

# *After Covid-19, a possible new role for the Cuban-American community*

---



After Covid-19, a possible new role for the Cuban-American community

By Charles McKelvey

April 6, 2020

As a result of the Covid-19 plague, a global ideological paradigm shift is possible, as occurred following the Great Depression of the 1930, which provoked a turn to social democracy; as well as following the social conflicts of the late 1960s and the stagflation of the 1970s, which led to neoliberalism; and following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, which caused a turn to unilateral aggressive imperialism. The plague could provoke a return to social democracy, because it has exposed the inherent limitations of neoliberalism.

The possible return to social democracy could result in space for socialism in public debate, including a reevaluation of socialist Cuba, which has responded to the pandemic with a scientifically informed, well-organized, and timely plan of battle, with which the people are complying with determination and

patriotism. While wealthy nations have been unprepared to respond to the pandemic, Cuba has the necessary human resources, medical supplies, testing kits, medicine, and hospital beds to respond to the crisis, most of which was previously established as a result of its comprehensive system of health, and some of which was created following the first news of the spreading of the disease.

The effective response of Cuba to the pandemic could stimulate journalists and academics of the North to investigate. Most will arrive with ideological blinders. But if they ask relevant questions, and if they place the desire for truth over other desires and interests, they will experience a transformation in their understanding. If so, they would find that the Cuban effective response was rooted in structural transformations that have been carried out in Cuba since the triumph of the Revolution on January 1, 1959. Said transformations include the creation of structures of direct democracy, people's democracy, mass organization, and people's power, which ensure that the government is in the hands of the delegates and deputies of the people; such that the state attends to the needs of the people, by directing resources to education, health, science, and culture. A more appreciative and informed understanding of Cuba could be central to a global ideological paradigm shift.

A reevaluation of Cuba would likely affect the political and ideological dynamics of the Cuban-American community. To date, the Cuban-American community has been characterized by two ideologies with respect to Cuba, namely, counterrevolution and peaceful coexistence. Each has been formed in a particular social and ideological context.

The Cuban-American counterrevolutionary ideology was forged by the Cuban national industrial bourgeoisie in exile in Miami the early 1960s. The Cuban owners of big industrial companies in Cuba had been invited by the revolutionary leadership to ally with the revolution, contributing to a project of autonomous economic development, freed from the control of the United States. Such an alliance was in the interests of the Revolution, inasmuch as the revolutionary government did not have access to the technical and human resources necessary for the management of large industrial plants. Accordingly, Fidel spoke to businesspersons, calling them to patriotism. However, the Cuban industrial elite did not have sufficient economic and ideological independence to convert itself from a figurehead bourgeoisie, totally subordinate to the interests of U.S. capital, to a national bourgeoisie allied with a national project of autonomous economic development.

U.S. capital itself was ideologically unprepared for the historic moment. Not discerning that global neocolonial structures had reached their limitations, the U.S. power elite rejected Fidel's invitation for cooperation and the establishment of a new relation based on respect for Cuban sovereignty. It adopted a policy of regime change, using the strategies of economic sanctions and terrorism.

The Cuban industrialists were in an impossible situation, called by their nation to patriotism, and by their sponsors to a political project in their economic interests. An alliance with the Revolution would have required exceptional leadership from a progressive wing of the national bourgeoisie, calling for support of the revolutionary project, debunking the ideological myths, and defining the parameters of an economic role that was compatible both with its class interests and the requirements of the revolution. Fidel waited for this possibility to emerge before acting to nationalize Cuban companies, but it did not materialize. In 1960 and 1961, Cuban industrialists abandoned their factories and their country, taking what seemed the more practical road of temporary exile and the U.S.-directed counterrevolution.

In Miami, the Cuban national industrial bourgeoisie joined other "exiles" of the privileged sectors of Cuba to forge the Cuban-American bourgeoisie. Its economic ascent in the United States was supported by the U.S. government, as the two were allies in the project of regime change in Cuba. The Cuban-American bourgeoisie has played a central role in presenting a false narrative toward the Cuban Revolution before the people of the United States, distorting reality in order to serve its economic and political interests.

When the U.S. government and the Cuban-American "exiles" failed to bring down the Cuban revolution, political space was established for a second ideological tendency in the Cuban-American community, that

of “peaceful coexistence.” In addition to the factor of the consolidation of the Revolution, this current was made possible by the turn of the U.S. government in the 1970s toward peaceful co-existence with the Soviet Union, the socialist bloc, and Cuba. Peaceful coexistence was pushed especially by Cuban-American businesspersons with interest in establishing commercial relations with Cuba, and it resulted in a formal dialogue between representatives of the émigré community and the Cuban government in Havana in 1978. Although eclipsed by the national turn to the Right in the United States in 1980, it remains an important tendency in the Cuban-American community, supported by the characteristics of the Cuban emigration since the 1990s.

We are now, however, in a different historical movement, defined by a sustained structural crisis of the world-system. This sustained crisis is rooted in the U.S. turn in the post-World War II era to a permanent war economy and the establishment of military bases throughout the world. Its plan was continuation of imperialist policies that sought to control the natural resources, labor, and markets of the world, with the intention of conserving U.S. hegemony in a world-system in transition from colonialism to neocolonialism.

The U.S. approach, however, was not rooted in a scientifically informed understanding of the United States and the world. Independent of its desires and interests, the United States could no longer maintain its hegemony, and the neocolonial world-system itself was no longer sustainable. This reality led to the stagflation and economic crisis of the 1970s. The global elite responded with the imposition of neoliberal economic policies, which deepened and extended the global crisis. Twenty years later, in the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks, with a stunning myopia, the United States has launched wars of aggression in the Middle East, casting aside the democratic façade that had been central to the neocolonial world-system and to the United States in its moment of hegemonic maturity.

The coronavirus plague dramatically demonstrates that the neocolonial world-system is not organized to respond to the needs of the peoples and to the protection of humanity. At the same time, the indications to date are that the socialist and progressive governments are demonstrating that they are more prepared to respond to the pandemic. For these reasons, the plague could provoke a global reevaluation of socialism and Cuba.

In the Cuban-American community, the plague could give rise to the emergence of a third perspective in the community, beyond counterrevolution and peaceful coexistence. A Left-wing current in the Cuban-American community has existed since the 1960s and 1970s. It has had a degree of participation in the current of peaceful coexistence, without having sufficient organizational strength and ideological coherence to present itself to the community as a third option. It could have more possibilities in the context of a global paradigmatic shift in the aftermath of the plague.

Cuban-American youth are Cuban as well as “American,” and accordingly, many may possess a desire to understand the land of their parents and grandparents, which could drive them to overcome the ideological barriers to learning about Cuba and to address with a desire to know the relevant questions about the Cuban Revolution.

Cuban-Americans also are part of the social fabric of the United States, entitled to speak as “Americans”, yet uniquely positioned to speak with knowledge about the Cuban Revolution and its lessons for the United States. These lessons above all point to the abolition of imperialism as the basis of U.S. foreign policy and to the need the development of structures for the protection of the social and economic rights of the people and of popular participation and well as the need to more effectively regulate the media.



**Radio Habana Cuba**