



# F P S A

**Florida Political Science Association**

## THE POLITICAL SCIENTIST

**Newsletter of the Florida Political Science Association**

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## A Message from the Editor

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Please join me in ushering in the latest reincarnation of *The Political Scientist*, the newsletter of the Florida Political Science Association. As the newly appointed editor, I aspire to create an environment for both academics and practitioners. It has always been my belief that theory does not only inform practice, but that practical knowledge is essential for the formation of ideas and accentuation of research and inquiry. The goal of this newsletter is to be as inclusive as possible of the voices that permeate academia, government, business, and the not-for-profit sector. When it comes to issues important to Floridians, all are welcome to share their expertise.

In this inaugural edition, we hear from a wide array of contributors. Peter McCabe and David Ellis, fellows at The Joint Special Operations University (JSOU), the academic arm of U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), apprise us of their work and make an appeal for greater collaboration. Mark Logas, a tenured faculty member at Valencia College, sounds the alarm on the current condition of civics literacy in Florida schools. Julio Aleaga Pesant, an independent journalist and prodemocracy advocate, in a transcript from a recent lecture, informs us of political circumstances in Cuba. Lastly, Juan Flores, Executive Vice-President for Government Affairs at Port San Antonio (Texas), writes of how citizen diplomacy has improved US-Mexico relations.

In closing, I encourage readers to share their thoughts and insights regarding the form and structure of the newsletter. As alluded to, the mission is to provide an all-encompassing venue for those desirous of a better understanding of policy and politics. By working together, we can mold *The Political Scientist* into a suitable representation of the community it strives to serve.

Kindly,

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Political Science & International Studies  
The University of Tampa  
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## 2018 Best Graduate and Undergraduate Paper Winners

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Each year the Florida Political Science Association recognizes the scholarship of students who present at the annual conference by selecting the best graduate and undergraduate papers. Over the years, the quality of the research and the number of submissions have increased exponentially. We thank the many students who submitted their work for consideration this year. The prize for best graduate paper goes to Sandor Fabian from the University of Central Florida for his paper,

“Why Does David Sometimes Defeat Goliath?” The best undergraduate paper was awarded to Alexander Bruens and Mirella Miranda, both from Florida Atlantic University, for their work, “Redefining Post-Conflict Peacekeeping Success in Regional and International Missions.” Congratulations to all three scholars for their impressive work. The two papers will be published in *The Florida Political Chronicle*, and each author will receive a cash prize.

## ***Florida Political Science Association Annual Meeting***

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**Saturday, March 2, 2019**  
The University of Tampa

The 2019 FPSA Annual Meeting will be held at The University of Tampa in Tampa, Florida on Saturday, March 2, 2019.

**Regular Registration until February 22, 2019:**  
\$75 for faculty and \$35 for students.

**Late Registration after February 22, 2019:**  
\$80 for faculty and \$40 for students.

Registration includes lunch, refreshments, and a subscription to *The Florida Political Chronicle*. For preregistration, please go to [www.fpsanet.org](http://www.fpsanet.org).

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Faculty, talented undergraduates, and graduate students are encouraged to submit papers. A \$250 award is given to the best Graduate Student Paper presented at the conference, and a \$200 award will be given to the best Undergraduate Student Paper. Please send paper proposals to Section Chairs by **December 15, 2018**. Accepted papers will be notified by **December 30, 2018**.

THE UNIVERSITY  
OF TAMPA

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# U.S. Special Operations Seek Input from Academia

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By Peter McCabe, Ph.D. and David Ellis, Ph.D.

The notion of special operators seeking academic input is somewhat of an anomaly. Special operations has a (justified) reputation for secrecy and working within the shadows, however, recent published books and movies have pushed special operations into the public light.<sup>1</sup> For good or ill, special operators and their missions are now part of mainstream conversations.<sup>2</sup> This fact should not be surprising as U.S. Special Operations and specifically, the U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) have previously sought input from academia. During World War II, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the predecessor to the Central Intelligence Agency and USSOCOM, and its founder General William Donovan, recruited and utilized academics to meet mission requirements.<sup>3</sup>

The Joint Special Operations University (JSOU), the academic arm of U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), located on MacDill Air Force Base, Tampa, Florida, is leading this effort to improve access to and incorporate academic expertise on a host of topics and wicked problems. JSOU's mission is to provide special operations forces (SOF) joint professional military education, develop SOF-specific curriculum, and foster special operations research, analysis, and outreach in support of the USSOCOM objectives.<sup>4</sup> JSOU's Center for Strategic Studies conducts or collaborates on original scholarly academic research, professional publications, and SOF enterprise outreach.

JSOU's goal of reaching out to academia is to work with scholars, students and institutional partners as the research hub on those topics important to the special operations community. To that end, every January, JSOU holds a research topic workshop to capture the critical issues in need of scholarly exploration and a non-military lens. For the most part, the published booklet does an excellent job of highlighting SOF-related topics that are recommended for research by those who desire to provide insight and recommendations on issues and challenges facing the SOF enterprise. That publication and all JSOU Press publications are publicly available and can be accessed at <https://jsou.libguides.com/jsoupublications>.

However, the research topic workshop has its limitations. It is attended almost exclusively by SOF personnel. What is missing is the outside perspective that helps SOF to think 'outside the box' and to keep the 'group-think' down to a minimum. To address this issue, JSOU held a research crossflow event in January 2018 to which JSOU invited academics from a variety of local (Florida) and out of state universities. The workshop provided a collaborative meeting environment for academic research experts, JSOU faculty and staff, and USSOCOM officials to build stronger and more productive relationships that will encourage better researcher-USSOCOM engagement; provide opportunities for researchers to inform participants on their capabilities; and provide signals to the research community of USSOCOM research requirements.

Recent JSOU outreach efforts to academia include presentations on special operations research to the International Studies Association –South and Florida Political Science Association conferences. In addition, research collaboration meetings are on-going with select faculty from the University of Tampa, University of Central Florida, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, and University of South Florida to name a few. The goal of all these current and future engagements is to leave interested faculty with a clear sense of (a) how their research aligns with wicked problems for which the SOF enterprise has been assigned responsibility, (b) the opportunities for publishing with JSOU, and (c) how special operations research can assist with professional development.

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Since the JSOU Crossflow Workshop, JSOU has endeavored to create opportunities for collaboration. First, JSOU is emphasizing joint research paper and articles, conferences, and publications. While most academics might think their specialties to be unrelated to the special operations world, the reality is often the opposite. Due to the breadth of requirements the nation has placed on SOF, it is typically possible to jointly explore different research/article topics, determine how they relate to SOF, identify potential publication venues for each topic, and prepare a short list of potential conferences where the work can be presented. Second, JSOU engages in applied research comprised of SOF personnel, members of other U.S. federal and local agencies, faculty, and private sector representatives. This research has a foundation in design thinking and tackle wicked problems head-on for meaningful operational impact. Applied research offers an ideal environment for SOF and academia to learn from one another and move theory into practice. For instance, JSOU is currently supporting Special Operations Command-North (Colorado Springs, CO) with a research series to help it learn more about the complexities associated with trafficking systems. Third, JSOU recognizes that institutional exchanges constitute a means of bringing real world application to the classroom. Having served in both worlds, JSOU faculty find it especially rewarding to describe how the theory reviewed in class translates to policy and practice in some of the most difficult environments imaginable.

SOF are increasingly being called upon by the country to address a dizzying array of wicked problems and operate amid rapidly advancing technological complexity. While SOF have traditionally adhered to the “silent professionals” ethos, today’s operating environments require the force to think well beyond its role in traditional statecraft. SOF recognize that how they think about their missions and the information they have at their disposal are increasingly important. The authors are seeking researchers interested in working with special operations. If this is appealing, please contact either author at [peter.mccabe.ctr@socom.mil](mailto:peter.mccabe.ctr@socom.mil), 813-826-3657 or at [david.ellis.ctr@socom.mil](mailto:david.ellis.ctr@socom.mil), 813-826-1469 and visit [jsou.libguides.com/jsoupublications](http://jsou.libguides.com/jsoupublications). We look forward to seeing everyone at FPSA 2019 at the University of Tampa.



*Dr. Peter McCabe serves as a Resident Senior Fellow at JSOU (employed by METIS Solutions). He came to JSOU from the U.S. Central Command where he worked as a strategic policy planner. Prior to that, he retired from the U.S. Air Force as a Colonel in 2011. He received his Ph.D. in political science from the University of Florida with a focus on international relations and comparative politics.*



*Dr. David Ellis is a Resident Senior Fellow at JSOU (employed by METIS Solutions). He holds a doctorate in International Relations and Comparative Politics from the University of Florida. Dr. Ellis’s research on democratization and development in identity conflict spans over two decades. His interests in peacekeeping, conflict resolution, development, and atrocity in ethnic conflict focused his doctoral research on identity, social movements, organization and social learning theory, and economic growth theory.*

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The views expressed in this article are entirely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views, policy, or position of the United States Government, Department of Defense, United States Special Operations Command, or the Joint Special Operations University.

<sup>1</sup> A “special operations” search on the goodreads website, <https://www.goodreads.com/search?q=special+operations>, reveals 1,300 results with many of the books written since 2001.

<sup>2</sup> See The Spec Ops Blog ([specopsblog.blogspot.com](http://specopsblog.blogspot.com)) and SOF-Blog (<http://sof-blog.tumblr.com/>) as examples.

<sup>3</sup> Irwin, Will, *The Jedburghs: the secret history of the Allied Special Forces, 1944*, New York: Public Affairs, 2005, XX.

<sup>4</sup> JSOU Factbook 2017, <https://www.socom.mil/jsou/PubDocs/JSOUFactbook.pdf>, accessed 12 April 2018, 8.

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## U.S. Government? Who Needs it?

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By Mark Logas

As a Professor of Political Science for over 17 years, I have witnessed a downward trend of student knowledge, understanding, and ability to demonstrate the most basic principles of the United States system of government. I’m glad to report that the Florida Legislature has taken action to ensure that students seeking an AA or AS Degree beginning in Fall 2018 must successfully complete a Civics Literacy Requirement in order to graduate.<sup>1</sup> There are several options open to students to demonstrate their civic knowledge. First, students can pass a CLEP exam in American government. Another option is to take a designated U.S. Government or American History class in college. Students who have taken Advanced Placement U.S. History and scored a 4 out of 5 or a 3 out of 5 on A.P. Government in high school will have satisfied the requirement. Universities are now allowing students to pass a 100 question U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services civics exam with a score of 60% or higher. State colleges are not allowing this option until further review of the questions that students will be asked.<sup>2</sup>

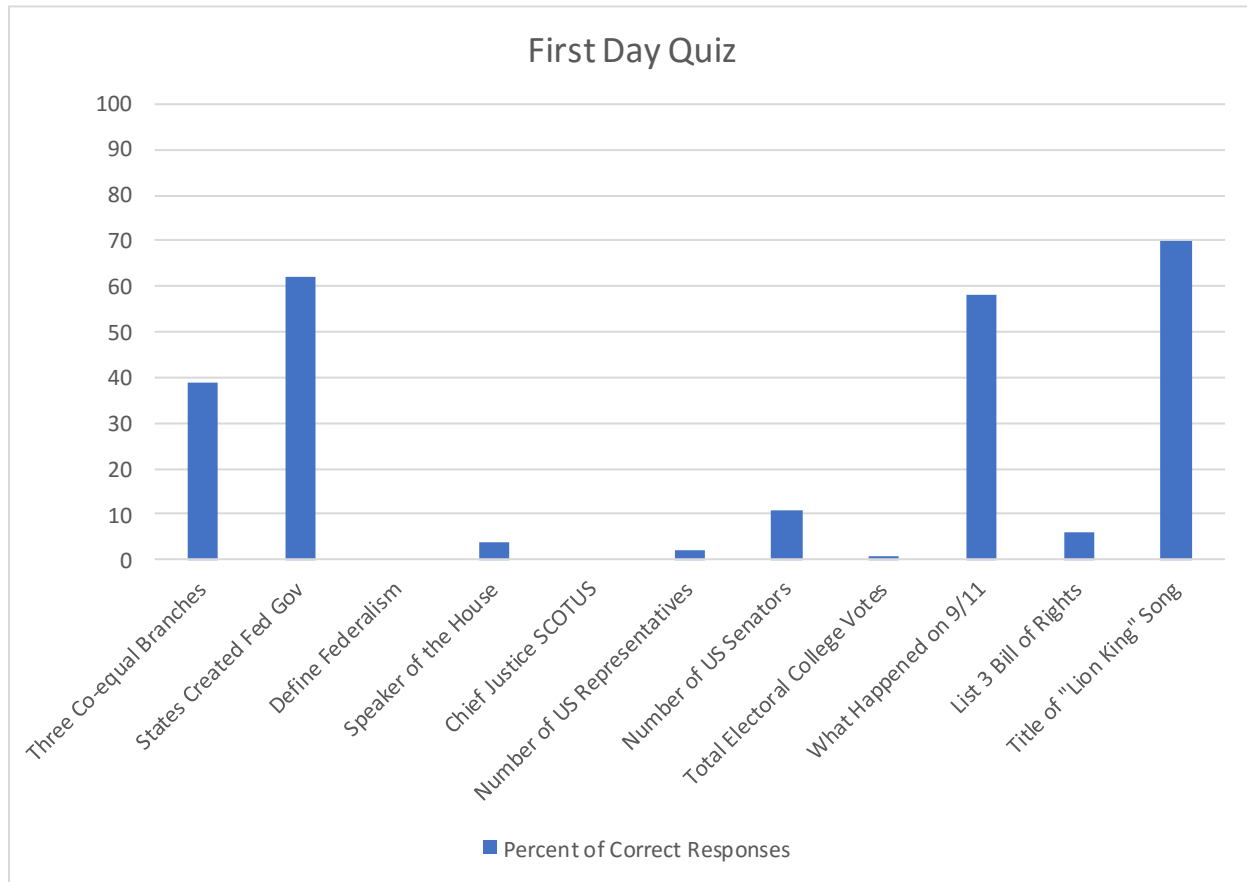
Nationwide, there seems to be little to no understanding of our Declaration of Independence, two Constitutions, the Electoral College, or the expressed powers of the three co-equal branches of government. The dumbing down of the American people through tired and failed educational opportunities in our public schools and higher learning institutions has created a divided nation. Elected officials are also void of the facts. On the floor of the House of Representatives, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee honored the Constitution that, in her words, has lasted “some 400 years”.<sup>3</sup> Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer incorrectly gave Thomas Jefferson credit for writing the “Bill of Rights”.<sup>4</sup> Sadly, only one mainstream media outlet reported these two glaring examples of illiteracy.

During my tenure in the classroom, I have started each U.S. Government class asking how many students are in attendance because they want to be there. There have never been more than five hands raised out of classes that range in size from 32 students to 75 students. What began as an informal ice breaker on the first day of class to illustrate how important their U.S. Government class would be to their future long after the semester has now evolved into more documented proof that

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students are virtually ignorant of the rights afforded to them by the Founding Fathers they cannot even identify. On the first day of class, I give an informal quiz with basic questions mostly from the U.S. Citizenship Exam that each student should know based on what a student is required to know in order to earn a high school diploma.<sup>5</sup>



Source: Data collected by author. Valencia College students, 1/11/16 and 1/12/16.

After collecting the quiz, I purposely refer to the song from the movie *The Lion King* as the “Cycle” of Life. Students begin to giggle at my error. In a very confident manner, they inform me that the song title is “Circle of Life”, not cycle. We then vote on it. Almost every hand is raised in their favor. Laughter then fills the room. When they are finished, I tell them this will be a very humbling moment for them because they defended a childhood animated movie that does nothing to protect their Constitutional freedoms but could not identify three of the Bill of Rights that directly affects their way of life. It is at that moment they understand there is a lot of learning that needs to take place.

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On the first day of the Spring 2017 semester at the University of Central Florida, I passed around a piece of paper requesting signatures to repeal an amendment to the Constitution. The statement at the top of the paper included, “*In an effort to rid the U.S. Constitution of amendments that no longer have a need for the reason in which they were originally ratified, I am forming a movement to repeal useless amendments. Please sign below as we move to repeal the 26th Amendment.*” Thirteen of

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74 students signed the document in my Mass Media & Politics class, while 8 of 75 students signed the document in my Politics in Film class. Twenty-one students at the second largest university in the United States readily gave their approval for me to help take away the 26th amendment which grants voting rights of 18-21-year-olds.

I believe that there are two reasons for students entering colleges and universities without basic knowledge of our government and why it is higher education's obligation to teach these students about their government.

First, K-12 educators appear to limit the scope of what they are able to teach based on standardized testing requirements and the fear and intimidation of those who either oppose our fundamental rights guaranteed in the Constitution or who simply have no clue as to what it contains. The National Education Association recently took a stand stating, "Across the nation, the testing obsession has nudged aside visual arts, music, physical education, social studies, and science, not to mention world languages, financial literacy, and that old standby, penmanship. Our schools, once vigorous and dynamic centers for learning, have been reduced to mere test prep factories, where teachers and students act out a script written by someone who has never visited their classroom and where 'achievement' means nothing more than scoring well on a bubble test."<sup>6</sup>

NEA President Lily Garcia concludes, "It's our job to bring back the arts and Social Studies and world languages and whatever it is our students need to leave behind the corrupting, unconscionable testing culture of blame and punish by test scores and move forward with an education that opens their minds to the infinite possibilities of their lives."<sup>7</sup> There is hope that educators throughout the country are not only identifying this crisis but taking positive action to correct it. Last year, Kentucky and Arkansas, "became the latest of more than a dozen states since 2015 that have required the high school social studies curriculum to include material covered by the 100 questions asked on the naturalization exam."<sup>8</sup> In higher education, the exchange of ideas is crucial to learning but many students who arrive have not been challenged to develop the skills to enhance their knowledge of government.

Second, few universities and colleges in the United States require all AA Degree seeking students to take and pass a basic U.S. Government class. According to the Wall Street Journal, "A majority of U.S. college graduates don't know the length of a congressional term, what the Emancipation Proclamation was, or which Revolutionary War general led the American troops at Yorktown. The reason for such failures, according to a recent study: Few schools mandate courses in core subjects like U.S. government, history or economics. The sixth annual analysis of core curricula at 1,098 four-year colleges and universities by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni found that just 18% of schools require American history to graduate, 13% require a foreign language and 3% economics."<sup>9</sup>

Annette Boyd Pitts reported in The Florida Bar Journal, that the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania reported results of a national survey that demonstrated how little Americans know about their government. Thirty-five percent could not name one of the three co-equal branches of government. Nearly a third believed that a U.S. Supreme Court ruling could be appealed. The Center for the Study of the American Dream at Xavier University used a national survey to test the civic knowledge of native-born citizens compared to immigrants applying for U.S. citizenship. They found that "one in three native-born citizens failed the civics portion of the U.S. naturalization test (also referred to as the U.S. citizenship test), while a 97.5 percent passage rate was reported for immigrants applying for U.S. citizenship." In addition, the survey also revealed that "85 percent did

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not know the meaning of ‘the rule of law’, 82 percent could not name ‘two rights stated in the Declaration of Independence’.” While so many citizens could not pass the citizenship test, the Center reported that “77 percent of native-born citizens agreed that all Americans should be able to pass the test, and 60 percent agreed that high school students should have to pass the civics portion of the naturalization test as a requirement for graduation.”<sup>10</sup>

If the public school system is turning out students who are not prepared, colleges and universities are the safety net to make sure that we enhance the knowledge of students who will become potential voters and business owners. Of equal importance is introducing students to the concept of being a good citizen. It is clear that when students take a college-level U.S. Government class they become more informed.

In addition to my own research, two college professors, Leonard Champney and Paul Edleman, used the Solomon Four-Group Design to measure student knowledge of U.S. Government and student knowledge of current events at the beginning and end of a U.S. Government course. They concluded that “students’ knowledge of government/politics, their knowledge of current events, and their self-confidence in their knowledge are all positively impacted by completion of a United States government course.”<sup>11</sup> Sadly, not one college or university in the state of Florida requires all AA Degree seeking students to take and pass a basic U.S. Government class.<sup>12</sup>

What I learned the most from conducting this research is how many administrators in K-12 and the college/university level have had little to no interest in listening to or addressing the lack of preparedness of students as it relates to learning about government 13. In fact, there are some colleges and universities seeking delays to the Civics Literacy Requirement mandate.<sup>14</sup> During my initial report, I concluded that government has little to no interest in encouraging students to learn about what it is government does. I must amend that conclusion in this report because the Florida State Legislature has addressed this crisis in education.

In conclusion, there is a basic question that needs to be asked. If students are not learning about U.S. Government in high school and the safety net for them to learn about it in college has been reduced or removed, then where are students learning about government and current events that directly or indirectly impact their lives? The answer lies with the media.<sup>15</sup> Think for a moment about the requirements or qualifications of a journalist. There are none. Doctors must earn a medical license and take state boards for the rest of their careers in order to continue practicing medicine. Lawyers must earn a law degree and pass the Bar Exam. A journalist doesn’t even have to possess a high school diploma. Several demonstrate their ignorance of government in what is called “Fake News” but what I consider to be ignorance of the basic tenets of our government and our laws. Another poisoning factor is how social media has spawned an entire new generation of “journalists” who are simply equipped with a phone and the good fortune of being in the right place at the right time. Those who have knowledge must be vigilant in correcting misreporting of facts and the rewriting of history. Our nation depends on it.



*Professor Mark Logas is a tenured Political Science faculty member at Valencia College as well as an adjunct professor at the University of Central Florida. He currently serves as the 1st Vice President of the Florida Political Science Association. As a broadcast journalist for 40 years, Mark provides election coverage for WFLA 540AM/FM102.5 in Orlando and anchored the station’s live coverage of the Pulse Nightclub Shooting.*

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## With All Due Respect to the Radicals

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By Julio Aleaga Pesant

A ghost haunts Cuba. The error of equating historical time and human time.

At the center of this misperception is the nation. After a long tyranny, and the departure of the two individuals most responsible for it, whose names I will omit because they should be obvious, many assume that the modernization of Cuba will occur in a generation or less. The radicals opt for an immediate change. It's understandable. The urgencies of life.

In democratic systems, politicians are asked to solve pressing problems. But it can't always work out like that. Many times, dramatic solutions produce catastrophes. Think of the consequences of Soviet collectivization. Over eight million dead, only in Ukraine. The Great Leap Forward in China. 30 million dead. The Harvest of the Ten Million in Cuba, which destroyed the environment. The ratification of the

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XVIII amendment to the U.S. Constitution prohibiting the sale and consumption of alcohol, leading to the creation of a black market and organized crime.

The people who promoted those policies had a vision. The eradication of hunger in Russia. The economic development of China. Increased sugar production in Cuba. The elimination of vice in the United States. The catastrophes came about because of the attempt to violate the laws of historical time.

The Republic of Cuba is at a crossroads today. The generation that imposed the longest single-party dictatorship in the hemisphere finally, due to historical imperatives, steps away from power.

A new generation assumes a role in the creation of public policy. Again, the dichotomy between historical time and human time arises in the devising of new development projects.

Eleven years ago, in his first speech as heir, Raúl Castro promised a daily glass of milk for every child and elder in Cuba. He did not keep his promise. But he did introduce far-reaching reforms. He broadened the marketplace, restored some of the liberties that had been proscribed, improved relations with the United States. The citizenry began to feel hope. They gave him a blank check. Migration out of Cuba fell during his first four years in office to historically low levels not seen since before 1959.

Was it that Raúl Castro could not, or did not want to fulfill his promise of the glass of milk? Most likely, the state bureaucracy, in its desire to control all economic and productive processes, prevented the operation of what Marxists call the forces of production, or simply stated, the freedom to do business.

The battle between reformists and bureaucrats is illustrated with an example from 2012. Reformists authorized the sale of automobiles. The bureaucracy set the price. \$250,000 dollars for a Peugeot 607. And with one condition. Cash up front!

Is the glass of milk the only unresolved problem? Of course not! Six years after the establishment of the Special Economic Zone at the Port of Mariel, a project designed to promote foreign investment, we still await confirmation of the thesis which emphasizes the importance of unlocking the economy as a mechanism to empower citizens who live on an average monthly salary of 30 dollars a month, entrepreneurs desperate to expand, investors with a desire to take advantage of their know-how.

Federica Mogherini, High Commissioner for European foreign policy, defined the Cuban drama best. Single party democracy, she called it. The euphemism contains within itself the problem of the continuity of Castro-communism. Just because the "President" isn't named Castro Ruz doesn't mean the end of the policies that characterized the regime they established.

Those who were outraged by the inaugural speech of the new President of Cuba, Miguel Díaz-Canel, must turn their eyes to history. Let's look at the challenge he faces. Let us listen again to the inaugural speeches of Adolfo Suarez, the first democratically-elected Prime Minister of Post-Franco Spain. Or Mikhail Gorbachev, as General Secretary of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union, or Patricio Aylwin, the first Chilean president during the democratic transition from the Pinochet dictatorship. With the exception of the Chilean case, these politicians all represented a generational change.

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If the most important feature of the Fidel-Raúl succession (2006-2008) was the rupture of the myth of the communist monolith, Cuba's new ruler will have to create new equilibria. A balancing act that will lead to unsuspected developments.

A recent example was the presence of the Cuban government at the 8th Summit of the Americas. In Lima, the Cuban government left its Venezuelan godchild in the lurch, repudiated by the forum. There was a time not long ago when that would have been unthinkable, when solidarity would have imposed itself over pragmatism. Now, relations with the United States and the attraction of foreign investment is the prime motivator!

The newly appointed president has to face different power centers established during the reign of Castro II, as he is known on the street. These groups are not defined by ideology, but by loyalties based on the work they do in common in their provinces and localities. They are defined by shared personal experiences and loyalties nurtured over the last 30 years, when their members were just young leaders of the Union of Communist Youth or the University Student Federation.

Four groups stand out among these power centers, and in my humble point of view, they are the most important. For example, the group "Mujeres de Pinar del Río" (Women of Pinar del Río). Led by the Minister of Food, María del Carmen Concepción, it is a stable organization, open to negotiation.

Another example is the powerful Cienfuegos Collective. Aggressive, strategic, captained by the engineer Lázara López Acea, a member of the Political Bureau and First Communist of Havana, and where the Minister of Health and the First Secretary of the Communist Youth both serve as well.

The third group is in Villa Clara. Headed by the tandem formed by the engineer Díaz Canel and the professor Lázaro Expósito. This group has worked successfully as a team since the late eighties.

Last but not least, two groups that merge into one. Santiago de Cuba! The historic leaders and generals of the Revolution coexist in this city with the new generations of up-and-coming politicians. They are called upon to be the guardians of that euphemism they refer to as "conquests of the revolution." Raúl Castro stands out, as do the military generals. And among the bureaucrats, the current Governor of Havana, Reinaldo García Zapata. This clique has an interesting characteristic. The historic leaders are of European descent. The "new politicians" are Afro-Cubans.

It's possible that these different groups will arrive at an agreement to establish a balance of power that will permit pragmatic action that will drive reforms. But they will only be positioning themselves for the grand moment, the first great battle of this new era: the municipal elections of 2020.

If this elite can come together and avoid a fratricidal fight among themselves, they may try to amend the strategic mistakes made by the recently concluded government.

These include:

- Allowing for greater economic freedom to stimulate Cuban entrepreneurship and fight corruption.
- Liberalizing import and export policy and operation, including the indispensable modernization of customs facilities. Converting tax policy into a mechanism that will allow for economic development.

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- Promoting the development of small businesses, and non-agricultural cooperatives.
- Promoting and streamlining the process for foreign investment.
- Establishing visible and stable mechanisms to allow for an end to the system of dual currency, including the devaluation of the Cuban peso and the establishment of a clear timeline for the monetary transition.

But it's not just about correcting mistakes. To gain legitimacy, the new power structure must present a strategic vision for the nation. In this vision, civil liberties must have a predominant role, in order to guarantee other constitutional freedoms in the political and economic spheres, and to promote the reintegration of the exile community into their country of origin. The implementation of a new foreign policy, one that does not destabilize the region, or use international organizations to defend the worst causes of humanity. A new national security policy that includes the disarmament of the army and the political police, and the integration of Cuba in regional security arrangements.

The democratic opposition.

It's no longer like it was at the beginning of the opposition to the dictatorship. Back when nobody listened. Now the opposition has broad representation in the international media, thanks to the repressive measures that the state continues to exert on individuals.

It would be a mistake not to consider the organized and informal forces of opposition that exist and operate on the island. In the most recent elections, 20% of the population abstained from voting and 19% did so selectively, which implies that only 60% voted according to the instructions of the government, despite its media campaign and coercive strategies.

However, one of the difficulties faced by the opposition is that its leaders are promoted by two major forces. First, the Cuban government itself, which makes them into public figures, by tightening or loosening the repressive noose. And second, international actors and organizations that identify those individuals closest to their own political agenda and develop client relationships with them. This is a significant temptation in an extremely impoverished society where traveling abroad is a great prize, and where the average salary is 30 dollars a month.

But another, less visible opposition exists. Other Cuban opposition leaders, Bahamonde Massó in 1989 or Oswaldo Payá in 2002, have promoted a strategy of participation in electoral processes as a way to solve the permanent crisis and create a new political scenario. Tomás Moulian in his book, *Chile Actual: Anatomy of a Myth* argued that the Latin American left, after the defeat of the guerrilla insurgencies, came to understand the importance of the ballot box. But in Cuba the radical tendency has not yet been defeated.

Today the electoral strategy is gaining ground within the opposition. It is beginning to prepare its participation in the municipal elections of 2020, to reinforce the reformist trend and close the way to those who seek continuity. But if free elections were held tomorrow, the opposition could not prove its strength, for it still suffers from a lack of organization.

The United States of America.

So close and yet so far. The United States is a paradigm for most Cubans. A quarter of a million Cubans have migrated to this country in only the last three years. The policies of President Obama

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created an unbearable crisis for the Cuban political class, which chose to entrench itself further in its hostile rhetoric. Today the communist leadership regrets not having taken advantage of the benefits of this proposal, and now faces a new U.S. administration, with a different take on the problem.

### Summary

Reformist or not, the current Cuban president will face the death of his predecessor and –why not?– the system that elected him. His legitimacy will then be born of a new arbitration. And for that we must all be prepared, to contribute with our personal efforts to the development of Cuba, with all due respect to the radicals.



*Julio Aleaga Pesant is an independent journalist and an active member of the Cuban democratic opposition since 1997. He was a professor at the University of Havana until his expulsion in 2006, and is currently the Executive Secretary of the opposition party, Candidatos por el Cambio (Candidates for Change). He specializes in political transitions in Latin America and has won awards for his essays on the transition to democracy in Chile and Spain. He is a regular contributor to media throughout the Americas.*

*Translation by James Lopez, Professor of Spanish, Languages, and Linguistics, University of Tampa.*

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## Citizen Diplomacy and Bilateral Innovation Vital to Strengthening the US-Mexico Relationship

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By Juan Antonio Flores

The U.S.-Mexico Sister Cities Summit, held in Guadalajara, Mexico on February 15-16 of this year convened over 300 “citizen diplomats” from throughout the US and Mexico to showcase existing program success and exchange ideas and best practices for strengthening bilateral cooperation.

The theme of the conference --“Independence & Interdependence” — focused on celebrating the historical ties between U.S. and Mexican civil society, educational institutions and businesses. This theme could not have been more timely and relevant given the current social and political rhetoric in both countries, which often diminishes and overlooks the value of our historical and geographic relationship.

The inextricable issues of trade and security were key topics of discussion at the summit, but one overarching question was: What lessons have local communities learned?

Participants agreed that municipalities need not wait for federal leadership to improve trade and security. In fact, over recent years, we have seen examples of local communities initiating efforts for bilateral cooperation that in turn have spurred state and federal governments to follow.

Cities can and do lead in matters affecting international diplomacy. But to understand how to move these efforts forward, it is important to review and understand the broader historical context.

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It may sound like a cliché, but our two countries are truly at a crossroads, the second of such crossroads in the 25 years since ratification of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), a period of time in which we have seen increasingly strong bilateral cooperation. After all, NAFTA was the culmination of us moving beyond being *Distant Neighbors*, as described by author Alan Riding, toward a truly cooperative effort in the pursuit of economic integration, as well as an understanding that regional competitiveness made sense as an economic development strategy, particularly in light of a strengthening Asia.

The tragedy of September 11, 2001, was the first of these two crossroad moments, after which the bilateral relationship faced a huge obstacle to what many had hoped would be a “whole enchilada” enhancement of NAFTA, under the leadership of U.S. President George W. Bush—a former border state governor; and Mexican President Vicente Fox, whose election had ended 70 years of single-party rule. Following 9/11, heightened concerns in the U.S. over border and homeland security hindered and ultimately impeded advancement of clear-eyed, bipartisan comprehensive immigration reform, among other issues.

It took some time, but bilateral cooperation efforts got back on track, and were reaching historic levels in 2015. However, in the wake of the 2016 elections in the U.S., as well as Mexico’s own recent historic elections, the bilateral relationship faces a second and perhaps more daunting crossroads that threatens not only NAFTA, but the entire bilateral cooperative framework that is of vital interest to both countries. The prognosis can seem dismal: US financial support of the Merida Initiative is waning; comprehensive immigration reform is as unpopular as ever; and the future of NAFTA negotiations appear uncertain at best.

Rather than hand wringing, local communities should build on success stories to nurture bilateral cooperation. Citizen diplomacy, as it were, is more important than ever. for 300 years.

In the face of fiscal and political challenges at the federal level, the Public-Private Partnership model has proven to be a basis for success in using local government and private-sector funding to solve challenges that have historically been within the federal realm. In other words, local communities can use this model to push the federal government towards solutions that don’t necessarily cost federal money.

The public-private partnership model proved its value in 2016 when the [Border Trade Alliance](#) (BTA), a grassroots advocacy organization that pushes for better policies across all three NAFTA countries, successfully led efforts to pass the [Cross-Border Trade Enhancement Act](#), championed by U.S. Rep Henry Cuellar (D-Texas) and U.S. Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas). Building on a previous pilot program, this legislation provides a framework for local entities – both public and private – to reimburse federal agencies for staffing costs. It has also supplied a process for the donation of capital assets in order to enhance infrastructure and expand hours of operation at busy ports of entry.

Border communities in Texas have formed the [South Texas Assets Consortium](#) (STAC) to leverage funds to expand operations at places like the [Pharr International Bridge](#), which is thriving with agricultural and other products moving both north and south. STAC even succeeded in lobbying the Texas Legislature for grant funding to support its efforts.

Another innovative example of a local community utilizing the public-private partnership model to attract private investment for bilateral solutions is the [Cross-Border Xpress](#) (CBX), a privately-owned

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pedestrian international border crossing provides secure access from San Diego, California directly into the Tijuana, Mexico International Airport. This infrastructure solution provides travelers with affordable options to destinations not available at the capacity-limited San Diego International Airport. As a resulting example, in March of this year Hainan Airlines began nonstop service from Tijuana to Beijing.

The Cali-Baja region offers still other examples of locally-led, bilateral infrastructure solutions, including a utility-scale wind power project in the Mexican state of Baja California that provides power to San Diego via a cross-border transmission line – a project funded by the San Antonio-based North American Development Bank (NADBank).

Then there's the still-in-development Otay Mesa East border crossing, an initiative led by the San Diego Council of Governments (SANDAG), with strong advocacy from area chambers of commerce. This project presents a unique and immediate opportunity to modernize the way in which we build cross-border infrastructure: this plan proposes creating a framework for the development and construction of a single, cross-border project, rather than the historically inefficient method of building ports of entry as two separate projects – one on each side of the border, with separate administrators, budgets, and schedules. There is strong local political and financial will to pursue such innovation; what it lacks is the proper legal and diplomatic framework.

“Otay Mesa East will be a locally-led success, but reaching agreement on toll collection, revenue sharing, and design has been challenging,” said Paola Avila, Border Trade Alliance chairwoman and vice president for International Business Affairs at the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce. “The lesson being learned is that you can have all the stars in alignment, but if you lack the governing structure to make it happen, such as a single entity with authority in both countries, it can remain challenging.”

Avila also noted that the U.S. and Mexican governments, which jointly fund NADBank, are poised to expand the bank's authority to play such a supra-national role in project development.

Local communities have demonstrated that they have the will, expertise, and financial resources to solve cross-border challenges. Local leaders in border state communities with strong ties to Mexico, such as San Antonio, the Rio Grande Valley, San Diego, and others must continue to advocate for the tools for locally-led success.

Organizations such as Sister Cities International, the Border Trade Alliance, the Texas-Mexico Trade Coalition, and others provide the venue for advocacy and collaboration. Bilateral innovation and citizen diplomacy can save NAFTA and help solve trade and security challenges, so that we can continue to strengthen the cultural and economic ties that in a place like San Antonio have persisted through the challenges of political ebbs and flows, and changed borders and demographics for 300 years.



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Please submit your:

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\*Short articles about teaching Political Science (innovative methods, new courses, curriculum development)

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\*Public policy prescriptions from practitioners in the private, public, or non-profit sectors.

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