

Adam Dempsey, UK Defence Forum Research Associate has written a study on Cuba after Fidel Castro. It is published as a paper on the UK Defence Forum's website www.ukdf.org.uk

This is the introduction.

On the 31st July 2006 Fidel Castro handed temporary control of Cuba's government and Communist Party to his brother Raul. Yet as a result of his continuing ill-health it was anticipated that Fidel would never exercise absolute power again. This was confirmed on the 24th February 2008 when Raul officially succeeded his brother to become the President. Raul's succession to the presidency also coincided with a meeting of the National Assembly of People's Power to determine membership of the Council of State. Yet despite the recent changes in government Fidel Castro still holds the official title of First Secretary of the Cuban Communist Party (PCC).

Whilst Raul has played an integral role in the safeguarding of the Cuban revolution his post-Soviet political outlook suggested that he would be a more pragmatic leader than his brother. Indeed, under Raul Cuba has continued to practice more open foreign and economic policies. Despite its long-standing policy of isolation the United States is also exploring new opportunities for dialogue with Cuba. However the cultivation of sound relations with a range of geopolitical actors has enabled Cuba to place less priority on improving dialogue with their American counterparts.

An increasingly pragmatic approach to foreign and economic policy has not resulted in similar changes within Cuban domestic policy. Cuba remains dominated by the institutions of government created in the post-revolutionary era. Instead of opening such institutions up to change, Raul has merely streamlined them to accommodate those party members and military officers that form his powerbase. As a result political freedom in Cuba remains limited and the overarching fundamentals of Fidel's revolution are intact.