

# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL Monterey, California



## THESIS

**THE NEXT TRANSITION IN CUBA: AN ANALYSIS  
BASED ON INSTITUTIONAL COMPARISONS WITH  
DEMOCRATIC TRANSITIONS IN CENTRAL EUROPE**

by

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September 2001

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington DC 20503.				
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)		2. REPORT DATE September 2001	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's Thesis	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE: The Next Transition in Cuba: An Analysis Based on Institutional Comparisons with Democratic Transitions in Central Europe			5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) Robert M. Thweatt				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A			10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.				
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE	
13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)  Decision makers throughout the international community, including the United States, need reliable information on the characteristics of Cuba's next transition to make effective policy towards the island. This work adds to existing research by exploring what lessons can be learned about Cuba's next transition by comparing Cuba's current institutional environment to the institutional environments found in four Soviet bloc countries prior to their transitions to democracy in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Based on this institutional analysis, the study argues that a lack of internal oppositional organizations makes Cuba institutionally unready for a transition to democracy. Instead, an imposition of an authoritarian successor regime will characterize Cuba's next transition. Moreover, Cuba's eventual transition to democracy likely will occur through imposition, but as the distance in time from the departure of Fidel Castro increases, a transition towards democracy through reform or, less likely, through revolution becomes more probable. Finally, this work recommends that international decision makers tailor their policies towards Cuba in such a manner as to avoid a violent revolution on the island, to promote an independent Cuban civil society, and to seek an international consensus on Cuba's future.				
14. SUBJECT TERMS Cuba, Fidel Castro, Regime Transition, Democracy, Communism, International Relations, U.S. Foreign Policy, Political Science, Political Institutions, Civil-Military Relations, Central Europe, Eastern Europe, Soviet Bloc, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Soviet Union, United States			15. NUMBER OF PAGES	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UL	

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CENTRAL EUROPE**

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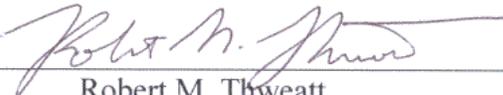
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS**

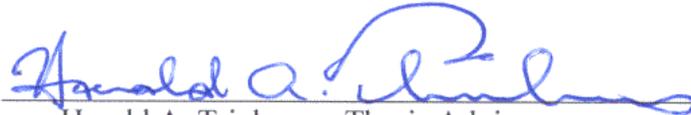
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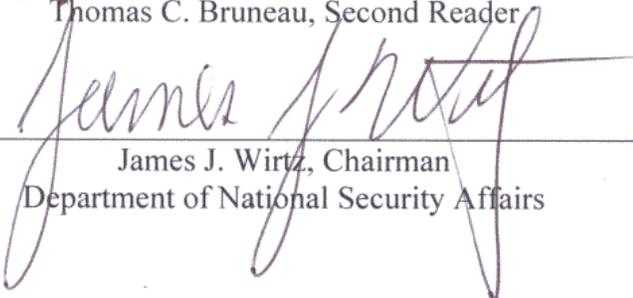
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## **ABSTRACT**

Decision makers throughout the international community, including the United States, need reliable information on the characteristics of Cuba's next transition to make effective policy towards the island. This work adds to existing research by exploring what lessons can be learned about Cuba's next transition by comparing Cuba's current institutional environment to the institutional environments found in four Soviet bloc countries prior to their transitions to democracy in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Based on this institutional analysis, the study argues that a lack of internal oppositional organizations makes Cuba institutionally unready for a transition to democracy. Instead, an imposition of an authoritarian successor regime will characterize Cuba's next transition. Moreover, Cuba's eventual transition to democracy likely will occur through imposition, but as the distance in time from the departure of Fidel Castro increases, a transition towards democracy through reform or, less likely, through revolution becomes more probable. Finally, this work recommends that international decision makers tailor their policies towards Cuba in such a manner as to avoid a violent revolution on the island, to promote an independent Cuban civil society, and to seek an international consensus on Cuba's future.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The author thanks the following people for their contributions to this study: Professor Trinkunas and Professor Bruneau, who provided astute guidance and helpful suggestions throughout the thesis process, and Tony Palá, who sparked the author's first interest in the next transition in Cuba.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study examines what can be learned about Cuba's next transition from a comparison of political institutions in Cuba with those in Soviet bloc countries that made their transitions towards democracy in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The primary assumption of this work is that political institutions matter in shaping the nature of regime transitions. Chapter I provides an introduction to the key elements of the study, including its theoretical foundation, its case study methodology, and its preliminary argument.

Chapter II explores Karl and Schmitter's framework for describing different modes of transitions and finds that a general consensus among scholars supports this assumption even though many of these authors dispute the specifics of political transitions. While this work does not proclaim Karl and Schmitter's framework to be the only applicable guide to analysis, it uses the framework throughout the study because it provides a straightforward method for choosing and analyzing the case studies and because it allows a simple, visual portrayal of the interaction of political institutions during different modes of transition.

This work then continues by analyzing four case studies of Soviet bloc transitions towards democracy in Chapter III. Chapter III looks specifically at four countries that represented four different modes of transitions. Hungary provides the closest example of a pacted transition while Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria conform respectively to the reform, revolution, and imposition modes of transition. In reassessing Karl and Schmitter's analysis of these countries' modes of transition, this work generally affirms the authors' location of the Soviet bloc transitions in terms of both the elite and mass-based institutions and the strategies of force and compromise. However, this study adds a third axis to Karl and Schmitter's diagram. This z-axis expands the ability of the framework to portray the complete spectrum of political institutions involved in transitions by showing the relative importance of internal and external institutions in the

case study transitions. In this manner, Chapter III provides the case studies against which to compare the Cuban case.

In a pattern similar to that of Chapter III, Chapter IV explores the current state of Cuba's elite, mass-based, and external institutions. Clearly, Cuba's communist elite institutions hold the greatest institutional strength among its internal institutions. A nuclear communist elite centered on Castro and an increasingly politically-involved military form the cornerstones of the communist regime. Elite and mass-based opposition remains weak and fragmented in Cuba. The most powerful of such institutions are the religious ones, and they serve more as an inconvenience to the communists than as a source of strong opposition to them. Chapter IV also compares Cuba's current institutional environment to the institutional environments in the Soviet bloc case studies during the most crucial phases of their transitions. Even though Cuba's institutional environment does not exactly mirror any of those found in the case studies, it most strongly resembles those in Romania and Bulgaria.

Building on this institutional comparison, Chapter V draws out the implications for Cuba's next transition. It looks not only at the similarities between Cuba and the case studies but also at the differences among them. In this way, it seeks to determine the mode of Cuba's next transition. Chapter V proposes three hypotheses about Cuba's political future. First, it argues that internal institutions will matter most in Cuba's next transition because the necessary external conditions for a transition toward democracy in Cuba already exist. Second, it places Cuba's next mode of transition firmly in the imposition mode and contends that an installation of a communist successor, not a move towards democracy, will characterize this imposition. Finally, it argues that Cuba's eventual transition to democracy most likely will occur in the imposition mode of transition but that as the distance in time from Castro's departure increases, so does the likelihood that its transitional mode will move towards the reform or, less likely, the revolution categories. Ultimately, Chapter V proposes that Cuba is not yet institutionally ready for a transition to democracy because it lacks oppositional institutions strong enough to challenge the communist regime.

As the concluding chapter, Chapter VI begins with a review of the major arguments and findings contained throughout the study. Next, it offers three tenets that should guide decision makers in the international community, including the United States, in formulating policy on Cuba. First, it recommends that policy makers should tailor their efforts to avoid a transition to democracy in Cuba through violent revolution. Instead, they should support a transition through imposition or reform. Second, it argues for the promotion of an independent Cuban civil society as a method to avoid a revolution and promote a democratic transition through imposition or reform. Third, it advises members of the international community, including states, non-governmental organizations, and inter-governmental organizations, to seek a consensus on Cuba's future in order to make the influence of these external institutions more effective in promoting democratization on the island. Finally, Chapter VI recognizes the necessity of continued research on Cuba's institutional environment to ensure that policy makers have the most current information on how these institutions shape Cuba's political environment and *vice versa*. Only with such sustained vigilance in analysis can an accurate assessment of Cuba's next transition be maintained.

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Today, Cuba approaches a looming political transition due, at least, to the aging of Fidel Castro. Despite the inevitability of a change, the type and direction of Cuba's next transition remain uncertain. Within this climate of ambiguity, the international community, including the United States, cannot easily prepare for the effects of the transition. To do so, these governments need to assess what type of change is most likely in Cuba. This work addresses this problem of predicting the characteristics of the next Cuban transition.

Although many scholarly and government studies have hypothesized about the nature of the post-Castro government in Cuba, this work addresses the issue through a comparison of the institutional environment in Cuba today with the institutional environments in several Soviet bloc nations prior to their transitions to democracy. Ultimately, this work proposes that an institutional comparison between Cuba and these Soviet bloc countries can aid in determining the characteristics of the next political transition in Cuba.

### **A. IMPORTANCE**

Studying Cuba's coming transition is especially important today as "intermestic" issues increasingly dominate the political environment. The connectivity between international and domestic concerns has increased with the phenomenon of globalization. In the case of Cuba, the importance of Cuban-American lobbying groups on United States' policies toward the island demonstrates the reality of this complex environment. If liberalization or democratization accompanies the next transition in Cuba, the United States and the international community may be bombarded with many of these intermestic issues related to Cuba. For example, potential problems may involve divisive issues, such as refugee flows, land ownership disputes, and business quarrels, to name only a few. The United States and the larger international community must be prepared to deal with such transitional issues. They will be unable to do so without a fairly accurate assessment of what the next Cuban transition will look like. This work adds to

previous insights by exploring the implications of institutional similarities or dissimilarities between Cuba and several Soviet bloc states.

## **B. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION**

This work focuses on the importance of institutions in affecting political transitions and pursues an institutional analysis and argument. While it does not refute the effects of culture and behavior on political environments, it stresses the importance of the organizations that transcend nationalities and permeate all political environments. Recognizing the growing influence of international actors on transitions, this study looks at both domestic and international institutions. Important domestic institutions include, but are not limited to, the following: political parties, government bureaucracies, civil-society organizations, and the political elite. Likewise, relevant international institutions include, but are not limited to, the following: other states, intergovernmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations. This work focuses on these institutions and their interactions with each other in influencing the transitional environment. This forms the basis for the theoretical approach.

## **C. METHODOLOGY**

A clarification of this work's methodology enables one to better understand its approach. Certainly, the complexity inherent in determining the characteristics of the next transition in Cuba could demand a ceaseless exploration. The common problem of a few cases and many variables applies to this study. In order to minimize the analytical complexity of this study, this work uses a case study approach. The case study approach simplifies the analysis by examining countries in the former Soviet bloc that have previously undergone a transition away from communism. Despite the differences among the Soviet bloc states, their commonality of communism reduces the number of variables and provides the closest extant cases to apply to a comparison with Cuba, the sole remnant Soviet-style communist state.

To further hone the focus of this study, this work uses the model developed by Terry Lynn Karl and Philippe C. Schmitter (1991) in their article, "Modes of Transition in Latin America, Southern and Eastern Europe." Karl and Schmitter propose a framework of transition classification based on the influence of political actors and their

strategies. From a theoretical perspective using various combinations of elites, masses, compromise, and force, four types of transitions to democracy appear. These four are as follows: pacts, reforms, revolutions, and impositions.

Using Karl and Schmitter's framework as a model for choosing the four case studies, this work focuses on the transitions in Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria. While most authors agree that Poland and Bulgaria clearly conform respectively to the reform and imposition models, the cases of Hungary and Romania are not as easily placed in any one category. Despite the heavy influence of imposition, Hungary does show some elements of a "pacted" transition. Similarly, while imposition also affected its transition, Romania is close to the revolutionary model. (Karl and Schmitter, 1991) Thus, these four states, showing elements of the four possible transition models, provide the case study material for this work.

Some initial hypotheses concerning the case studies help to clarify the intent of using a case study methodology. If, as Karl and Schmitter assert, the four Soviet bloc countries do indeed represent different types of transitions, different combinations of causal institutional factors should characterize each case study. Based on this assumption, one can hypothesize as to the relative importance of different institutions in each given transition. As the closest example of a pacted transition, Hungary's transition should reflect a compromise among elite actors, such as communist officials, bureaucratic leaders, or political party figureheads. Poland's transition, as the model of a reform-based transition, should demonstrate a compromise inclusive of the masses, such as civil-society organizations or broad-based political party movements. In the case of Romania, the closest model to a transition by revolution, one should expect to see the use of force by the masses, such as the aforementioned mass-based groups. For Bulgaria, the example of imposition, the use of force by elites, including the previously-mentioned elite domestic institutions or external institutions, should be dominant. Based on these initial hypotheses, with the possible exception of the imposition model, one should expect external institutions, such as other states or inter- and non-governmental organizations, to be limited to supportive, not dominant, roles in the transitions. In general, these initial hypotheses further illuminate the institutional actors whose presence or absence in any

given transition will confirm or challenge the categorizations made by Karl and Schmitter.

#### **D. PRELIMINARY ARGUMENT**

Although several scholars expected a transition in Cuba to follow closely behind those of the Soviet bloc countries, such a regime change did not occur. Cuba, despite its economic problems, has not succumbed to the Third Wave of democratization yet. Although it has changed many of its policies in an attempt to adapt to the post-Cold War realities, Cuba appears to have retained most of the fundamental political aspects of its communist system. That Cuba has been largely immune to external pressures for change suggests that the island's political continuity rests on its internal environment and institutions. *This work argues that the internal institutional environments responsible for transitions toward democracy in Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria are generally absent in Cuba and that the lack of this necessary political climate indicates that Cuba's next transition is not likely to be towards democracy.* If this preliminary argument holds true, the focus of the international community, including the United States, should be more on strengthening democracy-promoting institutions within Cuba than on attempting to weaken the communist regime through direct external pressure.

#### **E. FORMAT**

This work presents the institutional implications for Cuba's next transition through the use of a simple, logical format. Chapter II explains Karl and Schmitter's theoretical perspective in greater detail, setting the stage for the case studies, which appear in Chapter III. Chapter III focuses on the transitions in Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria. Even though it describes the transitions in terms of Karl and Schmitter's framework, it references several authors and includes different interpretations of the transitional events.

Chapter IV analyses Cuba's current institutional environment and highlights the similarities and dissimilarities evident between Cuba and the Soviet bloc case studies. It seeks to determine the degree to which Cuba's political environment looks similar to those in the Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria prior to their transitions. Once

again, the analysis of the institutional environment affecting Cuba draws upon the opinions and research of several prominent authors.

Chapter V explores the implications for the next transition in Cuba based on the findings in Chapter IV. The goal is not necessarily to match the current political environment in Cuba to one of the aforementioned Soviet bloc countries. Even though any similarities should not be ignored, the absence of such congruities does not condemn this work to futility. On the contrary, the absence of key pro-democracy transitional political institutions in the Cuban environment would suggest that Cuba's next transition will not be towards democracy. This would be just as significant a discovery as the identification of Cuba with one of the pact, reform, revolution, or imposition models.

Finally, Chapter VI summarizes the arguments and provides limited policy recommendations. Overall, the intent of the format is to provide a logical assessment of the characteristics that will most likely define Cuba's next political transition. Establishing a clear background on the possible forms and case studies of transitions provides the necessary information with which to analyze and assess the institutions in Cuba's political environment and their potential influence on the coming transition.

#### **F. FINAL REMARKS**

Ultimately, this work seeks to add to the current research on the characteristics of Cuba's next political transition. At times, authors have argued both that Cuba is on the verge of democracy and that Cuba is condemned to an undemocratic near-term future. The dichotomous nature of these predictions leaves little room for novel statements on future regime change on the island. Even so, the institutional approach taken by this work can add additional supportive or contradictory information to either of these aforementioned viewpoints. By comparing the institutional environment in Cuba today to that in former Soviet bloc nations prior to their democratic transitions, one *can* make accurate predictions about the characteristics of the coming political transition in Cuba.

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## **II. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON REGIME TRANSITION**

As noted in Chapter I, a specific theoretical perspective provides a model from which to choose the case studies examined in Chapter III. The framework used herein is one proposed by Karl and Schmitter (1991). It serves not only as a reference point for the case studies but also as a transitional theory against which other scholars' ideas about transition dynamics can be compared and contrasted. As such, Karl and Schmitter's framework is the basic model used in the analyses throughout this work.

This chapter explains the transitional framework in greater detail and reveals where Karl and Schmitter think Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria belong within that model. Furthermore, it compares and contrasts their ideas about transitions from authoritarianism to democracy with those from other authors. Overall, this chapter elaborates on the framework that will be used to analyze the case studies in the following chapter.

### **A. EXPLAINING THE FRAMEWORK**

Karl and Schmitter explain their transitional framework in the article, “Modes of Transition in Latin America, Southern, and Eastern Europe” (1991). In setting up their study, they make several assumptions, some of which need to be mentioned here. For example, Karl and Schmitter assume that the various transitional paths away from authoritarianism can be clustered into a few different “modes of transition.” Moreover, the presence of a certain type of mode of transition influences the type of subsequent democracy. (Karl and Schmitter, 1991, p. 269) From the latter assumption, one can further deduce that a transition away from authoritarianism will not always be a transition towards consolidated democracy. Moreover, an absence of any of the given modes of transition suggests that the transition will not be towards even an illiberal democracy. Thus, while some authoritarian governments transition towards democracy, some merely transition to some form of non-democracy.

With these assumptions, Karl and Schmitter propose four basic modes of transition -- pacts, reforms, revolutions, and impositions. Figure 1 shows a visual representation of how each of these modes of transition reflects varying degrees of elite or mass influence as well as different proportions of compromise or force. (Karl and Schmitter, 1991, p. 275) Importantly, the authors note, “Transitions are 'produced' by actors who choose strategies that lead to change from one kind of regime to another” (Karl and Schmitter, 1991, p. 274). In other words, certain political institutions have the ability to affect the outcome of regime transitions.

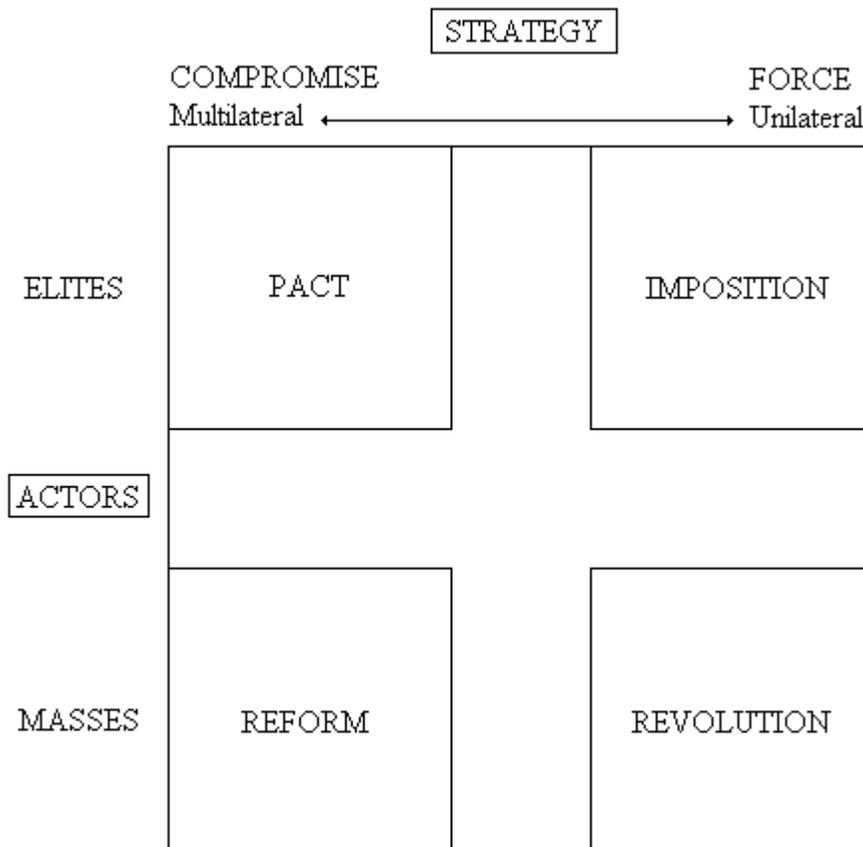


Figure 1. Modes of Transition  
From Karl and Schmitter, 1991, p. 275

Without identifying every applicable institution, Karl and Schmitter do provide some basic guidance on what types of institutions are most important for certain modes of transition. The division of Figure 1's vertical axis into “Elites” and “Masses” suggests a spectrum of political institutions ranging from the communist leadership at the upper

extremity to the citizenry at the lower extremity. In between falls a wide range of institutions, such as government bureaucracies, political parties, non-governmental organizations, and civil society groups. As Figure 1 proposes, each of these institutions can act either singly or in concert with other institutions to produce a regime transition. The specific combination of institutional actors and strategies determines the mode of transition taken.

In addition to Figure 1, Karl and Schmitter provide a verbal description of the modes of transition. A pacted transition occurs when “elites agree among themselves” to move away from authoritarianism. A mobilization of the masses from below that forces a compromised outcome absent of violence characterizes a reform. A revolution happens when the “masses rise up in arms and defeat the previous authoritarian rulers militarily.” Finally, elite use of force to create a transition amidst opposition by incumbents denotes an imposition. (Karl and Schmitter, 1991, p. 275) The definitions, while leaving substantial room for interpretation and variation, define the types of transitions one should expect for each mode.

Even with these definitions, a large area in Figure 1, denoted by the cross-shaped interior, remains outside of any of the given modes of transition. Karl and Schmitter classify this area as one in which “both the identity of the relevant actors and the selection of strategies are ‘mixed’” (1991, p. 275). In other words, this is the gray area of the diagram in which any number of combinations of institutions and methods can characterize the shift away from authoritarianism. Karl and Schmitter propose that external actors may have the most transitional influence in this area (1991, p. 275). Political institutions, such as other states, inter-governmental organizations, and foreign non-governmental organizations, may have their greatest effects on countries whose transitions fall in this ambiguous center space.

Based on the post-transition outcomes in the countries on which Karl and Schmitter focus in their study, they rank the modes of transition according to the likelihood that they will produce a democracy. They suggest that pacted transitions are most likely to lead to democracy, followed by impositions. However, they note that pacts and impositions often create restricted democracies that do not enjoy full political

liberties. Transitions by reform and revolution appear even less likely to produce democracy, with mixed modes of transitions producing the least favorable conditions on which to create a democratic transition. (1991, p. 282) Chapter V returns to this issue of transitional success as it attempts to locate where Cuba's institutional environment will place it on Figure 1 and what its location means for the next transition on the island.

In summary, different institutions and strategies determine whether a given transition away from authoritarianism should be characterized as a pact, reform, revolution, or imposition. As a visual depiction of these ideas, Figure 1 provides the basic model that will be used for analytical purposes both in the remainder of this chapter and in the rest of this study.

## **B. LOCATING THE SOVIET BLOC TRANSITIONS IN SPECIFIC MODES OF TRANSITION**

Reviewing Karl and Schmitter's location of the Soviet bloc transitions within the framework established by Figure 1 provides an initial reference point from which to assess the case studies used in this work. This section establishes the baseline classification of the transitions in Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria as a foundation for comparison in the following chapter.

Karl and Schmitter's modal location of the case studies used in this study appears in Figure 2. Each of the case study countries falls within or near one of the four modes of transition. Karl and Schmitter clearly characterize Poland's transition as reform-based, and Bulgaria's transition falls easily within the imposition mode. While the transitions of Hungary and Romania fall in the mixed area, they are the closest examples, respectively of the pacted and revolutionary modes of transition. (1991, pp. 276-7) Figure 2 reflects these classifications and also shows the locations of the modes of transitions of the Soviet bloc countries not used in this work.

Providing additional insight into the location of each of the case studies' modes of transition, Karl and Schmitter elaborate on their placement. In the case of Poland, the authors argue that its transition should be categorized as reform-based because it started and ended in that mode and involved mass-based movements throughout its life. Although a pact and an anti-reform military imposition followed the initial reforms,

additional pressure from the masses led to a second pact that increased the opportunity for more mass involvement and further reforms. Although Poland's transition actually involved several transitional modes, Karl and Schmitter ultimately firmly locate it within the reform mode. (1991, pp. 276-7)

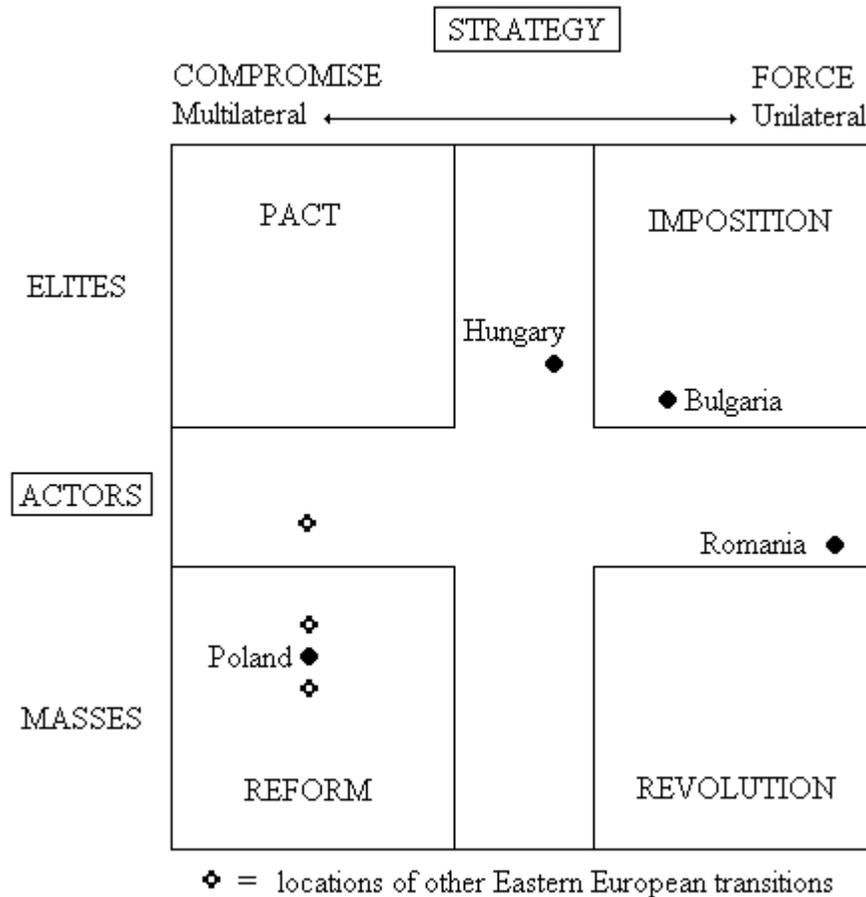


Figure 2. Modes of Transition of Soviet Bloc Countries  
After Karl and Schmitter, 1991, p. 276

Similarly, the remaining three case study countries experience forces from multiple modes of transition. Karl and Schmitter describe Bulgaria's transition as being initially characterized by violent mass-based mobilization but ultimately driven by the ruling elites (1991, p. 277). This explanation justifies the placement of Bulgaria in the lower half of the imposition box, closer to the revolution mode.

Hungary's transitional location is the furthest way from the mode for which it is being used in this work to typify. Even so, it is the closest Soviet bloc country to the

pacted mode. Karl and Schmitter note that Hungary's transition began as an imposition by the dominant party but eventually incorporated elites from opposition groups while the masses remained alienated from either process (1991, p. 277). This latter trend, in which elite institutional control became more multilateral, explains why Hungary's transition shows at least some elements of a classic pact transition.

Romania's transitional location, while not directly in its respective modal area, is relatively close to the revolution category. Indeed, as Karl and Schmitter point out, a violent mass-based movement characterized the initial stages of the Romanian transition. However, they add that the later involvement of the Soviet Union, the elite, and the military drove the process towards the imposition mode (1991, p. 277). Even so, Romania's transition serves as a useful example of a transition heavily influenced by revolution.

Interestingly, with the exception of Romania, the Soviet bloc transitions roughly lie along a line from the reform mode corner of Figure 2 to the imposition mode corner. This may suggest that the institutions needed for a pact transition or a revolution are largely absent within these types of communist states. The lack of an organized elite opposition to participate in a pact and the lack of civil society organizations capable of mobilizing mass revolts appear to characterize these transitions. Chapter IV returns to this observation and seeks to determine whether or not Cuba's institutional environment will place it along the same general line.

### **C. ALTERNATE VIEWPOINTS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF INSTITUTIONS IN TRANSITIONS**

#### **1. Linz and Stepan: Post-Totalitarianism**

Linz and Stepan offer some additional insights on the importance of institutions in political transitions in *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*. First, these authors describe Soviet-type regimes as post-totalitarian, as opposed to totalitarian or authoritarian. Post-totalitarian states allow for more institutions than totalitarian ones. In fact, a "parallel culture" may develop in these states that, although not interacting with the state, plays host to institutional pluralism. (1996, pp. 41-3) Furthermore, "[t]his growing pluralism is simultaneously a dynamic source of vulnerability for the post-totalitarian regime and a dynamic source of strength for an emerging democratic

opposition” (1996, p. 43). Interestingly, as Figure 2 shows, the majority of the Soviet-bloc transitions appear to be closer to the mass side of the vertical axis than to the elite side. This may suggest that institutional pluralism often plays an important role in forcing a transition away from communism.

Despite the favorable nature of the institutional environment in post-totalitarian states, one must be careful not to assume that the state is abandoning control. In fact, the state and its party still dominate the political forum, and expansions of other institutions should not be mistaken for political pluralism (Linz and Stepan, 1996, p. 46). Nevertheless, “[t]he pluralism of the parallel culture...should be seen as *social* pluralism that may have political implications” (Linz and Stepan, 1996, p. 46). In spite of its dominance, the post-totalitarian state demonstrates some unique weaknesses. Often lacking regular rejuvenation of the political leadership, these regimes become brittle as time passes. (Linz and Stepan, 1996, pp. 47-8) “Such a leadership structure, if it is not able to repress opponents in a crisis, is particularly vulnerable to *collapse*” (Linz and Stepan, 1996, p. 48). As the ideological commitment of the post-totalitarian leadership wanes, it becomes less able to mobilize popular support and relies increasingly on performance criteria as its basis of legitimacy (Linz and Stepan, 1996, p. 48-50). These factors combine to make mature post-totalitarian regimes institutionally weak, allowing non-state institutions to move into the political arena during crises.

Overall, Linz and Stepan's views generally support those of Karl and Schmitter. Both groups of authors highlight the importance of institutions and agree on the dominance of elite institutions in Soviet-style regimes. However, Linz and Stepan argue that mass-based institutions become politically active only in crisis situations. Prior to a crisis, the state successfully prohibits unofficial institutions from becoming part of the political landscape. Once these institutions become politically active during a crisis, though, they may find it relatively to easy to force a political transition.

## **2. Ekiert and O’Neil: Transitions from Authoritarianism**

Another set of authors provides additional insight into the importance of institutions during transitions. In separate articles, Grzegorz Ekiert and Patrick O’Neil analyze the importance of political institutions in creating regime change in Soviet bloc

states. Although these authors classify the Soviet-type states as authoritarian, they refer to the same basic governments as Linz and Stepan.

Ekiert's discussion of transitions from authoritarianism focuses on both institutional and structural catalysts. He asserts that the following preconditions characterized that collapse of all of the Soviet bloc states: sudden deterioration of old political institutions, continued economic decline, emergence of a second economy, relaxation of Cold War geopolitical constraints, and development of opposition movements that could affect the regime (Ekiert, 1991, p. 286-7).

Furthermore, he reviews the scholarly opinions of the past fifty years concerning the prospects transitions to democracy in the Soviet bloc. During the 1950s, many experts saw residual nationalism as a mechanism through which Central Europe could rid itself of communism. However, when a middle ground nationalist-socialist dogma arose after the Soviet crackdowns in Hungary and Poland, many authors abandoned the argument that differing ideologies would force transitions in the Soviet bloc. (Ekiert, 1991, pp. 290-1)

A structural-functionalist argument replaced the ideological theory by the mid-1960s. Supporters of this approach assumed that structural changes in the economy would produce political changes. This cause-and-effect relationship "allowed scholars to predict evolutionary, linear changes" as well as "an optimistic scenario of progressive and inevitable liberalization and a likely transition towards democracy." (Ekiert, 1991, p. 292)

When economic stagnation occurred in the 1970s without creating transitional pressures, scholars looked for yet another explanation. They offered a corporatist argument in which the communist regime would systematically co-opt opposition elements into its regime without making significant concessions. This proposal eliminated the potential for a transition to democracy; the socialist systems might change, but they would not disappear. (Ekiert, 1991, pp. 293-5)

However, when the largely independent Solidarity movement emerged in Poland, the corporatist theory came under attack. While some authors turned to a class-based argument, others began to recognize the importance of civil society, political society, and

the state. The latter insight became the basis for the institutional approach. (Ekiert, 1991, pp. 295-300) “This distinction between domestic society, political society and the state allows us not only to account for the various dimensions of the relations between the state and society overlooked by past approaches, but also to identify new socio-political changes and processes in the region which shaped patterns of collapse in state-socialist regimes and to discern the contours of the current transition process” (Ekiert, 1991, p. 300). Thus, Ekiert’s analysis and literature review lends support to the importance of political institutions in shaping transitions away from authoritarianism.

O’Neil also supports the argument that institutions play important roles in influencing the nature of political transitions. His emphasis on institutions as the major determining factor in transitions “start[s] from a rejection of the individual-based market analogies of the rational choice, pluralist, or behavioralist approaches” (O’Neil, 1996, p. 581). Instead of utilitarian creations, institutions develop independently and propagate their own particular norms, values, and patterns. This gives institutions the “ability to create and shape the objectives of individual and collective action.” (O’Neil, 1996, p. 581)

As mechanisms that solidify and limit long-term flexibility, institutions often have lengthy lives terminated by an abrupt sequence of events that overwhelms their ability to adapt to new realities (O’Neil, 1996, p. 582). “Institutionalization can thus be seen as a basic tactic for organizational survival, though one that over time often generates its own set of dangers” (O’Neil, 1996, p. 584). O’Neil suggests that this type of institutionalization, which characterized state socialism in the Soviet bloc, contributed to the sudden collapse of communist regimes in Central Europe (1996, pp. 585-7). Ultimately, “[i]nstitutional orders determine the context that shapes not only the transition itself but also the subsequent political order, that is, how authoritarianism dies and what replaces it” (O’Neil, 1996, p. 579). This premise mirrors the basic ideas held by Karl and Schmitter, and it provides an underlying assumption for this work -- that different combinations of institutions lead to different transitional outcomes.

### **3. Bunce: Interregional Comparisons of Transitions**

Valerie Bunce offers additional insights into the importance of institutions in transitions, and she responds negatively to Karl and Schmitter's assertion that comparing transitions between regions is a valid pursuit.

To begin, Bunce does not contest the value of institutional analysis in the study of transitions. She perceives institutions as important players during regime changes and recognizes that the power, organizational structure, and interests of different institutions affect political transitions. In addition, she lumps the remaining possible transitional influences in a category called "opportunities." She argues that opportunities, such as economic decline and political opening, often spark institutional change. In the case of Central Europe, both the institutions and the opportunities grew in such a manner as to promote political transitions. (Bunce, 1999, pp. 17-9)

However, Bunce attacks Karl and Schmitter's argument that transitions in the Soviet bloc can be compared to transitions in other regions, specifically Southern Europe and Latin America. She suggests that Karl and Schmitter's work does not validate their rationale for such comparison (Bunce, 1995a, 118). For example, Karl and Schmitter fail to include some transitions away from authoritarianism in their study and fail to offer reasons for the omission of such cases (Bunce, 1995a, 113). Bunce implies that Karl and Schmitter do not include all extant cases because all of the cases do not support their argument.

Specifically, Bunce finds several faults in interregional comparisons of transitions. First, Soviet bloc authoritarianism was longer and more entrenched than that of Southern Europe and Latin America. Second, relative institutional strengths varied in these regions. In the former, the military abstained from significant political involvement while in the latter it became politically active. Similarly, the Soviet bloc lacked the substantial middle class and civil society found in Southern Europe and Latin America. Third, transitions in Southern Europe and Latin America occurred within a stable international context while those of the Soviet bloc took place in the course of decay of a superpower. (1995b, pp. 88-9, 93-4) Bunce argues that these differences created different, incomparable types of transitions (1995b, p. 95). In the Soviet bloc, both the

state and the economic system needed total replacement, but in Southern Europe and Latin America the regime and existing institutions needed only modifications (Bunce, 1995b, pp. 91-2).

This work neither challenges Bunce's assertions nor intends to attack Karl and Schmitter's use of interregional comparison; such discussion is outside of the scope of this study. Nevertheless, Bunce's argument supports the comparison of the institutional environment in Cuba with those in the pre-transition Soviet bloc states. Although Bunce does not focus on Cuba because the island has not yet experienced a transition towards democracy, the institutional similarities between Cuba and the Soviet bloc states are many. Cuba does not conform to the typical image of a capitalist, authoritarian regime in Latin American or Southern Europe. On the contrary, Cuba faces many problems similar to those confronted by the countries of Central Europe. Cuba lacks a strong civil society, has no recent history of democratic rule, and continues to operate a failing socialist economy. In terms of Bunce's argument, the primary difference between Cuba and the Soviet bloc states is that the former's transition is likely to occur in a relatively more-stable international context. Ultimately, despite Bunce's rejection of interregional comparisons, her arguments do support a transitional and institutional analysis between Cuba and the members of the Soviet bloc.

Overall, Linz and Stepan, Ekiert and O'Neil, and Bunce offer opinions that support those of Karl and Schmitter to varying degrees. Although these authors use some different terminology, have minor disagreements on when certain institutions become politically influential, and do not agree on the applicability of interregional comparisons of transitions, all concede that institutions matter. The remainder of this work builds on Karl and Schmitter's framework, working with the assumption voiced by all of these authors that institutions play an important role in shaping the political environment and influencing the course of transitions from authoritarianism.

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### **III. THE CASE STUDIES**

Having established an understanding of regime transitions, this work now proceeds with the first major goal of analyzing the four transitional case studies by examining the importance of the various institutions in each case and reassessing the appropriate mode of transition for each. As noted above, the four transitional case studies are the transitions from communism to democracy in Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

This section consists of four parts, one for each case study. Within each case study first appears a brief description of the transitional events. An analysis of the political institutions involved in the transition follows. The discussions of political institutions include the following three broad classifications: elite institutions, mass-based institutions, and external institutions. Finally, each part reassesses Karl and Schmitter's placement of the case study in its appropriate mode of transition (see Figures 1 and 2).

The goal of this section is to develop an understanding of the different types of democratic transitions in Soviet bloc states and of the role of political institutions in propagating these changes. By analyzing a wide variety of transitions, this section seeks to uncover all the basic modes of transition available to Soviet-style communist regimes. Ultimately, the information from this section provides the basis for a comparison of the institutional environments in pre-transition Soviet bloc states with the current Cuban institutional landscape in order to aid in determining what direction Cuba's next transition will take.

#### **A. HUNGARY**

According to Karl and Schmitter (1991, p. 276-7), Hungary provides the best example of a pacted transition from among the Soviet bloc states. This section provides a brief description of the transition, an analysis of the importance of different political institutions in Hungary's transition, and an assessment of Hungary's mode of transition. Although the political institutions involved in Hungary's transition spanned the full spectrum of actors, this section argues that Karl and Schmitter's location of Hungary's mode of transition is generally valid.

## 1. Transition: 1985-1990

Even though the most decisive aspects of Hungary's transition occurred in 1989, important precursor and background events in its transition took place from the mid-1980s until 1990. As the first secretary of the Hungarian communist party, János Kádár was Hungary's political leader at the beginning of this period. Responding to the 1956 revolution, Kádár had established a regime based, in part, on amelioration. Nevertheless, the communist party solidly controlled Hungary's political environment through the mid-1980s. Kádár did promote economic liberalization during this period, most notably in the form of the New Economic Mechanism (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, pp. 204-5, 239-40). However, his reforms could not avert a general economic stagnation (Körösi, 1992, p. 1).

By 1985, dissatisfaction with the economic model had appeared among elite and mass-based elements, and pressure for reforms was growing. Even so, the majority of the influential political dialogue continued to take place within the official Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party. This communist party played host to a growing schism between the hardliners, concentrated around Kádár, and the reformers, led by Imre Pozsgay. As tensions within the communist party grew, the first opposition movement, the Hungarian Democratic Forum, emerged in late 1987 and began to mobilize popular sentiment against the ruling regime in mass-based meetings. (Körösi, 1992, pp. 2-4)

Amidst this environment, the first significant political change occurred in May 1988 when the communists replaced Kádár with Károly Grósz, another party hardliner. The new secretary recognized that the Hungarian economy needed attention, but he did not intend to promote any political reforms. Unable to synthesize these competing demands, Grósz appeared indecisive. (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, pp 240-2)

As Grósz did nothing, political dissension grew. The governmental response appeared mixed. On one hand, police dispersed a number of popular, anti-government demonstrations during the latter half of 1988. On the other hand, censorship evaporated by the end of the year, and the Hungarian opposition movement finally enjoyed freedom of the press. (Körösi, 1992, pp. 5-6)

Throughout 1988, the number of political parties grew. While these opposition groups pressed for open elections and a new constitution, the communist party hoped to contain the situation within the one-party system. Hardliners and reformers shared a consensus on the need to keep demands for participation and change within the traditional system and spoke of promoting “socialist pluralism” or “democratic socialism” in which the party would remain the ultimate arbiter. Although mass-based demonstrations also occurred in response to the government's decision to dam the Danube River, at the end of 1988 the opposition still was not directing the political changes in Hungary. (Körösényi, 1992, p. 6)

In the summer of 1989, Hungarians succeeded in reburying Imre Nagy, a hero of the 1956 revolution, in a national honorary cemetery in Budapest (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, p. 242). The reaffirmation of the revolution received support from statements issued by Pozsgay (Körösényi, 1992, p. 7) and by his attendance at the ceremony (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, p. 242). This symbolic event represented a shift in favor of the reformist elements of the communist party (Körösényi, 1992, p. 7).

Later in the summer, elements of the opposition and the communist leadership met in round-table negotiations to discuss a transfer of power. However, due both to divisions between the hardliners and reformers and to the unconsolidated nature of the opposition, these talks stalled. Meanwhile, reforms continued. Strikes became legal, and the communists agreed to a transition to a market economy. (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, p. 243) Eventually, the two sides, with the exception of the radical opposition, agreed on a Great Pact in late September (Körösényi, 1992, p. 8).

The final blows to the communist party came in October 1989. In a party congress that month, the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party reorganized as the Hungarian Socialist Party, and communist movement effectively collapsed (Körösényi, 1992, pp. 8-9). The country was renamed the Republic of Hungary later in the month (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, p. 243). Although the government leaders remained unchanged, their power had evaporated. Communist rule ultimately ended in March and April of 1990 when opposition parties won the majority of votes in the parliamentary elections. (Körösényi, 1992, p. 9-10)

## 2. Political Institutions

### a. *Elite Institutions*

Elite institutions compose the first category to consider when determining the influence of political institutions on the transition in Hungary. Examples of elite institutions that may contribute to any given country's transition include the following: elite-based political parties, government bureaucracy, and independent political elites. This section examines the role of each in Hungary's transition.

Political parties clearly played an important role in Hungary's transition. The leaders of these parties influenced events and shaped outcomes throughout the transition process. The traditional communist party, the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, and the multitude of new opposition parties formed the landscape of political parties. Through the mid-1980s, the communist party dominated the political scene, and its historical legacy of control meant that it would be an important actor in the transition. Indeed, tensions within the party between the hardliners and reformers played a significant role in creating the space for other opposition parties to emerge.

As László Lengyel suggests, "Even though [the communist hardliners] are standing in the corner, they still have considerable economic, political and military weight, perhaps the greatest in the party and the country" (1992, p. 30). The hardliners became largely incapacitated when the indecisive Grósz replaced Kádár. The inaction on the part of the hardliners appears to have given the party reformers an opportunity to promote their socialist pluralism. By making adjustments early on, the reformers "hoped to preempt an anticommunist backlash by gaining credit for their responsiveness to political change" (Munck and Leff, 1999, p. 9).

As the communist party struggled to develop a consensus on how to react to the growing economic problems, opposition parties sprang up. As the first opposition party, the Hungarian Democratic Forum found initial support among a group of Hungarian writers who had long criticized the Kádár regime. The party gained bargaining power as "all critical forces" of the opposition lined up behind them between late 1987 and summer 1988. (Lengyel, 1992, pp. 34-5) In the latter months of 1988,

other opposition parties formed, including the Federation of Young Democrats, the Alliance of Free Democrats, and the Social Democrats (Körösényi, 1992, p. 6).

While the communist party dealt with its own internal problems, the opposition developed to the point that it could exert pressure on the government by the summer of 1989. The negotiations between the official party and the opposition elite as well as the reburial of Imre Nagy were manifestations of this growing power. The recognition of the opposition by the communist party, especially the reformist elements within it, demonstrates that the ruling elite recognized the opposition elite as a legitimate political actor. The Great Pact developed as a compromise between these two political institutions; it “reflected the relatively equitable balance of power between rulers and opposition and the broad consensus for change” (Munck and Leff, 1999, p. 9). Still, the communists dictated the overall pace of change.

The communists' trend of attempting to stay one step ahead of the opposition led it to rename its party as the Hungarian Socialist Party. Although political pressure certainly shaped the environment in which this decision was made, it was a unilateral move by the communist party. This decision signaled that the regime was ready to cede a significant portion of its power to the opposition. The opposition recognized the importance of this change and secured further changes through a referendum that led to the parliamentary elections in spring 1990 (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, pp. 243-4). Thus, the political parties played a predominate role in the Hungarian transition.

Meanwhile, the remaining elite institutions either stayed aloof from the transition process or were co-opted into the political parties. Government bureaucracies remained largely uninvolved in the transition process. Although weakened, the communist party controlled the other government organizations throughout the transition (Lengyel, 1992, p. 30). For example, although the police dispersed some of the initial antigovernment demonstrations, they did so under the direction of the communist party. Furthermore, when the party abandoned repression, the police cooperated and did not act independently of the state. (Körösényi, 1992, p. 5) Thus, throughout the transition, the government bureaucracies played a very minor role.

Meanwhile, independent political elites were largely co-opted into the emerging opposition parties. As previously mentioned, an *intelligentsia* had been active throughout Kádár's regime, but these intellectuals only became a significant political force when they coalesced into parties and mobilized dissatisfied elements of the populace (Bozóki, 1992a, p. 16; Lengyel, 1992, p. 34). Thus, the influential independent elite in Hungary during the transition chose to exert their power through the opposition parties, and independent elite actors who did not join parties exerted little influence on the process.

**b. *Mass-Based Institutions***

Mass-based institutions compose the second category of political institutions that may affect any given transition. Examples of mass-based institutions that may contribute to a transition include the populace at large, such as may be involved in large-scale demonstrations, and groups within civil society, such as mass-based political parties, domestic non-governmental organizations, non-state unions, and social organizations. This section examines the role of these mass-based institutions in Hungary's transition.

Clearly, by the late 1980s, Hungarians showed signs of disapproval with the communist regime. "The flourishing of quasi-political clubs and societies in civil society also characterized this period." (Körösényi, 1992, p. 2) Moreover, the Hungarian Democratic Forum did hold public mass meetings in the winter of 1987-1988. However, even by the *de facto* demise of the communist party in late 1989, less than 1 percent of adults in Hungary were members of independent political organizations (Bruszt, 1992, p. 48). The lack of mass-based mobilization appears to have been partly a result of the lessons the populace learned during the 1956 revolution. Because the revolution failed, much of the populace resigned itself to being unable to change its future through collective political action. (Bozóki, 1992b, p. 164) These attitudes slowed mass participation in political parties and contributed to the elitist nature of early Hungarian political parties in the late 1980s. Thus, organized political activity among civil society groups remained mainly absent from the transition process.

Despite this lack of registered participation, Hungarians could have exerted pressure through other groups or through popular demonstrations. Indeed, some demonstrations did occur once the communist regime permitted them. In the summer of 1988, more than 100,000 Hungarians participated in an anti-Ceaușescu protest. Later in the year, Hungarians protested against their own government's plan to dam the Danube River. (Körösényi, 1992, pp. 5-6) Although a few demonstrations took place and although they served to express dissatisfaction with the communist regime, they were non-violent and were not specifically aimed at toppling the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (Bruszt, 1992, p. 46). Nevertheless, these mass demonstrations may have served to limit the options available to the communist regime and secure the balance of political power in favor of the opposition elites *vis-à-vis* the communist party (Bozóki, 1992b, p. 176).

Throughout this period, workers unions remained largely inactive (Bruszt, 1992, p. 46). Again, this reflects the lack of popular faith in the ability to challenge the status quo through organized political pressure. Instead of mobilizing existing institutions, the Hungarian masses believed that these institutions could not be converted into effective political tools. Failing to capitalize on the changing political environment, they continued to seek only individual advancement within the existing communist system (Bozóki, 1992b, p. 176). Thus, the mass-based institutions that did exist in Hungary never played a pivotal role in the transition, even though the civil society groups experienced some growth in numbers and the populace participated in some demonstrations.

### *c. External Institutions*

External institutions are the third type of political institutions that can affect transitions. Examples of external institutions that could help or hinder a transition include the following: other states, external non-governmental organizations, and inter-governmental organizations. This section examines the role of each in Hungary's transition.

Other states played the most prominent role among external institutions in creating favorable conditions for the transition. Unsurprisingly, the most influential

states, the Soviet Union and the United States, were the dominant Cold War actors. Although the Soviet Union was aware of the imminent changes in Hungary, it took few actions to help or hinder the reform movement. Essentially, the lack of Soviet support for the hardliners served as an implicit affirmation of the reforms. “Through the winter and spring of 1989, [the Soviets] repeatedly indicated their judgment that Hungary’s internal politics did not impinge on Soviet security interests; that it was up to the Hungarians to decide what political arrangements, institutions, and personalities they deemed most suitable for themselves; and that they had no intention of intervening even on behalf of Communism itself, let alone any particular Hungarian leader.” (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, p. 243) Of course, this situation differed greatly from the past, when the Soviet Union’s disapproval could easily quell criticism of the communist party throughout the Soviet bloc (Schöpflin, 1992, p. 100). For example, when the Soviets felt threatened by events in Hungary in 1956, they ultimately intervened harshly and militarily to destroy the revolution and re-impose communism (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, p. 160). Thus, while the Soviet Union did not force changes in Hungary in the late 1980s, its inaction produced the political space in which the Hungarian transition could take place.

Throughout the 1980s, Soviet bloc countries began to recognize that the Soviet model, centered on a command economy, was illegitimate. By the end of the decade, it became apparent that the Soviet Union had lost the Cold War. (Bozóki, 1992b, p. 172) Thus, by 1989 Hungary was much more receptive and responsive to pressure from the United States. For example, the approaching visit of President Bush to Hungary in 1989 served as an additional motivation for the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party to begin the round-table talks with the opposition parties during the summer of that year (Körösényi, 1992, p. 8). Thus, as the Soviet Union essentially removed its influence from Hungary in 1989, the United States and the West in general filled the role of the dominant external institution.

Besides the involvement or lack thereof by the superpowers, the role of external institutions in Hungary’s transition was minimal. The Cold War balance of power minimized the importance of inter-governmental organizations, such as the United Nations, because the United States and the Soviet Union provided the leading sources of

external influence on their respective satellite states. Similarly, due to the previously-closed nature of the Soviet bloc states, external non-governmental organizations did not have the access to Hungary that might have provided them an opportunity to significantly manipulate the transitional environment. Overall, the Cold War environment ensured that the major external institutions involved in the Hungarian transition would be the superpower states, and even their influence was mainly indirect.

### **3. Reassessing Hungary's Mode of Transition**

Drawing on an understanding of the relative weight of the elite, mass-based, and external institutions on Hungary's transition, this section reassess Karl and Schmitter's initial characterization of the country's mode of transition. Karl and Schmitter describe Hungary's transition as beginning as an imposition by the communist party but eventually incorporating elites from opposition groups. Meanwhile, the masses remained alienated from both processes. (1991, p. 277) Karl and Schmitter's explanation is generally valid, but it should nevertheless be reviewed.

Certainly, the Hungarian transition began with the reform movement in the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party. This does point to imposition as the initial cause of the transition. However, once the opposition had developed enough to engage in discussion with the official party, the pacted part of the transition began. In fact, some authors stress the pacted aspect of the transition. László Bruszt provides one such interpretation of the events:

One should first ask what did not happen in Hungary. Unless one regards the 'sausage strike' organized by the official trade union to protest at meat-price increases as one, there were no significant strike movements. Aside from two important mass actions in March and in June, there were no nationwide anti-government demonstrations involving hundreds of thousands or millions of people as in the GDR and in Czechoslovakia. No violent action took place, and no overt threat of the use of force was made, except for one made by a small-businessman member of the Hungarian Socialist Workers party. Everyone believed he was a mental retard. Well, then, what did take place in Hungary? Negotiations! (1992, p. 46)

This statement not only suggests that the pacted aspect of the transition was dominant, it clearly places the Hungarian transition in the elite, as opposed to the mass, category.

However, his viewpoint places too much weight on the role of negotiations. In the end, the Great Pact did not cause the transition. Instead, the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party renamed itself and waited for the opposition to present organized demands for change, which soon materialized in the form of pressure for parliamentary elections. If the opposition had been more organized during the summer of 1989 and if the opposition radicals had joined the opposition moderates in signing the Great Pact, the Hungarian transition could have easily been characterized as pacted. Nevertheless, because the opposition did not reach a consensus on the negotiations, the transition remained heavily influenced by the self-imposed reforms of the communists. The communists recognized that they were finished as a party, and their biggest challenge in the imposition process was the lack of a coherent opposition to take their place.

Taking this progression of events into account, Figure 3 provides a reassessment of Karl and Schmitter's initial characterization of Hungary's mode of transition. Figure 3 places Hungary directly between the pact and imposition modes, moving it slightly more towards the pacted corner than Karl and Schmitter propose in Figure 2. This reflects both the reality of imposition and the attempt to create a pacted transition. Figure 3 retains

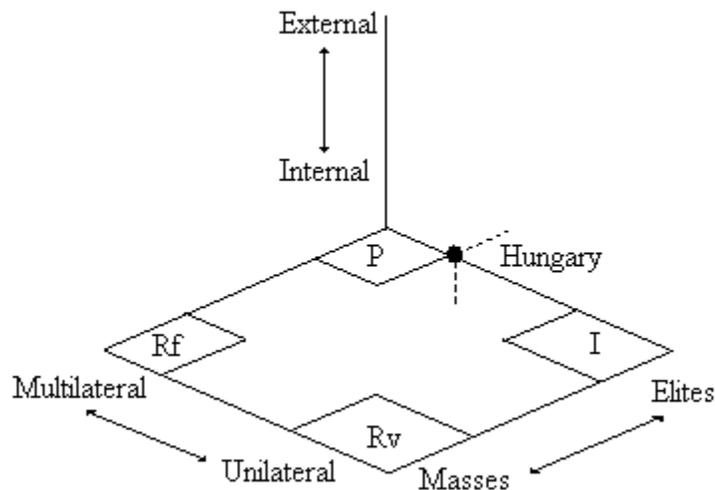


Figure 3. Hungary's Mode of Transition  
After Karl and Schmitter, 1991, p. 276

Karl and Schmitter's positioning in terms of the elites-masses axis. This accurately reflects the predominance of elite institutions in the transition process, acknowledging that while the political parties did have some mass support, the masses remained largely uninvolved in forcing the transition. In addition, Figure 3 adds a third axis that Karl and Schmitter do not include. This third axis, mathematically the z-axis, allows Figure 3 to differentiate between internal and external institutions. Admittedly, this third axis remains relatively crude in that it does not show the relative weight of different types of external institutions, as do the x- and y-axes for the internal institutions. Nevertheless, it does allow the reader to visualize the importance, or lack thereof, of external institutions in the transition process. In Hungary's case, the external influence remained low and mainly indirect, justifying the low position of Hungary along the z-axis. Generally, Figure 3 shows that Karl and Schmitter's initial characterization remains valid.

## **B. POLAND**

According to Karl and Schmitter (1991, p. 276-7), Poland clearly falls within the reform mode of transition. This section briefly describes Poland's transition, analyzes the importance of different political institutions in the transition, and reassesses Poland's mode of transition. While different modes of transition characterized Poland's transition at different times, this section argues that Karl and Schmitter's location of Poland's mode of transition is valid given their methodology.

### **1. Transition: 1980-1990**

Even more so than in the case of Hungary, the transition in Poland spanned several years, and the ultimate collapse of communism resulted from a series of gradual reforms made throughout the 1980s. The initial steps towards a transition took place in response to the government decision to raise the price of meat during the summer of 1980. Motivated by growing economic hardships and increasing inequalities in consumption, workers reacted to the price increases by striking. (Lee, 2001, 96-7) The strikers displayed a remarkable level of cohesion, building the Solidarity movement around the Committee for the Defense of Workers, which had been organized in 1976 by intellectuals and had the implicit support of the Roman Catholic Church. The workers' unity contrasted with the growing fragmentation of the communist party, which was under the control of the first secretary, Edward Gierek. (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000,

pp. 196, 198-99) The critical difference between this series of strikes and previous ones was the resulting politicization of the long-extant economic problems (Lee, 2001, p. 97).

Solidarity, represented by Lech Wałęsa, entered in negotiations with the government in late summer of 1980, and both sides signed the Gdansk accords (Lee, 2001, p. 97; Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, pp. 199-200). The Gdansk accords achieved a reversal of the price increases as well as several more political concessions, including the right to strike, the right to form independent unions, the opening of the media to alternative opinions, and the increased transparency of the government. Despite this progress, the communists agreed that Solidarity should not be allowed to threaten directly Poland's ties with the Soviet Union or to become a major power broker within the Polish political realm. Concurrently, the communists replaced Gierek with Stanisław Kania as the first secretary. (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, pp. 200-1) However, Kania's attempts to control Solidarity proved unable to sufficiently assuage the Soviets and the hardliners within the official Polish United Workers' Party, and, by late 1981, General Wojciech Jaruzelski had succeeded him as first secretary (Lee, 2001, pp. 97-8; Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, p. 201).

As protests continued later in 1981, Jaruzelski eventually responded by imposing martial law in December, and the communists gradually consolidated around a position that favored repression over reform (Lee, 2001, p. 98). As the communists forced Solidarity underground, a stalemate developed in Poland. Jaruzelski retained the political power, although he lacked popular legitimacy. Conversely, popular organizations, in spite of enjoying the support of the populace, could no longer access the political arena. (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, pp. 202-3) The political situation in Poland remained relatively constant for the following half decade.

The stalemate eased in 1988 following the Soviet Union's announcement that the Central European members of the Soviet bloc could no longer rely on Soviet military intervention to save communism in their countries. Moreover, Mikhail Gorbachev voiced his support for political reforms within Poland. In this context, Jaruzelski soon switched his backing from repression to reform. (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, pp. 227-9) By the spring of 1988, strikes returned to Poland with workers demanding higher

wages and the re-legalization of Solidarity (Lee, 2001, p. 98; Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, p. 229).

In response to the reinvigorated social pressure, Jaruzelski opted to begin round-table talks with Wałęsa, and these negotiations took place during the winter and spring of 1989 despite a lack of support from the extremist elements of both the communists and the opposition (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, p. 230). The talks resulted in the desired re-legalization of Solidarity and set a date for parliamentary elections (Lee, 2001, p. 98). The June elections, in which Solidarity could contest a third of the seats in the lower house, or *Sejm*, and all of the seats in the newly-formed upper house, gave all but nine of the contested 261 seats to the opposition. Even so, Jaruzelski was confirmed as president, as the two sides implicitly had agreed upon previously. (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, pp. 203-1)

The failure of the communists in these first open elections assured that their political longevity was rapidly faltering. In January 1990, the Polish United Workers' Party held its final party congress in which the communists split into two separate social democratic movements. Amidst this disintegration, Jaruzelski proved unable to form a governing coalition. Eventually, the Solidarity movement secured the prime ministerial position for their own candidate, Tadeusz Mazowiecki. Having been somewhat sidelined by the movement he created, Wałęsa reentered the political realm and called for the resignation of Jaruzelski from the presidency. Jaruzelski obliged and stepped down early. After elections in the fall and winter of 1990, Wałęsa became the president of Poland in late December 1990, thus fully ending communist control of the country. (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, pp. 231-5)

## **2. Political Institutions**

### ***a. Elite Institutions***

Elite institutions form the first category of institutions to be analyzed. With the exception of the communist party, elite institutions, such as the opposition party leadership, played a limited role throughout Poland's transition.

The communist elite, organized in the form of the Polish United Workers' Party, was the only consistently active elite actor throughout the transition in Poland.

Despite its enduring strength through most of the 1980s, the communist party's control began to wane as early as 1980. The cause of this degradation of power rested in the inability of the communists to retain a unified political position. Gierek's actions became increasingly inadequate in the late 1970s, and price increases appeared to be the only remaining solution to a worsening Polish economy (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, pp. 197-8). Indeed, some communist hardliners supported the price increases and saw them as an opportunity to recommit Poland to communism through repression of the strikes that were sure to follow. However, the reformers within the communist party recognized that price increases would only create more problems for the party, just as they had in 1970 and 1976. (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, pp. 195, 197-8) Thus, on the eve of the beginning of the transition, the communists remained firmly in control but lacked a viable plan for the country.

The degree of floundering within the communist party displayed itself in the rapid changes in the organization's leadership. Kania replaced Gierek within a little over two months after the latter had ordered price increases. Kania, unable to provide a solution, survived for approximately five more months, until Jaruzelski became prime minister in the winter of 1981. As a military leader, Jaruzelski represented a last resort for the party. (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, p. 201) At this point, the military was one of the most popular institutions in Poland, due in large part to its refusal to support the use of force against strikers throughout the 1970s and in 1980. However, Jaruzelski's declaration of martial law tarnished the military's pristine reputation and, along with the party's inability to boost the economy, further alienated the masses (Lee, 2001, p. 101-2).

Ultimately, the communist party under Jaruzelski succeeded in restoring order to Poland, but it did not find a remedy for the problems within the party. By the mid-1980s, the hardliners within the party thought that Jaruzelski had not gone far enough to silence the opposition, and they supported the police assassination of an opposition priest in late 1984 (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, p. 203). On the other hand, the reformers sought greater concessions within the communist framework to appease the masses (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, p. 228). Changes in the Soviet Union prompted Jaruzelski to move toward the reform group, and the unilateral granting of amnesty in fall 1986 followed by the submission of the economic plans to a national

referendum in 1987 demonstrated a shift towards liberalization. In spite of continued hardliner opposition, Jaruzelski led the reform movement into the round-table talks with Solidarity in 1989. (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, pp. 229-30)

After the elections, Jaruzelski continued as president, and most of the power appeared to be with the communist reformers. Through the office of the president, the communists had the ability to dissolve parliament, control the military, and fill the government bureaucracies with their own nominees. However, the dramatic lack of support for the communists, as displayed in the elections, quickly produced a *de facto* degradation of the party's power. (Kloć, 1991, p.16) This change led to the splintering of the party in early 1990 (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, p. 231), effectively undermining the institutional power of the party.

In addition to the communist party, another elite institution was present in the form of the Solidarity movement. The predecessor to Solidarity, the Committee for the Defense of Workers, included intellectuals and professionals within its membership (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, p. 199). However, with the rise of Solidarity in 1980, the *intelligentsia* within the opposition was largely co-opted into or overshadowed by the mass-based movement (Kloć, 1991, p. 14; Taras, 1995, p. 100). Ultimately, the Committee for the Defense of Workers disbanded in 1981, having served most importantly as a model for other opposition groups, such as Solidarity (Taras, 1995, p. 106). Thus, the concept of an opposition elite independent from the masses does not accurately characterize the Polish situation.

Overall, the communists remained the dominant elite actors in Poland throughout the transition. Opposition elites never gained a firm, independent footing in Poland because most were incorporated into the growing mass-based institutions.

#### ***b. Mass-Based Institutions***

In comparison to the elite institutions, mass-based institutions played a more visible and dominant role in Poland's transition. These civil-society organizations, best represented by the Roman Catholic Church and the mass-based Solidarity movement, became the driving force for change in Poland during the 1980s.

The Roman Catholic Church was an important mass-based institution during the Polish transition. The Church had consistently maintained a relatively high level of separation from the government throughout the period of communist rule (Kloć, 1991, p. 13; Taras, 1995, p. 96). This separation allowed the Church to serve as an “umbrella organization” for the mass-based organizations in civil society. Pope John Paul II’s visit to his Polish homeland in 1979 sparked large, peaceful gatherings that presaged the non-violent mass-based movements of the 1980s. Indeed, the Church emerged as the institution commanding the greatest trust from Poles in a survey in 1981. (Lee, 2001, pp. 102-3)

Elements within the Church that favored political reforms steadily gained influence among the Polish Catholic hierarchy as communist rule progressed. Although the Church attacked the declaration of martial law, some elements of the Church initially distanced themselves from the Solidarity movement. (Taras, 1995, pp. 96-9) During this period, the Church “also recommended tactical restraint and strategic moderation lest Poland again lose its sovereignty” (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, p. 200). After the Church failed to decry the assassination of a radical priest in 1984, its influence began to slowly wane (Taras, 1995, pp. 99-100). The last significant actions on the part of the Church occurred before the 1990 presidential elections when it gained some concessions from candidates, including Wałęsa, who did not want to alienate Catholic voters (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, p. 234). Overall, the most important action of the Church was to allow opportunities for the development of opposition movements during the communist regime.

Meanwhile, organized workers, especially skilled workers, formed the initial cadre for the non-Catholic mass-based movements in Poland (Taras, 1995, p. 100). Indeed, workers’ unions had existed throughout the communist regime, but only in the 1970s did enough resentment amass in response to economic hardships to push these groups toward political action (Kloć, 1991, p. 14). The price increases in 1980 served as the turning point for the workers’ organizations and led to the emergence of the Solidarity movement. Although the Committee for the Defense of Workers fostered much of the initial cooperation among workers’ groups (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, p. 198-9), the Solidarity movement soon moved beyond this elitist base to incorporate “workers and

white-collar employees, intellectuals and entrepreneurs, Catholics and communists” (Taras, 1995, p. 102). The wide variety of social sectors composing Solidarity, along with its vast membership, solidly characterized the movement as a mass-based one. Although Wałęsa controlled Solidarity *de jure*, his authority often appeared ineffective in directing the actions of the masses in his organization. Indeed, the resulting unmanageability of Solidarity proved to be own of its greatest powers (Taras, 1995, p. 102).

In spite of its initial success, Solidarity was not without its own troubles. Still threatened by the communist regime and losing membership by late 1981, it did not have enough strength to openly challenge the assertion of martial law (Taras, 1995, pp. 104-5). Solidarity moved underground for most of the decade following the government’s decision to de-legalize the movement in 1982. Solidarity used this period and its accompanying economic deterioration to attract renewed mass support. It continued to promote strikes, and the mass protests in 1988 succeeded in forcing negotiations with the communists early the following year. (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, pp. 202-3; Kloć, 1991, pp. 14-5) Support for Solidarity in the subsequent parliamentary elections demonstrated the overwhelming popular backing that the movement enjoyed and with which the movement was able to achieve significant political concessions from the communists. Overall, the mass-based institution of Solidarity gradually replaced the Roman Catholic Church as the most prominent actor in Poland’s transition.

### *c. External Institutions*

Composing the third type of political institutions, external institutions also played a role in shaping the transition in Poland. Unsurprisingly, the major external institutions included the Soviet Union and the collective West. This, of course, reflected the Cold War environment that dominated the political interactions between the superpowers and their satellite states.

As alluded to earlier, the Soviet Union's primary contribution to the transition was to create the necessary political space for reforms in Poland to progress. However, this did not occur until the mid-1980s. In the early part of the decade, the

Soviet Union, fearing that strikes might spread to other countries within the Soviet bloc, pressured Kania to contain the Solidarity movement. This external pressure was an influence in the Polish communists' decision to replace Kania with Jaruzelski. Soviet dissatisfaction, manifested by unusually large military exercises, continued to affect Jaruzelski's decision making with the instatement of martial law in late 1981.

(Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, pp. 201-2)

Despite the earlier repressive action favored by the Soviet Union, the political room to maneuver gradually expanded after Gorbachev introduced reforms into the Soviet system. The political opening in the Soviet Union corresponded with a relinquishing of control over the Central European members of the Soviet bloc. (Lee, 2001, p. 99) In 1987 and 1988, Gorbachev continued to support Jaruzelski amid mounting opposition pressure in Poland. However, the Soviets now urged the communist hardliners in Poland to pursue political change, and the Poles acquiesced. (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, p. 229) Moreover, in 1989 the foreign ministers of the Warsaw Pact countries met in Poland and decided to null the Brezhnev Doctrine, which had previously allowed military intervention in Central Europe by the Soviet Union (Lee, 2001, p. 99). Cumulatively, these changes allowed Solidarity to operate with more freedom and without the fear of triggering a Soviet crackdown in Poland.

Throughout this period of shifting Soviet strategy, the West consistently acted in support of liberalization and democratization in Poland. Beginning with the Carter administration and continuing through that of Reagan, the United States exerted significant human rights pressure on Poland. Western European countries also pressured Poland to increase its respect for the basic rights of its citizens. For example, when the communists declared martial law in Poland in 1981, the United States responded with sanctions against the regime. These measures remained in place until late 1984, when Polish political dissidents received amnesty and were released from prison. In a later instance, Vice President Bush paid his respects to the assassinated opposition priest during an official visit in Poland. (Lee, 2001, p. 100) These actions demonstrated the West's desire to advance the degree and pace of political reforms in Poland.

Ultimately, both the East and the West pressured Polish communists during the 1980s. Initially these pressures were in opposite directions, but after the Soviet Union adopted its own reforms, both superpowers pressed for political openings in Poland.

### **3. Reassessing Poland's Mode of Transition**

With an understanding of the relative weight of the elite, mass-based, and external institutions on the Polish transition, this section reassess Karl and Schmitter's initial characterization of Poland's mode of transition. Karl and Schmitter argue that Poland's transition progressed through the following modes of transition: mass-based pressure and a pact in the early 1980s, imposition of martial law in the mid-1980s, more mass-based pressures and a second pact in the late 1980s, and mass-based reform movement at the very end of the transition. Due to the initial and final presence of mass-based pressures and their continued presence throughout the 1980s, Karl and Schmitter firmly locate Poland's mode of transition in the reform category. (Karl and Schmitter, 1991, p. 276) Although this work moves Poland's position slightly, it does concur with Karl and Schmitter's decision to characterize the Polish transition as reform-based.

The presence and influence of politically-active Polish workers and the Solidarity movement from 1980 through 1990 clearly lends support to characterizing Poland's transition as one of reform. Indeed, the strikes in 1980 and again in 1988 and 1989 forced the communists to respond with political concessions. The pacts were a direct reaction to the mass-based power of Solidarity and were not merely an agreement between two elite institutions operating independent of the masses.

Even so, some authors emphasize the pacted aspect of the transition. Munck and Leff argue, “[T]he Polish transition began when incumbent elites allowed a marginalized opening that undermined the basic outlines of the *ancien régime*, while retaining sufficient control over the transition process to force antiincumbent elites to negotiate” (1999, p. 7). This interpretation ignores the events before 1989, minimizes the importance of the masses, and overstates the degree of imposition. Despite the ability of the communists to delay reforms in the mid-1980s, their lack of strength and their inability to find a solution to Poland's economic problems or their internal party divisions

suggests that the communists, in effect, were waiting for the mass-based opposition to develop enough power to be able to control the transition process. The communist elite influence acted more as a braking force rather than a propelling one for change.

Based on the events throughout Poland's long transitional period, Figure 4 locates the Polish transition within the reform category. However, recognizing the influence of the Great Pact, it moves Poland's location more closely towards the pacted mode than does Karl and Schmitter's assessment in Figure 2. However, keeping Poland within the confines of the reform mode recognizes that the pacted aspects of its transitions were clearly driven by constant, widespread mass-based pressure. Acknowledging the influence of the communist party but refusing to characterize that influence as imposition, Figure 4 moves Poland's position only slightly to the right, towards the elite portion of the x-axis, of Karl and Schmitter's positioning in Figure 2.

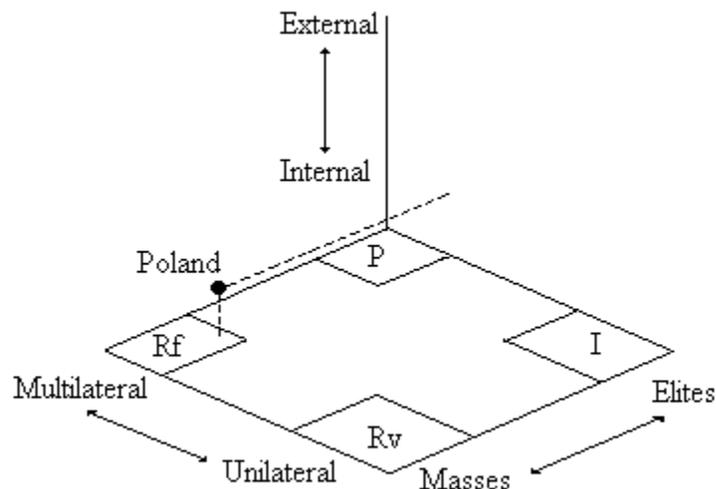


Figure 4. Poland's Mode of Transition  
After Karl and Schmitter, 1991, p. 276

Finally, Figure 4 places greater emphasis on internal than external institutions in Poland's transition. The pressure, or reduction thereof, from the Soviet Union and the West served to create additional political space within Poland and did not directly cause political change. Lee summarizes this viewpoint well:

[W]e must not overemphasize the external factors over internal incentives in the process of democratization. The change in the Former Soviet Union

did not propel transformations in Poland; what it did was to remove the crucial factor that had been blocking them. In other words, the constraint was external, but the impetus was internal. (2001, p. 100)

This quote supports the location of Poland's transition on the internal side of the z-axis. Essentially, Poland's location along this axis mirrors that of Hungary as both countries received similar pressure from external institutions.

Overall, Karl and Schmitter's assessment of Poland's mode of transition remains valid. Although Figure 4 moves Poland's position very slightly towards the pacted and imposition modes, it leaves it within the reform category, which most accurately describes the Polish transition.

### **C. ROMANIA**

According to Karl and Schmitter (1991, p. 276-7), Romania provides the closest example among the Soviet bloc countries of a transition by revolution. This section reviews the transitional events, analyzes the importance of different political institutions in Romania's transition, and reassesses Karl and Schmitter's characterization of Romania's mode of transition. Due to the overwhelming influence of mass-based pressure in the Romanian transition, this section argues that Karl and Schmitter's location of Romania's mode of transition should be adjusted slightly so that it unequivocally falls within the bounds of the revolution category.

#### **1. Transition: 1989-1990**

The most radical aspects of the Romanian transition away from Soviet-style communism clearly occurred between 1989 and 1990. To understand why the transition advanced so suddenly, one needs to be somewhat familiar with the political environment in Romania in the years preceding 1989. Nicolae Ceaușescu rose to power in Romania in the early 1970s and, despite communist party problems in other Soviet bloc countries, maintained firm control of Romania until his precipitous decline in late 1989 (Treptow, 1996, pp. 540-2, 554). During the 1980s, Ceaușescu promoted grandiose industrial goals at the economic expense of the country and at a high social cost to the masses, who generally remained paralyzed by a fear of the regime (Ratesh, 1991, pp. 1-9). Thus, a

hard-line regime and an intimidated populace accurately described the situation in Romania throughout most of the decade.

The first violent strike occurred in the fall of 1987. Led by economically-dissatisfied workers and soon joined by other Romanians, the strike developed strong political overtones. Unsurprisingly, the government responded with harsh measures of repression. (Ratesh, 1991, pp. 9-11) By early 1989, dissent began to rise within the communist party as well. Although Ceaușescu had successfully eliminated any opposition within his party during the course of his regime, in March 1989 a group of moderate communists published a letter in which they exposed the regime's abuses and demanded Ceaușescu's resignation (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, p. 246; Treptow, 1996, p. 553). Again, Ceaușescu responded with repression, isolating the authors of the letter (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, p. 246). Thus, until their ultimate demise, Communist hardliners remained in control of Romania.

In December 1989, the communists lost that power. Seeking to maintain the communists' grip on power, the state security apparatus, the *Securitate*, pressed for the transfer of an opposition priest from Timișoara to a smaller town. Although the church hierarchy agreed, the priest did not acquiesce. On 15 December, members of the priest's congregation as well as much of the population of Timișoara demonstrated around his church and blocked his transfer. Within two days, workers and students had joined the protest and transformed the religious disturbance into a political uprising. (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, pp. 247-8) Ceaușescu responded with force to break up the protests (Tismăneanu, 1997, pp. 416-7).

On 21 December, Ceaușescu ordered a popular rally to amass support for his position. However, the masses gathered for the event soon turned against the communists and, storming the Central Committee building, forced Ceaușescu to flee. (Tismăneanu, 1997, pp. 417) Clashes between the masses and security forces continued. Ceaușescu was captured, and a military court ordered his execution on Christmas. (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, p. 248) In ten days, Ceaușescu's reign had collapsed.

With no organized opposition to reorient the government, other communists, military leaders, and some members of the masses took control of the Romanian

government (Tismăneanu, 1997, pp. 417). These groups coalesced under the National Salvation Front, which took control of Romania's political future. Elections in May 1990 "produced" a victory for the National Salvation Front and its leader, Ion Iliescu. Although the Front claimed to be pro-democratic, it resorted to establishing a Leninist Socialist Party late in the year to further distance its previously-communist leadership from the past. Meanwhile, the multitude of opposition parties remained too weak and fragmented to establish a viable alternative to the continuation of the Soviet-era leadership under its new name. (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, pp. 249-50) Popular protests did continue, but the Front organized successful, violent counterdemonstrations (Călinescu and Tismăneanu, 1991, p. 294).

Despite the persistence of reformed communists in the Romanian government after the 1990 elections, a transition had occurred. Although the opposition would not take control of the government until 1996, the early 1990s did see a growth in the organizational and electoral ability of opposition parties (Tismăneanu, 1997, pp. 420-6). Thus, even though ex-communists filled the political vacuum in late 1989 and early 1990, the transition had been assured by 1990.

## **2. Political Institutions**

### ***a. Elite Institutions***

Some elite institutions played an important role in the Romanian transition. The Ceaușescu-controlled communist party dominated the elite institutions in Romania during the transition. This section focuses on the role of the party as well as that of the security forces, including the army and the *Securitate*.

The communist party dominated the elite institutions in Romania throughout its transition. Although the size of the communist party did not differ much from other Soviet bloc states, the concentration of power in Ceaușescu and his family was remarkable. During the 1970s, Ceaușescu's wife, Elena, became a member of the communist central committee, and his brothers, son, and brothers-in-law all held important positions within the ministries of defense, internal affairs, and agriculture as well as within the communist youth organizations and the council of science and culture. Moreover, the party created the position of president specifically for Ceaușescu.

(Treptow, 1996, pp. 541-2) These developments ensured that the communist regime became increasingly personalistic leading up to the transition in the late 1980s and effectively narrowed the scope of the communist elite within Romania.

As party power coalesced around Ceaușescu's inner circle, the hardliners simultaneously marginalized dissidents and reformers within the communist hierarchy. While this trend began in the 1960s and 1970s, it solidified in the 1980s. Party members who expressed concern over the path of the regime remained at or were relegated to lower-level positions within the party and the state bureaucracy. Iliescu was among this group that became increasingly unsuccessful in reorienting the regime's direction. (Treptow, 1996, pp. 542, 545-6, 551) Furthermore, Ceaușescu even rotated the hardliner members of the party through various positions and ministries in order to prevent them from challenging his control (Georgescu, 1991, p. 257). Thus, Ceaușescu found himself isolated from the political rebellions occurring in 1989 and unable to draw upon any party support or point to an intra-party reform movement as a way around an immediate loss of power. The increase in repression throughout the 1980s, highlighted by the decision to move the dissident priest out of Timișoara, further alienated the core party elite from the Romanian masses (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, 246-7).

Intra-party dissent did emerge early in 1989 in the form of a letter authored by six long-time communist committee members. Although this letter, which offered the hope of stimulating a reform movement within the party, received endorsement from two former first secretaries of the Romanian communist party, it failed to create a change within the Ceaușescu elite. (Ratesh, 1991, p. 11) The hardliners dismissed the letter's authors from the party and restricted their basic civil liberties in a successful attempt to stem dissent within their ranks (Rothschild and Winfield, 2000, p. 246).

Throughout this period, the government bureaucracies with the most influence were the security forces. Beginning in 1981, the army received increasingly higher levels of responsibility, especially in the economic sector, and eventually obtained control over several economic sub-ministries and projects (Georgescu, 1991, 261). Until 21 December 1989, the army remained loyal to the communist regime. Essentially, this

loyalty was what would normally be characterized as good civil-military relations. In response to the strikes, the army merely followed the orders issued from Ceaușescu, and, indeed, Ceaușescu assumed all of the responsibility for the army's actions as late as 20 December (Călinescu and Tismăneanu, 1991, p. 281). However, when popular protests suddenly sapped the communists' power on 21 December, dissidents within the military quickly followed the lead of the masses, taking prominent roles in the National Salvation Front (Călinescu and Tismăneanu, 1991, p. 284, 289). Indeed, the fact that a military court tried and sentenced the Ceaușescus (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, p. 248) suggests that the army remained loyal to whoever was in power at any given moment.

As the other main component of Romanian security forces, the *Securitate* operated in much the same way as did the army. The *Securitate* was responsible for preventing the rise of an organized opposition, and it relied on a dense network of informants to keep dissidents under control (Tismăneanu, 1997, p. 412). The first major use of the *Securitate* in the 1980s came in 1987 when the organization responded to worker strikes with extreme repression and violence. This scene repeated itself in December 1989 when harsh responses again followed the popular demonstrations. (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, pp. 246-8) Like the army, the *Securitate* followed orders from the party and did not initiate these actions of its own accord (Tismăneanu, 1997, p. 414). However, due to the actions of the *Securitate* during the transition, it became a convenient scapegoat on which the masses and the army placed significant blame for the revolution's casualties (Ratesh, 1991, pp. 136-7). Overall, all of the elite institutions, including the communist party and the security forces, that affected Romania's transition were state-based and under the tight control of the Ceaușescu regime.

#### ***b. Mass-Based Institutions***

Mass-based institutions form the second category of institutions that can affect regime transitions. Although a few civil-society organizations became more vocal critics of the communists in the latter half of the 1980s, most of the opposition remained fractured until the violent outbreak in 1989.

Organized mass-based institutions remained scarce in Romania throughout the early 1980s due to the actual and perceived effectiveness of the *Securitate* in shattering dissident movements in the prior decades (Treptow, 1996, pp. 552-3). Despite the crackdowns, latent anger continued to build among the population due to the continually deteriorating economic situation. As the communists sought more energy to power their grandiose industrial projects, they sold increasing amounts of local foodstuffs on the international market, and this resulted in a demoralizing food shortage in Romania (Ratesh, 1991, pp. 6-7).

The majority of reactions to these circumstances during the 1980s began among individual intellectuals. Schoolteachers, poets, writers, and human rights activists all contributed to the growing anti-communist literature of the late 1980s (Ratesh, 1991, pp. 13-4). In addition, some of the intellectuals had been members of political parties that were outlawed in 1947. These activists, some of whom organized the Romanian Democratic Action, did find some support among Romanian workers and youth, but their efforts centered on demanding respect for existing political guarantees in the constitution, as opposed to a sudden and complete change of regime. (Georgescu, 1991, p. 277)

Simultaneously, religious organizations did maintain a constant, albeit largely repressed, source of criticism for the regime. Although the leading Orthodox Church generally remained quiet, one of its priests, Gheorghe Dumitreasa, gave ardently anti-communist sermons during the 1980s. His actions resulted in imprisonment. Dissent was more widespread among evangelical churches, and their vigor and foreign connections proved a source of annoyance to the communist party. (Ratesh, 1991, p. 13) Also, beginning in the mid-1980s, members of the Hungarian minority in Romania became more vocal, demanding government respect for their nationality and their cultural rights. As an expression of their discontent, they succeeded in publishing Romania's only independent periodical. (Georgescu, 1991, p. 278)

The growing frustration within the unorganized populace found its release in the workers' strike of late 1987. Unable to reach an agreement with their management, workers in Brasov turned economic complaints into political demonstrations as their "election" day march attracted support from other common Romanians. The protestors

invaded the local party headquarters and burned communist literature and portraits of Ceaușescu. (Ratesh, 1991, pp. 10) This event was the first major popular outbreak to foreshadow the nationwide demonstrations of 1989.

Unorganized protest, generally in the form of critical letters and anti-government statements, did increase somewhat following the letter sent by the six dissenters within the communist party, but an organized opposition still did not emerge (Ratesh, 1991, p. 11). Ultimately, the largest manifestation of popular opposition to the regime was in December 1989. Parish members protesting against the transfer of their opposition priest from Timișoara on 16 December refused to disperse, and members of the police and army fired on them. (Tismăneanu, 1997, p. 416) The initiation of violence by the government triggered a coalescence of popular will that the limited opposition movements previously had been unable to achieve. Thousands of protestors returned to the streets the following day, and the same scene was repeated (Tismăneanu, 1997, p. 416). News of the uprising in Timișoara spread throughout Romania, and on 21 December mass demonstrations against Ceaușescu's pro-government rally effectively ended the communist regime.

Following the ouster of the communists, the opposition remained splintered. The varied opposition parties remained too weak and fragmented to create a successful electoral challenge to the National Salvation Front during the May 1990 elections. This contributed to the victory of the Soviet-era leadership under its new name. (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, pp. 249-50)

Overall, the number of individual and organized civil-society movements in opposition to the communists grew throughout the 1980s. However, they never reached the level of strength needed to openly challenge the government. Ultimately, the repressed anti-government sentiment of the Romanian population arose as a reactionary and previously-unorganized mass rebellion in response to the communists' attempt to use violence to maintain control.

### *c. External Institutions*

External institutions form the third group of political institutions that may affect regime transitions. In the case of Romania, not only did other states affect the

transition environment but also some influential non-governmental organizations became involved in shaping the political environment within the country.

As was the case in most Central European transitions, the other Soviet bloc countries played a role in affecting the transition in Romania. By December 1989, many of the communist regimes in the region had already been toppled. The Ceaușescu elite could no longer rely on the threat of outside intervention to force its population into submission. Essentially, Romania was isolated from the rest of Central Europe by the time of its transition. (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, p. 247) Moreover, in November 1989 the Soviet Union abandoned the Brezhnev Doctrine of intervening in Warsaw Pact states in support of communism (Călinescu and Tismăneanu, 1991, p. 280). Indeed, immediately following the massacre in Timișoara the parliaments of Poland and Hungary voiced their disapproval of the human rights situation in Romania, and the Soviets expressed regret over the loss of life in Romania (Ramesh, 1991, p. 37). Paradoxically, this lack of traditional sources of support caused the Romanian communist hardliners to increase their efforts at retaining control over the country (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, p. 247).

From the West, Romania felt pressure from states as well as non-governmental organizations. Through the middle of the 1980s, Western Europe and the United States had praised Romania for maintaining a fairly independent position within the Soviet bloc (Georgescu, 1991, p. 267). However, by the end of the decade it became increasingly clear that the communist hardliners left Western hopes of liberalization in Romania unfulfilled. The “gravitational pull” of the West, which seemed to have significant effects on other parts of Central Europe, (Parrott, 1997, p. 8) did not appear to have the same results on Romania, as evidenced by the continued hard-line position of the communist government.

Nevertheless, several external, non-state actors played influential roles in the Romanian transition. The Western press increasingly criticized the Romanian communist elites during the late 1980s. They labeled Ceaușescu a “tyrant” and the “sick man of communism” and, in reference to its economic problems, referred to Romania as the “European Ethiopia.” (Georgescu, 1991, p. 267-8) Moreover, due to the lack of a

non-state, nationwide news service in Romania, the Western media played a crucial role in disseminating information to the Romanian populace concerning the unfolding rebellion on 16 December 1989. By the following day, both the British Broadcasting Corporation and Radio Free Europe had alerted Romanians to the demonstrations in Timișoara. This information contributed to a sense of urgency among the masses that was reinforced on 18 December by interviews with eyewitnesses of the events in Timișoara. The same day, Radio Free Europe began repeating the following slogan: “Today in Timișoara, tomorrow in the whole country.” (Ratesh, 1991, pp. 35-6)

In reaction to the violence in Timișoara, Western governments strengthened their attacks on Romania’s communists. The United States condemned the use of force, the United Kingdom pressed for communist insiders to end the regime, West Germany characterized the situation as abominable, and the European Economic Community suspended agreements with Romania (Ratesh, 1991, p. 36). Nevertheless, these external pressures did not have a substantial impact on the hardliner regime.

Overall, state institutions from the East and West had isolated Romania to little effect. Even so, the spread of information via external non-governmental organizations did strengthen the masses’ resolve and help fuel the anti-communist demonstrations in the capital on 21 December (Treptow, 1996, p. 555).

### **3. Reassessing Romania’s Mode of Transition**

Building on an understanding of the influence of the various political institutions on Romania’s transition, this section reassesses the country’s mode of transition. Karl and Schmitter acknowledge that Romania’s transition was first a violent mass-based movement. However, they assert that the “unclear” role of the Soviet Union, the elite, and the military following the overthrow of Ceaușescu pushed the transition towards the imposition mode (1991, p. 277). This work challenges Karl and Schmitter’s latter description and argues that the Romanian transition falls clearly within the revolution category.

The absence of elite opposition to Ceaușescu's hardliner regime left few options for disgruntled Romanians. Attacking both reformers within the communist party and intellectual dissidents outside of the party allowed the Ceaușescu elite to keep a strong

grip on the country through fear and repression. However, once the masses disregarded the intimidation tactics of the communist-controlled security forces, Ceaușescu lost his foundation of power. After the mass-based uprising began in December 1989, the Romanian regime had no other options besides attempts at repressing the revolt. There were no opposition groups with which to negotiate.

Based on this course of events and the institutional environment in Romania prior to the transition, the collapse of Romanian communism must be characterized as occurring in the revolution mode of transition. Negotiations, pacts, and reforms did not figure into the transitional equation in Romania. Mass-based violence alone forced Ceaușescu to abandon his post and created the necessary political space for democratization.

Despite the crucial involvement of the masses in Romania's transition away from communism, they remained relatively unorganized and ineffective between December 1989 and May 1990 when the first elections took place. During this period, the ex-communists who formed the National Salvation Front did control the political environment. However, their actions did not constitute imposition as much as merely protection of their own interests. Thus, the events leading up to elections in post-Ceaușescu Romania reflected disparate partisan strengths more than an organized attempt by the National Salvation Front to impose a transition; democratization was already assured by the mass-based revolution.

Taking these events into account, Figure 5 locates Romania's transition firmly within the confines of the revolution mode of transition. In comparison to Karl and Schmitter's location of Romania's mode of transition in Figure 2, Figure 5 moves Romania's location toward the masses end of the y-axis. This reflects the primacy of the mass-based revolution in Romania's transition. Simultaneously, locating Romania's transitional mode near the elite edge of the revolution category acknowledges the strength of the elite-based National Salvation Front in the immediate post-Ceaușescu political environment. Figure 5 retains the location of Romania's transition relative to the y-axis as shown in Figure 2. This demonstrates the violent nature of the Romania's mass-based revolution and the lack of negotiations in the transition.

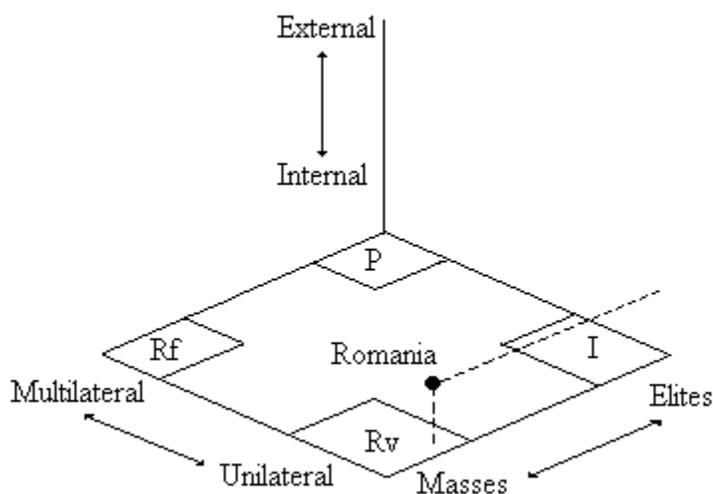


Figure 5. Romania's Mode of Transition  
 After Karl and Schmitter, 1991, p. 276

In reference to the z-axis, Figure 5 locates Romania's transition near the internal end of the axis. The internal, revolutionary nature of Romania's transition might suggest that external actors had less effect than Figure 5 recognizes. Indeed, the superpowers and their satellite states had a minimal effect on forcing a transition in Romania. However, the involvement of external non-governmental organizations, especially the foreign media, in alerting Romanians to the beginning of the revolution in Timișoara warrants placing Romania's transition closer to the external end of the z-axis than might otherwise be expected. Figure 5 reflects this contribution of external political institutions to Romania's transition.

Overall, Karl and Schmitter's characterization of Romania's transition places too much emphasis on imposition. Recognizing that a mass-based rebellion dominated Romania's transition, Figure 5 corrects this by moving Romania's location clearly within the confines of the revolution mode of transition.

#### D. BULGARIA

Based on Karl and Schmitter's assessment (1991, p. 276-7), Bulgaria provides the example of a country whose transition occurred through imposition. After briefly reviewing the crucial events in Bulgaria's transition, this study analyzes the importance

of different political institutions in the country's transition and reassesses its mode of transition. Ultimately, this section generally concurs with Karl and Schmitter's location of Bulgaria's mode of transition in the imposition category.

### **1. Transition: 1987-1990**

Although the crucial events in Bulgaria's transition occurred during 1989 and 1990, the proceedings begun in 1987 foreshadowed the coming. As the head of Bulgaria and its communist party, Todor Zhivkov had successfully pursued political stability and economic development, and by the 1980s outsiders thought of Bulgaria as more resistant to reform efforts than some of its Central European neighbors (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, p. 251). However, due to the Bulgarian communists' deference to the Soviet Union, the country soon came under pressure to institute changes. In 1987, Zhivkov introduced a substantial reform plan, the "July Concept." Although this program promoted political democratization, freedom of the press, and semi-open elections, it proved to be only a rhetorical tool. Initial changes disappeared by early 1988. (Bell, 1997, p. 357-8)

In July 1988, Zhivkov dismissed dissident members of the Bulgarian Communist Party who had fallen out of favor with Zhivkov's hardliner elites. Also during 1988, the first fledgling dissident movements appeared in Bulgaria. As change continued throughout the rest of the Soviet bloc, the government issued a second reform decree in January 1989. "Decree No. 56" was an economic reform program ostensibly designed to bring *perestroika* to Bulgaria. However, this program, like the July Concept, proved to be hastily planned and remained largely unimplemented. (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, p. 252)

By February 1989, opposition groups had become more vocal, but their protests did not significantly impact the communist regime (Bell, 1997, p. 358). In June 1989, the communists began a nationalist campaign against the Turkish-Muslim minority in Bulgaria, motivating over 300,000 of them to flee to Turkey (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, p. 252). Government repression of the Turkish-Muslim minority was stimulated, in part, by growing anti-communist sentiment among that section of the population (Bell, 1997, pp. 358-9).

Then, on 10 November 1989, the Politburo of the Bulgarian Communist Party removed Zhivkov from power and systematically eliminated his cohorts and relatives from their posts within the party and government. This action was a response to growing animosity among the communists towards Zhivkov's policies, his growing separation from the Soviet Union's policies, and his attempt to designate his unpopular son as his successor. (Bell, 1997, pp. 359-60) In addition, the decision reflected the desire of reformers within the party to forestall the collapse of Bulgaria's communist regime in a style similar to other Soviet bloc countries (Daskalov, 1998, pp. 9-10).

Petūr Mladenov replaced Zhivkov as the party and state leader. However, after videotape emerged showing him ordering tanks to move against a peaceful protest in December 1989, the party forced his resignation. Mladenov's successor, Aleksandūr Lilov, took control of Bulgaria in February 1990, and he distanced the communists from their Soviet legacy by assuming the renamed party role of "party president." This followed the January renaming of the Bulgarian Communist Party as the Bulgarian Socialist Party. Simultaneously, the regime ended censorship and agreed to round-table talks with the newly-formed Union of Democratic Forces opposition party. (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, p. 253)

The round-table talks prompted the government to implement laws in April 1990 that allowed political parties and defined the electoral system (Bell, 1997, p. 364). Freely and fairly contested elections took place in June 1990, and the Socialists captured the majority of votes. Even so, the opposition managed to force the Socialists to accept the leader of the Union of Democratic Forces, Zhelyu Zhelev, as the new Bulgarian president. (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, p. 253) Zhelev's ascendancy to the position of president effectively marked the end of Bulgaria's transition away from communism and towards democracy.

## **2. Political Institutions**

### ***a. Elite Institutions***

Elite institutions played a prominent role in Bulgaria's transition. The most important elite institutions were the Bulgarian Communist Party and its successor, the Bulgarian Socialist Party.

The communists dominated the political environment in Bulgaria throughout the early and mid-1980s. The ability of the communist party to work with the Soviet Union and Western Europe ensured that the Bulgarian economy remained fairly strong during these years. Furthermore, the party's rhetoric against Bulgaria's traditional enemies, such as Turkey, proved able to placate the desires of Bulgarian nationalists. (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, p. 251)

However, as economic problems and external pressure for change arose in the latter half of the 1980s, the communists could not develop an adequate response (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, p. 251-2). The July Concept recognized the need for reforms, but it changed little in actuality (Bell, 1997, p. 257). Similarly, the communist endorsement of *perestroika* and *glasnost* during the same year also created no long-term changes (Curtis, 1993a, p. 183-4). Hardliner control kept reform movements, both inside and outside the party organization, from presenting significant forces for political change. Although other communists absorbed some the aging Zhivkov's responsibilities during this period, he and the inner circle of communist hardliners remained able to dissipate the power of inter-party rivals, (Curtis, 1993a, p. 183) as evidenced by the dismissal of a disfavored Politburo member and the secretary of the Central Committee in July 1988 (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, p. 252).

Meanwhile, elite opposition groups remained absent from the political environment during the early and mid-1980s. The communist party co-opted vocal intellectuals, thus curbing the growth of an independent elite dissident movement. (Bell, 1997, p. 357) However, in the wake of increased repression of the Turkish-Muslim minority in Bulgaria, increased elite dissent emerged from the opposition. In the summer of 1989, Bulgarian intellectuals petitioned the government to restore the basic rights of the country's minorities. (Curtis, 1993a, p. 184)

Amidst the rising undercurrent of opposition, the hardliners remained generally unwilling to change. However, in late October 1989, Zhivkov did admit to the failure of the July Concept and Decree No. 56 to create sufficient political openings and economic growth (Curtis, 1993a, p. 185). Then, on 10 November 1989, the Central Committee announced Zhivkov's resignation. Soon it became apparent that reform-

oriented party members, who recognized that only political change could jumpstart economic recovery, had forced his resignation. (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, p. 253)

Even after the departure of Zhivkov, the communists remained the dominant elites and carefully directed Bulgaria towards democratization. Under the direction of the Politburo and, subsequently, Mladenov, the Bulgarian government initiated a series of political reforms, culminating in the scheduling of elections. These reforms proved essential to the retention of power by the renamed Bulgarian Socialist Party. (Curtis, 1993a, pp. 185-6) The round-table talks with the elite representatives of the opposition parties served to speed some of these reforms and also legitimized the former communists as valid post-Zhivkov actors (Daskalov, 1998, p. 10). Following the elections in early summer 1990, the opposition elites again played an important role in securing the presidency for Zhelev through negotiations with the majority Bulgarian Socialist Party (Curtis, 1993a, p. 187).

Overall, the communists headed the most significant elite institutions in Bulgaria. Before the Zhivkov's ouster, the hardliners dominated the Bulgarian Communist Party, and afterwards the reformers moved to the forefront with the Bulgarian Socialist Party. Opposition elites did not become important actors until early 1990 when they were able to negotiate with the Socialists for additional political concessions.

***b. Mass-Based Institutions***

Due to the prominence of the communist party, mass-based institutions did not play a major role in the Bulgarian transition. Nevertheless, the number of mass-based organizations increased as the transition approached.

The rise of opposition mass-based institutions coincided with the deterioration of the Bulgarian economy and political changes in the rest of the Soviet bloc (Curtis, 1993a, p. 199). An unofficial human rights organization emerged in Bulgaria in 1988, and other grassroots institutions arose soon after. By the spring of 1989, these organizations included *Podkrepa*, an independent trade union, and *Ecoglasnost*, an environmental party. (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, p. 252) Meanwhile, between 1987 and 1989, the membership of the Communist Youth League of Bulgaria declined by

30 percent, although the overall membership in the Bulgarian Communist Party remained remarkably high into the 1980s, with one in every nine Bulgarians registered as party members (Curtis, 1993a, pp. 205, 197).

Despite government attempts to eradicate opposition mass-based institutions, several such groups had established a secure foothold in Bulgaria by the summer of 1989 (Curtis, 1993a, p. 211). A few political parties, including the Social Democrats and the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union, reemerged under the Zhivkov regime. In addition, in May 1989 several thousand Turkish-Muslim Bulgarians demonstrated against the communists in response to increased government pressure on minorities in the late 1980s. (Bell, 1997, pp. 358) In late October and early November, meetings of human rights and environmental organizations prompted mass anti-government demonstrations in Sofia (Curtis, 1993a, pp. 184-5). Nevertheless, as the flight of Turkish-Muslims to Turkey demonstrated, mass-based institutions did not acquire sufficient support or power to force negotiations with the communists.

The major growth in mass-based organizations took place after the Bulgarian Communist Party dismissed Zhivkov. The Union of Democratic Forces was the primary post-Zhivkov opposition movement, and it incorporated several dissident organizations, including *Ecoglasnost* and the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union. Although the member groups within the Union of Democratic Forces agreed on several important political goals, they continued to focus their efforts on disjointed issue areas, which deprived the party of much of its potential political influence. (Curtis, 1993a, pp. 199-200) Nevertheless, the leaders of the Union did advance their party's position during the round-table talks with Bulgarian Socialist Party (Daskalov, 1998, p. 10).

The two other main mass-based organizations in post-Zhivkov Bulgaria were the Movement for Rights and Freedoms and the Bulgarian Socialist Party. The Movement for Rights and Freedoms represented the Turkish-Muslim minority in Bulgaria and, due to lingering nationalist sentiment in Bulgaria, failed to gain a seat at the round-table talks (Curtis, 1993a, p. 206). Representing the opposite extreme, the Bulgarian Socialist Party was very successful. Under new leadership but retaining the basic structure and resources of the Bulgarian Communist Party, the socialists

campaigns as defenders of the weak and as protectors of the Bulgarian nationalism (Daskalov, 1998, p. 12). Moreover, because the Bulgarian Communist Party had begun as an indigenous Bulgarian movement in the late nineteenth century, its socialist successor did not face the immediate rejection that plagued many other post-transition, Soviet-bloc communist parties (Curtis, 1993a, p. 186).

Thus, although some mass-based institutions did arise in Bulgaria prior to the ouster of Zhivkov, they remained weak and fragmented. When significant opposition parties finally coalesced in late 1989 and early 1990, they still did not enjoy the popular support or resource base of the reformed communist-socialist party.

*c. External Institutions*

Bulgaria's communists came under increasing external pressure to institute political changes during the late 1980s. Unsurprisingly, the greatest influences came from the Soviet Union and the West.

The turning point in Bulgarian-Soviet relations occurred in 1985 when the Soviet Union began political and economic reforms under the leadership of Gorbachev. The Soviets stressed that the Bulgarian communists had to institute similar changes if their traditionally-close relationship was to continue. (Curtis, 1993b, p. 56) The Soviets used economic pressure, including reductions in oil supplies and subsidies to Bulgaria, to force communist hardliners into action. The result was the July Concept of 1987, which, although it did not create long-term changes in Bulgaria, demonstrated the power of Soviet influence. The Soviet Union continued to support reform efforts within Bulgaria, as seen by the Soviet embassy's willingness to continue receiving reformist communists dismissed by Zhivkov in the summer of 1988. (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000, pp. 251-2) Simultaneously, the demonstration effect of reforms and changes throughout the Soviet bloc inspired Bulgarian intellectuals to become more vocal in their protests against the communist regime (Bell, 1997, p. 358).

The greatest demonstration of Soviet resolve to force reforms in Bulgaria was the Soviet-Bulgarian interaction prior to Zhivkov's dismissal. On a return trip from China, Mladenov stopped in the Soviet Union and discussed the political environment in Bulgaria with Soviet leaders (Bell, 1997, p. 360). The Soviets approved the inter-party

coup desired by reformers within the Bulgarian Communist Party, (Daskalov, 1998, p. 9) and Gorbachev viewed the change as appropriate due to Zhivkov's failure to create more-than-cosmetic reforms within Bulgaria (Curtis, 1993a, p. 185).

Pressure for reforms within Bulgaria also came from the countries of the West, but it was less influential than that of the Soviet Union. In the early and mid-1980s, Bulgaria sought relatively progressive ties with West Germany and France, but those links deteriorated as the end of the decade approached. In 1988, Bulgaria lost its attempt to receive membership in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade due to its persecution of Turkish-Muslim Bulgarians. (Curtis, 1993a, p. 221) In spite of this decision to punish Bulgaria's communists, the West did not reach out to pull Bulgaria towards democracy as much as it did for some of the other Soviet bloc countries. For example, the first Western head-of-state visit to communist Bulgaria was the French President Mitterrand in early 1989, and the United States only sent an assistant secretary of state to talk with the communists before Zhivkov's dismissal (Curtis, 1993a, p. 221). Although state interaction with the West was minimal, intellectuals in Bulgaria did increase their criticism of the communist regime after the West voiced support for human rights through the Helsinki Agreements (Bell, 1997, p. 358).

Overall, the Soviet Union was the most influential external institution in Bulgaria's transition. Soviet approval of Zhivkov's ouster was a significant boost to the reform elements of the Bulgarian Communist Party. Although the West made some overtures towards pressuring Bulgaria for change, its policies did not notably affect Bulgaria's transition except to encourage some elements of the opposition to take greater action against the communists.

### **3. Reassessing Bulgaria's Mode of Transition**

Building on the knowledge of the roles of various political institutions in Bulgaria's transition, this section reassess Karl and Schmitter's initial characterization of the country's mode of transition. Karl and Schmitter locate Bulgaria's transition within the imposition category, noting that violence occurred during anti-Zhivkov popular protests and that incumbent elites maintained control in the post-transition environment (1991, pp. 276-7). This work generally agrees with Karl and Schmitter's placement of

Bulgaria's mode of transition, but it argues against the importance of the popular demonstrations.

Clearly, Bulgaria's transition belongs in the imposition category. This "palace coup" was a preemptive move by elite communist reformers to ensure their political survival (Munck and Leff, 1999, p. 13). The decision of the Central Committee to remove their own hardliner leader, Zhivkov, demonstrated a forced change from within the party. Certainly, reformers' actions took into account the political events throughout the Soviet bloc as well as the rise of mass-based institutions in Bulgaria. However, since they acted before violence or negotiations forced them to, the Bulgarian communists executed a clear example of transition by imposition.

Moreover, the continued dominance of communist reformers and their Bulgarian Socialist Party in the post-Zhivkov environment showed their grip on power remained largely intact. Although some negotiations took place in early 1990, the Socialists spearheaded the majority of changes in Bulgaria's political system. Certainly, the retention of political strength and popular support by the Socialists adds weight to the argument that the communists instituted the transition on their own terms. Essentially, the imposition of change continued well past Zhivkov's departure.

While the description of Bulgaria's transition as one of imposition remains firmly agreed upon, the relative importance of opposition institutions is more difficult to determine. As previously mentioned, the communists were aware of growing dissent within the country. Political parties and civil-society organizations had grown significantly in 1989, and by the end of October popular protests had begun. Certainly, part of the communists' strategy was to "open competition so as to forestall a fuller popular mobilization that might attenuate their dominance" (Munck and Leff, 1999, p. 13). However, the limited scale of the demonstrations and the ability of the communists to manipulate the political environment showed that protests were not the controlling factor in Bulgaria's transition. Indeed, opposition mass-based institutions failed to capture the majority of Bulgarian support during the subsequent elections in the summer of 1990.

In spite of the weakness of the mass-based institutions, their elite leadership did help propel democratic changes in post-Zhivkov Bulgaria. The round-table talks allowed the elite opposition to pressure the Socialists and ensured that the Socialists would follow through quickly with more democratic reforms. That the opposition obtained the presidency for Zhelev in August of 1990 demonstrated both their growing political capacity and the “pattern of elite contestation” that characterized Bulgaria’s early democracy (Munck and Leff, 1999, p. 14).

Using this interpretation of events, Figure 6 places Bulgaria’s mode of transition firmly within the imposition category. However, it moves its position slightly in

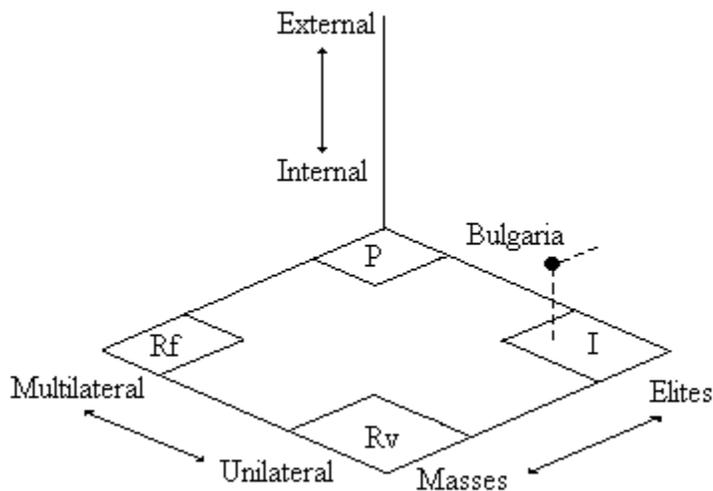


Figure 6. Bulgaria’s Mode of Transition  
After Karl and Schmitter, 1991, p. 276

comparison to Karl and Schmitter’s location of Bulgaria’s mode of transition in Figure 2. Figure 6 retains the location of Bulgaria's mode of transition relative to the x-axis in order to reaffirm the primary influence of imposition while acknowledging the pacted aspect of the post-Zhivkov round-table talks. In relation to the y-axis, Figure 6 moves Bulgaria's location more towards the elite end of the axis than does Figure 2. Although this is a relatively small shift, it reinforces the minimal influence of mass-based organizations on Bulgaria's transition and stresses the predominance of imposition.

In terms of the z-axis, Figure 6 recognizes the importance of Soviet approval for the imposition in Bulgaria. While external institutions aided in creating the political space in which the transition could occur, the Soviet state as an institution also influenced the course of the transition. For this reason, Figure 6 places Bulgaria's mode of transition closer to the external end of the z-axis and higher than any of the other case study transitions. Nevertheless, Bulgaria's location remains closer to the internal extreme of the axis than to the external extreme. This denotes the key role of Bulgaria's communists in devising and implementing the transition. Overall, Figure 6 generally supports Karl and Schmitter's characterization of Bulgaria's mode of transition as one of imposition.

#### **E. LESSONS FROM THE CASE STUDIES**

The previous analysis of the transitions in Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria reveals several important insights into transitions. Even though this study interweaves the transitional lessons through the comparisons of the Soviet bloc and Cuba found in the following chapters, this section provides a concise overview of these lessons to highlight the value of the case studies.

First, the case studies confirm that political institutions play a crucial role in regime transitions. In each of the case studies, the interaction of political institutions was sufficient to explain both the sequence of events during the transition and the mode of transition. No transitional outcomes remain unexplained by this method of analysis. Thus, as initially assumed, institutional environments determine the courses and results of regime transitions.

Second, although internal and external institutions both perform necessary functions in transitions to democracy in Soviet-style communist states, internal institutions played a more influential role in the case study transitions. In each case study, changes in the external institutional environment created the necessary conditions for a transition away from authoritarianism. The common external change among all the case studies was the decision of the Soviet Union to refrain from ensuring the survival of communism in Central Europe. Despite this change, the case study countries' internal institutional environments still required adjustment before a transition to democracy was possible. In essence, external institutional changes created additional space for internal

ones. Ultimately, while external institutions play a necessary role in transitions away from Soviet-style communism, internal institutions remain the more influential institutions in these transitions and largely determine the country's mode of transition.

Third, institutional changes occur at varying speeds. From the case studies, Poland and Romania represent two extremes of transitional rapidity. In Poland, the first substantial indications of change began almost a decade before the transition, but they did not happen in Romania until only a few months prior to its transition. This demonstrates that changes in a country's institutional environment can occur gradually or suddenly. Essentially, the specific strength and combination of the institutions affecting each country control the rate of its transition.

Overall, these three insights highlight the most fundamental lessons derived from the analysis of the case studies. These lessons appear in greater detail both explicitly and implicitly in the subsequent comparisons between the case studies and Cuba, and they greatly influence the implications for Cuba's next transition.

## IV. CUBA'S INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Focusing on this study's target country, this chapter analyzes Cuba's institutional environment. It begins by reviewing the institutions both within and outside of Cuba that are shaping Cuba's political environment and could contribute to the island's transition through their strengths or weaknesses. Next, this chapter compares Cuba's institutional environment with those of the case study countries. Ultimately, analyzing Cuba's institutional environment and comparing it to the institutional environments in Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria during their transitions provide the necessary information for drawing conclusions concerning the most likely characteristics of Cuba's next transition in Chapter V.

This chapter includes four main sections. The first three sections discuss the political institutions affecting Cuba and, like the previous chapter, focus on elite, mass-based, and external institutions. Prominent individual political institutions as well as groupings of less-influential institutions appear as subsections within each broad class of institutions. Based on the aforementioned sections, the fourth main section compares Cuba's institutional environment with those of the Soviet bloc countries throughout their transitions towards democracy.

### A. ELITE INSTITUTIONS

Elite institutions remain the dominant political actors within Cuba. Unsurprisingly, Cuba's primary elite institutions are its communist party and its security forces, including both the military and the internal security forces. A third and less-influential elite institution is the intellectual community. Although some dissent exists among this institution, it clearly has not risen to a level that cannot be controlled by the state apparatuses.

#### 1. The Communist Party

The *Partido Comunista de Cuba*, or Cuban Communist Party, is the single official party in Cuba and plays an important role in shaping Cuba's political environment. Like many of the other state institutions, the party responds primarily to Fidel Castro and his inner circle. In 1965, Castro reshaped the party to meet his own political needs, making

it essentially a front organization for Cuba's revolutionary political elites. Generally, Castro has not been a strong supporter of traditional party structure; rather, he has used the party as a policy tool and as a source of legitimacy. (Radu, 1995, pp. 91-2)

Despite the political strength of *Fidelista* hardliners within the party structure, the voice of communist reformers has been heard more often in recent years. This has led to contradictions in the statements made by Cuban officials. For example, reformers suggest that Cuba is heading towards a mixed economy while hardliners maintain that socialism will continue to be Cuba's permanent economic model. (Suchlicki, 2000, p. 123) Similarly, some disagreement exists within the party concerning the possible use of violence to maintain communist power. At an extreme, party members with intense ideological commitments, including many within the internal security service, favor such use of force. However, a significant section of more reform-oriented members of the party oppose a forceful continuation of the regime. In reality, it is difficult to determine the degree of backing for the use of violence against the populace because some party members who have affirmed their support may be doing so only to avoid party retribution but would not agree to such action in the event it was actually contemplated. (Betancourt, 1997, pp. 10-1)

The presence of some reformers within the Cuban Communist Party does not necessarily indicate that their viewpoint either is being accepted by hardliners or is forcing hardliners to compromise. In the past the party has consistently purged itself of members who wish to introduce attempts at liberalization or who challenge the dominance of the Castro hardliners. Many times, the dismissals have been justified as measures to rid the Cuban Communist Party of corruption rather than as assaults against rival political viewpoints. Furthermore, most of the replacements brought into the communist hierarchy have been younger and, thus, lack any type of independent political base. (Radu, 1995, pp. 92-3) This systematic purging of reform elements within the party has allowed the hardliner elements to retain an effective monopoly on party control.

In addition to ridding itself of internal challengers, the Cuban Communist Party is working to prepare a new leadership to carry on the revolution after Castro's death (Smith, 1996, pp. 108-9). In 1997, the Fifth Party Congress confirmed Raúl Castro as the

eventual successor to his older brother. During the congress, the younger Castro placed more hard-line communists in key party positions. Moreover, he announced reductions in the size of the party's Central Committee and Political Bureau, thus consolidating the power of the hardliners within Cuba. (Suchlicki, 2000, pp. 129-30) Based on Raúl's actions and rhetoric, it is clear that the party continues to see reformers within its ranks as threats to the regime (Betancourt, 1997, p. 19). In terms of his own political position, Raúl appears to be in the center-right of the party's membership, in support of hard-line political and security issues while in favor of limited economic reforms (Gonzalez, 1996a, pp. 38-41).

Overall, hardliners continue to dominate the Cuban Communist Party. Some reform elements may be present within the party, but they currently pose a minimal threat to regime continuation (Gonzalez, 1996b, p. 4).

## **2. The Security Forces**

Cuba's security forces form the island's dominant institutions. The Cuban military, or *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias*, and the internal security service are the two main security organizations in Cuba.

The Cuban armed forces were the first major revolutionary institution in Cuba. Their tradition of civic soldiering and their ability to avoid using violence against Cuban citizens has enabled them to maintain strong popular support (Walker, 1996b, p. 2). Since the early 1990s, the Cuban armed forces have become increasingly involved in the Cuban economy and, as a result, have become a more powerful institution (Radu, 1995, p. 99). Today, the military controls the following organizations in Cuba: the Ministry of Sugar Industry; the National Institute of State Reserves; the Ministry of Fisheries and Merchant Marine; the Ministry of Transport and Ports; the Cuban Civil Aviation Corporation; the Ministry of Information, Technology, and Communications; the Industrial Military Union; the Ideological Department of the Central Committee; the Ministry of the Interior; and several business outfits in the banking, tourism, shipping, land development, and agriculture sectors (Demarest, 2001, pp. 58-9; Walker, 1996a, p. 68). The growing role of the Cuban armed forces in the economy have led both to a

diminution of their fighting capability and professionalism and to an increase in their politicization (Millett, 1996, p. 147).

In terms of loyalty, the Cuban military continues to support the Castro elite. Furthermore, communist hardliners have worked to ensure that the military remains subservient to them. The 1989 execution of General Arnaldo Ochoa for involvement with the drug trade appeared more as an attempt to eliminate pro-Soviet, pro-reform tendencies within some sectors of the military than as a legitimate anti-corruption effort (Radu, 1995, p. 96). For the most part, the general officer corps within all of the services remains loyal to the regime although greater dissention appears to exist within the lower ranks of the military (Radu, 1995, p. 102). Higher-ranking officers tend to benefit most from the military's involvement in the management of the economy while those lower-ranking officers lacking in business skills see the changes as threatening their traditional avenues of promotion. For ideological and institutional reasons, the Cuban military generally favors limited economic reforms, but it does not support a complete transition to a market economy. (Gonzalez, 1996a, pp. 46-7) For similar reasons, the military also desires to avoid using force against the Cuban population although it remains unclear whether or not it would do so if so ordered (Demarest, 2001, pp. 59-60; Gonzalez, 1996a, pp. 47-8; Radu, 1995, p. 102). Overall, the Cuban armed forces currently have little to gain by abandoning the regime and are content with the choice of Raúl Castro as successor (Gonzalez and Nuccio, 1999, p. 10).

Cuba's internal security service, a part of the Ministry of the Interior, forms the second main security institution in the country. Besides its intelligence-gathering functions, the primary role of the internal security apparatuses remains defense against domestic opposition and subversion. Units within the Ministry of the Interior with anti-dissident functions include the Border Guard Troops, the Rapid Reaction Brigades, and the elite Special Troops. (Gonzalez, 1996a, p. 48) Indeed, the internal security services have infiltrated and eliminated dissident organizations on the island, have prevented the emergence of any robust civilian opposition, and have used force against the population, such as during popular riots in Havana in 1994 (Suchlicki, 2000, p. 132; Gonzalez, 1996a, p. 48).

Despite the difference in functions between the internal security forces and the military, the institutional separation between the two has diminished since 1989. In 1989, the Cuban government placed the Ministry of the Interior under the control of the Cuban armed forces and replaced the leaders of the ministry with military personnel (Walker, 1996b, p. 2). Although the regime justified the changes in the internal security services as an anti-corruption measure, the change may also have been prompted by the desire of Cuban hardliners to avoid later conflicts between the internal security apparatus and the military (Walker, 1996b, p. 2; Suchlicki, 2000, p. 132). Despite the co-option of the Ministry of the Interior by the armed forces, the former still functions as the primary defender of the communist regime. Institutionally, the internal security forces support the civilian hardliners even though some see limited economic reforms as beneficial. Moreover, due to the past abuses perpetrated by the internal security forces, a regime change threatens them even more so than it does the military. (Gonzalez, 1996a, pp. 48-9)

Overall, the security forces in Cuba appear committed and subordinated to the civilian authorities. Although both the military and the internal security forces support the communist regime, the latter appear to be more firmly embedded in hard-line doctrine and action than the former.

### **3. The Intellectual Community**

The intellectual community forms a third elite institution in Cuba. Although the Cuban government gives its intellectuals some degree of academic freedom, a strong, independent intellectual opposition still does not exist in Cuba.

Much of Cuba's intellectual community resides in Cuba's institutions of higher learning. Cuban professors claim to enjoy complete academic freedom as well as a high level of respect (Lawrence, 2000a, p. A48). In addition, since the mid-1990s, intellectuals have been able to make use of important external resources, such as the Internet. Internet access on university campuses is free and open, even though public Internet access is closely monitored and difficult to obtain (Lawrence, 2000a, p. A47; Demarest, 2001, p. 61). Although the government allows differing viewpoints to be taught and debated within its universities, it does not necessarily agree with them. In

practice, it even allows criticism of Cuban society as long as intellectuals do not blame the problems on the communist regime or the revolution. (Lawrence, 2000a, p. A48)

Due to implicit threats from the Cuban regime, many intellectuals remain hesitant to publicly comment on the government. Much of the intellectual community's hesitancy to denounce problems within Cuba or promote reforms is due to the relationship between it and the government. The government still controls academic travel and contacts with foreign intellectual communities. (Lawrence, 2000a, pp. A46, A48) Since a professorship and its benefits are much coveted in Cuba, intellectuals do not want to jeopardize their positions by pursuing political action (Lawrence, 2000b, p. A47).

Overall, despite the academic freedom available to Cuba's intellectual elite, the group generally confines its comments to the classroom. Due to the tight government control of career progression within the intellectual community, this sector of elites remains unwilling to jeopardize its status through political action.

## **B. MASS-BASED INSTITUTIONS**

Mass-based organizations in Cuba currently have varying degrees of effect on the political environment on the island. The most prominent and powerful mass-based organizations are religious ones, and the Roman Catholic Church dominates this group. Secular organizations also abound although the majority of these institutions maintains links with the communist regime. The final type of mass-based institutions, the dissident organizations, faces significant government harassment and lacks substantial popular support; thus, they cannot be considered strong political institutions.

### **1. Religious Organizations**

Despite past restrictions, religious organizations have become a stronger influence in Cuba in recent years. These organizations include the Roman Catholic Church, Protestant institutions, and Afro-Cuban religious affiliations.

The Roman Catholic Church is Cuba's primary civil-society actor. After the collapse of the Soviet bloc, Marxist-Leninist "religion" evaporated and the communists increased their religious toleration in an attempt to attract more Cubans to the communist party. However, many Cubans found their new religion in Catholicism, not in Cuban socialism. (Gonzalez, 1996a, p. 54-5) Moreover, the tendency of Cubans to seek refuge

in spirituality during times of crisis, which certainly have been evident in post-Soviet Cuba, has amplified the ranks of the Church's faithful (Dilla, 1999, p. 33). Today, the Catholic Church has the most popular support of any mass-based institution in Cuba. (Gonzalez, 1996a, pp. 54)

The Roman Catholic Church operates independently of the communist regime and has begun to challenge some of the government's policies (Gonzalez, 1996a, p. 54). Specifically, the Church supports a free-market economy, multiparty democracy, and a return to "traditional values of the Church" (Dilla, 1999, p. 33). Furthermore, priests often promote this political agenda from the pulpit in an attempt to reorient the political mindset within Cuba, and laymen bolster this promotion by conducting home-study programs focusing on the fundamentals of democracy. In addition, the Church sponsors an important non-governmental organization, Caritas, that has successfully bargained with the regime for greater access to foreign humanitarian assistance. (Gonzalez, 1996a, pp. 55-6) Overall, these operations aid the Roman Catholic Church in being the most active and influential mass-based institution in Cuba.

Although lacking in the organizational hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church, Cuba's Protestant churches have also become more active in the last decade. The stimulants of growth in Protestant organizations have been the same as those for the Catholic Church. (Gonzalez, 1996a, p. 56) In June 1998, a popular rally in Havana demonstrated the growing influence of Protestantism in Cuba. In response to the Pope's mass held early in the year, 100,000 Cuban Protestants gathered in the capital to show an alternative to Catholicism. Interestingly, the government provided transportation for this rally and broadcast it on television, and even Castro attended the function. (Jeffrey, 1999, p. 1190)

The political ability of Cuba's Protestant churches has grown slowly in recent years. While Protestants promote political viewpoints similar to those espoused by Catholics, they traditionally have not had as much success in coordinating their actions (Dilla, 1999, p. 33; Gonzalez, 1996a, p. 58). However, the Cuban Council of Churches is trying to change this by encouraging cooperation among Protestant congregations and organizations. The Council supports at least two significant non-governmental

organizations on the island, the Martin Luther King Center and the Center of Reflection and Dialogue. These organizations carry out community education and development projects and spread their message through progressive religious publications. (Dilla, 1999, p. 33) However, some church leaders question the loyalty of Cuba's Protestants and worry that Cubans see the churches as aid distributors more than a source of spiritual or political hope (Jeffrey, 1999, p. 1191). If true, this revelation weakens any political impact that Protestant organizations are likely to have in the near-term future. Thus, despite advances in membership and organizational capacity, Cuba's Protestant churches do not command as much political influence as the Roman Catholic Church.

The final group of religions in Cuba is based on Afro-Cuban beliefs. Afro-Cuban religions, including Santería, Palo Monte, and Abaku, remain the least influential of all religious groups in Cuba. Although these religions successfully escaped state efforts to dismantle them during the early waves of anti-religion campaigns, they have failed to mobilize politically in the last decade. In fact, the government began efforts in the early 1990s to co-opt the Afro-Cuban religions in an attempt to stymie political development within them, to gain support for the regime, and to undermine the growing Catholic Church. (Gonzalez, 1996a, p. 57) These efforts proved successful, and now informants within many Afro-Cuban congregations serve to alert the regime to possible dissidents (Gonzalez, 1996a, p. 58). Overall, despite the ability of the Afro-Cuban religions to attract followers, they currently lack the cooperation and organizational hierarchy necessary to become an influential political institution (Dilla, 1999, p. 33).

Ultimately, religious organizations form the core of mass-based institutions in Cuba. Although the religions vary in their political activity, none has developed its political activities as much as the Roman Catholic Church.

## **2. Secular Organizations**

A second type of mass-based institution appears in the Cuban non-religious social organizations and in the secular non-governmental organizations. The majority of these institutions maintains some affiliation with the government and therefore lacks an independent political voice. Truly non-governmental organizations remain scarce and,

having attracted negative attention from the communists, do not constitute an effective political opposition.

Social organization by the state has been a part of Cuban life throughout the revolution. Typically, many local and national social organizations served as mechanisms through which the communist party could disseminate its ideas and control the population. The largest state-organized institutions include the Committees for Defense of the Revolution, the Federation of Cuban Women, and the Union of Cuban Workers. Smaller institutions include student organizations, small peasant groups, and cultural and sports associations. (Dilla, 1999, p. 32) In total, over 2,000 such mass-based groups maintain official registrations with the Cuban government (Gonzalez, 1996a, p. 59). Even so, these organizations have declined in importance among the general population in recent years. The active membership of auxiliary organizations has dropped significantly as has popular interest in once-strong community activities, such as block meetings and vigilante patrols. (Radu, 1995, p. 106)

Regardless of the quantity of state-affiliated mass-based institutions in Cuba, the political capacity of the majority of these groups remains largely inconsequential. Publicly, these organizations support the revolutionary rhetoric. However, within the Cuban decision-making structure these institutions do enjoy some autonomy to express and promote their own opinions and agendas. They often develop independent positions on issues relating to their organization and represent their viewpoints in discussions with the government. Nevertheless, the open nature of these organizations resides primarily within each institution's framework and not in the framework of institution-government interaction. (Dilla, 1999, pp. 32-3)

Labor unions and other professional organizations in Cuba provide good examples of organizations with progressive internal structures. These institutions often have democratically elected leaderships and involve the organizational masses in routine policy-making. As early as 1994, the economic influence of these mass-based institutions became evident when labor unions succeeded in pressuring the government to abandon plans for an income tax. (Dilla, 1999, p. 32-3) The economic persuasion held by these institutions is not especially surprising when one considers that the sudden

growth in such organizations after 1989 resulted from the Cuban government's decision to shift much of its post-Soviet-aid social and economic burden to these mass-based groups (Gonzalez, 1996a, p. 59). Despite these advances, state-affiliated mass-based organizations have not challenged the communist regime politically. On the contrary, these institutions still support key political tenets of the revolution, such as the socialist system, economic equality, and anti-imperialism. (Dilla, 1999, pp. 32-3) If the more independent development of these organizations in the last decade represents an increase in regime opposition, it certainly must be characterized as loyal opposition.

Due to the close ties between most non-religious social organizations and the Cuban state, the majority of these institutions cannot be accurately described as non-governmental organizations. Nevertheless, a few secular, independent mass-based organizations do exist in Cuba. Perhaps the best examples of independent non-governmental organizations in Cuba are the Independent Society of Cuban Economists and the Independent Press Bureau. The Cuban government has denied these groups official non-governmental organization status, and this fact suggests that these institutions have not, like so many other social organizations on the island, been co-opted by the communists. (Gonzalez, 1996a, pp. 60-1) The local political ability of these institutions still remains low, and the Cuban government has actively attacked other non-governmental organizations, such as the *Concilio Cubano*, that it considered a threat to the revolution (Gonzalez and Szayna, 1998, p. 30). Thus, an independent network of non-governmental organizations remains weak and only in its formative stages in Cuba.

Overall, state-affiliated organizations dominate Cuba's mass-based social institutions. Government control of these organizations has allowed the communists to block the potential political influence of these groups. True non-governmental organizations have not established a firm footing in Cuba and face strong government opposition. Ultimately, this characterization of Cuba's secular social environment suggests that Cuban civil society remains in its earliest stages and faces significant challenges regarding its future progression (Gonzalez and Szayna, 1998, p. 35).

### 3. Dissident Organizations

Dissident groups with a specifically political focus form a third type of mass-based institution in Cuba. Although these groups have attracted some international attention, they remain a weak political force within Cuba due to constant government action against them and their own inability to mobilize significant popular support.

In the absence of opposition political parties, dissident organizations fulfill a unique role of political resistance to the Cuban government. While religious groups and non-governmental organizations support varying degrees of political action against the communists, the dissident organizations distinguish themselves because their sole *raison d'être* is political in nature. These institutions challenge the restrictive political environment in Cuba most commonly through campaigns to increase the regime's respect for human rights on the island.

Because of their purely political focus, dissident organizations in Cuba remain scarce and lack a significant political base and influence ("The Americas...", 2000, p. 38). The popular support for these institutions remains limited since most Cubans do not know about these organizations and, having developed a sense of political apathy under communist rule, do not care to participate in political change (Radu, 2000, pp. 11, 20). Moreover, although the Cuban government allows some individual criticism of its policies, it has successfully curtailed the growth of organizations that wish to increase their popular support or mount public challenges to the regime. Recently, the communists have renewed the crackdown on political dissent by using informants to help the regime target leaders of dissident organizations for continual government harassment. ("The Americas...", 2000, p. 38)

Despite the government's infiltration of and crackdown against most dissident groups ("The Americas...", 2000, p. 38), these mass-based organizations continue to make minor inroads against the communists. For example, during an Ibero-American summit in Cuba in late 1999, Castro succumbed to foreign pressure and allowed visiting dignitaries from through Latin America, Spain, and Portugal to meet with leaders of prominent dissident organizations. Although these institutions gained no concrete concessions from the government, they did cause some embarrassment for Castro and his

party. (Szulc, 1999, pp. 6-10) Specific dissident organizations have not attained any higher levels of success. Although a forty-day hunger strike in the summer of 1999 by the Tamarindo 34 Human Rights group sparked similar protests throughout the island and attracted support from a few thousand Cubans, it failed to achieve its goal of forcing the government to release all political prisoners and recognize basic human rights. (Martinez, 1999, p. 70)

Ultimately, the strength of the Cuban government prevents dissident organizations from expanding. Popular loyalty to Castro combines with widespread political resignation to produce sentiments such as the following: “Get angry? Why? There’s no point to getting angry. You can’t do anything about it” (Martinez, 1999, p. 71). As long as this context continues, dissident institutions in Cuba will likely remain small, fragmented, and politically weak.

### **C. EXTERNAL INSTITUTIONS**

A wide array of external institutions attempts to influence Cuba’s political environment. These include other states, non-governmental organizations, and even inter-governmental organizations. Although many external institutions have pressured the communist regime, none has achieved noteworthy success in actually forcing the Cuban government to change.

#### **1. Other States**

Through individual actions, other states seek to influence and change the Cuban government. The United States maintains the most hard-line stance against the communist regime. Many European and Latin American countries pursue a moderate relationship with Cuba through economic engagement. Other countries, such as China, Vietnam, and Venezuela, openly cooperate economically and politically with Cuba. Despite Cuba’s contact with a wide range of regime types, it has not changed its own political foundations as a result.

Historically, the United States has played a prominent role in attempting to shape Cuba’s political environment. Today, the United States continues as the dominant source of anti-Castro foreign pressure. In the last decade, the United States, hoping to speed democratization on the island, has acted to increase pressure on Cuban communists.

Much of this pressure has come in the form of Congressional laws intended to increase the economic woes for the Cuban government.

The Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 tightened the United States' embargo against Cuba by creating negative consequences for United States firms whose foreign subsidiaries traded with Cuba (Domínguez, 1996, p. 303). In 1996, President William Clinton signed the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, which further tightened the embargo. This act removed the president's prerogative over the embargo, requiring an act of Congress to change it. Furthermore, the legislation allows United States citizens to pursue legal action against foreign entities that deal in confiscated United States property and denies entry into the United States to any party involved in such activity. (Purcell, 1998, p. 48) However, President George Bush, recognizing the strong foreign criticism of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, recently followed the lead of his predecessor in suspending the section of the bill that allows prosecution of foreigners (Marquis, 2001, p. 1). Still, the United States refuses to deal economically or politically with the Castro regime.

Despite the United States' strong stance against Cuba's communists, many other states, while supporting democratization in Cuba, do not share the same affinity for harsh measures against the Cuban state. For example, during the 1993 Ibero-American Summit, all of the heads of the Spanish-speaking Latin American countries, Brazil, Spain, and Portugal approved a resolution that implicitly rejected the concept of the United States' unilateral embargo and called for its termination (Domínguez, 1996, p. 304). A similarly harsh response followed the United States' passage of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act. Important allies and trading partners, including Canada, Mexico, and many European countries, voiced disapproval of the legislation. Canada even responded with the Godfrey-Milikin Act, which duplicated the most controversial aspects of the United States law and authorized Canadian citizens to exact legal restitution from United States citizens for trafficking in confiscated Canadian property. (Richardson and Weiss, 1997, p. 1)

Mexico historically has maintained fairly close ties with Cuba, and in a recent interview, Jorge Castañeda, Mexico's foreign minister, reaffirmed that Mexico will

continue its relationship with the island. Although Mexico still disagrees with the United States' embargo against Cuba, under President Vicente Fox Mexico has pledged to press Cuba for greater respect of human rights and for democratization. (Castañeda, 2001, pp. 5-6) On the other hand, efforts to promote respect for human rights have not accompanied Venezuela's increasingly close ties with Cuba. In late 2000, Venezuela agreed to help alleviate Cuba's economic problems with supplies of subsidized oil ("The Ambitions...", 2000, p. 38). Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez's friendly ties with Cuba extend to the political arena as well; Venezuela voted against a resolution by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights to condemn Cuba on its human rights situation ("Vote...", 2000, p. 3). Some extra-regional states also maintain a position of solidarity with Cuba; these include countries with a past or present communist orientation, such as Russia, China, and Vietnam, and other Third World nations, such as Kenya (*Cuba*, 2000, p. 7).

Despite the large amount of economic, political, and human rights pressure applied to Cuba by other states, these measures have not produced significant changes in Cuba. For example, even though Cuba has changed its methods of repression, it has not lessened its anti-subversion campaign. In an attempt to avoid pressure from other states on the human rights situation on the island, the regime abandoned the long prison sentences previously awarded to dissidents and replaced them with a program of constant harassment based on continual short-term detentions ("The Americas...", 2000, p. 38). In essence, Cuba has noticed the human rights pressure from other states, but it has not fundamentally improved its respect for human rights.

In economic terms, the unilateral embargo has been unsuccessful in isolating the communists or producing a transition. Even though the Cuban government admitted that the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act did slow growth on the island (*Cuba*, 2000, p. 8), foreign investments and aid have continued to allow Cuba to weather the loss of Soviet aid that occurred in the early 1990s (Grogg, 2001, pp. 2-3). Ultimately, Cuba has not initiated significant political changes in response to the actions of other states in the last decade.

## 2. Non-Governmental Organizations

In addition to other states, non-governmental organizations also attempt to shape the political environment in Cuba. These institutions include groups with a political focus, establishments with business interests, and organizations devoted to protecting human rights. Due to the restricted access to Cuba, most of these organizations exert their influence indirectly by pressuring other states or inter-governmental organizations. Despite persistent efforts, these institutions have not forced changes within Cuba or among its communist leadership.

Cuban exile groups in the United States may be the most prominent non-governmental organizations focused on creating change in Cuba. However, these organizations do not form a monolithic bloc; instead they represent a wide range of opinions on interaction with the Castro government. Some extremist groups, such as *Acción Cubana* and *Alpha 66*, still maintain a militant stance against Cuba's communists. Although direct military action against Castro no longer is as widespread as it once was, such groups may have been involved in bombings of Cuba's tourist sector during 1997. (García, 1998, pp. 18, 22; *Cuba*, 2000, p. 8)

Among the more moderate exile groups, divisions exist between those who oppose engagement with the Cuban government and those who support it. Champions of the first position traditionally have included the Cuban American National Foundation, the *Junta Patriótica Cubana*, and *Cuba Independiente y Democrática*. These groups support hard-line legislation, such as the Cuban Democracy Act, that restricts the United States' ability to interact with Cuba. In contrast, institutions that favor dialogue with the Castro regime support efforts to increase personal and official interaction with the island. These groups include organizations such as the Cuban Democratic Platform and the Cuban Committee for Democracy. (García, 1998, pp. 21-2)

Moreover, changes and friction within exile organizations in recent years suggest that the lobbying potential of these groups may be waning. Younger Cuban Americans tend to support a more liberal position concerning interaction with Cuba than do their older, exiled relatives. Political involvement among this growing sector of the Cuban American community has been less widespread, and when these younger people associate

with exile groups, they favor organizations that support diplomacy over conflict. (García, 1998, p. 23) Recent developments within the Cuban American National Foundation mirror this trend. Many older, hard-line members of the organization have resigned their memberships, claiming that the group's young leader, Jorge Mas Santos, has softened the organization's opposition to Castro and betrayed the legacy of its founder and Mas Santos's father, Jorge Mas Canosa (Canedy, 2001, pp. 1-3).

Another, growing group of non-governmental organizations attempting to influence public policy in the United States is the business community. The Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers, the Export Council, and the National Foreign Trade Council have all echoed United States corporations' disapproval of the embargo against Cuba. (Richardson and Weiss, 1997, pp. 2-3) Arguing that democracy promotion accompanies the exportation of food and medicine, powerful farm lobbies representing grain and fruit growers have pressured the United States for changes in its Cuba policy (Magnusson, 2000, p. 56). The legislative response effectively blocked the hopes of these firms by making financing of food and medicine sales to Cuba illegal by any public or private government agency, bank, or financial institution. Furthermore, Cuba responded by declaring that it would not consider firms from the United States as suppliers until the United States lifts all of its economic restrictions against the island. (Grogg, 2001, p. 2) Denied access to Cuba, business interests in the United States have been unable to create significant changes there.

The final major group of non-governmental organizations with an interest in Cuba focuses on human rights issues. These groups seek to bring attention to the human rights abuses perpetrated by the communists and intend to improve the human rights situation on the island through external pressure. A limited number of non-governmental organizations attempt to influence the Cuban government in a relatively direct manner. The Brothers to the Rescue organization represents this type of group. Although it is known most for its efforts to save *balseiros* in the Straits of Florida, Brothers to the Rescue also aims to "promote and support the efforts of the Cuban people to free themselves from dictatorship through the use of active nonviolence." ("Hermanos....," 2001, p. 1) However, due to the willingness of the Cuban government to thwart activities

by these types of organizations, groups such as Brothers to the Rescue have been unsuccessful in creating change within Cuba.

Meanwhile, other non-governmental organizations with a human rights focus have pursued change in Cuba through indirect political pressure. These institutions, such as Amnesty International and the Human Rights Watch, provide human rights information on Cuba to other external institutions in the hopes that this knowledge will prompt these organizations to pressure Cuba for change. For example, the Human Rights Watch criticizes the communist regime on a number of fronts. Primarily, it compares Cuba's actions concerning human rights with the promises the island has made concerning the protection of human rights. The group criticizes Cuba for failing to respect the international agreements on human rights that it has signed, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and for failing to fulfill its obligations to respect human rights that stem from its incorporation into the United Nations Charter. Moreover, the Human Rights Watch uses specific examples of abuses in Cuba to support its findings. ("Summary...", 1999, pp. 1-8) Despite the efforts of groups like the Human Rights Watch, Cuba has avoided substantial change in its human rights practices.

Overall, non-governmental organizations have succeeded in attracting significant international attention to Cuba through the use of a wide variety of methods. Certainly, the awareness of Cuba's human rights situation among other states and inter-governmental organizations reflects, in part, the efforts of these institutions. Ultimately, though, the efforts of these groups have not created noteworthy changes within Cuba through direct or indirect action.

### **3. Inter-Governmental Organizations**

A final type of external institution that influences the Cuban political environment is the inter-governmental organization. The United Nations, the Organization of American States, and the European Union are three such institutions that have pressured the Cuban government to make political changes. Despite the number of countries that these organizations represent, they have been unable to obtain political concessions from Cuba.

As the most prominent inter-governmental organization in the world, the United Nations has supported Cuba on some issues and chastised the island concerning others. On multiple occasions in the last decade, the United Nations General Assembly passed resolutions that called for the United States to end its embargo on Cuba. These declarations served as a direct response to the passage of the Cuban Democracy Act by the United States in 1992. (Domínguez, 1996, p. 304) A similar resolution received the support of an overwhelming majority of the General Assembly following the United States' enactment of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act (Richardson and Weiss, 1997, p. 1).

During this same period of time, the General Assembly began calling on Cuba's communist regime to end its human rights abuses and to increase its respect for specific principles of the United Nations Charter, such as the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of association (Domínguez, 1996, pp. 304-5). The denouncement of Cuba's human rights situation has continued since then. For example, during the spring of 2000 the United Nations Commission on Human Rights voted to support a resolution that condemned the Cuban government for its repression of political dissidents and religious groups ("U.N. Rights...", 2000, p. 1). Thus, in the last decade, the United Nations consistently has supported Cuba's condemnation of the United States embargo while simultaneously criticizing the island for its dismal human rights situation.

The Organization of American States has adopted a stance on Cuban issues that is very similar to that of the United Nations. In 1996, the organization approved a resolution condemning the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act. The resolution, approved by all member states with the exception of the United States, decried the legislation as a threat to international law and commerce. (Richardson and Weiss, 1997, p. 2) In late 1997, the group reaffirmed its commitment to the Santiago Declaration by amending its charter to allow the institution to isolate any government whose leader comes to power by a coup ("International...", 1999, p. 2). Thus, although the Organization of American States criticizes the current United States policy, it also refuses to accept Cuba as a participating member of its institution because of the island's lack of democracy and poor human rights record.

As a third major inter-governmental organization with an interest in Cuba, the European Union has maintained a slightly more liberal position towards the island. Like the United Nations and the Organization of American States, the European Union does not support the United States' embargo of Cuba. Instead, it seeks to promote change in Cuba through economic and political ties. Since 1996, the European Union has affirmed a common position that links full economic cooperation to the communist regime's improvement of human rights and basic freedoms on the island. However, Cuba has rejected European efforts to cajole it into making political changes. Nevertheless, the European Union invited Cuba to be an observer to the Lomé Treaty, which established favorable trade agreements with less developed countries. ("Summary...", 1999, p. 9) Moreover, the European Union has provided humanitarian aid to Cuba in the form of shipments of food, medicines, and medical supplies (*Cuba*, 2000, p. 8). Despite the European Union's attempts to link economic engagement with political opening, Cuba has refused to agree to political change.

Ultimately, these inter-governmental organizations share a similar position. Each criticizes both the United States' embargo and Cuba's political and human rights situation. However, none of these institutions has shown significant progress in changing the political environment in Cuba.

#### **D. COMPARISON OF CUBA'S INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT TO THE CASE STUDIES**

Building on the analysis of the political institutions in Cuba, this section compares the institutional environment on the island with the institutional environments of each of the Soviet bloc case studies. This comparison provides the foundation for Chapter V, which draws out the implications of the similarities and differences found in the comparisons. This section divides the comparisons in three initial parts. Each section focuses on one of the following types of political institutions: elite, mass-based, and external. The fourth part of this chapter looks at the institutions collectively, and shows how Cuba's institutional environment is most similar to the institutional environments in pre-transition Romania and Bulgaria.

## 1. Comparison of Elite Institutions

An effective comparison of elite institutions recognizes that during a transition some elite institutions prefer a continuation of the non-democratic system while others desire to replace that system with a multi-party democracy. Thus, this comparison of Cuba's elite institutions to those in Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria looks at both pro-communist and anti-communist institutions. Overall, this comparison demonstrates that Cuba's pro-communist elite institutions most resemble those in Romania while its anti-communist elite institutions appear similar to those in Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria.

Table 1 compares Cuba's elite institutions to those found in the case study Soviet bloc countries prior to their transitions towards democracy. Each of eleven elite

<b>Elite Institutions</b>	<b>Hungary</b>	<b>Poland</b>	<b>Romania</b>	<b>Bulgaria</b>	<b>Cuba</b>
Communist Party	H	H	M	H	M
Nuclear Communist Elite	L	L	H	L	H
Communist Hardliners	M	M	M	M	M
Communist Reformers	H	H	L	H	L
Government Bureaucracies	L	L	L	L	L
Military	L	L	M	L	H
Internal Security Forces	L	L	M	L	M
Opposition Parties	H	L	L	L	L
Opposition Moderates	H	L	L	L	L
Opposition Radicals	M	L	L	L	L
Dissident Intellectuals	L	L	L	L	L
Assessments of Institutional Strengths: H = High; M = Moderate; L = Low					

Table 1. Comparison of Elite Institutions

institutions receives a ranking of high (H), moderate (M), or low (L) depending on the relative strength of the given institution. The ranking of the strengths takes into account both interstate and intrastate comparisons. The first seven institutions represent pro-communist institutions. Even though some of these institutions, such as the communist reformers, promoted political opening, each of these institutions preferred the continuation of their own power in a socialist or semi-socialist system. The communist party category represents the cumulative strength of the communist hardliners and reformers. The nuclear communist elite represents a small group of communist leaders,

such as coalesced around Ceaușescu in Romania, that effectively operates independently and above the communist party hierarchy. The government bureaucracies category represents all government bureaucracies with the exception of the military and the internal security forces, which are listed separately. The final four elite institutions in Table 1 represent the anti-communist institutions. These institutions do not need much explanation, but one should note that the elite opposition parties category reflects the combined strength of moderate and radical elite opposition institutions and factions.

In each of the five countries, the pro-communist elite institutions hold a significant amount of power. Hungary, Poland, and Bulgaria display similar elite institutional environments. Each country lacked a nuclear communist elite; thus, the pro-communist strength dwelt in the communist party and its hard-line and reform groups. By the time key transitional events began occurring in these countries, the communist reformers enjoyed high institutional strength while the communist hardliners' power had waned to moderate levels. Still, the communist party maintained a position of strength and represented an important actor in the transition. In Hungary, Poland, and Bulgaria the government bureaucracies, the military, and the security forces did not play an important role in the transition process, and Table 1 reflects this by noting these institutions' low strengths.

Pro-communist elite institutional strength also characterizes Romania and Cuba, but the distribution of power among their pro-communist actors varies from that of Hungary, Poland, and Bulgaria. Nuclear communist elites dominated the pro-communist elite institutions in Romania, and Cuba displays a similar pattern today as noted by the small group of hard-line communist insiders that surrounds Castro. In both countries, the communist party has only moderate strength due to its subordination to the nuclear communist elites. Within the communist parties, hardliners retain the majority of the influence. Communist reformers in Romania and Cuba have demonstrated a low level of institutional strength, as have government bureaucracies. However, just as the military played an increasingly prominent role in Romania in the late 1980s, the Cuban military expanded its role and institutional strength in the 1990s. In fact, the Cuban military's institutional strength today is higher than was that of the Romanian military prior to the collapse of the Ceaușescu regime. In both Cuba and Romania, the internal security forces

display moderate institutional strength. Ultimately, the pro-communist elite institutions in Cuba most closely resemble those of Romania prior to its transition to democracy.

In terms of the anti-communist elite institutions, a different pattern arises. In the exceptional case of Hungary, the anti-communist elite institutions demonstrated strengths comparable to those of the pro-communist elite institutions. Although dissident intellectuals had low institutional strength, the elite opposition parties enjoyed high institutional strength. Among these groups, the moderates held more strength than the radicals. This relative balance of institutional strength between pro- and anti-communist elite institutions explains why the transition in Hungary was the only Soviet bloc case study to experience a transition involving an important pact.

In contrast, the anti-communist elite institutions in Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, and Cuba lack significant institutional strength. Anti-communist elite institutions in these Soviet bloc countries engaged in minor roles in their respective political environments. Like Cuba today, each country had dissident intellectuals and some elite opposition, but these institutions did not obtain more than a low level of institutional strength. In short, the anti-communist elite institutions in Cuba are essentially the same as those in Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria.

## **2. Comparison of Mass-Based Institutions**

Like the comparison of the elite institutions, an effective comparison of the mass-based institutions recognizes that some institutions support the communist system while others oppose it. Therefore, this section compares Cuba's mass-based institutions to those in Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria, focusing on both pro-communist organizations and anti-communist organizations. Overall, this comparison demonstrates that Cuba's mass-based institutions do not mirror exactly the mass-based institutional environment of any of the case studies. However, its pro-communist mass-based institutions emulate those of all of the case study countries, and its anti-communist ones are most similar to those in Hungary and Bulgaria.

Table 2 compares Cuba's mass-based institutions with those of the case study countries. This table lists only one pro-communist mass-based institution, the communist auxiliary organizations. This category covers a wide range of institutions; any mass-

based organization co-opted by or affiliated with the communist regime falls under this heading. The following five mass-based institutions are anti-communist organizations. These include mass-based opposition parties, demonstrations, civil society, religious organizations, and secular non-governmental organizations. The categories are straightforward with the possible of exception of the civil society category. The civil society category reflects the vibrancy of independent mass-based organizations.

<b>Mass-Based Institutions</b>	<b>Hungary</b>	<b>Poland</b>	<b>Romania</b>	<b>Bulgaria</b>	<b>Cuba</b>
Communist Auxiliaries	L	L	L	L	L
Opposition Parties	L	H	L	M	L
Demonstrations	M	M	H	M	L
Civil Society	M	L	L	L	L
Religious Organizations	L	M	M	L	M
Secular Non-Governmental Organizations	L	L	M	L	L
Assessments of Institutional Strengths: H = High; M = Moderate; L = Low					

Table 2. Comparison of Mass-Based Institutions

Focusing first on the pro-communist mass-based institutions, one can see that all five countries share similarly-weak communist auxiliary organizations. In the case study countries, these auxiliary organizations experienced a loss of popular support as the transition approached. Membership in organizations such as youth leagues declined throughout the 1980s, leaving the organizational structures intact but lacking in popular support and participation. The same has been seen in Cuba in the last decade. Although the number of communist auxiliary organizations on the island remains high, the membership in and popular fervor for these institutions has dropped throughout the 1990s. Thus, Cuba's pro-communist mass-based institutions, like those of the case study countries, retain only low levels of institutional strength today.

Patterns among the anti-communist mass-based institutions are more difficult to discern. Hungary and Bulgaria share a similar overall weakness in mass-based institutions although the distribution of strength among the institutions varies. Considering that Hungary and Bulgaria's transitions occurred in modes of transitions characterized by elite action, it should not be surprising that their mass-based institutional environments show generally low levels of institutional strength. All of Hungary's anti-communist mass-based institutions held only low levels of institutional strength with the

exception of demonstrations and civil society, which both had moderate institutional strength. The demonstrations and the growth of social groups and quasi-political organizations in civil society may not have directly influenced the transition in Hungary, but they did indirectly provide bargaining power to the elites.

Similarly, the only Bulgarian anti-communist mass-based institutions to enjoy more than a low level of institutional strength were the opposition parties and demonstrations, which held moderate levels of institutional strength. The growth of opposition political groups and the eventual emergence of demonstrations in Bulgaria did not force a transition, but they certainly provided more reasons for the communist reformers to pursue an imposition. Thus, in Hungary and Bulgaria the anti-communist mass-based institutions were not very strong, yet they still affected the transition process indirectly.

In contrast, the case study countries that experienced a transition as a result of mass action displayed greater levels of institutional strength among their anti-communist mass-based organizations. In Poland, the opposition party, Solidarity, had a high level of institutional strength, which gave it a strong position in negotiations with the communists. Although the Roman Catholic Church's institutional strength was waning by the time of the transition, it did enjoy a moderate level of institutional strength as did the popular demonstrations, which served as visible reminders of the extent of Solidarity's societal support. Civil society and secular non-governmental organizations in Poland were the only organizations with low levels of institutional strength.

In Romania, high levels of mass-based anti-communist institutional strength dwelt in the violent popular demonstrations. Prior to these expressions of popular dissent, anti-communist mass-based institutional strength resided solely in the religious organizations and secular non-governmental organizations. These, however, only had moderate levels of institutional strength. The demonstrations produced the turning point in the transitional process in Romania and forced the Ceaușescu regime to capitulate. Opposition parties and civil society remained weak throughout the crucial stages of the transition process in Romania. Overall, Poland and Romania shared the similarity of

fairly strong anti-communist mass-based institutions that directly affected the course of their transitions.

Unfortunately, Cuba does not clearly fit either of the institutional patterns. Generally, Cuba's anti-communist mass-based institutions remain weak and fragmented; thus, they have only low levels of institutional strength. The only exceptions are the religious organizations, represented primarily by the Roman Catholic Church, which enjoy a moderate level of institutional strength. Initially, the strength of religious organizations might suggest that Cuba's mass-based institutions appear most like those of Poland or Romania, countries where the church remained a constant source of opposition for the communists and supported dissidents and political opening in at least some degree. Despite this similarity, Cuba lacks the strong political opposition that gave Poland's Solidarity its power. Furthermore, while Cuba appears even more similar institutionally to pre-demonstration mass-based environment in Romania, it currently lacks the crucial protests and high levels of mass unrest that defined the latter's transition.

In a broader perspective, Cuba currently resembles Hungary or Bulgaria more closely in terms of its anti-communist mass-based institutions. Hungary and Bulgaria both had low levels of institutional strength in this category. Cuba's anti-communist mass-based institutional strength is even lower. Therefore, despite the strength of the Church in Cuba, one must recognize that even though Cuba's anti-communist mass-based institutional environment does not duplicate that of any of the case studies, it appears more like that of Hungary or Bulgaria than that of Poland or Romania.

### **3. Comparison of External Institutions**

External institutions form the final group of institutions to compare between Cuba and the Soviet bloc countries. Similar to the comparison of the mass-based institutions, this comparison demonstrates that Cuba's external institutional environment does not fit the exact profile of any of the case studies. It does, however, most closely resemble the external institutional environment of Romania.

Table 3 compares the external institutions in Cuba with those in Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria. In contrast to the previous institutions, the external institutions cannot be as definitively divided between pro- and anti-communist institutions. In the

case studies, the communist bloc states, especially the Soviet Union, may have favored the continuation of a socialist system, but through action or, more commonly, inaction they generally favored reforms or political self-determination. In the case of Cuba, the remaining communist bloc states today do favor the continuation of the socialist system. The final three institutions, the non-communist bloc states, the non-governmental organizations, and the inter-governmental organizations largely seek major political changes in Cuba.

<b>External Institutions</b>	<b>Hungary</b>	<b>Poland</b>	<b>Romania</b>	<b>Bulgaria</b>	<b>Cuba</b>
Communist Bloc States	M	M	L	H	L
Non-Communist Bloc States	M	M	L	L	L
Non-Governmental Organizations	L	L	M	L	L
Inter-Governmental Organizations	L	L	L	L	L
Assessments of Institutional Strengths: H = High; M = Moderate; L = Low					

Table 3. Comparison of External Institutions

Looking for interstate similarities, one notices that Hungary and Poland’s external institutional environments appear similar. In both of these countries, action by the Soviet Union represented the majority of the influence of the communist bloc countries. The Soviet Union’s moderate institutional strength reflects its decision to allow the individual countries of Central Europe to self-determine their political future. The repudiation of the Brezhnev Doctrine solidified the Soviet decision to release its satellite states to their own destinies. In this way, the Soviet commitment to inaction created the political space necessary for the Soviet bloc transitions. The non-communist bloc states, represented primarily by the United States and Western Europe, filled the political space left by the Soviet Union. This allowed them to have a moderate level of institutional strength through promotion of respect for human rights and encouragement of democratic reforms. Due to the domination of the external political environment by the major Cold War actors, non-governmental and inter-governmental organizations played minor roles in the transitions in Hungary and Poland and, therefore, can be characterized as having low institutional strength.

Although this same type of pressure targeted Romania and Bulgaria, these countries responded differently. Romania's communists ignored the pressure for reform from both the East and the West. Thus, the institutional strength of the communist and non-communist bloc states remained low throughout the transition. However, Romania appears as a unique case in that non-governmental organizations achieved a moderate level of strength during the most critical days of the transition. Foreign media outlets with penetration in Romania aided the revolution by using information about protests in various parts of Romania to encourage and embolden other Romanians to join the revolutionary process. Still, inter-governmental organizations did not play a noteworthy role in Romania's transition.

In Bulgaria, the communist bloc states, specifically the Soviet Union, demonstrated a high level of institutional strength. Meanwhile, the other three external institutions showed only low levels of institutional strength. Bulgaria effectively ignored the small amount of pressure it received from the non-communist bloc states, and, like Hungary, Poland, and Romania, it remained untargeted by inter-governmental organizations. In contrast, the Soviet Union's high level of institutional strength reflected the special attention that Bulgaria gave to its traditional hegemon. The communist reformers' acquisition of specific permission from Moscow to impose a transition served as a concrete example of the Soviet Union's influence over the Bulgarian transitional process.

Today, Cuba's external institutional environment does not exactly match that of any of the case studies. Despite the continued pressure for reform from non-communist bloc states and despite the greatly increased post-Cold War role of non- and inter-governmental organizations in pressuring the island for change, Cuba has effectively ignored the political pressure from all sides. As the sole survivor of the dissolution of Soviet-style communism in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Cuba's internal political environment also operates independently from the few remaining members of the global communist bloc. In this way, Cuba most resembles Romania prior to the crucial events in its transition. After the revocation of the Brezhnev Doctrine and before external non-governmental organizations affected the course of events in Romania, low levels of

institutional strength characterized all the organizations in Romania’s external institutional environment.

Ultimately, Cuba’s external institutional environment does not mirror that of any of the case studies. Nevertheless, it appears most similar to that of Romania with the following important exception: external non-governmental organizations have not succeeded in helping to instigate a revolution on the island.

#### 4. Overall Comparison of Institutional Environments

An integration of the results of the previous sections into a single comparison with the institutional environment in Cuba aids in understanding the island’s overall institutional situation. This process demonstrates that although Cuba’s institutional environment does perfectly match any of those of the case study countries, on balance it most resembles that of Romania.

Table 4 summarizes the analysis of the previous three tables. In every category except for one, Cuba’s institutional environment most closely matches that of Romania. The deviant category is that of the anti-communist mass-based institutions, in which Cuba’s institutions appear more like those in Hungary and Bulgaria. Nevertheless, these similarities and that between the external institutional environments in Cuba and Romania are not exact but rather are the closest matches. Bulgaria follows Romania as the case study country with the next highest level of institutional similarity with Cuba. Bulgaria’s institutional environment is similar to that of Cuba in three of the five categories. With only two matching categories, Hungary and Poland’s institutional environments show the lowest similarities with the institutional environment in Cuba.

Overall, although Cuba’s institutional environment is not a perfect match with that of Romania during the crucial stages of its transition, it does resemble that of Romania more than that of any of the other Soviet bloc case study countries.

<b>Political Institutions</b>	<b>Case Study Country Most Like Cuba</b>
Pro-Communist Elite Institutions	Romania
Anti-Communist Elite Institutions	Poland, Romania, Bulgaria
Pro-Communist Mass-Based Institutions	Hungary, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria
Anti-Communist Based Institutions	Hungary, Bulgaria
External Institutions	Romania

Table 4. Comparison of Overall Institutional Environment

## **V. IMPLICATIONS FOR CUBA'S NEXT TRANSITION**

Having analyzed the importance of political institutions in the transitions in Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria and having compared the institutional environments of those countries to that of Cuba, this study now draws out the implications that this comparison creates for the next transition in Cuba. First, this section seeks to determine the relative influence that internal and external institutions will have on Cuba's transition to democracy. Next, this section looks at whether or not Cuba's next transition will be towards democracy or towards another form of government. Finally, this section looks beyond the next transition to explore the possible routes towards consolidated democracy in Cuba. In assessing each of these areas, this section draws from the institutional analyses and comparisons carried out in Chapters III and IV.

In looking at these three areas, this section is divided into three major subsections. Focusing on the relative importance of internal and external institutions in transitions towards democracy, the first part proposes that internal institutions will play a more crucial role than will external ones in Cuba's next transition. The second part suggests that Cuba's next transition will not be a democratic one because Cuba is not ready institutionally for such a transition. Specifically, Cuba lacks oppositional institutions with sufficient strength to challenge the dominant communist institutions. The final part of this section looks beyond Cuba's next transition and suggests that when Cuba makes a transition to democracy it is likely to be by imposition given the current institutional environment affecting the island.

### **A. IMPORTANCE OF INTERNAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE NEXT TRANSITION IN CUBA**

Based on the experiences of both the case studies and Cuba to date, this work argues that internal institutions will matter the most in Cuba's next transition. Internal institutions are crucial for two reasons. First, the necessary changes in the external institutional environment for a transition to democracy have already occurred. Second, even such external changes are not sufficient to ensure a transition towards democracy. This section elaborates on these arguments.

The case studies suggest that changes in the external institutional environment are necessary but not sufficient to promote transitions to democracy in Soviet-style communist states. Certainly, the Soviet decision to forego intervention in the internal political environments of its Central European satellite states both reduced the effective power of the communists and emboldened the opposition groups in these countries. Significantly, each of the transitions in the Warsaw Pact countries occurred after the Gorbachev regime began to allow and promote political reform of the socialist system.

Furthermore, once the first Central European transition began, the demonstration effect helped to speed the remaining political transformations throughout the region as the communist holdouts became more and more isolated from their traditional institutional sources of external support. Moreover, Western appeals for democratic opening in the Soviet bloc states quickly followed the relinquishment of Soviet hegemony in the region. However, if the Soviet Union had continued to protect communism through military action and if the West had not encouraged democratization in the area, the transitions in the case study countries likely would not have been possible.

Despite the necessary condition provided by changes in the external institutional environment, these adjustments were not sufficient to produce transitions to democracy. Without changes in the internal institutional environment, no transitions would have occurred. From the case studies, Romania provides a good example of this interaction of external and internal institutions. If Romania could have called upon the Soviet Union to restore order and support the communists in the early stages of unrest, the crucial demonstrations on 21 December probably would not have materialized and, if they had, Ceaușescu probably would have been unwilling to abandon power. Thus, the changes in the external institutional environment negated Romania's previous ability to call upon the Soviet Union for support and helped to create the necessary political space for the country's transition.

However, once Romania was free to determine its own political future, the internal institutional environment became the most crucial in affecting a transition towards democracy. Without the development of popular unrest, Romania would have continued to embrace a socialist system. The communists, including both the Ceaușescu

elite and the party members, were content with their positions and had no intentions to begin a reform through imposition. The important factor that changed this situation was the occurrence of the demonstrations. Without the development of a strong internal opposition, Romania could not have made the transition to democracy even though the necessary changes in the external institutional environment had already taken place.

In terms of Cuba, the island's external institutional environment has already made the necessary changes to support a transition to democracy. The end of the Cold War assured that Cuba's already fairly isolated position was made even more so. More than a decade after the dissolution of the Soviet bloc, there clearly is no external institution willing to intervene in Cuba to ensure the survival of its communist system. On the contrary, the majority of the most powerful members of the international community, including other states and non- and inter-governmental organizations, support the democratization of Cuba. Therefore, the remaining necessary condition to be fulfilled for a transition to democracy in Cuba is the emergence of a strong internal opposition. For this reason, the internal institutional environment will play the most crucial role in preparing Cuba for a transition to democracy.

Several authors support this position. For example, Guillermo O'Donnell and Schmitter argue, "[D]omestic factors play a predominant role in the transition [towards democracy]." Similarly, Laurence Whitehead purposes, "[I]nternal forces were of primary importance in determining the course and outcome of the transition attempt, and international factors played only a secondary role." (Linz and Stepan, 1996, pp. 72-3) Some authors make even more specific statements on the importance of individual internal political institutions. For example, Linz and Stepan assert "that there is no transition whose beginning is not the consequence -- direct or indirect -- of important divisions within the authoritarian regime itself" (1996, p. 72). In specific reference to Cuba, Javier Corrales contests, "Cuba has been exposed to the same changes that have triggered regime transitions elsewhere in Latin America. The missing ingredient is political parties." Corrales argues that the current levels of protest and resistance in Cuba are not sufficient societal pressures for change. He adds, "[O]nly parties could provide effective sanctions against incumbents who refuse to liberalize." (2001, pp. 101-2) Although this sampling of opinions on transitions towards democracy implicitly supports

the necessary contribution of external institutions and demonstrates a lack of consensus on the specific internal institutional changes that will produce such a transition, it does show that scholars agree that internal institutional changes are necessary for a transition away from authoritarianism.

Ultimately, internal institutional changes will play the most important role in creating the remaining necessary condition, domestic opposition, for a transition to democracy in Cuba. The institutional similarities between Romania and Cuba support this position. With the necessary external institutional changes already accomplished, internal institutions will matter most in determining the nature of Cuba's next transition.

## **B. THE NEXT TRANSITION IN CUBA: AUTHORITARIAN SUCCESSION**

Focusing on the internal political environment in Cuba, this section argues that Cuba is not ready institutionally for a transition to democracy. As alluded to in the previous section, Cuba lacks the internal opposition necessary for a transition to democracy. Therefore, Cuba's next transition will most likely be one of authoritarian succession through imposition. The experiences of the case study countries provide support for this argument.

Chapter IV demonstrated that Cuba's institutional environment appears most similar to that of Romania. Without a consideration of the important institutional differences between these two countries, one could incorrectly assume that Cuba's next transition will be a revolution. In order for a revolution to occur, however, massive unrest must prompt widespread anti-communist demonstrations on the island. As of the present, neither demonstrations nor extreme mass-based political dissatisfaction with the Castro elite has materialized. Certainly, most Cubans do not enjoy economic prosperity, but the country's economic troubles have not produced massive political frustration, even during the worst period of the economic crisis in the mid-1990s. On the contrary, most Cubans remain ardent *fidelistas* and continue to support their homegrown hero. Immigration has provided and continues to provide an important escape valve for Cuba in allowing those Cubans opposed to Castro to seek refuge elsewhere within the international community. Thus, until significant signs show that such unrest is building

among the populace, one cannot assume that Cuba's next transition will be revolutionary in its mode of transition.

Since a Cuban transition by revolution is not currently a possibility, one must consider the other options. As seen in Chapter IV, Cuba does not have an elite opposition. This eliminates the prospect of a pacted transition. Also, Cuba's anti-communist mass-based institutions remain weak overall. Only the religious organizations have achieved a higher-than-low institutional strength, and their moderate strength is not sufficient to challenge the very strong elite communist institutions. Due to the lack of a strong mass-based opposition able to force negotiations with the government, transition through reform must also be eliminated as an option for Cuba's next transition.

Having thus eliminated three of the modes of transition, the final option for Cuba's next transition is through imposition. Interestingly, the case study example of Bulgaria, which experienced a transition through imposition, is as similar institutionally to Cuba in as many categories as is Romania when the external institutions are ignored (See Table 4). Arguing that Cuba's internal institutions will matter most in its next transition, focusing on the internal institutional categories is logical. Again, however, one should not assume that Cuba's transition will be the same as Bulgaria's without considering the institutional differences between the countries.

To begin, Cuba's communist elites differ from those found in the Bulgarian case study. The nuclear communist elite in Cuba controls the party and the other important elite institutions, the military and the internal security forces. Bulgaria, on the other hand, had no nuclear communist elite. Rather, Bulgaria's communist party was the dominant elite institution, and its reform faction was strong enough to begin the imposition process. In Cuba, the nuclear communist elite has purged the party apparatus of reformers who would like to change the island's type of government. Therefore, a communist imposition of a transition towards democracy remains unfeasible given Cuba's current institutional environment. Moreover, Cuba's anti-communist mass-based institutions are not as strong as were Bulgaria's prior to its transition. Bulgarian reformers recognized the growing, potential strength of these mass-based institutions and

hoped to preempt radical change by imposing a controlled transition away from authoritarianism. Cuba's relatively stable and weak anti-communist mass-based institutions do not pose a sufficient threat to its communist elites to force the latter to pursue preemptive reforms.

These differences between Cuba and Bulgaria suggest that Cuba's elites will not impose a transition away from authoritarianism. However, since they are the only strong political institution in Cuba, they can still impose a transition. For these institutional reasons, Cuba's next transition will most likely be characterized by the imposition of an authoritarian successor regime. This certainly is the current intent of Cuba's communists and has been presaged by the designation of Raúl Castro as Fidel's successor. Figure 7 reflects this argument and places Cuba's next transition in the most elite-driven and forceful corner of the imposition mode. Moreover, Figure 7 places Cuba's next mode of transition on the extreme internal end of the z-axis to reflect the prominence of internal institutions in determining the outcome of Cuba's next transition.

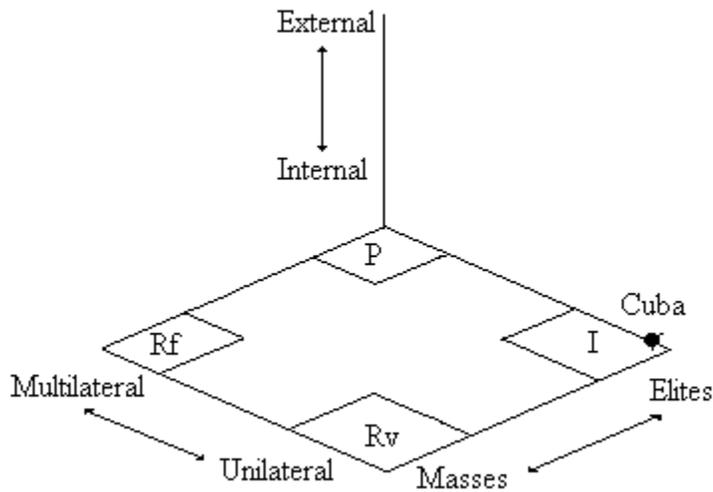


Figure 7. Cuba's Next Mode of Transition

Overall, the institutional analysis suggests that although Cuba most resembles the case studies of Romania and Bulgaria, its next transition will be unlike any of the case studies in that it will not be towards democracy. Cuba's next transition is most likely to

be the imposition of a successor authoritarian regime by the island's communists because the country lacks a sufficiently strong opposition to challenge its communist elites.

### **C. CUBA'S EVENTUAL TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY**

Even though Cuba's next transition most likely will not be towards democracy, it still is beneficial to consider what may characterize Cuba's eventual transition to democracy. This section looks at how Cuba's institutional environment may progress after the next authoritarian succession based on the current strength of Cuba's institutions. It argues that Cuba's eventual transition to democracy is likely to be by imposition although this scenario becomes less likely over time.

Significant changes in Cuba's institutional environment are unlikely until after power passes from Fidel Castro to his successor. Castro has demonstrated a firm commitment to socialism and to ensuring a smooth transition to Cuba's next communist leadership. If events progress as the communists have planned, Raúl Castro will be the successor. Because the younger Castro does not enjoy the same amount of personal following among Cubans, a weakening of Cuba's nuclear communist elite likely will accompany his assumption of control. As Cuba's nuclear communist elite loses institutional power, its strength likely will pass to the communist party. In this scenario, the division between Cuba's communist hardliners and reformers will become more apparent.

As the institutional strength moves from the nuclear communist elite and becomes contested by the hardliner and reformer sections, Cuba's elite communist institutions are more likely to resemble those in Hungary, Poland, and Bulgaria. Lacking a nuclear communist elite, these Soviet bloc countries entered the most crucial periods of their transitions with a strong communist party whose strength favored the reformers. Cuba's institutional development also is likely to follow this path. As the distance in time from Fidel's departure of power increases, the strength of the communist reformers likely will grow more rapidly.

Importantly, changes in the communist party in the last decade seem to foreshadow this shift. Cuba's nuclear communist elite has taken more aggressive action in controlling the influence of more reform-minded party members since the late 1980s.

This was demonstrated by purges within the politburo and the shrinking of its size. This signals a growth, albeit repressed, in reform-mindedness among Cuba's party members. Moreover, communists in Cuba, including the nuclear communist elite, responded pragmatically to the economic crisis that began in the mid-1980s and peaked a decade later. Growing integration into the world market and domestic economic liberalization show that the communists can flex their policies when necessary. Similar political changes largely have been absent because political pressure, unlike the aforementioned economic pressure, has not threatened to destroy completely Cuban socialism.

Of course, for a transition towards democracy to occur, changes in the anti-communist institutions must also take place. Peaceful changes are unlikely as long as the nuclear communist elites or hardliners remain in control. As communist reformers gain greater institutional strength relative to the hardliners, more political space will be created for the growth of anti-communist institutions. Since the majority of Cuba's fledgling anti-communist institutions today are mass-based, these types of institutions, as opposed to elite ones, most likely will dominate the anti-communist opposition.

Reflecting the probable shifts in power among Cuba's institutions, Figure 8 proposes the likely movement of Cuba's mode of transition over time. As changes in the pro- and anti-communist institutions occur, Cuba's mode of transition is likely to move

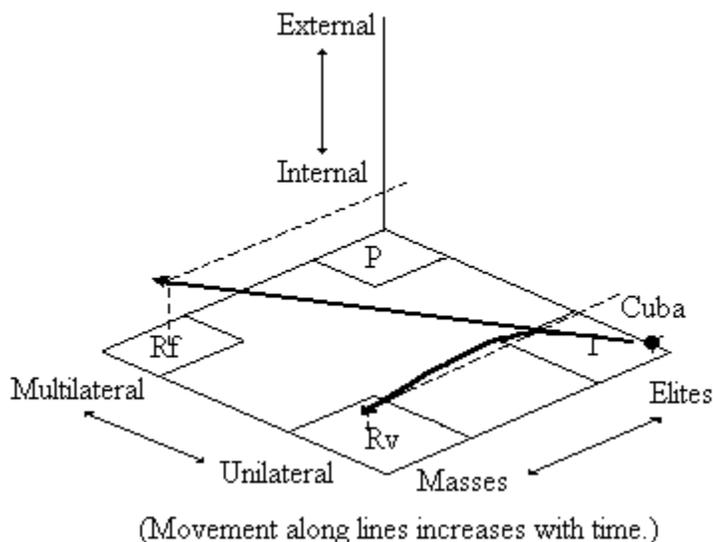


Figure 8. Cuba's Eventual Democratic Mode of Transition

further away from its current position in the extreme corner of the imposition mode. As pressure from mass-based institutions increases, the likelihood of imposition decreases. This pressure is likely to build slowly initially. However, as time progresses, this pressure likely will increase more rapidly. Certainly, this was the case in the Soviet bloc transitions.

Generally, three options exist. The most probable remains a transition by imposition towards democracy. Due to the demonstrated pragmatism of Cuba's communists and to their likely desire to stay involved in Cuban politics in the post-authoritarian system, they are likely to institute changes from above in response to growing anti-communist pressure from below. Assuming that the strength of such anti-communist institutions continues to increase over time, the longer the communists wait to begin an imposition, the more likely that Cuba's mode of transition will move away from the imposition mode.

If Cuba's transition moves away from the imposition mode, two results remain the most plausible. If the communists continue to repress mass-based institutions while pressure for change grows among the population, a revolution could result. Unable to channel their dissatisfaction through political institutions, Cubans might support violent protests. These demonstrations then could create a situation similar to that in Romania, where communist commitment to the socialist system evaporated once the party and its members were threatened by violent mass protests.

The final option is that of a transition by reform. If communists allow the creation of oppositional mass-based institutions and fail to preemptively impose a transition, these anti-communist organizations likely will develop enough strength over time to force changes in Cuba's political system in a transition similar to that in the Polish case study. In addition, a transition towards democracy by reform is more likely to involve a greater amount of participation by external institutions than one by imposition or revolution. A government open and vulnerable to a transition by reform is likely to be more responsive to pressure for change from external institutions also.

Overall, Cuba's eventual transition to democracy most likely will occur in the imposition mode of transition. However, as the distance in time from Fidel Castro's

departure increases, a transition by imposition becomes less probable. Depending on the manner in which the relative strengths of Cuba's institutions change over time, a transition towards democracy through reform or, less likely, revolution cannot be eliminated as implausible.

## **VI. CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Having given considerable space herein to each of the previous chapters, this study now broadens its observations to review its most significant findings and arguments. Moreover, it considers how policy makers in the international community can most effectively apply the implications of this work to their decision-making processes. Finally, it highlights the imperative of continued research on Cuba's institutional environment.

This study set out to examine what can be learned about Cuba's next transition from a comparison of political institutions in Cuba with those in Soviet bloc countries that made their transitions towards democracy in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The primary argument of this work has been that political institutions matter in shaping the nature of regime transitions. As Chapter II explored Karl and Schmitter's framework for describing different modes of transitions, it found that a general consensus among scholars supports this assumption even though many of these authors dispute the specifics of political transitions. While this work does not proclaim Karl and Schmitter's framework to be the only applicable guide to analysis, it used the framework throughout the study because it provided a straightforward method for choosing and analyzing the case studies and because it allowed a simple, visual portrayal of the interaction of political institutions during different modes of transition.

Having thus described its methodology, this work then continued by analyzing four case studies of Soviet bloc transitions towards democracy in Chapter III. Chapter III looked specifically at four countries that represented four different modes of transitions. Hungary provided the closest example of a pacted transition while Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria conformed respectively to the reform, revolution, and imposition modes of transition. In reassessing Karl and Schmitter's analysis of these countries' modes of transition, this work generally affirmed the authors' location of the Soviet bloc transitions in terms of both the elite and mass-based institutions and the strategies of force and compromise. However, this study added a third axis to Karl and Schmitter's diagram. This z-axis expanded the ability of the framework to portray the complete spectrum of

political institutions involved in transitions by showing the relative importance of internal and external institutions in the case study transitions. In this manner, Chapter III provided the case studies against which to compare the Cuban case.

In a pattern similar to that used in Chapter III, Chapter IV explored the current state of Cuba's elite, mass-based, and external institutions. Clearly, Cuba's communist elite institutions hold the greatest institutional strength among its internal institutions. A nuclear communist elite centered on Castro and an increasingly politically-involved military form the cornerstones of the communist regime. Elite and mass-based opposition remains weak and fragmented in Cuba. The most powerful of such institutions are the religious ones, and they serve more as an inconvenience to the communists than as a source of strong opposition to them. Chapter IV also compared Cuba's current institutional environment to the institutional environments in the Soviet bloc case studies during the most crucial phases of their transitions. Even though Cuba's institutional environment does not exactly mirror any of those found in the case studies, it most strongly resembles those in Romania and Bulgaria.

Building on this institutional comparison, Chapter V drew out the implications for Cuba's next transition. It looked not only at the similarities between Cuba and the case studies but also at the differences among them. In this way, it sought to determine the mode of Cuba's next transition. Chapter V proposed three fundamental assertions about Cuba's political future. First, it argued that internal institutions will matter most in Cuba's next transition because the necessary external conditions for a transition toward democracy in Cuba already exist. Second, it placed Cuba's next mode of transition firmly in the imposition mode and contended that an installation of a communist successor, not a move towards democracy, will characterize this imposition. Finally, it argued that Cuba's eventual transition to democracy most likely will occur in the imposition mode of transition but that as the distance in time from Castro's departure increases, so does the likelihood that its transitional mode will move towards the reform or, less likely, the revolution categories. Ultimately, Chapter V proposed that Cuba is not yet institutionally ready for a transition to democracy because it lacks oppositional institutions strong enough to challenge the communist regime.

## **A. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

Although this work is useful as an exercise in understanding the interaction among political institutions during regime transitions, its application should be more than academic. The implications for Cuba's next transition derived from the institutional analysis can aid decision makers in the international community, including the United States, in determining how to formulate policy on Cuba that effectively promotes a stable transition towards consolidated democracy on the island. This work proposes the following three general tenets to guide the international community in supporting such a transition: avoid a violent revolution, promote an independent Cuban civil society, and seek an international consensus on Cuba's future. The following sections explain how these recommendations can guide decision makers in creating progressive policy on Cuba.

### **1. Avoid a Violent Revolution**

First, policy makers must consider what type of transition to democracy is most desirable in Cuba. In answering this question, one must acknowledge that in some cases there may be a trade-off between an early transition and a successful transition. Regardless of the time frame, Cuba must be prepared institutionally for democracy before it can become democratic. Therefore, to promote a successful transition to democracy in Cuba, decision makers in the international community should promote a stable, peaceful transition to democracy and make every effort to avoid a violent revolution on the island.

A revolution is not the most desirable mode of transition for Cuba's move towards democracy for several reasons. As Karl and Schmitter suggest, a revolution appears to be the mode of transition that least is likely to lead to the establishment of a consolidated, durable democracy (1991, p. 282). A revolution signals high popular dissatisfaction with the current political system while simultaneously implying that no mechanism exists for the lawful expression of that discontent. When a transition occurs prior to the emergence of political institutions that can be effective transmitters of popular sentiment to the government, consolidated democracy becomes a more difficult achievement. A communist regime may fall easily to a revolution, but such a transition suggests that the institutions necessary for negotiation and consensus building in a

democracy still do not exist. The post-revolutionary environment thus is more likely to be filled by remnant communist organizations than by a mix of institutions representing the opposition because the latter institutions generally remain weak and fragmented throughout a revolution. This was the case in the Romanian case study.

As a correlating premise to the avoidance of a revolution, the promotion of a transition by imposition or reform should also guide the decisions of international policy makers. Transitions through imposition and reform avoid the sudden power vacuum of a revolution and allow the gradual development of mass-based political institutions. This slower process gives fledging institutions the opportunity to gain experience in developing the political skills necessary for effective representation in a controlled, peaceful environment. Instead of being thrust into power unprepared, these institutions can slowly take on greater responsibility in the political system and are more likely to contribute to the consolidation of democracy once the transition is complete. Moreover, a transition through imposition or reform lessens the probability that external institutions will intervene directly in the Cuban transition process.

Overall, the first tenet policy makers should follow is that of avoiding a violent revolution in Cuba. To do so, decision makers must promote a transition through imposition or reform. This will encourage the political development of Cuba into a stable and consolidated member of the global democratic community.

## **2. Promote an Independent Cuban Civil Society**

To avoid a revolution in Cuba and to support a transition towards democracy through imposition or reform, international decision makers need to promote an independent civil society on the island. A vibrant civil society speeds the development and practice of the political skills of negotiating and consensus building needed in a democracy. To accomplish this goal, policy makers should support a two-pronged effort that targets both civil society and the communist elites.

For civil society to grow in Cuba, it needs the support of external institutions. Because of the Cuban government's current repression of these organizations, this funding depends on the generosity of external institutions. External institutions should provide resources, including both financial ones and practical training and education, to

Cuba's civil society actors with political potential. However, guidelines must be established for determining the recipient institutions. The international community should not support Cuba civil society organizations that are affiliated with the communist regime. Instead, it should focus its efforts on expanding the popular base of independent institutions that promote, directly or indirectly, peaceful change towards democracy on the island. In this way, external institutions will speed the development of the mass-based institutions and skills crucial to creating a democracy in Cuba in the future.

In addition to providing aid to Cuban civil society institutions, the international community should also pressure the communist regime to accept the growth of an independent civil society in Cuba. Certainly, the communists that most likely would respond positively to such suggestions are the reformers. Therefore, the international community needs to establish mechanisms for dialogue with this institution. Moreover, international institutions should also build relationships with the Cuban security forces in an attempt to build support among these normally-repressive institutions for the growth of an independent Cuban civil society. Thus, by seeking to influence the communist regime, external institutions may expand the political space needed for independent civil society institutions in Cuba.

Ultimately, a peaceful, stable transition towards democracy in Cuba requires the emergence of an independent civil society. Promoting this growth by working with both civil society and the communist regime, international actors can help Cuba to avoid a violent revolution while building the foundation for consolidated democracy on the island.

### **3. Seek an International Consensus on Cuba's Future**

To accomplish the aforementioned recommendations in an efficacious manner, the international community must seek a consensus on Cuba's future. The influence of external institutions in promoting change in Cuba will be heightened if they speak with one voice. Certainly, not every external institution will support a single plan of action towards Cuba. Nevertheless, the underpinnings of a consensus appear in the policies of most European and Latin American countries as well as those of the most prominent inter-governmental organizations. Mirroring these institutions' approaches to Cuba, an

international consensus needs to voice support for a peaceful transition to democracy on the island and develop a strategy for making this desire a reality.

In general, the international community already agrees on Cuba's need for democracy. Most states, non-governmental organizations, and inter-governmental organizations support the democratization of Cuba regardless of the methods they use in pursuing that end. Even the outlier states, such as China and Venezuela, do not dispute the right of self-determination for Cubans even if they do not think democracy would be the desired outcome. Therefore, agreeing that Cuba should become an integral member of the democratic community comes as the easiest step in reaching an international consensus on the island's future.

Reaching an agreement on the best way to promote democratization is the more difficult challenge for the international community. The debate over the United States' embargo of Cuba demonstrates the current divergence in opinions. Even though the United States needs to be involved in shaping Cuba's future due to its inevitable interaction with a post-authoritarian Cuba, its unilateral policies towards Cuba greatly hinder an international consensus on the island's future. Eliminating the embargo would greatly enhance the bargaining power of the international community and make an international consensus possible. Normalizing trade relations with Cuba would unlink basic economic issues from political ones and, according to Cuba's communists, provide the necessary step for dialogue on Cuba's political future. Although additional aid to Cuba could be effectively conditioned on political changes on the island, negotiating on a foundation of mutual respect with multilateral agreement will be the most effective way the international community can promote their desired changes in Cuba.

In short, an international consensus on Cuba's future will aid external institutions in avoiding a revolution in Cuba, supporting peaceful democratization on the island, and promoting the growth of an independent Cuban civil society. Ultimately, the three tenets this work proposes to guide international policy decisions on Cuba are mutually reinforcing and hold the greatest promise for increasing the ability of external institutions to positively influence Cuba's political future.

## **B. THE IMPERATIVE OF CONTINUED RESEARCH**

Due to the dynamic interaction of political institutions, continued research is an imperative for an accurate assessment of Cuba's next transition. Just as political institutions shape the political environment in any given country, political environments also shape institutions. As institutions change, so may the implications for Cuba's next transition. Thus, the study of Cuba's institutional environment needs to be an ongoing effort in order accurately assess Cuba's next mode of transition and provide decision makers with relevant information on Cuba's future.

The case studies explored in this work demonstrate the imperative of continued research. For example, the most crucial events in the Romanian and Bulgarian transitions towards democracy occurred in the years of 1989 and 1990. Radical changes in institutional landscapes and important shifts in institutional strengths characterized these two years. Certainly, an assessment of these countries' political institutions during the mid-1980s would not have suggested that such fundamental transformation of these states' political systems was so close at hand. Consequently, one cannot assume that an analysis of Cuba's institutional environment performed today will be valid indefinitely. Therefore, research on and analysis of the institutions affecting Cuba's political environment should be an ongoing process.

Ultimately, up-to-date research on Cuba's institutional environment supplemented by comparisons with the transitions in the Soviet bloc countries *can* help predict what type of transitions Cuba will experience in the future and *can* aid decision makers in formulating effective policy that will promote a stable, peaceful transition to consolidated democracy on the island.

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