

ON BECOMING AN AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENTIST¹

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I was a boy when Fidel Castro rode triumphantly into Havana. In those first days of January 1959 it seemed as if the whole country had gone wild about the man whom everyone credited with having driven out dictator Fulgencio Batista.² And for the next few months we listened, enraptured, for hours on end, to Castro's manly, eloquent voice, as he deceived us into thinking that the revolution was, as one of his early slogans put it

¹This is a revised and extended version of "Bridging Two Cultures and Two Disciplines," in Howard J. Wiarda (Ed.), *Policy Passages. Career Policies for Policy Wonks*.

Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002, pp. 185-193. Many may regard it presumptuous of me to write this memoir, but perhaps it will be of interest to a few souls who will receive it in a charitable spirit.

² Think of the receptions given to the Beatles when they arrived in the U.S.A., a city celebrating a victory of its team in the World Series or the Super Bowl, and a New Year's party in Times Square all rolled into one, and you have a pretty good idea what it was like.

to preemptively deny that he was a communist, “as green as Cuba’s palm trees.”³ His image saturated the country. It was an exhilarating time.⁴

The following year ushered in a cataclysmic change in the political climate.⁵ In February, Soviet Deputy Premier Anastas Mikoyan arrived. It was as if the specter of

³ The perceptive observer then as now will note that green was notably absent from the symbol of his organization, the “26th of July Movement,” a red and black flag.

⁴ This is how I remember experiencing it at the time. For my retrospective review of that first year of Castro’s rule from the vantage point of a political scientist, see references cited below, especially *Fidel Castro: A Machiavellian Prince?*, and “Totalitarianism in the Tropics: Cuba’s ‘Padilla Case’ Revisited.” Here and in all other footnotes I cite only the titles of the articles. For complete references, see the bibliography. Most items are available on my webpage, uwf.edu/acuzan, and a few at ssrn.com.

⁵ Actually, it had been preceded by several moves that anyone with a minimum of political sense should have correctly interpreted as ominous: the summary executions of members of the defeated army and the show trials of others along with denunciations of U.S. criticisms of the same; the expropriation without due process of the properties of members of the former regime; ousting of the nominal “president,” Manuel Urrutia, whom Castro himself had appointed less than a year earlier; and the arrest, trial (where Castro himself was the star witness- cum-accuser), and sentencing to 20 years in prison of one of Castro’s four top *comandantes* and the mysterious disappearance of another, the popular Camilo Cienfuegos. Incidentally, I remember spotting him at a beach club,

communism was stalking the island, presaging the coming darkness at noon. Joy turned into terror, hope into desperation. Relatives and friends who never before would have contemplated emigrating stampeded for the exits, desperate to get out of the country via any avenue available before the Iron Curtain clamped shut. An aunt and her children flew to Jamaica, thence to Miami, where her husband awaited. In April 1961 we (that is, my parents, three younger brothers and I) boarded a Spanish-flag ocean liner bound for Veracruz, Mexico. As the ship sailed out of Havana harbor, half of our extended family, some never to be seen again, waved goodbye with their handkerchiefs. It was a tearful moment. Only a few days later, my favorite uncle, my father's older brother, landed at the Bay of Pigs as a member of the ill-fated [Brigade 2506](#), and was taken prisoner. Supported in Mexico City by my mother's Godfather for several months, we applied and were granted resident visas to the United States.⁶ In September, first by train and then by bus, we made our way to Miami, Florida, then the capital of Cuban exiles, today of Cuban-Americans.⁷

running up to him so shake his hand and glow afterwards in his warm greeting.

⁶ Sometimes in class I jokingly tell a different version: that we swam across the Rio Grande.

⁷ Remarkably, in the 2016 South Carolina presidential two Cuban-Americans, U.S. Senators Marco Rubio of Florida and Ted Cruz of Texas, placed second and third, respectively, behind Donald Trump. A third U.S. Senator is also a Cuban-American, Bob Menendez, Democrat from New Jersey. Four others have served in the House. In the

What we thought would be a temporary exile turned into permanent expatriation. For some time I had difficulty adapting. English did not come easily to me. In Cuba I hated the weekly lessons, telling myself, “Why do I have to study this, I’ll never use it.” That’s how much a ten-year old boy knows! In Miami, upon entering the 8th grade at Miami Edison, like many of my peers I attended an English-as-a-second language program in the mornings, and in the afternoons we went to classes it was believed we could handle, including Math, Music, and Physical Education. I particularly enjoyed the music class. The teacher, a young man, was a fan of lyrics from Broadway musicals. I remember “On the Street where You Live” and “Wouldn’t it be Lovely,” from “My Fair Lady.” However, outside school I continued to resist learning English, obstinately clinging to my native language.⁸ It was not until the family temporarily relocated to Kansas City that I read my first full-length book in English, Melville’s *Billy Bud*. It was in high school that I began extensively to read in my adopted language. I do not remember there having happened anything dramatic forcing me to make the switch. I think it was a natural evolution arising from necessity. In any case, read I did. *Pride and*

Ukrainian-born comedian Yakov Smirnoff’s 1980s signature catchphrase, “What a country!”

⁸ Richard Rodriguez, *Hunger of Memory. The Education of Richard Rodriguez* (Bantam, 1983) is a poignant account of Rodriguez’s struggles with language and his searching for a niche between the Mexican culture of his childhood and the American culture in which he grew up, an experience in some ways similar to mine.

Prejudice, Silas Marner, The Caine Mutiny, Marjorie Morningstar, A Summer Place, The Citadel, The Judas Tree, Good-Bye Mr. Chips, Cheaper by the Dozen, I'm a Lucky Guy, Tales of the South Pacific, and the Dobbie Gillis series are some of the titles of the many novels and collections of short stories I remember having enjoyed. In 1966 I graduated from Miami Edison high school and then earned a B.A. in Government and Economics from the University of Miami, all the while living at home and working part-time at various part-time jobs which left no time to engage in the extra-curricular activities⁹ that traditionally have been typical of college students.¹⁰

As a child I had assumed I would follow my father's footsteps to the law (a path two of my younger brothers took), but no sooner did I arrive at UM that the prospect of

⁹ About 15 years ago or so, observing our Model UN team competing on campus, I wistfully wished that I had been able to participate in something like that while in college—until it dawned on me that I *was* presently engaged in something very much like it: I was a member of the Faculty Senate!

¹⁰ At the start of every semester I ask my classes how many work at least 10 hours per week, 20 hours, 30 hours, more than 30. Most students respond that they work between 20 and 30 hours. "I empathize. I did the same. What you need to do for the next 16 weeks is to live like a monk or a nun most of the time, spending very little time on leisure. Ten years from now you will not regret not having attended more parties or drunk enough beer when you were a student, but rather, of not having applied yourself enough to your studies."

spending my life reading, lecturing, and writing on matters of historical import excited by imagination—and ambition. Two experiences, in particular, made a deep impression on me. When in a freshman economics course I first beheld a graphical representation of the law of supply and demand, it was as if the proverbial light bulb had been turned on above my head. I was almost mesmerized by its beauty and elegance. The other impressionable experience was reading John Locke’s *Second Treatise on Government*. To this day it remains a favorite. In my senior year I debated whether to pursue a doctorate in economics or political science, finally deciding in favor of the latter, for two reasons. One was practical, based on realistic self-knowledge: I did not think I could master the mathematics that was increasingly required to excel in economics. The other was idealistic: I thought economics had solved its basic problems but political science had not. Nevertheless, I was attracted to both, and envisioned using economic tools to analyze political phenomena. With the help of collaborators (Richard J. Heggen, a hydraulic engineer from the University of New Mexico and Charles M. Bundrick, a statistician from UWF) I took a stab at doing just that, although only time will tell whether this work, unconventional in its assumptions and going against the grain in its conclusions, constitutes a real contribution to the discipline.¹¹

By the time graduate school loomed ahead, I applied to several schools: Harvard, Wisconsin, North Carolina, Indiana. All accepted me and all but Harvard promised me a scholarship or assistantship, but it was IU that made me an offer I could not refuse: a

¹¹ “A Fiscal Model of Presidential Elections” and its sequels.

three-year NDEA fellowship (only one of two awarded that year¹²). I had picked Indiana because one of my professors, Bernie Schechterman, had gone there. Also in my senior year I applied for and became a naturalized citizen of the United States. (Bernie served as one of my character references.) It was my first, deliberate step in becoming an American.¹³

In September 1969, one month shy of my 21st birthday, I arrived in Bloomington.

¹²The other recipient was Donald Studler. Only a few years ago he recognized me at breakfast in a restaurant, I believe in a hotel abroad. He was headed for an appointment in Scotland. We traded stories before wishing each other well.

¹³To do so I renounced Cuban citizenship. I do not approve of “dual citizenship” or of automatic citizenship by virtue of birth. I think all people born in the United States should choose whether to become citizens, with all the rights and obligations pertaining thereto, or to remain as residents, subject to the protection of the law but without voting rights. Citizen or resident, all males would be subject to the military draft and other duties imposed on the population during wartime. Citizens would take on additional duties, something equivalent to the militia, e.g., service in the reserves, either the military or an auxiliary corps in support of the local police or sheriff or fire or emergency service for a period of years. The choice of citizenship or residency should first be exercised when the person reaches voting age, although the decision should not be irrevocable, but open to revision every decade thereafter, but with a lengthier time of service in an auxiliary corps for late deciders.

My graduate education, like my interests then and now, was eclectic. In my first interview with the graduate advisor, [Alfred “Freddy” Diamant](#), a native of Austria, I told him I was not interested in studying Latin America. Indeed, I was not; neither did I care to be pigeon-holed. Later, though, looking for a third field in which to take my “comps,” I changed my mind. It helped that a new professor, a fresh Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, [David Collier](#), had joined the faculty. Moreover, adding Latin American politics to my repertoire was a sensible choice, since competence in Spanish gave me a comparative advantage. All the while, though, I took courses from several political science professors while minoring in economics, taking courses from economist [James Witte](#), who kindly agreed to serve on my committee. Via the Ostros, [Vincent](#) and [Elinor](#), I encountered the work of [Gordon Tullock](#) and other contributors to the public choice school. Years later I would write Gordon, who encouraged me even as he relentlessly criticized my work. All four are dead now.

Among the books that made a lasting impression in graduate school were Anthony Downs’ *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, James Buchanan and Gordon Tullock’s *The Calculus of Consent*, Tullock’s *The Politics of Bureaucracy*, Friedrich Hayek’s *The Road to Serfdom*, Jane Jacobs’ *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Vincent Ostrom’s *The Intellectual Crisis in American Public Administration* (which I read in draft form, as it was being written at the time), Charles W. Anderson’s *Politics and Economic Change in Latin America*, Alexis de Tocqueville’s *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, and W. Ross Ashby’s *Design for a Brain*.

Ashby's book, a fascinating discussion on the attributes of a stable system, was in Vincent Ostrom's reading list. I don't recall whether I was drawn to it because of concerns about Latin American instability or the other way around. But reading it prompted an intuition: that Latin American dictatorships suffered from "hidden political instability." I had no means, let alone sufficient understanding of the problem for testing the idea. It is only recently that I was reminded of it when I showed that there appears to be a "law of shrinking support" affecting all incumbents, dictatorships not exempted: the moment a competitive election is held, official parties favored by the dictatorship almost invariably are swept out of office, and either disappear from the political stage or are "reborn" as something else.¹⁴

Also at IU, it was with shock and consternation that I discovered that Fidel Castro's stock among Latin Americanists was high and rising. This seemed to confirm the assessment I had made as an undergraduate that political science had yet to solve its basic problems.¹⁵ If interpretations of the Castro regime could be so wide of the mark,

¹⁴ "Five Laws of Politics." See, also, "Some Principles of Politics."

¹⁵ In *Reflections on a Ravaged Century* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000), Robert Conquest commented on the "mental incapacitation" and moral obtuseness that corrupted the judgment of countless Western intellectuals, including many academics, when it came to assessing the true nature of Stalinism. (See also Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims*, originally published by Oxford University Press, 1981.) A similar disability appears to have crippled understanding of Castroism and Sandinismo (and,

the discipline had a long way to go. In the 1980s, simmering indignation boiled over when so many Latin Americanists embraced Nicaragua's Sandinistas with the same fervor many of us had greeted Castro in 1959. I had had enough. In a series of guest columns published over a period of several years in [The Times of the Americas](#),¹⁶ I

more recently, Chavismo) on the part of all too many Latin Americanists. See my "The Latin American Studies Association vs. The United States: The Verdict of History"; *Dictatorships and Double-Standards: The Latin American Studies Association on Cuba*, Miami, FL: Endowment for Cuban-American Studies, Paper #13, 1995; "Cuba's Ranking in the Fitzgibbon Democracy Surveys: Reflecting a Leftist Bias?" *Cuban Affairs, Quarterly Electronic Journal*, 2 (2), April 2007; and various OP-EDS I wrote for *The Times of the Americas*. For my own interpretation of the Castro regime, see "Totalitarianism in the Tropics: Cuba's 'Padilla Case' Revisited"; *Is Fidel Castro a Machiavellian Prince?*; "Franco's Spain and Castro's Cuba: Parallels and Contrasts"; and "Francisco Franco and Fidel Castro: Loyalist vs. Revolutionary? A Preliminary Exploration."

¹⁶ The weekly paper originated as [The Times of Havana](#), the creation of two brothers, [Carl E. Moore](#) and [Clarence W. Moore](#), who after their paper was seized by the regime in 1960 joined the exodus out of Cuba and resurrected it with the new name first in Miami and then in Washington, D.C. In the 1980s, on a phone conversation with one of them (probably Carl but it may have been Clarence), remarking on the time he spent on what was a labor of love, he joked that his wife regarded the paper as his "mistress." After Carl

challenged their interpretation of the Nicaraguan revolution and the war in El Salvador, ridiculing their sophomoric infatuation with the Sandinistas and their Salvadoran counterparts.¹⁷ Many of these essays were translated into Spanish and distributed throughout Latin America by [FIRMAS Press](#).¹⁸ (A handful are available on my webpage.¹⁹)

When it came time to pick a dissertation topic, my concerns about the state of Latin American studies led me to propose a comparative study of Costa Rica and El

died the paper was sold to a commercial company, which made a botch of it, and it soon folded.

¹⁷ Also, I published a number of articles academic journals on Nicaragua. These are included in the bibliography.

¹⁸ Firmas Press is directed by [Carlos Alberto Montaner](#), a Cuban-born, widely-published and read writer (novelist, essayist and columnist). One of his early books, *Informe Secreto de la Revolución Cubana* (Ediciones SEDMAY, 1976; English translation, *Secret Report on the Cuban Revolution*, Transactions Publisher, 1981) has the status of a classic in my mind. It should have put an end to the starry-eyed views of the Castro regime by willfully ignorant fellow-traveling academics and journalists.

¹⁹ I quit writing them after I found that they interfered with my scholarly work, in the sense that no sooner did I submit one I became preoccupied about what I would write the next month. I acquired a lot of respect for columnists who write one or two a week, and publish books on the side, to boot.

Salvador. I had become interested in Costa Rica at UM, when I read a chapter on that country by James L. Busey in Martin Needler's *Latin American Political Systems*. Noting that it was an island of democratic stability in a sea of political storms, I wondered why. Looking for a contrasting case, I settled on El Salvador, about which I also had read a chapter, by [Charles W. Anderson](#), in the Needler reader. However, although intrigued with Costa Rica, and getting to know it became an end in itself, I chose it primarily because I wanted to evaluate a hypothesis I mentioned earlier about a three-way relation between the structure of government, the scope of government, and its stability. To maintain stability, I thought, there has to be a balance between centralization and scope—if one goes up the other must fall. I fancied that someday this might become known as “the law of centralization and scope,” and conjectured that the key to understanding Costa Rica's stability was that, unlike its neighbors, it had decentralized as the scope of its government had widened. Long on theoretical speculation, I was rather vague about methodology, but anticipated it would be in the traditions of participant-observation and case studies.

Ironically, unbeknownst to me at the time, for I had not yet read it, which only shows an embarrassing gap in the political science education I had received, in *The Politics. A Treatise on Government*, Aristotle discussed the operation of this “law”:

the stability of a kingdom will depend upon the power of the king's being kept within moderate bounds; for by how much the less extensive his power is, by so much the longer will his government continue; for he will be less despotic and

more upon an equality of condition with those he governs; who, on that account, will envy him the less.

It was on this account that the kingdom of the Molossi continued so long; and the Lacedaemonians from their government's being from the beginning divided into two parts, and also by the moderation introduced into the other parts of it by Theopompus, and his establishment of the ephori; for by taking something from the power he increased the duration of the kingdom, so that in some measure he made it not less, but bigger; as they say he replied to his wife, who asked him if he was not ashamed to deliver down his kingdom to his children reduced from what he received it from his ancestors? No, says he, I give it him more lasting" (The Project Gutenberg EBook of Politics, by Aristotle, Book V, Chapter XI; emphasis added).

In sum, Aristotle says that by reducing the scope and dividing the power, i.e., decentralizing his regime, Theopompus made it more stable. Just the kind of relationship I had conjectured.

We spent a year in Costa Rica and five months in El Salvador, returning to Miami in June 1974 with boxes of books, newspaper clippings, and about a dozen or so thick notebooks recording my observations and interviews with local officials and citizen activists in cities and towns across both countries. Although the dissertation did not and could not accomplish anywhere near what I had initially imagined it would do, i.e., establish a "law of centralization and scope," it did make a reasonable case for the proposition that Costa Rica's more decentralized political structure had something to do

with its superior performance relative to El Salvador's in satisfying public demands, and it was approved in 1975.

The following spring I received an offer from New Mexico State University, in Las Cruces. On the telephone, the chairman, a retired Air Force officer, told me that I would be expected to contribute to the MPA program and teach the introductory course in American politics, but that there would be no opportunity in the Latin America field, it being already occupied by two other members of the faculty. Actually, being shut out of teaching Latin American politics turned out to be beneficial in unanticipated ways. Drawing on my economics background, I developed a graduate course in budgeting and an undergraduate one in political economy. This enabled—indeed, required—me to read more economics. Also, I became interested in natural resources. As it happened, one of the case studies included in my dissertation was an analysis of Costa Rica's national aqueducts agency. Never having lived in a dry climate before, in New Mexico I began to read about water policies in America's Southwest. In pursuit of that interest, I attended a Chautauqua workshop held in Austin, Texas.²⁰ There I met Richard J. Heggen, then an assistant professor of Civil Engineering at the University of New Mexico. On the return flight we coincidentally happened to sit next to each other. To pass the time I

²⁰ That workshop yielded an article, Alfred G. Cuzán, "A Critique of Collectivist Water Resources Planning," which led to an invitation to contribute a chapter to a book on water resources edited by Terry Anderson of Montana State University, "Appropriators vs. Expropriators: The Political Economy of Water in the West."

showed him a model I had developed to account for political violence in Central America.²¹ He said it was similar to microeconomic models used in engineering. Subsequently, we pursued the discussion by telephone and letter (that was long before email), eventually writing two articles based on the initial model.²² Then we developed a different, but related model to study American presidential elections.²³ In 2000, after a long hiatus, we temporarily resumed our collaboration, publishing an article with Bundrick in *Simulation*. Although he's retired, we communicate periodically. Also at NMSU, I met two wonderful people, Cal and Janet Clark (both now retired from Auburn and West Georgia, respectively). An expert on methodology, Cal taught me a lot while collaborating on two conference papers which, as it turned out, never found their way to print. From him I learned to appreciate the value of statistics in testing political hypotheses, something I had been unreasonably skeptical about in graduate school.²⁴ In

²¹ "Authority, Scope, and Force: An Analysis of Five Central American Countries."

²² Heggen and Cuzán, "Legitimacy, Coercion, and Scope: An Expansion-Path Analysis Applied to Five Central American Countries and Cuba," and Cuzán and Heggen, "A Micro-Political Explanation of the 1979 Nicaraguan Revolution."

²³ Cuzán and Heggen, "A Fiscal Model of Presidential Elections in the United States: 1880-1980."

²⁴ That was the third and, I hope, the last time, that I made the misjudgment I previously had made regarding the study of the English language and ancient political theory.

fall 2015, I assigned his book on research methods in a graduate seminar and he came down three times in the semester to teach three of the chapters.

On the strength of my natural resources work I was offered a position at The University of West Florida. I was expected to teach public administration and to contribute to a Coastal Zone Studies program (which folded a few years later).²⁵ The man who hired me, Lynton Hayes, also an IU Alumnus, returned to Australia to head a management institute, and later moved to the Harvard Business School. His successor, Jim Witt, was in his own way as indulgent with me as David Collier had been. When the department's Latin Americanist left, he allowed me to take over her course, along with another on communist theory and practice. And when another colleague moved into university administration, leaving a hole in political theory, he allowed me to fill part of that, too. So step by gingerly step, I left public administration behind. Also, soon after my arrival at UWF I made a fortunate find: Mike Bundrick, a mathematician and statistician, who co-authored many of my articles on American presidential elections until a few years after he retired.

In 2004, I ran into a review of Ray Fair's *Predicting Presidential Elections and other Things* by J. Scott Armstrong, an expert on forecasting and advertising at the Wharton School. Scott liked the book, but lamented that there was no policy variable in

²⁵ I produced two items, one solo "The Political Economy of Ports in the United States and Great Britain," and one co-authored, "The Appropriation of Shifting Sands: Transferring Institutions from the Desert to the Coast."

Fair's model. I emailed Scott, attaching one of the articles on the fiscal model, and he responded with a surprising proposition. Let's create a website to predict the 2004 presidential election by combining forecasts from different sources, including polls, the Iowa Electronic Market, forecasting models by Fair and others by political scientists, and a panel of invited experts on American elections who did not use a forecasting model. I agreed, provided we could interest Randall J. Jones, Jr., whose book, *Who Will Be in the White House* (Longman, 2001), I had recently read. Randy liked the idea, and we were off. Thus the [PollyVote](#) was born. Traffic at the site was sporadic at first but grew with every additional month. Among the forecasting models I included was the first prospective prediction made with the fiscal model. As it turned out, it was one of the most accurate that year. This opened the way to publish several items on the model in *PS: Political Science and Politics*, arguably the most widely read journal of the American Political Science Association. Two others followed with Bill Tankersley, using the fiscal model as the basis for evaluating the vote-getting efficiency of presidents with the Data Envelopment Analysis model. For the 2008 election, a fourth member joined the PollyVote team, the German scholar Andreas Graefe. Eventually he assumed responsibility for the website and has taken the lead in authorship of the many papers and articles that have followed. In 2017, we won the Outstanding Paper Award of the International Journal of Forecasting for an article published in that journal in 2014.

I am often asked if I have visited Cuba. No, I have not; nor am I going to until there is a real regime change there. I refuse to grant them authority over me, unlike all who ask their permission to enter the country and put themselves under their power for

the length of their stay. The Castro dynasty is a criminal syndicate, a corrupt and cruel gerontocracy that has made life miserable for millions of people, and not just in the island. They have divided families, driven more than a million Cubans from their homeland, executed tens of thousands, run hundreds of thousands through their prison system, squandered the country's patrimony, and made themselves rich and famous while running the country's economy into the ground. "But it wouldn't be dangerous for you, would it?" I was asked recently. "It depends how seriously they take some of my writings," I replied.²⁶

I already mentioned that in graduate school I was shocked to find out that Castro's stock was high and rising among Latin Americanists. I remember an academic once advising me to make excuses for my family having left Cuba, and to leave Castro out of my writings. In another instance, an academic with whom I had had good relations said he wished to not to be "associated" with an article (and, by implication, with me), a review of Jorge Edwards' *Persona Non-Grata* published by Murray Rothbard in the *Libertarian Forum*. Recently, one of our graduate students who was being wined and dined at several universities trying to recruit him for their doctorate programs was told in one of them that I deserved credit for being so clear-eyed about the Castro regime. But what it actually reflected was not any special insight on my part

²⁶ A colleague from another institution who had gone to lecture at an NGO was summoned to the police and interrogated for several hours, including his writings on Cuba, which were deemed "too critical." This is not unusual.

but, as I said earlier, the obtuseness of so many Latin Americanists and, let it be said, the complicity of silence of many others in the face of so much falsehood or wishful thinking spread by committed leftists, presumably for fear of being black-listed by the powers that be at conferences, foundations and journals, and foregoing any chance if being granted a visa to visit the island.

Reflecting on my academic career, I have a few words of advice for the foreign-born would-be political scientist. Do not allow yourself to be stereotyped or pigeonholed. Whatever your country of origin, it will always be with you. Because you were born there, you have a comparative advantage when it comes to comprehending it or the broader cultural region to which it belongs. Moreover, you may have a strong sense of duty to your former compatriots, and may thus wish to foster a better grasp of their politics and society among scholars, U.S. policy-makers or the public at large, or even to try to influence political developments there for the better.²⁷ (A model worthy of emulating in along that line is that of the Estonian American [Rein Taagepera](#).) At the same time, you need to pursue broader comparative interests. Above all, you need to study the United States. Bear in mind that some of the most insightful commentaries about this country have been made by foreigners, Alexis de Tocqueville justly being the most renowned. But note that, in *Democracy in America*, de Tocqueville analyzes the United States through implicit and explicit comparisons with France or Great Britain. It was by comparing these cases that he was able to improve his understanding of all three. Being *in* the United States but not entirely *of* it has its liabilities, to be sure. But it also

²⁷ See my “A Constitutional Framework for a Free Cuba.”

affords you a valuable vantage point that those who were born of second or later generations of Americans do not have. Make the most of it.

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