Handbook of Contemporary Cuba
Economy, Politics, Civil Society, and Globalization

Edited by Mauricio A. Font
and Carlos Riobó

Cuban studies is a highly dynamic field shaped by the country's distinctive political and economic circumstances. The Handbook of Contemporary Cuba is an up-to-date and comprehensive survey offering the latest research available from a broad array of disciplines and perspectives. The Handbook's general introduction and its section introductions survey the key literature in the field in relation to rapidly changing events on the island and in global political and economic affairs. For students, scholars, and experts in government, the Handbook of Contemporary Cuba is vital to any collection on Latin American studies or global politics.

About the editors
Mauricio A. Font is Director of the Bildner Center for Western Hemisphere Studies and Professor of sociology at The Graduate Center and Queens College,
City University of New York.

Carlos Riobó is Associate Professor of Latin American literature and cultures, Chairman of his department at The City College of New York, and Cuba Project Fellow of the Bildner Center for Western Hemisphere Studies at CUNY.

Handbook of Contemporary Cuba offers contributions by leading scholars from the United States, Cuba, Europe, and other world regions.
Pavel Vidal Alejandro; Carlos Alzugaray; Carmen Antón-Guardiola; Maria Aristigueta; Larry Catá Backer; Miguel Barnet; Hilary Becker; José Choffre-Sirvent; Amparo Sánchez Cobos; Margaret Crahan; Mauricio A. Font; Alberto Gabriele; Armando Nova González; Mario A. González-Corzo; Yvon Grenier; Camila Piñeiro Harnecker; Zoya Kocur; Emily Morris; Armando Chaguaceda Noriega; J.R. Paron; Robert A. Portada III; Carlos Riobó; Archibald R. M. Ritter; Jorge Luis Romeu; David Strug; Omar Everleny Pérez Villanueva.

Key features of the book
- Intertwines the study several spheres of Cuban society (economy, culture, history, religion, media, race, and others) to develop a clear assessment of its organization and the reform process evolving since the 1990s.
- Exemplifies a fruitful balanced academic collaboration with scholars from the University of Havana, and other institutions in Cuba, making a contribution to rigorous academic exchange.
- Builds a strong foundation for further research on contemporary Cuban society.
- Maintains an emphasis on Raúl Castro's reforms and their impact.

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HANDBOOK OF CONTEMPORARY CUBA

ECONOMY, POLITICS, CIVIL SOCIETY, AND GLOBALIZATION

Edited by

Mauricio A. Font
and
Carlos Rioló

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Introduction

Carlos Ribó

Contrary to popular thought, Cuban politics and civil society have not been stagnant for the past fifty-three years, caught within a time warp or the polarity of "us" versus "them." While perhaps official rhetoric on and off the island has often hewed closely to anachronistic Cold War posturing, the recent transfer of power to Raúl Castro, foreign tourism, greater visibility of the Catholic Church, and social media signpost a more complex trajectory, especially since the Special Period of the 1990s. What may we glean from the ebb and flow of Cuban policies and practices? How do we move beyond binary commonplaces in Cuban studies? We ask the right questions, gather recent data, and articulate our ideas dispassionately.

In this part, our nine authors, from on and off the island, bring us up to date on Cuban politics and civil society. Some merely need to scratch the surface of Cuban society to uncover competing political discourses and definitions of civil society, while others must delve deeply into matters such as race (often thought resolved in Cuba) to open up the debate to the twenty-first-century reader. Our authors try to understand the degree to which organizations within Cuban civil society can act as agents of persuasion, applying pressure and wielding influence. The relatively dynamic policies of liberalization subtending traditional socialist politics in Cuba are examined carefully in this section.

The chapters in this section, most written in English and one in Spanish, focus either on politics in Cuba or on the island's civil society, with these two areas often bleeding into one another as is to be expected. Contributions by Yvon Grenier and Carlos Alzugaray and Armando Chaguaceda Noriega look at political change and institutions allied with politics. Analyzing cultural
The last section on politics and civil society features an essay by Jorge Luis Romeu, which studies new stages in the formation and promotion of Cuba's civil society. Romeu's "Cuban Freemasons in the Development of Civil Society and Political Opening" discusses the future development of participation in Cuban civil society by studying important traits of the Cuban Freemasons (CF) and their Grand Lodge (GLC). The GLC has been largely ignored by researchers of Cuban civil society despite being one of the oldest, largest, most widely spread throughout the island. This essay uses cemographic data to show how the GLC constitutes one of the most important organizations of such civil society that is able to play a significant role in fostering a political opening. This discussion fills an important gap in the literature on civil society.

In 1990, exiled Cuban journalist and social analyst Carlos Alberto Montaner wrote that Cuba was in the throes of a "terminal crisis" (Montaner, 1990). Although this sentence came as a harbinger of the Special Period in Cuba, it actually describes a way of life for Cubans today. Today's mantra in Cuba is resolve, or the need to get by however one can, by whatever means necessary. More than twenty years have passed since the austere beginnings of the Special Period, yet belt-tightening, incomplete economic reforms, and martial vigilance continue in Cuba without sparking a civic movement that could topple the regime. Why has there not been concerted civic opposition in times of national crisis? Why has there not been a Cuban Spring as there has been in the Middle East? The authors in this section of our handbook propose answers to some of these questions. They examine the discrete instances of civil opposition, analyzing alliances and new spaces opened for social discourse; they trace the evolution of the political strategy of indirect confrontation, in the realms of religion and race in particular. In the end, it would seem that Cuban political reforms and civic and social openness are making incremental gains rather than revolutionary changes on the island.
CUBAN FREEMASONS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND POLITICAL OPENING

Jorge Luis Romeu

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

During a 2006 Bildner Center symposium called Cuba Futures, several papers on the embryonic Cuban civil society were presented. They discussed a number of groups inside the island that ranged from Catholics to the Abakú and from internal dissidents to the remnants of the small Jewish community in Havana. We noticed how such patterns were also present in other forums such as the Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy (ASCE). Somehow, researchers failed to recognize one civil society organization that has continuously existed in Cuba for over 150 years, with nearly 30,000 members, distributed among 314 lodges, in every province, town, and city in the country: the Cuban Freemasons of the Grand Lodge of Cuba (CF/GLC).

Several possible reasons exist for the omission of the role of the CF/GLC in the research literature of Cuban civil society: first, a poor knowledge of Cuban history and of its traditional institutions; second, an emphasis on dissident groups that oppose the current Cuban regime and a failure to recognize how civil society is not solely integrated by opponents of the establishment; and third, an existing prejudice against freemasons in general, something well studied and documented in several papers published by the Centro de Estudios Históricos de la Masonería Española (CEHME).

This chapter addresses two key research questions that have been ignored by most researchers of Cuban civil society. First, how can CF/GLC...
About the Contributors

Carlos Alzugaray (Ph.D., University of Havana) is a professor at the University of Havana and a Cuban diplomat.

Carmen Antón-Guardiola (Ph.D.) is a professor of public international law, foreign affairs, and law of the European Union in the University of Alicante. She has published a number of works on public international law and European Community law, including the Gibraltarr: un desafío para la Unión Europea (2010).

Maria P. Aristigueta (Ph.D., University of Southern California) is a professor of public administration and senior policy fellow in the University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration. She is the author of, among other works, Civil Society in Cuba (2008).

Miguel Barnet is a Cuban writer, novelist, poet, and ethnographer, whose works have encompassed several sociological and anthropological themes. He is author of Biography of a Runaway Slave (1966).

Hilary Becker (Ph.D., University of Havana) is an assistant professor of accounting at Carleton University. He has worked as an analyst with DuPont, Inc., and has consulted with the World Wildlife Fund, the MacArthur Foundation (among other organizations), and the government of Cuba.

Larry Catá Backer (J.D., Columbia University) is a professor of law and international affairs at Pennsylvania State University. He has published an edited collection of essays, Harmonizing Law in an Era of Globalization: Convergence, Divergence, and Resistance (2007).

Armando Chaguaceda Noriega (M.A., University of Havana) is a political scientist, historian, and social activist. He is a professor of history and political theory at the University of Havana. He is currently developing his
Armando Nova González (Ph.D., University of Havana) is a professor and researcher at the Center for the Study of the Cuban Economy. He is author of a number of books and articles on Cuban economy and Cuban agriculture.

J. R. Paron (Ph.D., University of Southern California) is a retired US Navy Captain (O-6) fighter pilot and a senior research scientist for Dynamics Research Corporation. He participated in the Cuban missile blockade and made routine visits to Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. He is the author of numerous classified and unclassified publications related to public policy and national security.

Omar Everleny Pérez Villanueva (Ph.D., University of Havana) is a professor at the University of Havana and was director of its Center for the Study of the Cuban Economy. He has published several articles and books, including Cincuenta años de la economía cubana (2010).

Camila Piñeiro Harnecker is a researcher and professor at the Center for the Study of the Cuban Economy (University of Havana). She is editor and author of the compilation Cooperativas y socialismo: una mirada desde Cuba (2011). She is currently finishing her Ph.D. on the regulatory framework of Cuban state enterprises.

Robert A. Portada III (Ph.D., University of Notre Dame) is an assistant professor of political science at Kutztown University. His current research is focused on constitutional reform in Latin America and the role of private security companies in foreign affairs.

Carlos Riojó (Ph.D., Yale University) is an assistant professor of Latin American literature and cultures at The City College of New York and Cuba Project Fellow of the Bildner Center for Western Hemisphere Studies (CUNY). He is the author of Sub-versions of the Archive: Manuel Puig’s and Severo Sarduy’s Alternative Identities (2011), among other books.

Archibald R. M. Ritter (Ph.D., University of Texas at Austin) is a professor in the Department of Economics and the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs at Carleton University (Ottawa). He has published a variety of works on Cuba including (as editor) The Cuban Economy (2004).

Jorge Luis Romeu (Ph.D., Syracuse University) is a professor at Syracuse University and a SUNY faculty emeritus. He directs the Juárez-Lincoln-Martí International Education Project and has published extensively on Cuban issues, including a demographic study of Cuban Freemasons in the twentieth century.