

warranted, they argue. Unless there is significant pressure, nothing will change.

The opposing argument claims that 44 years of U.S. hostility of precisely such a policy has produced even more disappointing results. If the objective is to make Cuba adopt a Western-style liberal democracy and develop an appreciation of related civil and political human rights, then clearly it has failed. Neither has happened. Countering the hard-line approach, proponents of constructive engagement claim that the U.S. tactics have in fact made Cuba withdraw even more from these goals. Not only has the U.S. approach failed, but it has also been counter-productive—and has probably resulted in the Cubans adopting an even harder line. Indeed heavy pressures, especially in the public eye, achieve little or nothing in Cuba, while constant presence and helpful approaches in confidence-building—although a painfully slow process—do.

Mexico has traditionally sought a third way in its dealing with Cuba—seeking to maintain the status quo in its relationship, without any attempt to promote political change in Cuba. In essence this can be termed a diluted form of engagement. The administration of Zedillo and, in particular, that of Vicente Fox have adapted this approach to suit their own goals, but have aligned themselves far more closely with U.S. goals. As a result they have followed a noticeably proactive strategy, seeking to denounce what they see as flagrant abuses of human rights, and calling for greater liberal democratization. After three years this clearly has not worked—and as in the case of the U.S. policy pursued by nine former presidents (George W. Bush is the tenth president following this goal)—it has been counterproductive, both in Cuba and in terms of domestic politics. (The only possible exception was the attempt of President Carter in the late 1970s to pursue a new approach, one which sadly failed).

Perhaps the essential lesson to be learned by Ottawa is to continue pursuing the essentially Canadian position of compromise, negotiation, constructive criticism, and confidence-building (although this should be pursued more consistently than has been the case in the last decade). The alternatives simply don't seem to work. In fact, as has consistently been shown, when the Cuban government feels itself attacked, it fights back swiftly and with aggressiveness. Nothing has been improved as a result of over four decades of U.S. hostility, nor is there any real prospect that it will. Aggression from Washington is simply counterproductive.

The Mexican approach has generally been intelligently played out, focussing less on changing the situation in revolutionary Cuba and more on improving the bilateral relationship to facilitate Mexican gain. It is a lesson from which Canada too could gain, although clearly Ottawa believes (probably incorrectly) that it can impose its own stamp upon the relationship. It is indeed useful to cooperate with Mexico in seeking common approaches to Cuban issues—but we should not underestimate the validity of our own ideas. We believe that this made-in-Canada approach in the long run makes the most sense. Constructive engagement is clearly not perfect. It is, however, the only sensible policy for a peaceful transition with honour—both for Cuba and for Canada.