citizens that become state informants. There are official informants, the members of the Revolution Defense Committees (*Comités de Defensa de la Revolución*). There is one committee for every block. They are in charge of keeping order at their block, which considers making sure that all kids go to school or monitoring that husbands do not beat their wives; but also considers informing the state of all suspicious political activities and talks (Krugar, 2007).

And there are also secret informants, just like in Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union, in which citizens were either recruited by the state for providing information of their neighbors, coworkers, or even family; or it also may be the case that they provide information to the state spontaneously for gaining something in exchange.

State Legitimacy

An interesting feature of the Cuban state is that it enjoys a certain degree of legitimacy among its citizens. Many citizens seem to sincerely support the regime, while asserting all of its problems.

It may be the combination of a powerful official narrative of the Revolution and the United States embargo (*bloqueo*), and a self-selection effect: many of those that strongly disagree with the regime had left Cuba or have been eliminated or silenced by the regime.

5. PERILS TO ORDER AND SECURITY

In this final section, we outline our forecast for Cuba's order conditions as this nation hypothetically liberalize.

It is important to specify what we should understand by a liberalized Cuba, since any forecast regarding law and order on the island is dependent upon the type of liberalization process and its outcome. In this respect, I assume a gradual liberalization process that has been taking place since the mid-2000s in the Island. The core elements of the process up to now, that I consider to elaborate this forecast has to do with gradually extended liberties (legal and de facto) in the commercial realm and on the entry and exit to the country of Cubans and foreigners.

Overall, assuming that no intervention takes place, it seems unlikely that Cuba would have a transition process in which order is not seriously affected and security conditions remain low

This is a key issue that would endogenously affect Cuba's chances of a transition to democracy and a successful process of democratic consolidation.

In the subsequent sections, we analyze the specific effects of the main variables that may or may not sustain order in a future, more liberal, Cuba.

Police Forces

How security services would transit to a (hypothetically) more democratic regime is a key question to address Cuba's future (Rothman, 2003).

In principle, it seems unfeasible that in the short-term the whole police would be substituted in case of a transition to a more democratic regime. Training takes a lot of time and it implies a lot of resources; both of which are scarce in a developing country transiting to democracy.

If this is the case, then, it implies that we should think on the likely effects of having a high proportion of the current police forces Cuban police is a well-trained body, but mainly for repression and other activities that would likely not be allowed in a more democratic regime. It implies a rough relationship with citizens and problems to perform well.

Retraining, then, should take place. There are some successful and some unsuccessful experiences in Central America, and Central and Eastern Europe. The current positive perception on the police to solve (non-political) crimes should help to integrate them into a more democratic environment. Police efficacy would likely be a valuable asset, as it happened in former communist countries in Europe (Cohen, 1995).

A bigger problem would be the intelligence police. This organization is deeply feared by the population and would likely represent the autocratic regime in the minds of many citizens. Likely, it would be dismantled as a political sign of a hypothetical more democratic regime.

If the secret police is eliminated, a key issue is where all of its members would go. Even though there is no trustable data on the actual size of the, formal and informal, Cuban intelligence apparatus, all the existing evidence and accounts from former government officials in exile point to a huge number, perhaps around 100 thousand people (around 900 agents for every 100 thousand habitants). It is a huge number.

Former intelligence agents may get into illicit activities thanks to the information they have, especially those in the high ranks. Elite officials have wide chunks of information and know what to do with it. Informants know the information at the microlevel, and have knowledge on the workings of specific illicit markets and organizations. The information and know-how of these bodies is of enormous value for criminal activities. This is what actually happen in Russia, and it detonated a significant increase in criminal activities.

A third group that participates on security issues are the unofficial informants. This is also a group that would not be easy to accommodate in a more democratic Cuba, because many of their tasks are related to repressing political dissidents.

Among these, the Revolution Defense Committees may prove useful if it is feasible to transform them into more democratic organizations. They constitute social capital, but currently used for a blend of positive and negative issues.

Culture of Illegality

Cubans have embedded illegality in their mindsets and have learned to justify it on the basis of necessity. A key question here is how difficult it would be to reprogram how they think about what is legal and illegal, and the subset of specific circumstances under which it is justifiable to break the law.

Changing this culture has proven to be difficult, as in the case of post-communist nations in Eastern Europe (CITE). It has been a significant issue for attracting foreign investment (Brovkin, 2003; Harper, 1999).

It is likely that scarcity would be significantly reduced as Cuba liberalizes, but it is unlikely that economic conditions magically improve as the regime liberalizes. These 2 variables are key to understand how the conditions of "necessity" change and, thus, whether necessity would still be a reasonable justification.

Economic Conditions

The economy is a key variable for the legitimacy of a hypothetical new regime. There are multiple theories and empirical evidence showing that bad economic conditions lead to the instability of the political regime (e.g. Kennedy, 2010; Barron et al., 2013).

The experience from Central and Eastern Europe is not especially encouraging. After the fall of the communism, the new economic structure in many countries considered oligopolies—many of which were controlled by former bureaucrats from the previous regime. There is a significant danger of capture of the state by former communist bureaucrats (Los, 2003), especially those in security areas.

In the Soviet Union, there are reports pointing to a well-planned scheme to keep in the hands of public officials the funds, properties and resources of the Communist Party going back to 1984, well before Perestroika (Block, 2003).

For Cuba, there is evidence that the military in Cuba has (unfairly) appropriated many business in tourism—especially hotels—that the Cuban regime offers since 2014 at the yearly International Havana Fair, in which many business opportunities are offered to potential investors—including the military.[12] A hypothetical new state may be created as a "criminal state" (Los, 2003, 155; Handelman, 1994, 81).

Social Context for the Youth

The social context would significantly affect the incentives that Cubans, especially the youth, would have to engage in criminal activities. In this respect, many of the core predictors of crime are not in good shape.

The education system, which has been one of main sources of pride for the Cuban regime, is crumbling. At some point in time, education became an end—which had a dual goal, benefiting the population, but also working as a propaganda device—instead of a mean for improving the success chances.

As a result, Cuba has a highly-educated population, but there are no jobs for most of them that matches their investment in education. As the Cuban economy opens, income inequalities in the population arise, and the determining variable for a higher income is whether you are able to get a

[12] http://ow.ly/ZHxy3060P1U.

job in a sector related to tourism, and not the expertise that somebody acquired in formal education. This is a significant source of frustration for many Cubans.

Although, for some, Cuba's education system has contributed to social order (e.g. Weisman and Weisman, 2010).

If the Cuban economy successfully liberalizes, some qualified individuals would be able to find jobs that match their skills and investment in education. But many would not find it easy to find a position matching their skills because the current supply of students at the college level is not based on the demand, but on the goal of providing education to the higher number of Cubans. Moreover, while Cuban education excels in areas such as medicine, it severely lags in others, especially those in the social sciences.

The youth population in Cuba behaves as most youths elsewhere: it is an age in which they are exposed to many dangers, especially if better opportunities are not available for them. Once the Cuban regime is incapable or unwilling to exert control in many aspects on its youth population, as it does today, we would likely observe an increase in heavy alcohol drinking, drugs consumption, and criminality.

Criminal Networks

Cuba is full of criminal networks. Many are relatively harmless nowadays. They trade vegetables, seafood, or clothes. Some of these criminal organizations would likely disappear when the supply of this goods is determined by market mechanisms and legal restrictions are relaxed.

Yet, some criminal networks may utilize their existing structures for trading other goods, related to prostitution, drugs, or weapons. It does not seem unlikely that drug trafficking organizations from other countries, such as Colombia, Venezuela, Honduras, or Mexico would

seek local partners in Cuba to us this country as a strategic spot for smuggling drugs into the United States. There are already criminal networks that smuggle Cubans into the United States (Brown, 2002).

A related, although more extreme version, circumstance are the cases of Honduras and El Salvador, in which gang members were massively deported from the United States. These individuals imported to Honduras and El Salvador the know-how on multiple criminal activities and their (illicit) business connections in the United States for drug-trafficking.

6. CONCLUSIONS

There is ample evidence on the, paradoxically, noxious effects that democratization processes inflict of order and security. The multiplication of demands from societal groups along with the inability of state institutions to satisfy such demands in the short-term, incentives the use of illicit means. Power vacuums are filled by non-state organizations for their own illicit purposes.

The current process of, mainly economic, liberalization that Cuba undergoes nowadays confronts multiple challenges to minimize negative effects on order.

Illegal activities are widespread in nowadays Cuba. Criminal violence, however, is at low levels, especially for Latin American standards. Many illegal activities are justified on the basis of necessity or of absurd legislation; yet, this line is blurred.

Overall, the Cuban state has managed to maintain order within its territory using a blend of coercion, psychological threats, and citizens' support. Note, however, that order related to political dissidents considers an abusive use of coercion.

Assuming an incremental process of liberalization in Cuba, the existing evidence points to a significant decrease in order conditions: an increase in crime, violence, and corruption.

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