Thank you very much. Michael Small's presentation obviously was excellent, and I find myself in little disagreement anywhere, so I think what I'll do is sort of highlight and go into more depth on one point or another.

We're taught as intelligence analysts to tell policymakers what our level of confidence is when we're talking on any given subject, so I should be candid with you all from the outset and acknowledge that my level of confidence on projecting about Cuba is relatively modest.

That's for a couple of reasons. One is the obvious point that getting inside information on the top levels of the Cuban government is extremely difficult for any outside power, most particularly the United States. Then, in a different way, projecting how the Cuban population is going to react when the key pillar of the Cuban Revolution leaves the scene is difficult for anyone to do.

We know Fidel is worried about it. We know he is worried about the legacy of the revolution going down the tubes. But even with all the polling that Castro does, I suspect he doesn't have a firm grip on how the population is going to react.

Having said that, let me just sort of jump through my presentation again and emphasize one point here and there. A couple of other preliminary thoughts: one, I don't think we've mentioned that Raul could predecease Fidel, and that could be a curve ball. The other complicating factor is Fidel's cognitive abilities clearly are slipping. It's hard to know whether that is the normal aging process, or whether he has Parkinson's Disease, as is considered to be the case on the part of many people, but we'll have to watch very closely in the months and years to come how the regime handles the situation, if Fidel is alive but cognitively somewhat impaired.

The first point I would make on Raul—and we've already talked about his being the anointed successor, has been since the first days of the revolution, and the constitution calls for him to take over—is that he is no Fidel, obviously, but we shouldn't underestimate him. He turned a guerilla army into an extremely powerful force in relative terms that was instrumental in winning wars in Africa, namely in Angola and Ethiopia.

He built the strongest institution in Cuba—Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (MINFAR)—where advancement is based on merit as much as anything else. He has a collegial, deliberative style, which compensates for his lack of charisma. A lot of people think that if Raul inherits the top position he will probably surround himself with people like Ricardo Alarcon and Carlos Lage. Alarcon has experience in foreign policy, particularly with the U.S., and Lage has experience on the economic side, so there would be a troika with the central power clearly being Raul Castro.
If one were to speculate about his policies in key areas, economics first of all, it seems to me there are going to be contending forces in Raul's own mind, because he knows he is no Fidel, he realizes he is going to have to make a number of economic concessions.

By the same token, in my own mind, I consider Raul somewhat of a puritanical Communist. What we've seen from him over the years is that he was very comfortable with the Soviet economic model from the mid '70s to the mid '80s, and the key aspects of that model were somewhat of a decentralized system where the heads of state owned enterprises, were given the day-to-day option to make a number of calls. There was a little bit of an opening in terms of private markets, mainly in terms of retail food, and there was a small growth of private sector, very small, certainly not touching the commanding heights of the economy whatsoever. I think that model gives you some idea of the direction he'd be inclined to head—slow, gradual economic liberalization, but avoiding anything that would allow extreme divisions in wealth, or allowing enough of a private sector that you have contending centers of power.

Would he follow a Chinese model? People talk about that. I think there have been occasions in the past where he has brought Chinese experts to talk about aspects of their model, and he may draw from the Chinese. I don't think he'll do so in a wholesale fashion. If you think back on what Chairman Deng Xiaoping said, at one point, that to get rich is glorious, that's absolutely abhorrent in the way Raul looks at things, so to the extent that's part of the Chinese economic model, I wouldn't expect him to move in that direction. Economic policy—slow, gradual liberalization.

On the foreign policy side, he has no more affinity for the United States than does his brother Fidel. That said, I don't think he defines himself the way Fidel does in terms of the need for that constant adversarial relationship with the U.S. I would look to him to reach out to the United States, perhaps building on the relationships he has built with some former U.S. military people. His key goal, I think, would be to get rid of the economic embargo. Obviously, he realizes the things Michael Small has talked about in regard to Helms-Burton, its constraints, and I think he would work to sort of erode the coalition in the U.S. Congress that supports the Helms-Burton provisions.

The place where we would not find flexibility on Raul's part, in my view, is on any significant concessions on the political front—that is to say, competitive elections, the diminution of the Communist party's role on the political side in Cuba. I wouldn't look for movement there, so you can see that there are going to be some major discrepancies between the U.S. and Cuba, even as Raul moves towards a more concessionary approach.

Let me just talk a minute about domestic pressures that are likely to face Raul. Michael touched on a number of those, and, as I said, I think I'm basically in agreement there. The Mid-level cadre in the Communist party and in the government, and to some extent in MINFAR, the Armed Forces Ministry too, what we're able to pick up is there clearly is a lot of disgruntlement among people in that middle cadre. They realize that the economic model has not succeeded. It has failed. They hold Fidel personally responsible for that. As the moderator said, if it weren't for Hugo Chavez, the economy would be in really desperate shape, so I think you would see support in the mid-level cadres for an economic liberalization. I'm dubious as to whether there would be that same support for political change, because they are the principal beneficiaries of the current political situation.

Secondly, I'll just touch on the dissidents. I think I'm basically in agreement with Michael. I don't see a major role for the divided and repressed dissident groups in the immediate future post-Fidel. I think someone like Oswaldo Paya, who in my view is probably the most prestigious of them, would push for gradual change in Cuba, even after Fidel is gone, and would not be on the same page with some of the other people who were less willing to make concessions to the regime. But, again, one can't emphasize enough how repressed this group has been, and not just going back to 2003. I think that repression has
become accentuated since mid-July. "Subtle" is the wrong word, but you don't go after a Paya, you go after his supporters and arrest them and throw them in jail. That keeps the dissidents off balance.

The third group, and the most important group I would like to talk about as the motor of change, is going to be popular demand. As I said from the outset, it's a little bit difficult to predict how they'll come out, but I agree with Michael, that basically they're going to be looking for more economic space. There will be some demand for political liberties, but I think the main focus will be on the economic side from that group.

We haven't talked about the Catholic Church. I'll just say a word or two there. It's the only non-regime group that's got island-wide support, hundreds of thousands of supporters. The church's role so far has been one of sort of prudent pressure on the regime, and that's what I would expect. I think there would be a more proactive approach. There will be some pressure of grass-roots priests, particularly foreign priests, to have a linkage between the church and the dissident community, but I think at the end of the day the church is not going to be getting out front and be hard-line in pressing the regime.

Where does that leave us? I think I've told you what I think about Raul's preferences. I think he will be under tremendous pressure from hard-liners in the regime not to make a lot of concessions on the political side. So it boils down to—and this is a point Michael pointed to as well—the leadership qualities. Does Raul have that fine-tuned sense that he can keep a lid on those kinds of demands, but make enough concessions to keep the process moving and to keep his relationships with the outside world expanding?

Some people I respect in one of the foreign intelligence services think that Raul won't be able to control that situation, that he will make so many concessions that the situation gets out of his control. It's plausible. The only thing I would say there is, like Fidel, Raul has watched very carefully, studied very carefully, the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and he is bound and determined not to let that happen in Cuba.

I think I'll just touch on one more point, and that is the international reaction to a Raul government. I guess I'd make just two or three points. Whereas I think most of the EU and Latin America view the Castro regime as anachronistic and would like to see political and economic liberalization, I think there are some real constraints on what they are actually going to do. I think the Latins and the Europeans, if Raul makes some overtures to the United States, are going to press hard to have the U.S. respond in kind—some lifting of the embargo, and there we run into the kinds of things Michael talked about before, the Helms-Burton constraints.

I talked about Raul trying to undermine the support for that coalition in Congress, and clearly there are forces in Congress and in the private sector in the U.S. that want to see more flexibility on Helms-Burton, so there may be some space, some bargaining room, for the two sides. That said, though, I don't expect any major changes. I think there could be some atmospheric changes in improving relations, but I wouldn't expect a major breakthrough as long as Raul is there.

I think the Latins, as I said, want a major change in Cuba, but there's a tremendous non-intervention sentiment across the board in Latin America. I don't think any of them will get out front. On Mexico—we've got some of the most prestigious social scientists in all of Mexico here in this room, so I'll not pontificate on that issue, except to say I think if Lopez Obrador is elected, given what we know about the PRD and its past contacts with Cuba, I would expect a growing rapprochement between the Lopez Obrador government and the Cubans. I think there would be real resistance on the part of a PRD-led government to go along with the U.S. pressing on human rights, pressing for political liberalization.
The Canadians have an excellent record on human rights. I think they would be, if not in lockstep with the U.S., pushing in that same direction to get the release of the 61 political dissidents. I think there would be much more patience on the part of the Canadians and most Europeans and most Latins to let the situation play itself out and see where economic liberalization goes.

The last point I'll make has to do with what happens post-Raul? I agree with Michael. Again, even though Raul is five years younger than his brother, he has a history of binge drinking and alcoholism, so how long he lasts is difficult to predict. My sense is that the transition would be to another senior military figure. There are two or three people whom one could easily point to as most likely succession figures, but in any event, I think there would be a joining of the top echelons of the Communist party with the military in terms of de facto running the country.

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