

## *International Networks and Change*

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In November 1999 the heads of state of Latin America, Spain and Portugal gathered in Havana for the annual Ibero-American Summit. Despite Castro's attempt to utilize the occasion to garner international condemnation for the U.S. economic embargo and to position Cuba as a strategic regional actor, the event scored an important victory for the internal opposition. Some leaders boycotted the summit in protest of Cuba's human rights record, and others including the leaders of Spain and Portugal used the occasion to hold meetings with prominent members of the island's dissident community.<sup>1</sup> As a result, the meeting came to be known as the "Summit of the Dissidents."

This event symbolizes the beginning of important developments that began to unfold in Cuba in the late 1990s, and identifies the potential role that transnational linkages can play in facilitating the empowerment of opposition. Past research has established the growth of Cuba's opposition movement in the last decade. (Lopez-Gottardi 2005; Espinosa 2001, 2003; Pumar 1999; Encinosa, 1994) This article explores the extent to which opposition growth can be attained by stronger ties with the international community. Given the nature of repression and social control exerted against opposition and other autonomous organizations in Cuba, as well as the experience of comparative opposition movements who have benefited from international support, this article demonstrates that these agents can contribute to opposition development in Cuba.

International support networks are not new to Cuba, although in the past they were largely restricted to Cuban exile groups and larger international human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. In the last decade, however, we witness a sudden growth in the num-

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1. Nicaragua, Costa Rica and El Salvador were among those to boycott the event citing Cuba's human rights record.

ber, diversification and activity level of international linkages. This was the result of a number of events that began to unfold in the last several years beginning with the 1994 sinking of the *13 de marzo* tugboat, malecon demonstration and rafter crisis of the same year. These events were followed by the crackdown against *Concilio Cubano* and the shutdown of two Brothers to the Rescue planes in 1996 and the 1998 Papal Visit which together increased international attention on Cuba's human rights record. Finally, the 1999 Ibero-American Summit, which came to be known as the Summit of the Dissidents, "officially: marks the beginning of greater support and recognition for Cuba's opposition movement. The March 2003 crackdown served as the final catalyst for the expansion of more networks. The proliferation of international linkages was also facilitated by a number of factors, including: the sudden growth and maturity of opposition groups in the 1990s, and a greater ability to communicate due to strides in communication and the growth of independent journalism in Cuba which together helped to increase the flow of information between the island and abroad.

Several cases demonstrate that international factors can empower opposition movements. (Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Angell, 1996; Pridham, 1991) Due to the fact that Cuba's internal opposition has no formal or institutionalized channels of representation, and their ability to effect change from within remains grim, they have been forced to look outside of the island for a voice and to establish their own legitimacy. Unlike the Polish Solidarity Labor Union, civil society and opposition organizations in Cuba are not officially recognized by the state. (Quiroz, 2003) They have no legal status and therefore little legitimacy within society. As a result, they have recognized the need to seek external assistance in both the exile and international communities which have led to the creation of international support networks. These networks can act as new agents of change by: (i) serving as a voice or forum for the opposition to express their views and garner support, (ii) procure critical resources including material and organizational capacity, (iii) provide a "safe" space or cover where the opposition can gather, (iv) and in effect creating a channel of communication and pressure between the state and civil society that did not previously exist. Therefore, while domestic actors will be the "principal protagonists" in a future transition, international networks through their assistance to and support of the opposition, may also be helpful in driving change. (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997)

International networks can serve the opposition as critical support structures, which may help to facilitate their growth and development and therefore enhance the possibility for a transition. This argument is fundamentally based on theory advanced by Keck and Sikkink (1998) who argue that networks of activists referred to as, "transnational advocacy networks," or

TANs, may assist the opposition in three critical ways: (i) information gathering and dissemination; (ii) multiplying the channels of access; and ultimately (iii) exerting external pressure upon the regime. These networks create a forced channel of communication between the state and civil society referred to as the boomerang pattern of influence. (Keck and Sikkink, 1998: 12-13) In order to, “gain influence these networks seek leverage over more powerful actors. By leveraging more powerful institutions weak groups gain influence far beyond their ability to influence state practices directly.” (Keck and Sikkink, 1998: 23) Thus the strength of these networks comes from their transnational structure and their ability to affect policies from the outside. Tarrow (1996) makes a similar argument regarding social movements stating that, “the power of social movements are a mix of internal and external resources. If movement organizers succeed in mobilizing the bases of their movement, this depends not on formal organizations, but on the social networks in which supporters are found, and on the mobilizing structures that link them with one another.” (Tarrow, 1996: 153) Thus this form of assistance lowers the transaction costs and increases a movement’s ability to sustain over time.

TANs are forms of voluntary, reciprocal organizations that plead the cause of others, and in the case of Cuba ultimately aim to change state behavior. They exchange information, training, financial resources and support, and are characterized by (i) the centrality of values or principled ideas; (ii) the belief that individuals can make a difference;<sup>2</sup> (iii) the creative use of information; and (iv) the employment by nongovernmental actors of sophisticated political strategies in targeting their campaigns. TANs tend to be most common in issue areas that have high value content and informational uncertainty. Information exchange is central to the relationship. They are significant in creating norm implementation by pressuring actors to adopt new policies and by monitoring compliance of these policies with international standards. (Keck and Sikkink, 1998: 2-3)

In the last several years the Cuban opposition has benefited from this form of assistance. Most notably, international response to the March 2003 crackdown against independent journalists and Varela Project organizers was unprecedented in terms of the number of responses, the severity of criticism directed at the regime and the actors involved. Roy (2003) noted, “the measures generated an unprecedented world wide protest not limited to the usual conservative sectors in the United States and the Cuban exile community. Traditionally tamed European governments in Europe made explicit protests, while important backers of the Cuban regime abandoned their endorsement, changing it for straight denunciation.” In addition, collaboration between

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2. This is similar to Lopez’s (2002) notion of political efficacy, although his focus relates specifically to the connection between political efficacy and its ability to initiate mass protests.

internal opposition groups and international human rights and exile organizations has also increased dramatically leading to the creation of TANs and thus allowing for the facilitation of information, the distribution of supplies and funding, moral support, increased visibility and legitimacy. The growth of the opposition in the 1990s and these recent repressive measures have also led to an increase in the number of foreign based organizations interested in human rights conditions on the island. Further, these organizations are no longer restricted to Cuban exile groups, nor larger human rights organizations (although they continue to remain very active), rather there has been an increase in and diffusion of international interest, particularly from European based organizations to monitor and pressure for change. Some examples include Reporters Without Borders (France), People in Need Foundation (Czech Republic), Fundación Hispano Cubana (Spain), Adveniat (Germany), Asociación Españoles por la Libertad (Spain), International Committee for Democracy in Cuba (Czech Republic), Committee to Protect Journalists (internationally focused, based in New York), Konrad Adenauer Foundation (Germany), Helsinki Human Rights Foundation (Finland), Center for the Rights of Man (Romania), among others.

This diversification has also resulted in greater legitimacy and strength for the movement. This article explores the nature and extent of Cuba's transnational networks, and establishes conditions for their ability to assist the opposition in affecting real change. Regardless of the means by which a transition eventually transpires, these international linkages will serve an important supportive role that will be critical to emerging democratic forces.

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### *International Support Networks*

There is a general consensus in the literature that international factors play a secondary role in the transition process (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997; Whitehead, 1996; Huntington, 1991; Schmitter, 1986). Nevertheless several cases demonstrate that they can be helpful in encouraging or initiating a transition and in supporting consolidation. (Hyde-Price, 1994; Niklasion, 1994) The proximity of transitions in South America and Europe during the third wave for example, in terms of both time and space, illustrate the power of demonstration effects, or what is also referred to as contagion produced by external events. Whitehead describes this as "the diffusion of experience through neutral, i.e. non-coercive and often unintentional channels from one country to another." (Whitehead 1996: 30) This was particularly evident in Eastern Europe as a result of the changes taking place in the former Soviet Union under Gorbachev's leadership. International influence can also be achieved with pressure applied through a country's foreign policies. The U.S. embargo which conditions its relations with Cuba with economic sanctions,

and the 1996 EU Common Position which outlines specific human rights requirements, are examples of this strategy.

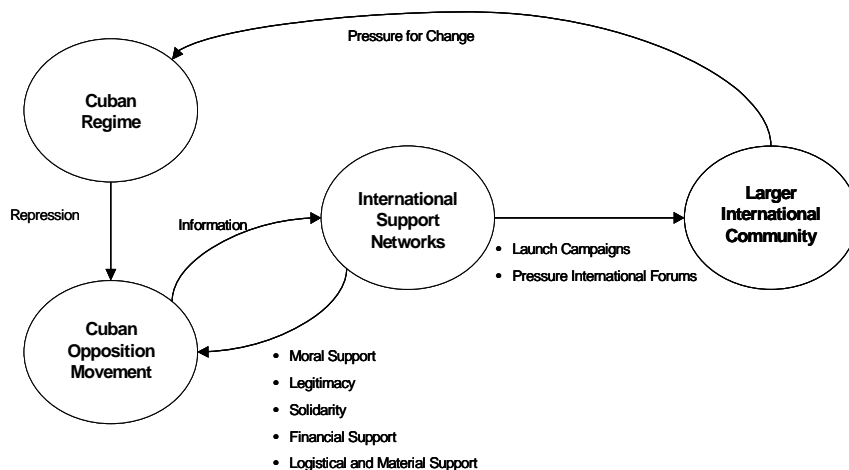
According to Sikkink (1996), another manner in which international pressure can influence the transition process is “by entering into the decision making calculus of key political actors at critical turning points.” (Sikkink, 1996: 75) She references O’Donnell and Schmitter’s (1986) assertion that transitions are the result of divisions within the regime itself. Sikkink argues that it is precisely at this phase “when civil society is still relatively repressed and not yet able to mobilize actively, that international human rights efforts may help to shift the calculations of actors inside the regime, giving weight to arguments of softliners in favor of liberalization.” (Sikkink, 1996: 75)

TANs provide yet another international factor that may be relevant in contributing to opposition growth and precipitating a transition. TANs have become increasingly salient in contemporary politics as the lines between national and international arenas have blurred. This theory draws from Keohane and Nye (1977) who argued that contemporary politics are not a seamless web, but rather “a tapestry of diverse relationships.” TANs have particular significance in repressive environments where these networks are often the only forum available to civil society and opposition groups. They are significant domestically as well as transnationally because, “by building new links among actors in civil societies, states and international organizations, they multiply the channels of access to the international system...they also make international resources available to new actors in domestic political and social struggles. Thus by blurring the boundaries between a state’s relations with its own nationals and the recourse both citizens and states have to the international system, advocacy networks are helping to transform the practice of national sovereignty.” (Keck and Sikkink, 1998: 1) Thus TANs can also be viewed as political spaces. In countries such as Cuba where there is little space for political action, TANs create new channels of communication and access, and are areas where advocacy can occur with less fear of reprisals.

TANs are most effective in cases where: (i) the channels of communication and interaction between domestic organizations and/or individuals and their governments are blocked; (ii) activists, in this case opposition members, believe that networking will be effective in furthering their cause; and (iii) international contacts serve as a forum for strengthening networks. (Keck and Sikkink, 1998: 12) The key is that, “where channels of participation are blocked the international arena may be the only means that domestic activists have to gain attention to their issues. Boomerang strategies are most common in campaigns where the target is a state’s domestic policies or behavior.” (Keck and Sikkink, 1998: 12-13). This Boomerang Effect is the very key to

the operational effectiveness of these networks. As depicted in Figure 1 they may work when domestic NGOs bypass their state and directly search out international allies to try to bring pressure on their states from outside.” (Keck and Sikkink, 1998: 12-13)

FIGURE 13-1. TANs in CUBA



(Adapted from Keck and Sikkink, 1998)

TANs utilize four primary tactics to generate change: (i) information politics which involve making information accessible and strategically useful. Radio Marti and the growth of independent journalism are examples;<sup>3</sup> (ii) symbolic politics are used to heighten awareness by framing issues around highly symbolic events, dates or accolades. Oswaldo Paya Sardinias’ nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize in both 2003 and 2004, and Raul Rivero’s 2004 win of the UNESCO humanitarian award are examples of symbolic politics due to their international visibility and ability to increase awareness of Cuba’s human rights and political conditions (*See Table 1*); (iii) leverage politics are aimed at attaining policy changes from specific actors, and attempt to find a negotiating platform. Examples include Cuba’s expulsion from the OAS in 1962, the U.S. economic embargo, the EU Common Position, and the FTAA Democracy Clause adopted at the Third Summit of the Americas in Quebec in April 2001 which established that any unconstitutional alteration or interruption of the democratic order in a state of the hemisphere constitutes an insurmountable obstacle to that state’s participation in the Summit of the

3. *Cubanet* and *Nueva Prensa* have facilitated these efforts.

Americas Process. This clause is now incorporated as Article 19 of the Charter; and (iv) accountability politics which seek to hold actors accountable to international laws and pronouncements, by threatening their noncompliance to the international community. (Keck and Sikkink, 1998: 80) More recently, however, accountability politics have proven relatively ineffective in the case of Cuba.

TABLE 13-1. Awards Given to Opposition Movement Members (A partial list)

<b>Award</b>	<b>Recipient</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Year</b>
Honorary doctorate, Columbia University	Oswaldo Paya Sardinias	Varela Project, Movimiento Cristiano Liberación	2006
Shakarov Prize for Freedom of Thought, European Parliament	Damas en Blanco	Damas en Blanco	2005
UNESCO Humanitarian Award	Raul Rivero	Cuba Press	2004
Shakarov Prize for Freedom of Thought, European Parliament	Oswaldo Paya Sardinias	Varela Project, Movimiento Cristiano Liberación	2003
Nomination, Nobel Peace Prize	Oswaldo Paya Sardinias	Varela Project, Movimiento Cristiano Liberación	2002, 2003
New York Academy of Science, Heinze R. Pagel Award	Martha Beatrice Roque	Asamblea Para Promover la Sociedad Civil	2002
Civil Courage Prize	Vladimiro Roca Antunez	Todos Unidos	2002
Democratic National Institute, W. Averell Harriman Democracy Award	Oswaldo Paya Sardinias	Varela Project, Movimiento Cristiano Liberación	2002
Liberty Prize Pedro L. Boitel	Angel Moya Acosta	Movimiento Opción Alternativa; Movimiento Libertad y Democracia	2002
Folkpartiet Liberalerna "Lars Leijonborg" Democracy Prize	Berta Mexidor and Gisela Delgado Sablon	Proyecto de la Bibliotecas Independientes de Cuba	2002
Liberty Prize Pedro L. Boitel	Juan Carlos Leiva	Fundación Cubana de Derechos Humanos	2001
People in Need Foundation Homo Homini Human Rights Award	Oswaldo Paya Sardinias	Varela Project, Movimiento Cristiano Liberación	1999

Success of each of these strategies is measured on the basis of their ability to influence the position of relevant international actors, issue and agenda creation, policy changes of target actors and ultimately their ability to influence state behavior. (Keck and Sikkink, 1998: 25) In Cuba, the goal is to attain a voice for opposition and dissident groups, which may require a regime change. Keck and Sikkink (1998) have found that "transforming state policies has come about from linking principled ideas to material goals: mili-

tary aid, economic aid, and trade benefits.” (Keck and Sikkink, 1998: 118) Further, these pressures are most effective “against states that have internalized the norms of the human rights regime and resist being characterized as pariahs.” (Keck and Sikkink, 1998: 118)

Cuba’s response to this strategy presents an interesting scenario. Cuba’s foreign relations began a profound transformation beginning in the late 1980s that have affected the utility of this tactic. In the immediate aftermath of the Cold War and with the initiation of the Special Period, Cuba was forced to seek international support in order to replace the sudden loss of Soviet subsidies and to position itself as a relevant international player. During this time, accountability or leverage politics proved effective strategies due to Cuba’s vulnerability in the international system. More recently, however, the regime has had to consider alternative tactics to ensure its immediate survival, thereby demonstrating less concern regarding international norms and pressures. The March 2003 crackdown is evidence of this change in policy. As a result, it appears that regime survival has evolved into a simple cost calculation for the time being. Once allies, tensions with the European Union in 2003, particularly against Spain and Italy, as well as Mexico and Peru are evidence of this change. In June of the same year the European Commission ruled to scale back diplomatic and cultural contacts to the island. The EU Presidency led by Greece, “issued an unprecedented blistering declaration on Cuba’s deplorable actions in violating fundamental freedoms, demanding the immediate release of all political prisoners, and calling on EU member states to limit high-level government visits to Cuba, to reduce the profile of participation in cultural events, and to invite dissident to national day celebrations.” (Roy 2003: 2) This decision was made just after the European Commission opened its first diplomatic office in Havana. The Castro regime responded by suspending the Spanish Cultural Center in Havana and organizing state-sponsored demonstrations on June 12, 2003, outside both the Spanish and Italian ministries. (Roy, 2003)

These developments also have important economic ramifications given that “Europe as a whole has become Cuba’s most important trade and investment course, replacing the Soviet Union as Havana’s main commercial partner.” (Roy 2003: 3) In particular, Cuba enjoys strong foreign investment from a number of EU countries led by Spain and Italy. In addition, the EU provides Cuba with the highest amount of development aid. Although EU relations with Cuba remain defined by the 1996 Common Position which conditions full economic relations on human rights reforms, since early 2005 most EU countries, with the exception of the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic have resumed diplomatic contact with Cuba. Thus given these recent developments, particularly the suspension of the EU’s diplo-

matic standoff, as well as changes in the political makeup of Latin America, it remains to be seen whether this surge in international support networks are particular to the period described or whether it will benefit from a longer trajectory. This is currently difficult to predict and will have to be closely monitored.

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### *Comparative Cases*

International support received by the Chilean exile community during the Pinochet era was critical in fostering the development of a strong opposition that organized to defeat Pinochet in the 1988 plebiscite. Similar forms of assistance were extended to Eastern European dissident organizations from the West. These cases are presented to provide comparative insight and share significant parallels with the Cuban Diaspora which remains fervently active in its campaign against Castro despite over four decades of exile.

Angell (1996) has written extensively on this subject and found that, “the international dimension of Chilean politics, and not least the effect of exile, was of greater importance [in Chile] than in other contemporary military dictatorships of Latin America” (Angell 1996). In particular, he cites the benefit of: (i) financial support;<sup>4</sup> (ii) the experience attained by exiles who returned influenced by ideas and attitudes of where they had been (principally Europe, the United States, and elsewhere in Latin America); (iii) ties developed with sympathetic governments, NGOs and parties who later mobilized to support and exert pressure for the 1988 plebiscite.<sup>5</sup> (Angell 1996: 175) Like Cuba, Angell notes that, “it is hardly surprising that opposition parties turned to external support simply to survive.” (Angell 1996: 179) Political parties which were so strong in Chilean history, remained active and formed in exile. Because the Pinochet regime was so widely condemned, “the opposition was widely supported.” Exile might have contributed to the short term consolidation of the Pinochet regime in so far as it removed opposition politicians from Chile, but the long term effects were adverse for the government. Exiled politicians became adept in mobilizing international support for their opposition to the Pinochet government, and the very fact of exile on such a dramatic scale dramatically underlined the abuse of human rights committed by the Pinochet regime.” (Angell 1996: 184) International support in Chile was first directed towards humanitarian needs and was later channeled for political purposes through a variety of research institutions, and in support of opposition press and media.

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4. Angell (1996) reports that the majority of the funding was provided by Catholic organizations in the U.S. and Europe and also by the U.S. and West Germany.

5. Angell cites that the number of exiles ranged between 30,000 and 163,686 (Angell 1996: 176).

Bugajaski and Pollack (1989) also describe significant international support links between opposition groups in Eastern Europe and the West. In the case of Poland, international labor unions became “natural” allies in the Polish push for democracy. Kubik and Ekiert (2000) found that, “dissident organizations developed networks of contacts and communications across the Soviet bloc and in the 1980s a transnational dissident movement of sorts emerged in Eastern Europe.” They report that following the Helsinki agreements in 1975, human rights groups such as Amnesty International established links to dissident organizations. Eventually these Western organizations became protective umbrellas, publicizing the arrests of opposition leaders and the condition of dissidents under communism. (Kubik and Ekiert 2000: 6) Funding levels indicate that the Workers Defense Committee, KOR, was the most successful in attaining material assistance. This assistance increased following the de-legalization of Solidarity in 1981. Similar to current USAID support to Cuban opposition groups (channeled through exile organizations), assistance to Polish groups was initially channeled through intermediary organizations such as Committee in Support of Solidarity in New York, now the Institute for Democracy in Eastern Europe. (Kubik and Ekiert 2000: 6-7)

In the former Czechoslovakia, dissidents fostered contacts with international human rights organizations who helped to launch campaigns for the release of political prisoners. Contacts between opposition groups and exiles abroad were also common. Additional sources of international assistance to Eastern European countries came from the National Endowment for Democracy, Jan Hus organizations, and the Central and East European Publishing Project which was created in 1986 by a number of major U.S. foundations including the John D. and Catherine T. McArthur, Ford Foundation, George Soro’s Open Society Institute, and the Rockefeller Foundation to fund samizdat literature. (Kubik and Ekiert 2000: 7)<sup>6</sup> These linkages created political lobbying groups, served as a source of material and financial support (to fund research, conferences, purchase equipment, humanitarian aid, among other initiatives), and as a “point of contact with dissidents allowing for information about opposition initiatives to flow out of Czechoslovakia and words of support and solidarity to come in.” (Bugajaski and Pollack 1989: 100-107)

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6. See Lopez (2002) for further details on international material assistance to civil society in Eastern Europe, including particular funding amounts and their intended purpose (by relevant organizations and countries). See also related annual reports of the National Endowment for Democracy.

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*Actors and Forms of International Support to Cuba*

International support networks to Cuban opposition organizations has taken several forms including: (i) financial funding (primarily to the families of political prisoners); (ii) logistical, technical or strategic assistance; (iii) moral support and solidarity; (iv) sanctions, official declarations and other foreign policy measures; (v) awards or other accolades which increase awareness and legitimacy; (vi) and generally providing an international platform from which the opposition can voice their grievances. These different forms of assistance are provided by a variety of actors, including: (i) foreign governments; (ii) international NGOs such as Reporters Without Borders, People In Need Foundation, among others that are profiled below; (iii) intellectuals or other relevant individuals not necessarily officially representing any group or nation; and (iv) exile-based groups.<sup>7</sup>

The following section profiles a selection of different actor types, the forms of support they have provided, and demonstrates the manner in which they have fostered Cuba's opposition movement. The goal is to attain an understanding of the impact of international support networks from a variety of actors.

**Case Studies**

The Czechoslovakian People in Need Foundation (PINF) is a privately funded NGO created in 1992 to assist in relief programs and missions, provide humanitarian aid, promote the protection of human rights and democratic freedoms throughout the world. In the last several years PINF has been actively involved with Cuba's internal opposition providing financial funding, moral and political support, technical assistance, medical supplies, and disseminating information on Cuba to the international community. They work with a network of organizations including select UN agencies, NGOs, private foundations, and a variety of government representatives and entities. Each year PINF delegates visit the island to collaborate with families of political prisoners, independent journalists and other dissident initiatives. They have also campaigned for increased international condemnation of the country's human rights practices. Most recently they lobbied support for Oswaldo Paya Sardinias' nomination for the 2003 and 2004 Nobel Peace Prize, an example of symbolic politics. Through articles, documentary films and photo exhibitions, PINF tries to spread the word on conditions in Cuba.

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7. Due to the complex nature of exile politics these groups are considered outside the scope of this study. Nevertheless they form the most significant basis of support. Many exile groups were originally opposed to direct contact or assistance to opposition members because in their view this represented some form of legitimization of the regime. Today, however, the majority of exile groups encourage direct assistance to opposition organizations.

Most recently they produced a film titled, *La Primavera en Cuba*, which presents a series of interviews with the island's most prominent dissidents and families of the victims of the March 2003 crackdown. It was filmed clandestinely in 2003 and has been widely distributed internationally. PINF also recently produced an online photo exhibition of the *Damas en Blanco*.<sup>8</sup>

PINF has been instrumental in garnering the backing of numerous European and Latin American officials, including former Czechoslovakian President Vaclav Havel. Following the March 2003 crackdown, PINF organized a fundraising campaign known as SOS KUBA to support the families of jailed dissidents. These funds are personally delivered by PINF representative to the victim's families in Cuba.

PINF has also hosted visits from a few notable activists including Elizardo Sanchez Santa-Cruz of the *Comite Cubano de Derechos Humanos y Reconciliación Nacional* in 1999, Paya of the Varela Project in 2003 and poet Raul Rivero in 2005. PINF is currently working on "Transformation Project" which is a handbook of lessons learned from the Czech transition to be distributed to Cuban dissidents on the island.

Reporters Without Borders (RWB) is another example of an international organization that has created strong international linkages with Cuba's internal opposition. A French based organization, RWB, is dedicated to monitoring freedom of press and censorship throughout the world. They defend the rights of journalists and have created a network of correspondents who monitor international developments. Since the March 2003 crackdown in Cuba, RWB has initiated a targeted campaign on behalf of Cuba's independent journalists, and seeking increased international condemnation. Towards this end, they declared 2003 the Year of the Cuban Opposition and launched an aggressive publicity campaign to educate the world on social and political conditions in Cuba. In March 2004, on the one year anniversary of the crackdown, RWB organized numerous exile and internationally based opposition groups, including the exile based Mothers and Women Against Repression (MAR), to appear before the European Parliament to lobby for continued sanctions against the Cuban government. In November 2004 on the occasion of the Ibero-American Summit RWB appealed to President Castro urging the release of the 26 journalists imprisoned in the 2003 crackdown. This came upon the release of RWB's annual Worldwide Press Freedom Index in which Cuba ranked second to last (166th place) just ahead of North Korea. (Reporters Without Borders, 2004) They have also organized an "adoption program" of political prisoners which is another attempt to raise awareness on an inter-

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8. The "Damas en Blanco" or "Women in White" are the wives and mothers of political prisoners. Since the March 2003 crackdown they quietly protest each Sunday outside of a Havana church.

national level, and also serves as a message of support and solidarity to the prisoners themselves.

Another interesting organization that formed in the aftermath of the March 2003 crackdown is the Association for a Third Cuban Republic (ATREC). ATREC is a group of Miami and French based activists fighting for a democratic Cuba. ATREC's principal activity includes weekly demonstrations held in front of the Cuban embassy in Paris. More recently they have collaborated with the *Asociación Européenne Cuba Libre* and the *Comité Pour les Droits de l'Homme* to form the *Comité Solidarité Cuba Libre* in order to establish an adoption program of Cuban political prisoners. Currently all victims of the March 2003 crackdown are sponsored by members of the French Parliament.

*Pax Christi* is a Catholic, not-for-profit European based NGO with offices in over 30 countries throughout the world devoted to monitoring peace, justice, human rights, security, environmental sustainability and economic justice. *Pax Christi* first became active in Latin America in the 1970s in response to human rights abuses that were taking place in the region. *Pax Christi* Netherland's work in Cuba, however, is more recent and currently focuses around support for the *Movimiento Cristiano Liberación's* Varela Project, and Vitral magazine produced by the diocese of Pinar del Rio. In addition, *Pax Christi* lobbies to pressure EU trade policy to ensure that it contains a human rights component and that investment laws are also conditional upon social concerns. *Pax Christi* works with a network of activists and contacts in the region to "advocate the rights of victims" through lobbying to international organizations, capacity training, supporting local peace initiatives such as the Varela Project and encouraging dialogue.

Numerous prevalent individuals are also working to broaden international ties with the Cuban opposition, including intellectuals, activists, and former government officials. For example Vaclav Havel, former President of the Czech Republic, Lech Walsea former President of Poland and Arpad Goncz, former President of Hungary together released a letter in September 2003 titled, Time for Action, in which they condemned the March crackdown and called on Europe and other member of the international community to defend the rights of Cuban citizens:

Today, it is the responsibility of the democratic world to support representatives of the Cuban opposition, irrespective of how long the Cuban Stalinists manage to cling to power. The Cuban opposition must enjoy the same international support as political dissidents did in divided Europe...Europe ought to make it unambiguously clear that Castro is a dictator, and that for democratic countries a dictatorship cannot become a partner until it commences a process of political liberalization. (The Daily Telegraph, 2003)

Havel also joined with other international and exile figures including former U.S. Secretary of State under the Clinton Administration, Madeline Albright, former Prime Minister of Estonia, Mart Laar, Polish journalist Adam Michnik and other international and exile activists to create an international commission.<sup>9</sup> In a letter published on December 10, 2002, in the *Financial Times* to commemorate International Human Rights Day, the commission expressed their solidarity with Cuba's opposition movement, condemned the crackdown and pushed for change on the island.

With these plain and indeed self-evident truths in mind, we, both Cubans and non-Cubans living in the democratic world, would like to express our solidarity with all brave men and women of Cuba still struggling for their inalienable rights and human dignity under the difficult conditions of an oppressive, totalitarian regime.

... We call on all democratic governments of the world to express their strongest possible condemnation of these inexcusable acts of repression, blatantly violating obligations of Cuba and urge them to ask the Cuban government for their immediate release.

The ICDC organized its first major conference in Madrid in July 2003 titled "Towards Democracy in Cuba," held under the auspices of the Czech Foreign Ministry and organized by the People in Need Foundation. Participants included NGOs, diplomats, former Chilean President Patricio Aylwin Azocar, and the former Prime Ministers of Bulgaria and Latvia, among others. Havel stressed its significance stating, "...the international recognition that a conference affords is the lifeblood of resistance to totalitarianism...I remember vividly what the support of the democratic world did for me when I was persecuted and imprisoned in [communist] Czechoslovakia. I feel obliged to repay this debt to those who are in a similar situation now." (Spritzer, 2004) Members of this group have more recently joined Havel to create the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba (ICDC). The ICDC is headquartered in Prague and holds a secretariat with the People in Need Foundation. It seeks the following objectives: (i) to promote Cuban prisoners of conscience and their families; (ii) support of the Varela Project, independent libraries, independent journalists, labor activists and other civil society groups; (iii) to continue to pressure the Cuban regime for the release of political prisoners and promote the initiation of dialogue; (iv) to create a

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9. Other signatories include: Harriet Babbit, former U.S. Ambassador; Elena Bonner, Russian human right leader; Marek Edelman, leader of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising in Poland; Jan Figel, MP Slovakia; Bronislaw Geremek, former Foreign Minister of Poland; Adam Michnik, journalist, Poland; Tomas Pojar, People in Need Foundation, Czech Republic; Jeane Kirkpatrick, former U.S. Ambassador; Carlos Alberto Montaner, Union Liberal Cubana; Martin Palous, former dissident, Czech Republic; Ricardo Bofill, Cuban Committee on Human Rights; among many others.

“European Fund for Democracy;” (vi) to lobby for Oswaldo Paya Sardinias’ nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize. In addition, the ICDC aims to (i) conduct research and sponsor events related to Cuba and to disseminate these internationally; (ii) to create a committee for a transition<sup>10</sup> in Cuba composed of experts from Central and Eastern Europe; (iii) channel funds and information to activists internally; (iv) organize visits by government officials and journalists to meet with members of the Cuban opposition; (v) produce a Cuban radio newscast to be transmitted via shortwave radio through official networks (such as Radio Exterior in Spain, Radio Prague, and Radio Netherlands); (vi) organize seminars that address the Cuban situation, particularly related to issues of trade, tourism, and investment; (vii) increase “sensitization of the European and Latin American public opinion on the topic of Cuba;” (viii) create an award which will be given to either the individual or organization “that best contributes to Cuban freedom.”

A second conference was held in Prague in September 2004 which produced the Prague Memorandum<sup>11</sup> in which the ICDC committed to the following:

Our goal is to help create the conditions so that the Cuban people can bring about democracy through a non-violent transition. Our priority is to strengthen the civil society and civic movement that are bringing about that democracy. In order to accomplish this, we seek to set out common objectives for a general plan of support for democracy in Cuba that can be implemented in a coordinated manner at different levels and from different parts of the world. The task of general coordination and support for this plan will correspond to the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba.

This summit marks the beginning of a concerted international effort to aid Cuba in becoming a full member of the world democratic community. We are convinced that through their own efforts and with international solidarity, Cubans will one day enjoy the true peace that only freedom brings. It is to this worthy goal that we fully commit our efforts.

The government of the Czech Republic has been active in assisting Cuban dissidents since 1993, and in 1999 they took the lead in condemning Cuba at the annual UN Commission on Human Rights. More recently the Czech Foreign Ministry has established a Transition Promotion Unit focused on transition studies and promotion in Cuba, Belarus, Ukraine and Myanmar. (Spritzer, 2004)<sup>12</sup> In 2001 the Cuban government responded to these Czech

10. A comprehensive list of the ICDC’s goals can be viewed at the ICDC’s website, <http://www.pinf.cz/english/humanitarnipomoc/cuba.php>.

11. A full copy of the Prague Memorandum is available <http://www.icdcprague.org>.

12. Further information on the ICDC can be obtained from the organization’s website, <http://www.pinf.cz/english/humanitarnipomoc/cuba.php>.

initiatives by jailing Ivan Philip, former Freedom Union MP, and Jan Bubenek, former parliamentarian, on a trip to Cuba. (Spritzer, 2004)

The Joint Commission of European and Latin American Parliamentarians in Support of Democracy and Human Rights in Cuba is another international initiative launched in May 2003 in the Mexican congress by a group of approximately 50 Latin American and European government representatives and lawmakers. This organization has also created an adoption program for political prisoners, and is monitoring human rights conditions on the island. Organizers include, Francisco Landero, a Mexican federal congressman from the National Action Party; Anna Maria Stame Cervone, an activist in Italy's Christian Democratic party; and Alvaro Dubon, a Guatemalan member of the Central American Parliament. (Ottey, 2004)

Together these organizations and international initiatives are having an important impact upon the development of opposition in Cuba. While this impact cannot be readily measured in quantitative terms due to their diffuse nature, we can note the following trends: (i) greater facilitation and diffusion of information on current conditions in Cuba to the international community which would not otherwise be possible; (ii) increased lobbying for change in a variety of international arenas and forums which the opposition would otherwise not have access to; (iii) more moral support and solidarity through adoption and letter writing programs; and (iv) more financial assistance and solidarity to the victims of repression and the families of political prisoners. Financial support is critical due to the fact that the majority of these individuals are denied employment opportunities by the state which makes eligibility based on one's allegiance to the revolution. This factor is frequently cited as a significant obstacle to the recruitment of opposition members and therefore directly affects the further growth of the movement. It is a topic Lopez (2002) discusses at length.

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### *Conclusions*

Given the nature of repression and social control placed on opposition groups in Cuba, they have recognized the need to seek international assistance. This article demonstrates that "external linkages" to other actors are critical in repressive environments where avenues regularly available to civil society are closed. The assistance received by the Polish and Chilean opposition from these sources has been very encouraging. International linkages with the Chilean opposition under Pinochet were significant in fostering financial aid, active exile participation and the significant networks they fostered. In particular, the strength of Chile's political parties and Poland's labor unions also facilitated support from international sources—although these have not

been relevant in the Cuban case. Poland and Czechoslovakia also benefited from Western assistance for the production of samizdat and human rights monitoring. In the last several years the Cuban opposition has made important inroads in some of these areas which have contributed to the movement's growth and development although both require greater attention and resources.

International linkages are not entirely new to Cuba, however this article has argued that the sudden growth in the number and distribution of networks is a new phenomenon which began to develop in the last decade. These networks became particularly active at the 1999 Ibero-American Summit, and in the aftermath of the March 2003 crackdown. These events mark important turning points that have had a significant impact on the proliferation of opposition, and on the degree of international pressure concerning Cuba's human rights record. While it is difficult to ascertain the specific impact of such networks due to their diffuse nature, we can note substantial increases in financial and material assistance, as well as greater moral support and legitimacy though symbolic and information politics.

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