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THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF DIALOGUE WITH CUBA:
WHAT OBAMA NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT
TALKING TO HAVANA

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. PICCONE: I'm Ted Piccone. I'm a senior fellow here at the Latin American Initiative at the Foreign Policy Program at Brookings, and we're very happy to have you here for what I know will be a fun, lively, and enlightening conversation about one of the oldest conundrums in U.S. foreign policy -- Cuba.

We're here today to discuss the latest and greatest work of two of Washington's best scholars on Cuba and its place in U.S. foreign policy, Bill Leogrande and Peter Kornbluh. Their new book, *Back Channel to Cuba: The Hidden History of Negotiations between Washington and Havana*, which is on sale in the back of the room, is one of those rare gems that speaks both to the modern history of diplomacy between these two neighbors, and to the relevance of that history, defining solutions for breaking the over five decade impasse.

We're also very fortunate to have with us another top expert on Cuba, Julia Sweig, to draw out some of the lessons for President Obama as he looks ahead to the final two years of his presidency.

To produce this definitive account on the subject, Kornbluh and Leogrande scoured the archives and secured interviews with key figures in the drama, including former presidents Jimmy Carter and Fidel Castro, to bring us an amazing but true story. Yes, there are exploding cigars and poisonous wetsuits and much more. But more importantly, there are repeated attempts by both sides to find common ground and negotiate compromises despite a long list of roadblocks, from the threat of nuclear apocalypse to the death of John F. Kennedy, to the personal drama of thousands of Cubans fleeing the island's collapsing economy. At every stage, and regardless of which party was in power, efforts were made to build new bridges towards rapprochement. Unfortunately, the record shows that there are more failures than success in this story,

and therein lies the value of the book's final chapter, which outlines 10 lessons for the next stage of dialogue between our two countries.

But regardless of how that next phase is conducted, as the book reminds us, success depends ultimately on whether both sides have the political will to get beyond their differences. We may learn, sooner rather than later, if the conditions exist for that to happen. There may be a window of opportunity after the November elections for the president to go beyond his initial steps in the first term and move forward more boldly with a policy of constructive engagement towards Cuba. Either way, next year's Summit of the Americas in Panama will force a decision by the White House on whether and how to engage Cuba. If he decides to do so, if the president decides to take that approach, he need look no further than this book for guidance and advice on how best to do so.

Let me quickly introduce the speakers and then we'll get on with the program.

We're first going to hear from Peter Kornbluh. Peter is a senior analyst for many years at the National Security Archive at George Washington University. He works on the archive's Cuba and Chile documentation projects, and has for many years worked on Iran contra-documentation issues, as well as U.S. policy towards Nicaragua. He has been teaching on and off at Columbia University, and has written a number of books on facets of U.S. policy during the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Pinochet file, as well as other works on those subjects.

We are then going to hear from Professor Bill Leogrande, professor of Government at American University School of Public Affairs and a longtime expert on Latin American politics and U.S. foreign policy. He's written seven books, including *Our Own Backyard: The United States in Central America*, which discussed the years of wars

in Central America and Washington's policy response, and he is well known to many of us in this field.

Julia will serve as our commentator. Julia is the Nelson and David Rockefeller senior fellow for Latin American Study at the Council on Foreign Relations here in Washington. She also directs the Council's Global Brazil Initiative and writes a bi-weekly column for *Folha de Sao Paulo*, Brazil's leading newspaper. Julia has written a number of important works, particularly on Cuba, *Inside the Cuban Revolution: Fidel Castro and the Urban Underground*, which was an award-winning book for which she has received deserved praise.

I think that's it. Now, we'll then have time for Q&A. Do we have a hashtag today? I think it's #Cuba. There's also one associated with the book, of which you guys need to remind us. There's also, in addition to the book on sale in the back, a number of interesting articles that are beginning to be published about the findings in the book, including in *The Atlantic*, *The Nation*, *The Nueva Herald* this weekend on the front page, and *Cigar Aficionado*, which I'll recommend you look for next.

With no further ado, Peter Kornbluh.

(Applause)

MR. KORNBLUH: Thank you so much, and thank you to Brookings and Ted Piccone for inviting us to do this. It's the right place at the right time. I want to thank Dr. Julia Sweig also for coming to join us, and I'm looking forward to her own assessment of how the work that we've pulled together could play a role in the thinking of the president and the White House in the months to come.

We're gathered today on the anniversary of one of the most horrific acts of international terrorism in the history of the world in the Western Hemisphere, and that is the bombing of Cubana Flight 455 on October 6, 1976, an operation undertaken by

violent Cuban exile terrorists, anti-Castro terrorists, precisely to stop people from traveling to Cuba, and to send a signal that the United States and Cuba should not have better relations. And this document, which was an FBI report to Henry Kissinger after the bombing reminds us of really the episodes of our relations with Cuba, of U.S.-Cuban relations and how they've been defined over so many years. They've been defined by that list that Ted referred to; the assassination plots by the CIA against Fidel Castro; by the Invasion of the Bay of Pigs, where some of these violent exiles got their initial training; by the embargo itself. Henry Kissinger referred to this as the perpetual antagonism in U.S.-Cuban relations, and he made this comment even as he was drawing up contingency plans to attack Cuba in the spring of 1976 in a pique about Cuba's dispatching troops to Angola. And these are the episodes that for the most part people think about. They've been written about in the past.

Our goal with this book was to add to this long, understood narrative, balance this narrative, and hopefully, change the discussion of this narrative and this history by adding a different history, very detailed, very rich, extremely colorful I have to say, and I hope you will agree if you read a book, and that is the history of kind of both the open dialogue and the covert and quiet dialogue and negotiations that have gone on in the past with the hopes that making this history available would create a historical foundation for a dialogue of the present and a dialogue of the future. The enemies of dialogue, the (speaking in foreign language) as one of our assistant secretaries of state put it in a secret memo about talking to Cuba, have always opposed talking to Cuba as a heretical idea. But the history shows that it is actually a commonplace idea. It's been done openly and surreptitiously, but it has been done.

It turns out that every president since Eisenhower has found something to talk to the Cubans about. Three different presidents have actually talked about

actually changing the framework of U.S.-Cuban relations with the Cubans. Kennedy started down that road, and just as he was getting started he got assassinated. Only the conspiracy theorists can bring a relationship to that. But under Ford, Henry Kissinger did actually pursue a very serious effort to normalize efforts with Cuba, and Carter picked up on that effort after it failed and pursued it as well. Clinton tip-toed up to the edge of really discussing better relations but never kind of got beyond kind of the actual kind of secondary issues of which there was quite a bit of discussion as the book will tell you.

The idea for this approach really comes first from the Cubans, not in this document but in a proposal that Che Guevara makes to Richard Goodwin in August of 1961, after the Bay of Pigs. After the Bay of Pigs, Fidel sends Che Guevara to an economic summit on the Alliance for Progress in Uruguay, with a beautiful mahogany inlaid box of cigars which are for President Kennedy, and that is where the first proposal by the Cubans is. "Look, you know, the Bay of Pigs turned us from an aggrieved little country into an equal, and as an equal, we would like to propose to you that we have normal relations." And that was where the first proposal took place.

Richard Goodwin told us that he recommended a below-ground dialogue go forward, but nobody in the Kennedy administration was interested in that at the time. However, after the missile crisis -- after the Bay of Pigs and after the missile crisis, that changed, and a young aide to McGeorge Bundy named Gordon Chase, who really has not received his historical recognition, proposed that the president start to look at a feasibility study for what he called a policy turnaround. And that is, instead of the overt and covert nastiness towards Cuba as he put it, try the sweet approach. The "sweet approach" to turn Fidel Castro back towards us and develop a more positive relationship with him.

During Kennedy, this was undertaken, as sensitive as it was, of course,

through secret intermediaries. Kennedy used a New York lawyer named James Donovan to free the Bay of Pigs prisoners. The CIA then asked him to get three CIA agents freed as well as all the other Americans that were in Cuban jails. This was the first notable prisoner swap that took place in the spring of 1963. It has a lot of relevance to the current situation in U.S.-Cuban relations in which there are prisoners in both countries that could be exchanged as a humanitarian gesture from both countries.

The administration used an ABC news correspondent, Lisa Howard. I don't know how many of you remember her. She was the Barbara Walters of her day. She took a great interest in restoring normalcy to U.S.-Cuban relations. Her Central Park apartment became communications central with phone calls going back and forth to Fidel's office from high U.S. officials, and it was in her own apartment of the 19th of November, 1963, when a U.S. official called Castro's office and they started to discuss concrete a preliminary meeting either in Cuba or in New York to set an agenda to talk about the future of U.S.-Cuban relations. And, of course, as we know, this is the famous history that has been known for all these years.

Jean Daniel, the French journalist, carried a message from John F. Kennedy to Fidel Castro. That was the last message and he was the last messenger. He was delivering that message at the moment that Kennedy was assassinated.

One of the things that the book does that I think you'll find very, very interesting is it addresses this issue of whether Cuba actually wants better relations with the United States of America. And this is an issue that has come up this summer again and again as Hillary Clinton has been on her book tour talking about her position on the embargo. And she spins the issue on the embargo by saying we should lift the embargo because really the Cubans want the embargo to stay, so we would be doing something against their interest. And Fidel Castro and the Castros have used it as an excuse for

everything. She said they've used it as an excuse for everything all these years. And she has gone into a discussion of how her husband tried to improve relations with Cuba, only to have that sabotaged by Fidel Castro.

The truth is quite different. One of the takeaways of this history is the degree to which Cuba has actually reached out to every new president, even the most hardline anti-Communist of all of them, to see if better relations were possible. This document is the message that Lisa Howard carried back to Linden Johnson in February of 1964, only three months after Kennedy's assassination and Johnson assumed the presidency. Fidel was basically saying, "Look, we want you to know that we started down this road with Kennedy. We would like to continue with you, even if you have to play 'I'm being bad to Cuba during the 1964 election,' we will understand. But I want to caution you -- and this is very important -- do not take my reaching out to you as a sign of weakness. It is anything but. We would like to have better relations under a system with mutual respect, et cetera."

Nixon becomes president and literally 11 days after he assumes office, Castro reaches out to him using the Swiss ambassador to send a message, and that message gets brought to the State Department a month later, and begins the first kind of back and forth under Nixon, of course, who was understood to be one of the most anti-Castro of all U.S. officials.

I want to flip forward to -- hold on -- to Reagan as well. Another, you know, hardliner. And the Cubans, both publicly and privately, make all sorts of gestures when he becomes president to say we would like to have better relations, only to be completely rejected according to this document by Al Hague and the president himself. However, there were secret talks at the beginning of the Reagan administration. Al Hague went to Mexico for a secret meeting; Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, the vice president

of Cuba; Vernon Walters was dispatched to Havana shortly thereafter to talk face-to-face with Fidel Castro.

We have gotten Kissinger into the news lately on his contingency plans. What you should take away from the book, of course, is a reminder that Kissinger really did reach out to Cuba. It fit into his concept of detente with China and of the Soviet Union. He sent to the Cubans this aid memoir that you see here, which was one of the most carefully worded and positively worded statements ever made to the Cubans in all these years. Basically, it said, "We have ideological differences that are vast but that does not mean that we cannot arrive at common ground and common understanding and go forward." A three-hour meeting at the Pierre Hotel in July of 1975, we just went back to the Pierre to launch the book as a way of saying this is a historical site. This is where the first serious talks for normal relations took place. And this is part of the history.

And, of course, Jimmy Carter came in to be president. He didn't even need a gesture from the Cubans. He, himself, philosophically felt that we should have relations with as many states, even hostile states as we could, and actually was the first president -- the only president -- to issue a presidential directive to the National Security Bureaucracy. "I want to normalize relations with Cuba. Start the diplomacy, the diplomatic steps to make that happen."

We would remiss, particularly in this audience, not to remember some of the great players from our community. Robert Pastor, who is no longer with us; Peter Tarnoff was one of the key negotiators, back channel policymakers. There are many others. Some of them are actually in this room. Fulton Armstrong, right over here; Wayne Smith over here; and others, who deserve this extraordinary recognition for the work that they did when they were in the U.S. Government. And there are many, and I hope that the book actually gives them their due.

And, of course, there were a series of other secret intermediaries along the way, right up to this present day, to these four pictures. We should have added Bill Richardson, who has done his own share of shuttle diplomacy, particularly on the Alan Gross case. Gabriel Garcia Marquez carried a series of messages from Fidel Castro to Bill Clinton. The untold story, which I don't think people know, is that the chairman of Coca-Cola, J. Paul Austin, was an emissary from Jimmy Carter to Fidel Castro twice. It's a very interesting story that's in the book. Peggy Dulany, the daughter of David Rockefeller, carried a message from Fidel Castro to George Schultz during the Reagan area. And, of course, Jimmy Carter himself, ironically, as a former president, an ex-president, became an interlocutor to try and resolve the Balsero crisis. This story was on the front page of *The Nueva Herald* yesterday. And this is just part of the colorful history. There are many, many, many others that we should remember.

I don't have a lot of time, so I can't summarize all the other aspects of the book, but I want to lay the groundwork of how interesting, colorful, meaningful, and immediately relevant this history is. The book starts with a quote from Raul Castro, which Bill Leogrande managed to find parts of in many different places and put together as a whole.

And -- can you hand me the book? Let me just read it to you to finish.

"Our relations are like a bridge in wartime. I'm not going to talk about who blew it up." "I think it was you who blew it up," he said to the U.S. representatives he was talking to. "The war has ended and now we are reconstructing the bridge brick by brick, 90 miles from Key West to Varadero Beach. It is not a bridge that can be reconstructed easily as fast as it was destroyed. It takes a long time. If both parties reconstruct their part of the bridge, we can shake hands without winners or losers."

Raul Castro made this statement not as president of Cuba, but in 1977.

And he was right. It takes a long time.

Our hope with this book is that it has recorded the bricks that have already been laid to build this bridge, and lets us know how many bricks are left to complete it.

Thank you.

(Applause)

MR. LEOGRANDE: Well, thank you all for coming. As Ted said at the beginning, we drew a number of lessons from this long history of dialogue, which we summarize in the last chapter of the book. There's also an abbreviated version of the lessons in the forthcoming issue of *The Nation Magazine*. And this morning I want to try and touch on just some of the highlights.

First, and in some ways most important, even at moments of intense hostility, there have always been reasons for and opportunities for dialogue between Cuba and the United States. As Peter said, every president since Eisenhower has found some reason to negotiate with Cuba, some common ground. Sometimes the talks have been about the big issues of normalizing relations. Sometimes they've been about smaller, or secondary issues, but there's always been reason for dialogue.

And today, of course, we know there's a sustained dialogue at the lower diplomatic levels between Cuba and the United States, but it doesn't seem to be making much progress except on a few minor issues of mutual interest -- Coast Guard search and rescue, oil spill mitigation, and so on. It's ironic because today there are even fewer reasons for continued hostility between Cuba and the United States than there have been historically.

Although Cuban leaders have always been willing to talk to the United States, they've instinctively resisted making concession to U.S. demands. During the

1970s, of course, Fidel Castro refused to negotiate away Cuba's solidarity with revolutionaries in Latin America or Africa in exchange for some quid pro quo from the United States. When U.S. demands about Cuban foreign policy were replaced by demands about Cuba's internal affairs after the Cold War, Cuban leaders reacted with even greater indignation that this was an affront to Cuba's hard-won sovereignty.

So President Obama's insistence that the goal of his Cuba policy is to bring about democracy is not, first of all, a realistic objective at present, and it makes a dialogue over the terms of coexistence between the two countries even more difficult than it already is.

Fidel Castro once said -- excuse me, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, the vice president of Cuba, once said to U.S. diplomats, Bob Pastor and Peter Tarnoff in 1978, "I can assure you that we would never decide anything as a function of a precondition imposed by the United States. The pride of small countries, which can even push them to make the wrong decisions at times and their feelings of dignity and sensitivity, must be borne in mind."

This, I think, summarizes a problem in U.S.-Cuban relations in that the United States continues to make explicit demands about Cuban behavior, both domestically and internationally, that the Cubans instinctively reject. Nevertheless, Fidel Castro, in 1978 and 1979, released over 3,000 political prisoners in response to Jimmy Carter's human rights policy, even though he had publicly rejected a few months earlier any concession when Carter posed human rights as a condition of normalization. So the Cubans are willing at times to make gestures that respond to U.S. concerns as long as they're not framed as direct concessions to the United States.

So the lesson here is that the United States should focus on what is happening in Cuba and act in response to events, rather than insist on explicit linkages

tying U.S. actions to specific Cuban concessions.

Another lesson that comes out of this history is that Cuban leaders have a hard time distinguishing between gestures and concessions. So the Cubans worry that even small steps on their part may be misinterpreted in Washington as weakness. And Peter mentioned the 1964 message that Fidel Castro sent to Lyndon Johnson proposing an opening of a dialogue, but warning that Johnson shouldn't see this as weakness.

As a result of this concern, Cuba wants the United States to take not just the first step towards reconciliation, but the first several steps. And to make matters worse, Havana tends to discount U.S. gestures that serve U.S. interests. So when Kissinger, for example, decided not to oppose the OAS lifting of economic and diplomatic sanctions against Cuba in 1975, hoping that Cuba will see this as a gesture of faith, Havana sees it as Washington trying to cut its diplomatic losses in Latin America. And almost an exact analogy, in 2009, when Obama decided not to oppose the OAS repeal of the 1962 resolution suspending Cuba's relationship, Havana, again, had exactly the same interpretation. And when Obama lifted limits on Cuban-American travel, Cuban leaders regarded it as a political debt to the Cuban-American community, not a gestures to Cuba.

On the other side, Washington, for its part, wants Cuba to take significant steps to give the White House political cover from domestic critics so that the White House can show that a policy of engagement pays dividends. And when U.S. gestures fail to elicit a significant reciprocal step from Havana, the risk looks too strong and presidents tend to back off. This is a worry that preoccupied every president who has made major gestures towards Cuba, from Ford and Kissinger, to Carter, Clinton, and Obama, making them reluctant to really take dramatic steps that might have broken this Alphonse and Gaston stalemate.

I think it's worth noting here that Kissinger's '75 initiative to normalize relations was driven by significant pressure from Latin America within the OAS, and this was a time when hemispheric opinion -- ironically, it was a time when hemispheric opinion had the strongest impact on U.S. policy towards Cuba, which is ironic because we don't think of Henry Kissinger as being all that sensitive to international opinion normally.

In principle, one would think that the Obama administration would be actually more open to influence from Latin America. After all, the president pledged a new relationship with the hemisphere, an equal partnership. So I think the upcoming Summit of the Americas in Panama in April will be a test since it seems Cuba is likely to attend despite U.S. objections. And so the question is will Obama be more responsive to Latin American opinion than Henry Kissinger was?

Small successes don't necessarily lead to big ones. Most successful talk between Washington and Havana have been about relatively narrow issues where both sides have a clear interest in cooperation -- migration, fishing and maritime boundaries, anti-hijacking, counter-narcotics cooperation, and so on. Most of the people in this room know the list well. Policymakers in both Havana and Washington have at times shared a presumption that progress on these issues of mutual interest might provide a bridge towards progress of normalizing relations. And yet, despite significant successes on the narrow issues, the two sides have never really been able to translate that momentum into real progress towards normalization. It doesn't mean that those smaller issues aren't important; they are, and there's nothing wrong with clearing away the underbrush, but it takes political will to make the jump from the small issues to the central issues, and recent U.S. administrations have really been unwilling to do that.

Timing is everything. Up till now, there's never been a moment when

both sides wanted to normalize relations on terms acceptable to the other. At key moments, when Washington was most motivated to reconcile with Cuban, Cuba subordinated the desire for normal relations to its policies in Africa and Latin America. And when Cuba's interest in normalization was strongest, after the end of the Cold War, U.S. presidents were either uninterested or intimidated by the Cuban American lobby.

So since the end of the Cold War, the United States has been willing to live with what Henry Kissinger called the perpetual antagonism between Cuba and the United States because the foreign policy costs for the United States have been relatively low, and changing the policy entails some domestic political risks, or at least it has historically, that successive presidents judged to high.

I think it's an interesting question as to whether the current moment is different. The Cubans clearly want a change in the relationship motivated by their current economic situation. Obama has said repeatedly that he, too, wants a change in the relationship and sees existing policy as a failure. But if he's serious, he has a relatively small window of opportunity in which to act.

Domestic politics has always been an issue on both sides. From the beginning, there have been people in both capitals who were interested in improving the relationship and those who were opposed to improving it. In the '60s and '70s, U.S. opposition came primarily from Cold Warriors inside the foreign policy bureaucracy. In the '80s and '90s, it came more from conservative Cuban Americans. The end of the Cold War reduced that first obstacle, and I think that we've seen that changing demographics in the Cuban American community have gradually eroded the second obstacle, as demonstrated by President Obama's relative success in the Cuban American community in the 2008 and 2012 elections. So today, it seems to us, domestic political obstacles on the U.S. side are probably lower than they've ever been before.

The final lesson that we draw is that Cuba wants to be treated as an equal with respect for its national sovereignty. As Fidel Castro said to Peter Tarnoff and Bob Pastor in 1978, "Perhaps it is because the United States is a great power it feels it can do what it wants. Perhaps it is idealistic of me, but I never accepted the universal prerogatives of the United States. I never accepted, and will never accept, the existence of a different law and different rules." Whereas, Washington, on the other hand, of course, has long felt entitled to do whatever real politic demands, especially in its own sphere of influence in this hemisphere.

In late 1959, as the U.S.-Cuban relationship was deteriorating, Cuba responded to a diplomatic protest from the State Department with a long recitation of the history of U.S. domination of the island. And those of you who have ever negotiated with Cuban diplomats or been in public meetings with Cuban diplomats, will recognize the tendency to give that long recitation as preface to getting down to business. And the note read in its conclusion, "The Cuban government, and the Cuban people, are anxious to live in peace and harmony with the government and people of the United States, but on the basis of mutual respect and reciprocal benefits."

And this is a theme that has echoed across half a century of U.S.-Cuban relations. Raul Castro has repeated the same point over and over again in offering to negotiate differences with the United States. And yet treating Cuba with respect, the respect due a sovereign nation, has been one of the hardest things for Washington to do. The long history of Cuba's subordination to the United States before 1959 has weighed on the minds of policymakers on both sides of the Florida Strait. Policymakers in Washington have to accept that Cuba in the 21st century will never again be the subordinate Cuba of the 19th and early 20th. Policymakers in Havana need to trust that reconciliation with the United States is possible without putting at risk Cuba's

independence for which they made a revolution to secure.

In a century when the most pressing problems transcend national boundaries, near neighbors cannot afford perpetual hostility. With every passing day, Cuba and the United States become ever more closely intertwined as Cubans buy wheat from U.S. farmers in the Midwest; Cuban and U.S. citizens travel more freely back and forth; as Cubans and Cuban Americans knit back together the cultural, financial, and family ties that were severed by the revolution in 1959. The history of dialogue between Cuba and the United States since 1959 demonstrates that it's not only possible to replace sterile hostility with reconciliation, but it serves the national interests of both nations.

Jose Marti, who has eloquently expressed suspicions about U.S. imperial designs on Cuba, inspired Fidel Castro's nationalism. Jose Marti, nevertheless, saw the possibility of a relationship between the United States and Cuba based on equality. A few months before his death he wrote, "There is that other America, North America, that is not ours and whose enmity it is neither wise nor viable to encourage. However, with firm propriety and an astute independence, it is not impossible, and indeed, it is useful to be friends."

Thank you.

(Applause)

MS. SWEIG: Thanks all of you for coming, and Ted, thanks for inviting me. I'm Julia Sweig.

I want to congratulate my good friends, Bill and Peter on their most prodigious and profound accomplishment with this book. All of us -- many of us in this room at least have watched them toil in the vineyards of research, tried to help them, yelled at them sometimes, and it's just a really wonderful accomplishment. So congratulations.

You two have covered a lot of ground already, and I'll just make a few comments to get our discussion going. One thing that I'll note is that when you first put the slide up here of I think it was Fidel on the left and some of the presidents on the right with Henry Kissinger in the center, I notice absent two presidents, the two Bush presidents, which I'll just tell you that although there's a little bit of a story, probably more than I know behind this, I did hear recently from a former George W. Bush official in the Treasury Department, who told me that they were thinking about -- "they," the Bush administration -- giving Havana the IDB were Havana to engage in a serious negotiation, of course, on the terms of the George W. Bush transition scenario, which implied a major overhaul of everything that Havana holds near and dear in terms of sovereignty. But there was some thinking about what could be possible, even under very different terms by the Bush administration. And likewise, I recall Raul Castro, shortly after George W. Bush was elected, saying, you know, "We can do law and order. Go into the Guantanamo gates and say, you know, if these people try to escape, we're going to send them back." Appeals by conservative republican administrations more recent -- not the detente preaching of the mid-'70s -- appeals to them to try to find a rapprochement.

In any case, one last historical reference before I get to today, and that is I had the privilege of working with Bill Rogers and Bernie Aronson on a project about 15 years ago looking at ways post Helms-Burton for the executive branch to take steps to move down a path of rapprochement and create a diplomatic framework and change in policy. And Granma published almost the entire document that CFR printed in its pages and a couple of days later, Raul Castro gave an interview -- he was then Minister of the Armed Forces -- gave an interview to Granma in which he said, "Washington would do well to negotiate this settlement while my brother is still alive." He's got the chops and the domestic street cred to get this done. And I'm thinking now that we are just a few

years, 2018, from a post-Castro moment when there will neither be a Fidel Castro when there will neither be a Fidel Castro, nor we're told a Raul Castro in power, and it does seem to me that that suggests another incentive, both from Havana and opportunity from Washington, to really take this opportunity in the next couple of years while Fidel Castro is alive, but as importantly, more importantly, while Raul Castro is the president to find a path forward.

So just a couple of comments. On the regional dynamic that was mentioned here, the last time the White House cared about Latin America Bill says was in 1975. Fast-forward now. We've had a dynamic going back not just under the Obama administration, but under the Bush administration where a very strong drumbeat of Latin American heads of state -- our friends, our frenemies, our allies, our enemies across the board now have delivered a very strong message to Washington, which is in the multilateral setting, in Latin America, if you want to be seen as really opening a new chapter in terms of partnership and that sort of thing, fix the Cuba issue.

And so we saw this with Trinidad Tobago. We saw it more strongly in Cartagena, where the consensus was even strong. We now have not just Dilma Rousseff or Maruda or Eva but we have President Juan Manuel Santos of Colombia, whose country, because of Havana's sponsorship of the talks between the government and the FARC, is now closer than it's been in 52 years to ending the region's longest-standing insurgency. And Santos, not just because of the, let's say, counterterror role that Havana is playing today, but because of his understanding of how to bring the new regional diversity, if you will, into some sort of coherent and productive voice that includes Washington, has taken the issue of rapprochement between the United States and Cuba to the White House, to the State Department, bringing it up repeatedly, privately and publicly. And I think that's very relevant to Washington policymakers as they look at the

summit coming next spring and they ask themselves as we've heard and asked many of us, well, you know, how do we talk about this democracy thing? We really have to get the Latin Americans to put democracy and human rights on the table with the Cuban government. And what's the face-saving way for we, Washington, to show up at that summit and not say something about democracy or the lack thereof in Cuba. And I would suggest that one way to do that, and this involves Cuban participation, would be to propose what the EU and Havana have been going through in the last several years, which is actually a dialogue about democracy and human rights. I can imagine a scenario in which, oh, I don't know, Josefina Vidal and Roberta Jacobs would sit in a room and Roberta would say, "Gee, you know, you guys don't have a multiparty democracy, so how can you call this democracy?" And maybe Josefina Vidal would say, "You know, there was that Ruling Citizens United in the Supreme Court. Now, what does that say about the nature of your democracy?"

Now, I'm not trying to put any equivalence here, but I am trying to say that a dialogue is possible. It's been happening between the EU and Cuba. It could happen between Cuba and the United States without Latin American intercession.

So the regional piece I think is incredibly important. I can also see in the scenario in which President Obama doesn't go. Perhaps Vice President Biden, who is really the point person for Latin America goes down there, tells Latin Americans, "Yes, we feel your pain about Cuba. We even agree that policy needs to change, but we're not ready yet." And he's there and Raul Castro is there and it's kind of, sort of, a deflated anti-climactic moment, but it moves the ball forward a tiny bit.

The domestic context here for what President Obama could do after November is really important. And just to refine a couple of Bill's points, we have public opinion among Cuban Americans and the general public stronger than ever in terms of

recognizing that the current policy has failed and supporting not just the end of the travel ban for Cuban Americans but for all Americans. And supporting diplomatic relations as well. The Cuban-American piece of this is driven not just by demographics, but it's also driven to President Obama's credit, although I don't know if he thought of it in this calculated a way, to the organic ties that are now reconnecting the Cuban community and the diaspora with the island. Those are financial ties. They're family ties. They're ties of investment where we have remittances up to two, three billion a year flowing into the Cuban economy from abroad.

I heard one Obama official say perhaps that Cuba is South Florida's largest trading partner. Now, I don't know if that's true, but what we do have is a big shift in terms of the transfer of technology, money, resources, from South Florida to Cuba, and of course, from Cuba to South Florida with the flow back and forth of people that changes in Cuban law have permitted with the elimination of the ban on most travel by most Cubans entirely. So Cubans now can travel and go to the United States, go to the EU, remit back, have bank accounts, houses, and jobs in three places if they can pull it off. That's been a big change.

Also note Charlie Crist. He's running for governor. He's running neck and neck with Rick Scott. He said over the summer it would be great for the Florida economy to lift the embargo. It hasn't hurt him a bit. It's not an issue in the South Florida campaign for governor right now. Likewise, Hillary Clinton, for all of her dressing up what she was saying in politically permissible language was still saying and getting it out there now before she's running against, who knows, Jeb Bush, that it's time to get this done. Asking Obama, "Look, get this done," not only because of the regional strategic opportunity but because there's campaign finance opportunity there where you have Cuban Americans of longstanding republican wealth orientation who have now moved

and are saying -- I think some of them are associated with this institution -- saying repeatedly, publicly and privately, "We want to be a part of Cuba's future. American laws are getting in our way." Who are ready to put to bed the longstanding fight.

So we have also, last point to pick up on Bill, Cuba, alternatively, while not framing the changes that it has made since 2006-2008 as concession to Washington, if you tick through them, they certainly look as if, while responsive to Cuba's domestic needs, are done not in the vacuum, not outside of the notion of what might make things easier for Washington or the EU to undertake, releasing political prisoners, eliminating restrictions on small businesses, moving forward in a significant way in terms of economic reforms which when you peel them back have deep, political connotations. Again, it's not a multiparty election monitored by the OAS yet, but these changes in Cuba do provide, I think, an opportunity not only moving forward but as we've seen some Obama officials say, even the president, to take credit for them. So we've even seen the president saying, "You know, we've been supporting these changes and look, there they go." Supporting them by allowing some travel and some contact by Cubans and others.

So going forward, we don't know the outcome yet of the race in Congress, and that, I think, will perhaps be part of a calculus. Surely, there's an opportunity should Chris be reelected in South Florida, but there's also a major foreign policy legacy opportunity for the president that given the wide latitude that still exists within the framework of regulations governing the Cuban embargo could give the president room to maneuver. Clearly on travel there's a way to move from this -- I don't want to be too technical here -- but to issue general licenses much more liberally for the categories for which now many of our institutions have to beg the Treasury Department for specific licenses and hire expensive lawyers to pay them, to hoc OFAC over and over. General licenses for all kinds of existing, permitted travel today would be possible.

I have a long list of those, of other things. Allowing regular air service by U.S. common carriers. This doesn't require a change in the law. It requires simply a tweak in the regulations. Banking transactions, also something else which given just the preliminary ties between the countries, it's incredibly onerous that there are no ability. All of you guys that go to Cuba stuff cash in your pocket because you can't use your credit card or your ATM. While we have loosened up to some extent, the Treasury Department has cracked down very aggressively in terms of third party financial and banking and commercial restrictions. That's because Cuba is still on the terrorist list. And that is a key element of what could change, what has been under consideration, put on the table, taken off the table. Removing Cuba, especially given its sponsorship of those talks in Havana from the terrorist list.

Now, of course, would this encounter some loud, angry press releases and noises from Marco Rubio and Robert Menendez? Well, of course. Would it be a 36-hour news cycle? Possibly even less because to counterbalance this kind of change -- and there are many others that could be taken with the president's executive authority, and we know that he is thinking for his final two years in office of using that executive authority aggressively on a number of other issues. There are, for every Marco Rubio or Ileana Ros-Lehtinen tantrum, there will be the Chamber of Commerce, and almost every single local Chamber of Commerce port authority editorial opinion in the country rallying around the president and saying actually 52 years was enough, let's move forward.

So I'm going to wrap this up so that we have time to speak and for the authors to take your questions. But I guess the last thing that I want to note has to do with an issue that's sort of, as a friend of mine in the audience has referred to as a political Frankenstein hanging over all of this, and that has to do with an issue that requires diplomacy and it requires negotiations. It can't be done unilaterally. It will

require some set of maybe parallel play, some kind of process, and that has to do with the release from American prisons and from Cuban prisons of people who are now in those prisons who are there because they were working to implement the policies of their own government toward the other. Of course, I'm talking about the remaining of the Cuban 5, the three, and I'm talking about Alan Gross. That issue, which during Obama's first term was put out there as an obstacle to all progress forward, particularly Alan Gross's incarceration, thankfully in the second term has been moved into a space that has made it easier for the two governments to work on some issues going forward, but clearly, this is an opportunity to once and for all get the kind of process underway that can lead eventually to their release. We have a precedent, not only in terms of American foreign policy with swaps with other nations, but there is also precedent even between the United States and Cuba. So what we're missing is the will, but certainly not the legal precedent.

And on that note I will wrap this up. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

MR. PICCONE: Just a second while we get mic'd up here.

Our speakers were so good and comprehensive this morning that we've covered a lot of the really big issues, but I do want to start and return to some of the fundamentals before we open it up to you all.

You know, your book does such a good job at identifying all the various modalities of diplomacy that were taken along the way. You know, tit for tat, calibrated responses, parallel positive steps, and yet, after more than 50 years, we're left still in the same place really. And so you have to kind of wonder if we need to really change our framework in some bold new way.

The history of the back and forth and the covert diplomacy strikes me as,

you know, you think the fog of war is bad. The fog of diplomacy in this case is also just as bad. There's so much room for misunderstandings and miscues and all of that. So it seems to me that we need to try a different approach; that there needs to be some kind of unilateral public statement on the part of the United States to say we've decided it's in our interest, our national interest, to begin a process of greater engagement with Cuba, and we're going to take the following steps -- X, Y, and Z.

I'm wondering, what does that look like? It's a Nixon and China moment that as you laid out -- all of you, but particularly Julia, your last point, the timing is particularly fortuitous in the next two years. What does Obama have to win and lose in that kind of scenario? Assuming he had the political will to do it, what does it look like? How would it play out at the Summit of the Americas?

MR. LEOGRANDE: That's about four questions in one, but let me start out by saying that one of the lessons that I didn't get a chance to talk about just for lack of time is the fact that instrumentalism, historically as a strategy, has not worked. And there's a tendency I think among policymakers to hope that if you sort of take small steps toward an improvement in relations, you won't cause too much of a political furor at home because they're just small steps. And that turns out to be completely wrong, because the opponents of improving relations see small steps as a slippery slope, and they fight just as hard against the smallest steps as they would a big step. And so, in fact, it's the "bolt from the blue" strategy, if you will, the Kissinger to China strategy, that seems to us to hold the best opportunity. And I think, you know, the summit really gives Obama a chance to sit down with Raul Castro, not only in the multilateral context potentially, but with sidebar discussions in a bilateral way that could then lead to the kind of statement that you suggested where the president says -- following up on what he said already, I mean, he's already said the policy doesn't work. He could now turn around and say the

policy doesn't work and here's what the United States is going to do to get us off the dime.

MR. PICCONE: So, the president actually having a bilateral meeting with Raul Castro would be a powerful statement and they shook hands at the Mandela funeral. But there always is, and the way the world works, some need for some preliminary discussions and steps. So why not appoint a special envoy of some kind who will speak on behalf of the president and actually carry out -- the president has a lot on his plate, as we know, especially in foreign policy terms, and Cuba will not rank to take up the president's time in the kind of way that you might be suggesting. Yes, he has to go to the summit -- probably has to go to the summit. What about the idea of appointing someone, not as a secret envoy but someone publicly who will now represent him in such a discussion?

MR. KORNBLUH: So there's a number of issues with that. One is that it announces that you're going to enter into this process and it's going to take place over a long period of time. Just like the instrumentalism, it gives your enemies time to oppose you. Certainly, that kind of protracted effort also does the same thing. Interestingly enough, I think the Cubans would prefer to have a dialogue that's open and clear to a meeting of certain officials anywhere in the world -- Mexico, Spain, Miami -- because they see that as a validation process as well. Not just normalizing relations would be a validation of mutual respect, but also simply having an open dialogue as the United States has had with so many other countries. But the situation now is trying to arrive at an understanding of common ground. We should remember that Barack Obama, when he was running for president, had a debate with Hillary Clinton during the primaries in which he said, "I would sit down with leaders of hostile states and try and work out agreements. I would sit down with Raul Castro." And she said, "You would do that?"

She said, "I wouldn't do that without preconditions and without working things through."
And he said, "Well, sometimes you have to work some things through, but I would still do it." And, of course, he won't do it unless there's already some agreements in place. And the question now is whether those agreements are going to be negotiated quietly behind the scenes or whether they, as you suggest, could be negotiated somewhat more openly.

MR. PICCONE: So let's talk about preconditions. This is my last question, and maybe Julia you can elaborate on some points that you made at the end. Right now, for all intents and purposes, it's very clear. There is a precondition, and the precondition is the release of Alan Gross to the U.S. moving forward. And I'm wondering, you laid out some ideas and Bill Richardson had tried to carry some messages down that failed. Do you think the Cubans are ready to move and negotiate on this front as well? And can you say a bit about where the democracy aid programs fit into that matrix?

MS. SWEIG: Oh, sure.

Well, I think this question of are the Cubans ready, are the Americans ready, I mean, each needs to call -- I mean, they need to get in a room and work it out. We really won't know until we know. What we know in terms of public messaging coming from Havana and private messaging that then moves into the public space is many reports repeatedly over the years, especially since the second term began -- the tic-tock of the first term in the first few years of Alan Gross being in jail was quite a bit different, but let's just move to the more recent period. The messaging has been let's get in the room and work this out without preconditions. Without preconditions from the Cuban side, I understand to mean, look, we've got our guy, Gerardo serving multiple life sentences in jail in California, but we're not saying you have to release him first. We're just saying let's start a process so that we can get there. And I think it is the absence, as far as we know -- maybe there is a process underway -- but the absence of a process

that needs to change.

So do I think -- I think that there's a clear understanding in Havana that Alan Gross is said to be an obstacle, but I'm saying "is said to be an obstacle," because Havana also looks at how the United States operates, including with this recent Taliban exchange, where there isn't an explicit linkage. Stuff happens, negotiations and diplomacy solve problems, and that's what we need to see is negotiations and diplomacy solving problems.

And that connects to your second question, which is the democracy USAID programs. Now, one thing, if the United States wants to have a conversation about democracy with Havana, it should probably stop the covert programs aimed at creating some kind of Eastern European velvet revolution and variety of democratic upheaval which is what the USAID programs by and large look like and the kind of program that Alan Gross was down there implementing in violation of Cuban law and without telling the Jewish community in Cuba or the Jewish community in the United States that was taking stuff down there that this was part of a covert program.

So I think those programs need to be massively overhauled, shifted into whatever economic support, the normal kind of non-regime changing stuff that the United States can do. That would be a very significant sign by the United States that we are serious about moving forward.

MR. PICCONE: Do you want to comment on that or we'll open it up to the audience.

MR. LEOGRANDE: Let's go to the audience.

MR. PICCONE: All right. Well, let's go to your questions. There's a microphone here. Please identify yourself and try to keep your question short because I see a lot of hands. We don't have that much time.

We'll start with the gentleman with the white paper holding up.

MR. TOWELL: I'm Timothy Towell, a retired Foreign Service officer. I was on the Cuban desk in 1969 and was deputy to Wayne Smith in '79 and '80, and we did so beautifully that Miami got a half a million new citizens.

The theme I hear, which I find fascinating, which is my question, is the time to get this done. And then you cite, besides pedaling your book, and I'll buy it, that Obama might be ready to leave a better historical record than he's got so far maybe, that the people in Calle Ocho are getting tired, older than I am even, that Governor Crist is being progressive, that Hillary is ready to move, and hooray. Let's focus on the Cuban side of it though. You were saying we've got to get it done because Fidel is old and is going to croak soon, but Raul is the guy that's talking all this stuff. But if you know who Raul is, he's the guy who had Camilo Cienfuegos blown out of the air. He's the guy that sent that wonderful Che Guevara to Angola hoping he might get gored by an elephant, and then sent him to Bolivia where I was (inaudible) Obama when he was killed on the road. Get him out of town because Raul is the mean son of a bitch that protects the dynamic older brother. He's head of the army. Makes money with Gaviota, taking fat Italian tourists to the beach rather than going to town. He's the head of the intelligence service, making money on that. He's head of the police. He's a bad guy, but he's talking progressive. Are the Cubans ready to go or do we wait? Maybe now isn't the time. Wait until he croaks and in come somebody that knows that we're in the 21st century.

MR. PICCONE: Let's take a couple more questions before we come back.

This gentleman.

MR. RUSMAN: Thank you very much. My name is Villa Rusman. I work at the German office at the World Bank, and it's very interesting your presentation.

For a foreigner, I have the impression the cat is very, very anxious of the mouse. So could you argue on the panel, please, on when West Germany would have treated East Germany the way the U.S. is treating Cuba, would the wall still stand? Thank you.

MR. PICCONE: And did I see Wayne's hand?

Yes?

MR. SMITH: Wayne Smith.

I just want to disagree with Timothy. I know Raul Castro. I think he's open to dialogue with us. I would say that this is the best time to move towards Cuba now that Raul is there. He'll be a welcoming voice.

MR. PICCONE: Okay. Why don't we come back to the panel now?

MR. LEOGRANDE: Let me start out with the question about Raul Castro. I think, looking historically and even more so since he took over from Fidel, that Raul Castro, who has shown himself to be extraordinarily pragmatic, much more pragmatic than Fidel. Fidel has always been motivated by some very deep ideological antagonisms toward the market and capitalism and so on to the point that even when the Cuban model wasn't working, he wouldn't let go of some of those ideological core principles that he believed. Raul has been more like Deng Xiaoping. What difference does it make if a cat is black or white as long as it catches mice? And so the economic restructuring that's going on in Cuba right now looks a lot like, as we all know, looks a lot like the restructuring in Vietnam and the restructuring in China to create kind of market socialism.

So this is a very pragmatic individual. He doesn't blame the United States for Cuba's problems in the way that Fidel historically did. He doesn't get up and say the economy is a mess because of the embargo. He gets up and says the economy is a mess because the model that we've been carrying out isn't working effectively and

we need to change it.

And just from a strict national interest point of view, Cuba, in this process of economic restricting, would be a lot better off if it had normal economic relations with the United States. It would make that process easier for them to open up to greater trade, to open up to U.S. investment. So I think when he says he's interested in improving the relationship with the United States, for very cold-blooded national interest reasons, he's sincere.

MR. PICCONE: Well, I want to have a quick follow up, which is let's imagine a hypothetical in which Raul doesn't make it to 2018, or let's say we're still in the same situation as we are now and it's 2018. What do you see in terms of the preparation for succession of leadership in Cuba of the Communist Party that would factor into this calculus? Any crystal balls on that?

MS. SWEIG: The designated successor's name is Miguel Diaz-Canel. He served sort of effectively as governor, secretary of the Communist Party in a couple of Eastern Cuban provinces where he was known to have presided over some experimental local taxation and budgeting and some of the regional decentralization that we're now starting to see become a little bit more national. He's a man in his 50s. He's served as Minister of Higher Education. Since his designation, he's started to travel abroad a little bit, but he grew up on the Fidel Castro model of how you see the United States, and his generation is, although sort of looking to the future, definitely not -- or I'll just talk about him -- he doesn't have the kind of international experience or exposure to dealing with Americans that Fidel Castro and Raul Castro have. Remember, Fidel and Raul both have for years been entertaining many, many Americans and know them, and Diaz-Canel is just far more unknown, and I think it's almost kind of a cliché, but an accurate cliché, to say that he's not going to be in as strong of a position to come in, let's say, in 2018 with a

new president here and him as president in Cuba and right off the bat have the political space to be on the other end of some big negotiation. So I think there is some uncertainty given that his priorities will be consolidating domestically.

Now, he will need, as Bill said, the economic benefit of an opening with Washington. But Cuba is also diversifying its trade and investment portfolio and pointedly not holding off for an opening with the United States after 52 years. So it's not going to be the North Star necessarily of his foreign policy calculus.

MR. KORNBLUH: I'd like to just say that I hope that the U.S. Government does not wait until 2018 to take up this issue. One humanitarian reason is I truly do not believe that Alan Gross will be alive in a Cuban jail as of 2018. I've visited him twice. I've spent seven hours with him, and I just don't see him lasting. If he is hurt or dies in a Cuban prison, it empowers the enemies of this process. They are the only ones who really gain by that. And so there's an immediacy to some type of humanitarian exchange, and then there's an immediacy to the issue of the summit, which is coming up. And since those issues are real, putting a change of Cuban policy into a package, not just doing one thing, you know, a humanitarian exchange of some sort of one or two steps forward, but a broader package. It can't go all the way because Bill Clinton gave away the embargo to Congress and we're not going to get a vote in Congress to lift the embargo. But it can go 75 percent of the way. And it helps Hillary Clinton in many ways if this is kind of off the table the table before the campaign really begins, and she can pick up some momentum. And it certainly helps U.S. economic interests, the interests of the diaspora in Miami, and our interests in Cuba evolving in terms of a different economic system, which some theorists will say will eventually have an impact on their political system.

MR. PICCONE: Let's take another round. And why don't we start a little

bit more in the back. There's a hand way in the back.

PAMELA: Thank you. Thank you all for your wonderful presentations. My name is Pamela, and I work for Florida International University up here in D.C.

My question has to do with, I guess, preconditions you guys touched on a little bit, and I hate to be the token Venezuelan to bring up the country in every Latin American conference, but seeing what Congress has done with individual sanctions in Venezuela, with individual people, have individual sanctions been considered towards Cuba? Or if it is considered, does it seem more as a step back towards lifting the embargo? Thank you.

MR. PICCONE: There are two in the front here. This one. Yeah. And then next.

MR. GLUCK: Thank you. My name is Peter Gluck.

So it didn't take 52 years of sanctions to precipitate the downfall of apartheid in South Africa, and it didn't take 52 years of embargo or sanctions to precipitate negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program. But after 52 years of embargo against Cuba, what can the opponent of normalization say to oppose that process? I mean, what positive outcomes have come from this embargo for 52 years? It's difficult to tell. But of course, I'm not living there.

MR. PICCONE: Yes?

MS. VAN RIEGERSBURG: Good morning. That was an absolutely marvelous presentation.

My name is Stephanie Van Riegersburg, and I was an eye-and-ear witness to a lot of what is in this book, and I can't wait to read it.

My question though has to do with the macro tragedy in the making of the end of the OAS as we know it if the Venezuelan and other more left-leaning people

use the non-Cuban acceptance at the Panama Summit as an excuse to move further in the direction of CLAC and the other south (inaudible) the U.S. and Canada excluding organizations. It really worries me as a matter of our foreign policy going forward.

MR. PICCONE: Let me take one more. The woman in front of you.

MS. KOTAK: Hi, I'm Sharon Kotak, retired from the State Department.

I went to Cuba about a year and a half ago on one of those People to People exchanges, and when we were there we saw Chinese buses, Korean cars. So can President Obama say that it's in the U.S. economic interest to pursue relations with Cuba? Because we are totally missing out on this. Thank you.

MR. KORNBLUH: Can I just say before we start answering that Stephanie Van Riegersburg, who asked this question over here, was the translator and interpreter for many of the highest level secret meetings that took place over a long period of time, and it is because of her tremendous professionalism that not only did those meetings go very well in a lot of ways, but she then went back to the State Department and from her shorthand notes did the memorandum of conversations that survive today and let us be a fly on the wall in the room of all of these historic meetings. We owe her a tremendous debt of gratitude.

(Applause)

MR. LEOGRANDE: So let me take up the issue of individual sanctions on Cubans. The current regulations prevent Cuban -- senior government officials of Cuba or party officials of Cuba from receiving remittances or gift packages or from traveling -- in most cases from traveling to the United States except on official business, but there are not sanctions, apart from the mention of Fidel and Raul in the Helms-Burton legislation, there are not regulatory sanctions on individual Cubans.

What's the case that the opponents make? Well, we're getting close now

to overthrowing the government. That's the argument that they make. Just turning the screw a little more and it'll finally work. That's the argument.

So, well, you know, first it was, well, you know, when the Soviet Union collapsed and the Cubans had terrible economic depression called the special period, the argument --

MS. SWEIG: That was *Fidel's Final Hour*.

MR. LEOGRANDE: That was *Fidel's Final Hour*, famous book written called *Fidel's Final Hour*. And the CIA said that this regime won't last more than a few more months. So there was this expectation that they were on the verge of collapse. Well, they didn't collapse, of course. And then it was, well, when Fidel finally goes from the scene, the whole regime is built around Fidel. It can't survive his passing. Assistant Secretary Tom Shannon said, "The Cuban regime is like a helicopter. It's a single-point failure mechanism. When Fidel is gone, the whole thing is going to crash."

Well, that didn't happen. Then it was, well, when Venezuela stops giving them all this aid, then they're going to crash. Well, they still haven't crashed. And the current argument is, well, the fact that they've undertaken this economic reform program is proof that the economy is collapsing and therefore, we just have to wait a little bit longer. It's always that success is just around the corner. That's an argument U.S. officials opposed to improving relations, have been making literally since 1959. Thomas Mann, who became assistant secretary of state later in the Eisenhower administration, when U.S. Ambassador Philip Bonsal asked for permission to hold out the olive branch of economic branch to Havana to try and prevent the deterioration of relations, Thomas Mann said, "No, we think it's better to wait for a successor regime." We're still waiting.

MS. SWEIG: I want to address the question about the inter-American system and also the economic question. Clearly, we have a national economic interest in

being able to be a market player inside of Cuba. Of course, there are other larger economies. This always is -- Cuba is a small island in the Caribbean, and so we have to be realistic about just how much the opportunity exists, but it's also true for those of you who have been to Cuba, is that Cuba needs everything and we are very close. Cuba now has a renovated port at Mariel, which is a hop, skip, and a jump away from the United States, and there are clearly big commercial opportunities for both countries to benefit from an economic opening.

On the question of the OAS, I think this is a moment in time, and we've been living in it for a while and this will continue within the Americas in which we can expect many things to be happening simultaneously. So even if we do have an Obama or a Biden show up at the summit and there is some sort of good photo opportunities backed up by some previously negotiated agreements between the United States and Cuba, even if they are far reaching, I don't expect that to mean that either the OAS will come out in new and stronger clothing and become a representative and functioning institution, nor do I expect the absence of that scenario to take place to mean that the new regional institutions are going to become much, much stronger very, very quickly. They are all sort of going to continue to evolve. Weakening, strengthening, but happening simultaneously. So I think we have to anticipate the reconfiguration of regional institutions to continue to unfold, either strengthened or weakened, somewhat were Cuba and the United States to be brought into the fold to both.

MR. PICCONE: Can I supplement that? Because there is an important feature in all of that discussion that goes to the heart of why it's so difficult for the United States to accept Cuba at the Summit of the Americas, which is the democratic charter and the democratic criteria, so to speak, of the OAS and the Summit of the Americas, which there's a debate about how strong and hard that is. But nonetheless, it is a feature

of the institution and has been. It's a good value for many years, and so you don't want to lose that I think. So if there's some way of engaging in some kind of dialogue, that's why Julia's point about looking at the EU model, they're engaging in a dialogue about human rights and democracy and there's back and forth, and that's the kind of process that you could begin and I think without losing the democratic character of the OAS and the Americas, because I think that is important for many people.

On Venezuela, just to make a point, we looked at some of the scenarios of what might happen. If things were to change in Venezuela, what would the impact be on Cuba? And what we see is that there's nothing like the dependency that Cuba has on Venezuela that it had on the Soviet Union, so you're not going to see the kind of collapse and the difficulties that Cuba experienced then, but we also see a mutual relationship there. It benefits both sides, and it is in Venezuela's interest to keep that going, and that Cuba would be the last on the list that would be harmed by any kind of major cutback in their largess is our judgment on that. So I did want to throw that on the table as well.

And then just I think final roundup because we're actually out of time.

MR. LEOGRANDE: Okay. Well, as Peter said at the very outset, we wrote this book because we had a sense that the narrative about U.S.-Cuban relations was dominated by the obvious elements of conflict over the last 50-some odd years. But the more we looked into this history, the more we realized how much dialogue there had been, most of it secret because it's politically sensitive. And the idea of the book is to show that there is as much of a history and as much precedent for dialogue and successful dialogue as there is for confrontation and that one can see the opportunities, sometimes narrowly missed opportunities to normalized relations in 1975 and again in 1977, 1978, but this history holds out the promise that, in fact, there is enough common ground between these two countries, and I think now the conditions are especially ripe for

us to finally move forward and put an end to this perpetual hostility.

MR. KORNBLUH: We spent 10 years working on this book together, and a lot of people knew we were working on the book. And as Julia pointed out, yelled at us to get it done, wondered why it wasn't out earlier. And, of course, it was planned. It was planned to come out right at the time that it would have the most impact, and I hope that that time is now. There was a question about the current situation, and you know, there is an alignment of political interests and situations now with a second-term democrat in the last phase of his presidency. People who are smart enough to know that this policy is a failure and that it should be changed to have announced this, and hopefully the book provides in a sense a bit of historical political cover and precedent and a foundation, including the information in it that might be useful to go forward. And certainly, it starts a debate about this very issue at a time when it's most relevant. And that's heartening.

MS. SWEIG: For the last chapter of the book is President Obama's to write?

MR. KORNBLUH: Exactly.

MR. PICCONE: Beautiful. Well said. Well, thank you all for coming, and thank the panelists.

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