Notes

Preface

1. Specifically, he said that “Cuba is a small country, but it has a big country’s foreign policy. It has tried to carry out such a policy since the beginning of the revolution, but only in the second half of the 1970s did it have conditions . . . to become a visible and important actor actually shaping the course of events.” See Jorge Domínguez, “Cuban Foreign Policy,” Foreign Affairs 57 (Fall 1978), 83.

2. Nye’s concept of soft power is explained and discussed more fully in chapter 1 of this book.

1 Introduction: Cuba as a World Medical Power


2. The Special Period refers to the period after the collapse of the Soviet bloc during which Cuba endured a massive economic crisis that, while for the most part ultimately resolved, required the government to deprioritize most nonrelated domestic and foreign policy concerns. The severity of the situation is illustrated by the following per capita GDP data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>GDP Per Capita Index (1989 = 100.0)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>96.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>86.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>77.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>66.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>66.4</td>
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<td>1995</td>
<td>67.9</td>
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<td>1996</td>
<td>72.8</td>
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<td>1997</td>
<td>74.3</td>
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<td>1998</td>
<td>75.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>79.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>85.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Havana sometimes makes special agreements operating outside the CHDP framework with wealthier countries (e.g., Mideast oil powers) whereby the host nation pays much more generous stipends, with a certain percentage thereof going to brigadistas while the remainder reverts to the Cuban Health Ministry.


7. Census data indicate that blacks constitute 11 percent of Cuba’s population, a figure comparable to that of the United States. But when the 51 percent of the islanders who are classified as mulattos are added to the equation, a heavily African-oriented demographic portrait emerges.

8. Another indication of the Fidelistas’ Cubans’ growing African orientation was the legendary Che Guevara’s guerrilla adventure there. In April 1965, along with approximately 200 Cuban volunteers, he arrived in Africa to join insurgents who were trying to drive Moise Tsombe from power in the Congo (now known as Zaire). Having participated in the fighting for several months, Che’s force withdrew in late 1965 at the request of their Congolese allies. Although ostensibly Guevara was operating on his own as a private citizen since he had given up his Cuban citizenship as well as all of his posts in Castro’s government, his sojourn there strongly suggests that Africa’s status was rising on Havana’s international agenda.


10. The other two were Barbados and Trinidad/Tobago. Unlike the rest of the hemisphere, Canada and Mexico had never succumbed to U.S. pressure to sever their diplomatic and economic relations with revolutionary Cuba.

11. An excellent survey of these developments can be found in John Walton Cotman, *The Gorrión Tree: Cuba and the Grenada Revolution* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993). See especially Chapter 6 on “Cuban Civilian Assistance Programs” where he notes on page 116 that Havana’s medical aid contingent peaked in 1983 when there were a total of 3,044 Cuban health care workers on the island (1,675 of whom were doctors).

12. These figures come from H. Michael Erisman, “Cuban Development Aid: South/South Diversification and Counterdependency Politics,” in


14. The total 1992–2000 declines for all the countries listed in figure 1.2 are as follows: from $73.055 to $53.737 billion in constant 2000 dollars and from 0.33 to 0.22 as a percentage of GNP. See “Foreign Aid Spending Falls,” *Worldwatch Institute* (July 7, 2006), available on the Internet at <www.worldwatch.org/node/4316>.

15. In-depth analyses of this restructuring process can be found in Erisman and Kirk, op. cit. and in H. Michael Erisman and John M. Kirk (eds.), *Redefining Cuban Foreign Policy: The Impact of the “Special Period”* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2006).


17. “Cuba and Global Health,” with the original source being cited as *Registros estadísticos de la Unidad Central de Cooperación Médica*.

18. Subsequently Bolivia, Nicaragua, Dominica, and Honduras would become parties to the ALBA agreement.

19. William Demas, *Consolidating Our Independence: The Major Challenge for the West Indies* (Distinguished Lecture Series, Institute of International Relations, University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, 1986), 12.


21. Historical information about the international brigades can be found in Verle Johnson, *Legions of Babel: The International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1968); and R. Dan Richardson, *Comintern Army: The International Brigades and the Spanish Civil War* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1982). One of the most famous fictionalized treatments of the subject is Ernest Hemingway’s novel *A Farewell to Arms*. Note that the island’s close cultural/historical links with both Spain and Hemingway would probably serve to make most progressive Cubans (such as Fidel Castro) highly familiar with and sympathetic to the internationalist ethos symbolized by the Spanish brigades.

23. See the Cuban Constitution at <www.cubaverdad.net/cuban_constitution_english.htm>.

24. Feinsilver, op. cit. A very useful unpublished study is the April 2005 Dalhousie University undergraduate honors thesis submitted by Sarah Stewart entitled “Cuban Medical Internationalism: The Ascension of a World Medical Power,” which is based in part on field research undertaken while studying for a semester at the University of Havana.

25. For more information about MEDICC, see its Internet webpage at <www.medicc.org/index.php>.

2 The Cuban Health Care System


3. Rodríguez, op. cit. A recent graduate student has also condemned the health care system as one where “there is no right to privacy in the physician-patient relationship in Cuba, no patients’ right of informed consent, no right to refuse treatment, and no right to protest or sue for malpractice […] Cuban family doctors are expected to attend to the ‘health of the revolution’ by monitoring their neighborhoods for any sign of political dissent, and working closely with CDR officials to correct these beliefs or behaviors.” See Katherine Hirschfeld, “Re-examining the Cuban Health Care System: Towards a Qualitative Critique,” Cuban Affairs, Vol. 2, No. 3 (July 2007). Her article, however, is rather heavy in ideological commentary, and light in analysis of the medical system.

4. Before the Revolution, Cuba had different forms of health coverage. First, there was a form of social security dating back to 1902, which covered workmen’s compensation and maternity care. The government also covered members of the military and their families with separate health care. Additionally, there was a system of Mutualist Health Associations that nearly one half of the population used. It was a form of prepaid medical coverage where a member would pay 2 to 5 pesos per month and receive medical services. The government also partially contributed a subsidy for those who could not afford the cost. See Steven G. Ullmann, “The Future of Health Care in a Post-Castro Cuba,” Center for Cuban and Cuban American Studies (Miami: University of Miami Press, 2005), 5.

11. Ibid., 17.
13. MacDonald illustrates well this context: “Long before the revolutionary administration had published details of exactly how it was to remedy existing social injustices, large numbers of wealthy people saw the writing on the wall and left. Among them were all but five senior faculty members (out of 140) at the Havana Medical School. Also included in the exodus were at least two-thirds of the ordinary doctors practicing in Havana and Santiago.” See MacDonald, op. cit., 47.
17. MacDonald, op. cit., 103.
18. Ibid., 103.
19. Ibid., 56.
20. Ibid., 8.
23. MacDonald, op. cit., 141.
24. Ibid., 35.
25. Ibid., 45.
26. Ibid., 147.
27. “At a Glance: Cuba, Statistics.” UNICEF.
31. MacDonald, op. cit., 141.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.


36. MacDonald, op. cit., 16.

37. Whiteford and Branch op. cit., 20.

38. MacDonald, op. cit., 156.

39. Ibid., 180.

40. Ibid., 149.

41. Ibid., 176.

42. Whiteford and Branch, op. cit., 23–24.

43. MacDonald, op. cit., 177.

44. Ibid., 20.

45. Ibid., 145, 179, 189.


49. Presno and Soberat, op. cit.

50. MacDonald, op. cit., 178.


53. Fawthrop, op. cit.

54. MacDonald, op. cit., 112.

55. Ibid., 17.

56. Ibid., 56.

57. Harris, op. cit.


64. See Ibid., 35–36 for an excellent analysis of the significance of this policy.


67. A personal note might be illustrative here. On May 3, 2007, Dr. Kirk’s daughter was treated at the Cira García after she had eaten food that included peanuts. She had a severe allergy and was rushed to the hospital. Within a minute of arriving at the hospital she received an injection of adrenalin, followed by two others (benedraline and dextrose), and hydrocortisone. She also received a prescription for prednisone. The costs were: $0.25, 0.70, $0.50, and $0.95 for the medication injected; $10, $5, and $5 for each of the injections; a $30 fee for the medical consultation; and $1.00 for the prednisone—for a grand total of $55.05.

68. “Nearly 10,000 Venezuelan Patients Treated in Cuba,” Agencia de Información Nacional (July 12, 2007), accessed via the listserve at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.

69. The dilemma for Cubans is well portrayed in a 1994 article:

“Of course it is a positive gesture,” a Cuban friend told me. “But why does this hospital [for the Chernobyl children] work and the hospitals of Cubans don’t? At a time when Cubans cannot find aspirins in the pharmacy, it’s difficult to justify.”

Others, who support the project, sidestep the intense deterioration of Cuba’s economy. “Those of us who understand the importance of this revolution, understand that international solidarity is one of its fundamental values,” one woman told me. “If we are capable of providing for somebody in need, it’s our duty. Right now, we do not have very much food in Cuba, but that doesn’t mean that we can ignore the children that have been the victims of such a tragedy as Chernobyl.”


71. Data provided by Dr. Juan Carrizo, rector of ELAM, and provided in “Latin American Medical School,” available on the Internet at <www.saludthefilm.net/ns/elam.html>.
72. See “Speech given by Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz, President of the Republic of Cuba, at the First Graduation of Students from the Latin American School of Medicine, Karl Marx Theatre, August 20, 2005,” available on the Internet at <www.cuba.cu/gobierno/discursos/2005/ing/f200805i.html>.

73. In a variation of the approach employed at ELAM, there is an even more innovative strategy in medical education now being applied in Cuba:

“This scaling up [of medical training] began in earnest in Cuba during the 2006–2007 academic year: 12,000 students from other nations—primarily African and Latin American—began medical studies in Cuba under a new program that replicates the ‘university without walls’ model first piloted with Cuban medical students, then carried to Venezuela. (Some 13,000 Venezuelan students are enrolled in the program there, sponsored by the Cubans and six Venezuelan universities). According to this model, students are based at campuses in the Cuban countryside for their class work, and professors mentor them in clinical studies involving local clinics and hospitals.”


74. “Speech delivered by Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz, President of the Republic of Cuba, at the Foundation Ceremony of the ‘Henry Reeve’ International Contingent of Doctors Specialized in Disaster Situations and Serious Epidemics, and the National Graduation of Students of Medical Sciences, in the Ciudad Deportiva, on September 19, 2005.”

75. Ibid.

3 Cuba’s Cold War Medical Aid Programs

1. Among the previous works by the two authors on the broad scope of Cuba’s foreign relations are: H. Michael Erisman, Cuba’s International Relations: The Anatomy of a Nationalistic Foreign Policy (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985); Erisman and Kirk (eds.), Cuban Foreign Policy Confronts..., op. cit.; H. Michael Erisman, Cuba’s Foreign Relations in a Post-Soviet World (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000; Erisman and Kirk (eds.), Redefining Cuban Foreign Policy..., op. cit. This overview section draws heavily on material in the two Erisman books.

2. For an excellent examination of the impact of the Missile Crisis on Cuban/Soviet relations in particular and Cuban foreign policy in general, see James G. Blight and Philip Brenner, Sad and Luminous Days: Cuba’s Struggle with the Superpowers after the Missile Crisis (Lanham, MD: Roman and Littlefield Publishers, 2002).

3. For an excellent and highly detailed examination of this episode, see Piero Gleijeses, “Cuba’s First Venture in Africa: Algeria, 1961–1965,”
4. Jorge Domínguez, “Cuba’s Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Affairs* 57 (Fall 1978), 83.


11. The extremely close Cuban/Soviet cooperation in fighting the Somali invasion did not extend to the Eritrean situation. With the Somalis defeated, Haile Mariam’s government turned its full attention to the insurgents in Eritrea with whom it refused to negotiate or compromise. Moscow pressured Havana to use its troops already in the country to help put down the rebellion. The Cubans, however, refused, partly because they did not want to offend pro-Cuban Third World governments that were friendly toward the Eritrean cause and also because involvement would have seriously tarnished their anti-imperialist credentials since they had previously characterized the Eritrean struggle as a legitimate war of national liberation.


14. Other moderate-conservative leaders who were elected in the late 1970s or early 1980s were Milton Cato in St. Vincent (December 1979), Kennedy Simmonds in St. Kitts-Nevis (February 1980), Vere Bird in Antigua (April 1980), Eugenia Charles in Dominica (July 1980), George Chambers in Trinidad/Tobago (November 1981), John Compton in St. Lucia (May 1982), and Lynden Pindling in The Bahamas (June 1982).

15. Cotman, op. cit., 118. Cotman’s book provides the most comprehensive and data-rich overview available, at least in English, of Cuba’s
civilian aid programs—medical and otherwise—to the New Jewel Revolution.


17. Varying degrees of external support for the Sandinistas also came from such sources as Mexico, France, the Socialist International (an association of progressive Western European political parties that included England’s Laborites and West Germany’s Social Democrats), the Nonaligned Movement, and the UN General Assembly. Among the analyses emphasizing the importance of such diversified external solidarity were Richard E. Feinberg, “Central America: No Easy Answers,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 59, No. 5 (Summer 1981), 1121–1146; and Roger Burbach, “Central America: The End of U.S. Hegemony?” *Monthly Review*, Vol. 33, No. 8 (January 1982), 1–18.


19. Feinsilver, op. cit., 162.

20. Ibid., 162–163.

21. For an analysis of Cuba’s Cold War Middle Eastern policies in general and its relations with South Yemen in particular, see Damión J. Fernández, *Cuba’s Foreign Policy in the Middle East* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988).

22. See Feinsilver, op. cit., 163–164.

23. Ibid., 169–171.


27. Roca, op. cit., 171.

28. These figures come from Eckstein, op. cit.

29. Ibid.


32. This calculation is based on data found on the Internet at <www.fbc.keio.ac.jp/~endoh/downloade.htm>. The trade volume rebounded to earlier 1960 levels by 1970.


35. Analysts of the U.S. presidency often make a distinction between these two types of power, emphasizing that the popular perception often inaccurately sees the president as possessing the power to command (i.e., to issue orders and directives that will be followed), while in reality the office is generally limited to persuasive power and hence presidents’ legacies are ultimately dependent upon their ability (or lack thereof) to wield it effectively.

36. Its tenure did not, however, proceed as smoothly as hoped, the main problem being that Havana’s Moscow connection caused it to become enmeshed in the controversy surrounding the USSR’s war in Afghanistan, a situation that Cuba itself complicated by voting against a January 1980 UN resolution (supported by the vast majority of developing nations) condemning the Kremlin’s intervention. The Third World backlash that this incident generated cost Cuba the seat on the UN Security Council that it had long coveted. Even before the Afghan crisis erupted, Havana had become involved in a hotly contested battle with Colombia for the Council’s vacant Latin American slot. Washington strongly backed Bogotá as part of its campaign to undermine Cuba’s international prestige. Although Havana led on most of the early ballots (usually by a substantial margin), neither party was able to muster the necessary two-thirds majority. The Afghan crisis, however, radically altered the political equation and it soon became obvious that enough anti-Cuban sentiment had developed to render a Cuban victory impossible. Consequently Havana withdrew from the race (with Mexico emerging as the ultimate compromise selection).

37. The G-77 was formed in 1963, its primary purposes being to provide a forum for developing countries to establish common positions on matters concerning international economic relations and to represent their interests in North-South developmental negotiations. Originally composed of 77 countries, its membership had almost doubled to 133 by the early 2000s.

38. More information and analyses regarding Cuba’s involvement in such IGOs can be found in Steven Reed, “Participation in Multinational Organizations and Programs in the Hemisphere,” in Blasier and Mesa-Lago, op. cit., 297–312.

this article originally appeared in *Foreign Affairs en Español*, Vol. 6 (October–December 2006), 81–94.


41. Roca, op. cit., 166.

4 Contemporary Cuban Medical Aid Programs: The General Third World Arena


5. Two very useful overviews of Cuba’s biotechnological development can be found in Dr. Philip Shapira, “Cuban Biotechnology Development: Rethinking Traditional Frameworks,” available on the Internet at <www.cherry.gatech.edu/TRP/proceedings/2001/01Burton.doc> and “Cuba Profile: Biological Overview,” available on the Internet at <http://www.nti.org/e_research/profiles/Cuba/Biological/index_3482.html>.

6. The term “intermestic” is used by political scientists to characterize issues, processes, and phenomena that involve a merger of *international* and *domestic* considerations. They are, in other words, simultaneously international and domestic in nature.

7. These items were culled from a much longer list appearing in Max Azicri, *Cuba Today and Tomorrow: Reinventing Socialism* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 138–139. See chapters 6 and 7 for a detailed discussion and analysis of economic reforms instituted during the Special Period.


12. In February 2007, the governments of Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica and Saint Vincent, and the Grenadines all signed a memorandum of understanding with Venezuela indicating an interest in becoming full-fledged members of the ALBA agreement. Reported by Sinay Céspedes Moreno, “Caribbean Nations Join ALBA Initiative,” GRANMA (February 20, 2007), available on the Internet at <groups.yahoo.com/group/CubaNews/message/62127>. As of early 2008, only Dominica had actually done so.


14. Yugoslavia also served two leadership terms, but it is no longer an active NAM participant because its membership was suspended in 1992 due to the civil war there that led to the dissolution of the Yugoslavian Federation. Egypt will become the second current member to have done so in 2009. A detailed analysis of Havana’s leadership prospects can be found in H. Michael Erisman, “Cuba’s NAM Leadership: Promoting South/South Cooperation as a Challenge to the Washington Consensus,” paper presented at the International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association (September 5–8, 2007) in Montreal, Canada.

15. See Cuban Foreign Ministry, A Cuban Vision of the Movement of Non-aligned Nations (Havana, 2003), available online at <groups.yahoo.com/group/CubaNews/message/15096>.

16. See Agencia de Información Nacional—Habana, “Cuba Set to Offer Proposals at Upcoming Non-aligned Nations Summit” (June 12, 2006). See also Orlando Oramas León, “Cuba to Propose Concrete Action at Non-aligned Summit,” GRANMA (September 9, 2006), available on the Internet at <groups.yahoo.com/group/CubaNews/message/54684>.

17. Moreno’s quote and additional information can be found in Patricia Grogg, “Cuba: All Set for Non-aligned Summit—with or without Fidel,” Inter Press Service (August 15, 2006).

18. “Summary of the Press Conference Given by Abelardo Moreno, Cuban Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chairman of the Meeting of Senior Officials and the Organizing Committee Spokesperson.”


20. The foregoing information in this paragraph comes from Margaret Blunden, transcript of lecture given at the London Metropolitan University (January 9, 2008), available on the Internet at <http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/research-units/cuba/past-events/pietroni.cfm>.

21. The source for table 4.7 also reported that currently more than 12,000 youths from 83 countries were studying medicine in Cuba. Out of these, 1,500 were from South America, 3,244 from Central America, 489 from Mexico and North America, including 65 from the United States and two from Puerto Rico. Some 1,039 students came from Caribbean nations, 777 from sub-Saharan Africa, 42 from Northern Africa and the Middle East, 61 from Asia, and 2 from Europe.


25. The quote and case rate information come from Gorry, op. cit.


5 Contemporary Cuban Medical Aid Programs: Latin America and the Caribbean


2. A useful analysis can be found in Luis Suárez Salazar, “Cuba’s International Relations with Latin America and the Caribbean: Toward a New Stage?” in Erisman and Kirk (eds.), Cuban Foreign Policy Confronts a New International Order, op. cit., 107–118.

3. Ibid., 109.


11. Cuba’s medical brigades vary in size. Typically, they are made up of 3 to 6 medical personnel—2 doctors and 1 nurse to 4 doctors and 2 nurses


15. Ibid. See also Emily Beam, “Medical Diplomacy,” Michigan Daily (September 9, 2005), available on the Internet at <www.michigandaily.com/home/index.cfm?event=displayArticlePrinterFriendly&uSt>.


23. Roque, op. cit.

24. Ibid.


27. Upon graduation, Cuban doctors must pledge themselves to the revolution. As one section of the pledge goes, “We pledge: to strive always to be worthy representatives of Cuban health professionals, devoting ourselves with true love to our profession, with a profound respect for human life, feeling the pain of others as our own, seeing in each patient and their family our own loved ones, and working tirelessly towards excellence in health services.” Clearly the work of the Cuban doctors after both Hurricanes Mitch and George demonstrates their commitment to this pledge and to others. See Conner Gorry, “Innovative Project Brings Permanent Medical Services to Honduran Mosquitis,” *Medicc Review* (February 1, 2007), available on the Internet at <www.medicc.org/publications/cuba_health_reports/006.php>.
29. Koppel, op. cit.
31. The Cuban government website that provides data on the PIS indicates the extent of the medical cooperation of Cuba to date in all countries covered by the program since 1998: 112,439,930 consultations had taken place; 913,863 births had been assisted; 2,407,647 surgical operations had taken place; 9,577,736 vaccinations had been administered; and 1,855,023 lives had been saved. See “Resultados generales del programa integral de salud,” at <www.cubacoop.com/CubaCoop/Cooperacion_ProgramaIntegralSalud.html>.
33. All data from “Cuban Doctors Make an Impact on Honduras Health Levels,” Agencia de Información Nacional (September 9, 2007); AFP Bulletin, “Histórica visita de Zelaya a Cuba” (October 9, 2007); and Elson Concepción Pérez, “Honduras Thanks Cuba for Its Example of Dignity, Independence and Solidarity,” Granma (October 11, 2007). All sources accessed via the listserve at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.
34. Elson Concepción Pérez, “Honduras Thanks Cuba . . . .” A similar sentiment was expressed by Guatemalan president Alvaro Colom as he attended the inauguration of the third ophthalmological hospital in his country: “This hospital is part of the sacrifices made by the Cuban people. This act of solidarity is worth much more, however, because Cuba does not have the economic resources that other countries do. But it does have human resources, and a huge human heart—and that is why we should be exceptionally grateful.” Quoted in the Cuban diplomatic bulletin, “Cuba entrega a Guatemala tercer hospital oftalmológico” (April 21, 2008), found at http://www.cubacoop.com/cubacoop/2008/Cuba.html.
35. “Cuban Doctors Help Thousands of Guatemalans to Recover Sight,” Agencia de Información Nacional (August 7, 2007), accessed via the listserve at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.
37. Quoted in “Cuba Supports Venezuelan Sovereignty Decision,” Granma (June 6, 2007), accessed via the listserve at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.
38. Cited in Kovac, op. cit.

41. “Médicos cubanos salvaron las vidas de cuatro mil 300 bolivianos,” *WDS Report* (February 5, 2007), accessed via the listserv at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.

42. “Literacy Program Keeps Benefiting Bolivians,” *Agencia de Información Nacional* (June 22, 2007) accessed via the listserv at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.

43. “400 médicos cubanos atienden a damnificados por desastres naturales,” *Agencia Bolivariana de Información* (February 21, 2007), accessed via the listserv at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.

44. “Cuban Doctors Saving Lives in Bolivia,” *Agencia de Información Nacional* (February 5, 2007), accessed via the listserv at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.

45. See “Cooperación oftalmológica de Cuba permitió ahorro de 80 millones de dólares a Bolivia,” *MINREX* (April 17, 2007), accessed via the listserv at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.

46. See “Médicos cubanos atendieron más de seis millones de bolivianos,” *Prensa Latina* (August 22, 2007), accessed via the listserv at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.

47. When questioned about concerns some Bahamians had expressed about setting up an embassy in communist Cuba, Ambassador Carlton Wright referred to the close ties between the two countries, the possibilities of enhanced trade, tourism opportunities, and technological assistance. He concluded: “You would be irresponsible to have a neighbor on your doorstep and not have relations with them, and this is all that this is about. This is not about ideology and it’s not about politics. It’s about practicality.” Cited in Erica Wells, “Strengthening Ties with Cuba,” *Nassau Guardian* (July 23, 2006), accessed via the listserv at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.

48. Fidel Castro, “Fidel Castro Addresses Cuba-CARICOM Summit” (December 9, 2005), accessed via the listserv at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.


51. Cited in Marc Frank, “Eye Surgeons Bring a Ray of Hope to the Caribbean,” *Financial Times* (October 21, 2005), accessed via the listserv at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.

52. “Education Priority, PM Tells Jamaicans Studying in Cuba,” *Jamaican Information Service* (September 22, 2006), accessed via the listserv at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.

53. See “Prime Minister of St. Lucia Arrives in Cuba,” *Granma* (May 22, 2006), accessed at via the listserv at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>. 

NOTES

54. Francisco Forteza, “Premier de Santa Lucía se reúne con presidente cubano en ambiente cordial,” *Granma* (May 24, 2006), accessed via the listserve at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>. Translation of this and of other material in Spanish is by the authors.

55. “CARICOM Tells U.S. They Will Remain Friends with Cuba and Venezuela,” *Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation* (June 25, 2007), accessed via the listserve at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>. Significantly he added: “In Guyana’s case, I said to him that the students that we have studying in Cuba, if we were to send those students to the United States of America, it would cost us $70 million […] That is important to me, educating the doctors.”


60. “Cuba, Venezuela Closer to Strategic Alliance,” *Prensa Latina* (February 5, 2007), accessed via the listserve at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>. Venezuelan ambassador to Cuba, Alí Rodríguez put it higher—at $3 billion—and claimed that Cuba received 92,000 barrels of oil per day. See “Venezuela comercia con Cuba por USD 3,000 millones, envió 92,000 bd de crudo.” *AFP*, accessed via the listserve at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.


63. “Declaración conjunta de las delegaciones de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela y de la República de Cuba en ocasión de celebrarse la VII Reunión de la Comisión Mixta del Convenio Integral de Cooperación,” *Granma* (March 1, 2007), accessed via the listserve at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.

64. See the speech of Carlos Lage, “Una verdadera integración de dos pueblos latinoamericanos,” *Juventud Rebelde* (January 25, 2007).

65. Lomas, op. cit.

66. Data provided by the “Declaración conjunta…,” op. cit.

67. Lomas, op. cit.

69. “Cuban Sports Trainers Hard at Work in Venezuela,” Agencia de Información Nacional (August 8, 2007), accessed via the listserv at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.

70. Data provided by the “Declaración conjunta. . . .” op. cit.

71. “Ministerio de Agricultura cubano en 28 proyectos conjuntos con Venezuela,” Prensa Latina (November 22, 2006), accessed via the listserv at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.

72. Cited in “Afirmá Chávez que su socialismo es distinto al de Cuba,” El Informador (January 29, 2007), accessed via the listserv at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.


74. Ibid.

75. “When critics lightly pass over the thousands of Cuban doctors, and medical technicians, literacy workers and teachers working in Venezuela, they do not take into account the decades of massive social investment it took Cuba to make such exports possible. The accumulated social and educational [programs] that the island now exports has not been quantified nor measured, yet it is a monumental contribution with vast and long-term consequences in the hemisphere.” Quote from Robert Sandels, “Cuba-L Analysis: The Other Revolution” (April 21, 2007), accessed via the listserv at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.

76. Marc Frank, “Chávez Victory Bolsters Cuba’s Succession Hopes,” Financial Times, accessed via the listserv at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.

77. The role of Petrocaribe, created in 2007, is important. Its objective—as in the Cuban case—is to provide subsidized oil to 16 nations in Latin America and the Caribbean. By August 2007, this had resulted in a saving of $450 million for the nations involved. The Venezuelan government oil agency PDVSA has also helped to install or construct distribution centers in Belize, Dominica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada, and Haiti and has sent generator equipment to Saint Kitts and Nevis, Antigua and Barbuda, Nicaragua, and Haiti. Together with supplying Cuban technicians there are also plans to build or extend oil refineries in Dominica, Jamaica, Guyana, Belize, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic—specifically as a means of reducing their dependence on U.S. refineries. On a much smaller scale, these initiatives, together with the distribution of tens of millions of incandescent light bulbs and the actual reductions in the price of oil by the 16 nations of PetroCaribe, have followed the same thrust as Venezuelan initiatives in Cuba. (Repayment terms for Venezuelan oil are, as in the case of Cuba, extremely generous: there is a 25-year
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repayment plan, with an interest charge of 1 percent if the price of crude rises above $40 the barrel. See “PetroCaribe Apuesta por la Seguridad Energética,” Prensa Latina (August 17, 2007), accessed via the listserve at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>. Another unusual twist comes from an alternative form of repayment: “Countries are allowed to pay off part of their oil bills in goods and services. Dominican president Leonel Fernández said his country hopes to begin an exchange program offering hotel and tourism training to visiting Venezuelans.” Speaking in August 2007 to the members of PetroCaribe, Chávez pledged Venezuela’s support for the region’s nations. He predicted a steady increase in the price of oil but noted, “If we truly unite … the grandchildren of our grandchildren will have no energy problems.” See “Venezuela’s Chávez Pledges to Meet Long-Term Oil Needs in Caribbean,” Associated Press (August 11, 2007), accessed via the listserve at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.

78. Frances Robles and Steven Dudley, “Chávez May Be Buying Cuba’s Future with Oil,” Miami Herald (August 30, 2006), accessed via the listserve at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>. Other estimates are as high as $4 billion—not in terms of the contractual cost, but rather in terms of value if sold in the international market. See Jorge Piñon, “Venezuelan Oil Subsidies to Cuba Surpassed $3 Billion in 2006,” Cuba Facts, No. 34 (August 2007).

79. An alternative interpretation emphasizes the ideological dependence of Venezuela on Cuba:

“It is well known that the political alliance between Venezuela and Cuba is strong, as are the personal ties between Chávez and Castro. Yet the government in Caracas claims that it is promoting a move towards homegrown socialism that is inspired by the Cuban experience, but with a Venezuelan face. A closer look at the policies implemented in Venezuela to consolidate power and enroll the populace in internal intelligence collection and armed defense, policies entrenched in Cuba for some time, may undermine this claim.

See Eric Driggs, “Is Venezuela Following the Cuban Model?” Cuba Facts, No. 33 (July 2007), accessed via the listserve at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.

80. While Cuban doctors working in the 36 countries covered by the General Comprehensive Agreement (PIS) receive about $150 per month, in Venezuela the salaries are higher—approximately 700 bolivares, or $200. In addition, each month 50 CUCs or convertible pesos (each worth approximately $US1.20) are deposited in Cuba for a designated person to collect. Finally, bonuses for each year successfully completed are deposited and can be drawn when the mission is completed.

81. See Robles and Dudley, op. cit.
82. “Chávez Praises Balanced Exchange with Cuba,” *Granma* (November 11, 2006), accessed via the listserve at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.

83. One benefit that has accrued for Cuba and is difficult to quantify is the increasing popular acceptance of the revolution, as Venezuelans have overcome long-held stereotypes of the process on the island. See Enrique Ubieta Gómez, *Venezuela rebelde: Solidaridad vs. dinero* (Havana: Casa Editora Abril, 2006).

84. Mercedes Ibaibarriaga, “Entrevista a Felipe Pérez Roque,” *Boletín por Cuba* (May 18, 2007), accessed via the listserve at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.


86. Brian Latell has also drawn out the personal influence of Fidel Castro on Hugo Chávez, noting how the Venezuelan had come to Havana in 1998 when Chávez had been released from prison after leading a coup six years earlier. In April 2002, after being arrested in an attempted coup, Chávez sought the support of Castro, who provided him with strategic advice and also lobbied Venezuelan military leaders to free the president. See “The Castro Brothers and Hugo Chávez,” *The Latell Report* (October 2006), accessed at http://ctp.iccas.miami.edu.

87. See “Chávez cierra campaña y anuncia la agenda bolivariana del siglo XXI,” *La Jornada* (November 27, 2006).

88. Speaking in July 2006, Chávez condemned the claims by the U.S. Presidential Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba that Cuba was using Venezuela’s oil revenues to promote subversion in the hemisphere: “It is precisely now that Venezuela will further support the Cuban people and their revolution. There will be no empire, no matter how powerful, capable of discouraging us from keeping our strategic alliance with Cuba. We feel ourselves increasingly encouraged to keep with that alliance every single day.” Cited in “Washington Threatening Cuba and Venezuela, Says Hugo Chávez,” *Agencia de Información Nacional* (July 12, 2006), accessed via the listserve at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.


91. See “Zimbabwe: Hospital Gets Cuban Docs,” *The Herald* (Harare, April 23, 2008), accessed via the listserve at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.

92. Quoted in Raúl Zibechi, “Haití y Tibet: Las miserias del doble discurso,” *ALAI* (Ecuador, April 13, 2008), accessed via the listserve at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.
6 Toward an Understanding of Cuban Medical Internationalism


5. Feinsilver, op. cit.

6. Coverage in Cuban media of the visit of Guinea Bissau president Joao Bernardo Vieira in April 2007 illustrates the emphasis placed upon these themes. The president met with some 400 Cubans who had fought in Guinea Bissau. He visited ELAM, where he noted, “I saw how this beautiful project that offers other countries the possibility to educate their professionals contributes to the unity among the nations of this area. It’s part of the work of this revolution.” He noted the presence of 21 Guineans studying in Cuba. And he spoke of support for Cuba: “There’s no doubt of our alignment with Cuba. After our liberation struggles we have always had your solidarity and support. This is not a debt, but we believe that it is an obligation to be alongside Cuba, and for that reason we always support that position [condemning the U.S. embargo] at the United Nations.” See Deisy Francis Mexidor, “Interview with Guinea Bissau President Joao Bernardo Viera,” Granma (April 10, 2007).

7. See the two Agencia de Información Nacional reports of April 30, 2008, “Encuentro del Emir de Qatar con presidente cubano,” and “Emir of Qatar Begins Working Visit to Cuba,” available on the Internet at <Cuba-L@list.unm.edu>.

8. Feinsilver, op. cit. The most recent official figures (January 2009) indicate that there are 1,196 Cuban medical personnel (including 827 doctors) in 22 African countries. Data found at: http://www.cubacoop.com/Cubacoop/Cooperacion_Resultados_Generales.html.

9. “There these doctors are incredibly popular, not only because they are considered highly competent but also because of their non-hierarchical and sociable behavior. Their hands-on, resourceful manner, under what are admittedly tough working conditions, and the fact they can be found even in the most remote rural areas, where
most medics prefer not to go, are also highly recognized.” See Katrin Hansing, “Cuba’s International Development Assistance: A Model for the Non-aligned Movement?” *FOCALpoint*, Vol. 5, No. 7 (September 2006), 3.

10. This section draws heavily upon a lecture by Margaret Blunden, director of the International Institute for the Study of Cuba Policy Unit, London Metropolitan University (January 8, 2008).


12. This section is based upon helpful insights provided by Dr. Ernesto Menéndez Cabezas, former head of the Medical School in Gambia.

13. One Gambian student summed up well the practical nature of the medical training provided by their Cuban professors:

   Above all [...] they brought their spirit. From the start it was clear that they were teaching to prepare us, to make sure we understood we had a responsibility to our people, to help them come out of the cycle of disease and poverty and ignorance. They never minced words about that. And so, from the beginning we visited communities and families to get a sense of their problems, and to lay the foundation for ourselves. (Cited in Reed, op. cit.)


16. Figures found at “Llegará hoy a Cuba Canciller de Timor Leste,” *Granma* (May 6, 2008), available on the Internet at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.


19. See “Timor Leste seguirá apoyando a Cuba en su lucha contra el bloqueo,” *Granma* (May 10, 2008), available on the Internet at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.

20. Interview with the authors, Ministry of Foreign Relations, Havana (May 10, 2007).


In this regard, no other country in this world can boast to having done as much for as many as has Cuba [. . .] Cuba last year upgraded its consul general to an ambassador, and the Bahamas—which recently named a resident ambassador to Cuba—plans to open an embassy in Havana in coming weeks. Also, some 300 Bahamians recently received free eye surgery, courtesy of the Cuban government. (available on the Internet at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>)

23. For his part Dominica’s prime minister, Roosevelt Skerrrit, revealed his appreciation of Cuban humanitarianism, while at the same time criticizing U.S. policy toward Cuba, again illustrating the link between Cuban solidarity and political support: “We, since 1979, have been benefitting from the goodwill of the Cuban leader and the Cuban people. And to appreciate the contribution of the Cuban people is to have a greater understanding of the struggles they have gone through as a result of the economic blockade that has been placed before them for so many years.” Quoted in “Dominica PM Acknowledges Castro’s Contribution to Humanity,” Caribbean Net News (August 1, 2006), available on the Internet at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.

24. See www.who.int, for pertinent data. Whereas Cuba spends 7.6 percent of its GDP on health care, the United States spends 15.2 percent (all 2005 data)—and yet the Cuban model obtains better health results in some key areas.

25. Tatyana Guerrero-Pazano, a student from New Mexico, is one of the U.S. students at ELAM. She noted in an Albuquerque newspaper the advantages of training in Cuba, stating that “it is inspiring to work in a country with free, universal health care. She said Cuban doctors focus on patients’ needs rather than the cost of quality treatment,” and concluding that “if we were to focus on health promotion and prevention instead of treating something once it’s already developed into a full-blown disease, I think this country and this state would have a lot less of a bill to pay in terms of public sector health care.” See Bryan Gibel, “U.S. Students Study for Free at Medical School in Cuba,” Daily Lobo (September 28, 2007), available on the Internet at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.

26. See the Cuban Constitution at www.cuba.cu/gobierno/cuba.


30. Bolivian socialist senator Antonio Peredo has expressed this possibility well: “We will also need to develop the same internationalist spirit, so that one day doctors, artists or athletes from Bolivia can offer their experience and contribute to the development of other nations.” Quoted in Cory López, “Un millón de bolivianos atendidos por médicos cubanos,” *WDS News Service*, available on the Internet at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.

31. Interview with the authors, Ministry of Foreign Relations (Havana, May 10, 2007).


35. See the letter from the reader identified as Chitraykha, “Cuba has given us medical help for decades,” in the *Starbroek News* (October 13, 2007), available on the Internet at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>. In a related comparison, it is worth contrasting the assistance provided to Ukrainian children by Cuban-Americans with that given by the Cuban government. Mention was made earlier about the 23,000 children who have received medical assistance at no charge in Cuba since the meltdown of the Chernobyl nuclear reactor in April 1986. One article in the *Miami Herald* presented “nine Ukrainian children frolicking with dolphins at the Miami Seaquarium” and mentioned how an organization known as Cuba Democracy Advocates hoped to pay for prosthetics for 30 children from poor backgrounds.” As the article shows, there is a strong political rationale for this aid. See Laura Wides-Muñoz, “In New Political Era, Cuban-Americans Help Ukrainian Children,” *Miami Herald* (October 8, 2007).

36. Cited in Gary Marx, “Cuba Loses Doctors to Asylum Offer,” *Chicago Tribune* (February 11, 2007), available on the Internet at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>. It is perhaps significant that this amounts to a rate of between 2 percent and 3 percent of Cuban medical staff who have taken the U.S. offer and sought exile in the United States. A useful comparison can be made with the annual rate of medical
graduates from Canadian medical schools who emigrate to the United States—about 9 percent. See also Tal Abbady, “Hundreds of Cuban Medical Workers Defecting to U.S. while Overseas,” Sun-Sentinel (October 10, 2007), available on the Internet at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.

37. Feinsilver, op. cit.
38. “Aumentará a 80 la cantidad de países con médicos cubanos,” Ahora (Holguín, March 28, 2008), available on the Internet at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.
39. See “Médicos cubanos atienden a 70 millones de personas en el mundo,” Juventud Rebelde (April 13, 2008), available on the Internet at <Cuba-L@list.unm.edu>.
40. “Cuba to Extend Medical Collaboration to 81 Countries,” Granma International (April 1, 2008), available on the Internet at <Cuba-L@list.unm.edu>.
41. See “Fidel y Chávez son médicos de almas, médicos de pueblos,” Granma (April 12, 2007), available on the Internet at <Cuba-L@unm.edu>.
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