
Recovering

Nonviolent

History

Civil Resistance
in Liberation Struggles

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Maciej J. Bartkowski



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Cuba: Nonviolent Strategies for Autonomy and Independence, 1810s–1902

Alfonso W. Quiroz

Traditional views of nineteenth-century nationalist struggles worldwide have emphasized the violent means necessary to achieve patriotic goals. Violent heroic feats are seen as confirming that nations are forged with the blood of patriots in armed struggle against foreign oppression. Interpretations of Cuban efforts to achieve independence from Spain are no exception. Indeed, the cult of national heroes and racial freedom fighters, such as martyred “Apostle” José Martí and “Bronze Titan” General Antonio Maceo, killed in action during the insurrection of 1895–1898, remains today a dominant theme in political praxis, education, identity, culture, and history writing in Cuba.¹

If in contrast we study more widely the historical record of Cuban struggles for self-determination led by civilian-based political and civic movements during the Spanish control of the island, countless yet unsung nonviolent efforts can be found. These were defiant struggles to oppose colonialist restrictions and abuses, and to achieve full constitutional rights and political autonomy without armed conflict. As the insurrectionist General Máximo Gómez recognized in 1891, Cuban civilian leaders engaged in nonviolent resistance “do not believe it’s necessary to use brute force ever. They are right in part because when triumph is obtained with that force the road ahead is plagued with disasters.”² A strengthening native civilian collective firmly rooted in the island’s constrained socioeconomic realities had promising chances of leading a nonviolent transition toward independence and a resilient postindependence democracy in Cuba. This promise was substantially realized despite the ascendancy of violent separatist groups and US military intervention.

After 1826, the only remaining Spanish American colonies were Cuba and Puerto Rico. Cuba's strategic importance and rising colonial revenues extracted from a booming sugar, coffee, and tobacco export economy reliant on slave and peasant labor made the island indispensable to Spain. In consequence, political and military events in Cuba and Spain became even more intimately intertwined. Cuba's elite remained collaborative while the Madrid government granted tax and customs concessions. However, following the death of King Ferdinand VII in 1833, successive Spanish captains-generals (colonial governors in charge of the Spanish colonial administration in Cuba) in Havana reinforced military despotism and harmful commercial and fiscal policies. Madrid hardened colonial discrimination against those born in Cuba. Successive waves of Spaniards arrived in Cuba—particularly after the 1840s—to bolster the regular army, colonial bureaucracy, and urban service sector, thereby displacing Creole (Cuban born of European descent) and free black inhabitants from their former positions. Simultaneously the slave population in Cuba increased dramatically and free black groups lost some of their traditional rights.³ Colonialist use of abusive force and a divide and rule policy to control Cuban society and exploit the stark divisions between free and enslaved people, and Creole- and Spanish-born inhabitants, sparked the organization of the first reformist and separatist movements.

Two distinct historical strategies developed among divided groups of Cuban reformists and separatists. One strategy was based on nonviolent, gradualist traditions that pressed for colonial reform, attainment of constitutional and civil rights already recognized in Spain, a distinctive Cuban education, and autonomous self-government. The other strategy relied on violent conspiracies, rebel naval expeditions, and armed insurrection that eventually triggered two destructive wars for independence—the Ten Years' War (1868–1878) and the War of 1895–1898. Violent military action and reaction and, ultimately, US military intervention in 1898, weakened the political standing and leadership of nonviolent strategists. However, by building a grassroots core through unifying civilian-national identity and an autonomous civil society clearly differentiated from the colonialist state's divisive social designs, the contributions of nonviolent organization and action toward an independent Cuba were irreversible.

Radical nationalist stances—inspired by insurrectionist leader Martí and his views on revolutionary violence—have considered crucial nonviolent actions as being antipatriotic and pro-colonial because they did not contribute to armed struggle for independence.⁴ With a similar political logic, nonviolent dissent in Cuba today is persistently declared reactionary and pro-imperialist. What is remarkable is that, despite violent colonialist reaction, nonviolent strategies and goals remained consistent and received wide popular support and recognition among Cubans throughout the nineteenth century. It is

therefore important to set the record straight concerning civilian-based non-violent movements in Cuba through the assessment of their preindependence scope and influence as well as their successes, failures, legacies, and lessons for future nonviolent transitions.

Socioeconomic and Political Developments in Nineteenth-Century Cuba

The strategic importance of Cuba in the Atlantic placed it at the center stage of historical imperial disputes and geopolitics. After the British invasion of Havana in 1762, the Spanish empire reinforced its defenses, enhancing fortifications, building up the navy, and militarizing Cuban society by reorganizing the regular army and local militias.⁵ Cuban business and landholding elites linked the advancement of their interests with Spanish colonialist authorities, Spanish transatlantic networks of trade in goods and slaves, and monopolist and protectionist interests in Spain.

The massive influx of slaves to Cuba after the Haiti slave rebellion (1791–1804) and British prohibition of slave trade (1807) was accompanied by the introduction of new machinery and economic reforms leading to a sugar boom. Initially, Creole landholders dominated sugar production, Francisco Arango y Parreño (1765–1837) being credited with its modernization,⁶ while Spanish merchants controlled trade. The demographic and ethnic changes resulting from the slave influx intensified divisions that were reinforced and manipulated by the increasingly despotic and militaristic Spanish rulers who reasserted colonialism in the island. The island thus faced a transformation that endangered its condition as a settler society and reinforced elements of a colonial plantation society and captive market benefiting mainly Spanish trading interests.

The swift independence of most Spanish American colonies had been attained in the period 1810–1826 at a time of instability and a crisis of power in Spain itself. Cuban Creoles noted the turmoil in the newly independent Latin American republics and, in general, remained loyal to the Spanish crown. In the 1820s thousands of defeated Spanish soldiers and loyalist immigrants from former colonies resettled in Cuba,⁷ which increasingly was run by a centralized military and official bureaucracy that privileged Spanish officers and left little space for local self-government or municipal authority. The growing Creole middle and professional classes were displaced from their previous positions of influence. Under the Spanish constitution of 1812, Spaniards “in both hemispheres” were recognized as citizens, Creoles of Spanish descent being entitled to vote and to be represented in the Cortes in Spain.⁸ However, subsequent revisions were to disenfranchise them. Under the growing tyranny of the captain-general, buttressed

by the island's emboldened Spanish "party" (slave-trafficking interests), and immigration of Spanish soldiers and civil servants, Cuba became the milk cow that provided strategic fiscal revenues to a needy Spanish monarchy. In Spain, Regent María Cristina and her daughter Isabel II—in alliance with the colonialist Moderate Party, ambitious military leaders, and protectionist agricultural and manufacturing interests in Spain—made use of colonial revenues to fight off Don Carlos, the archconservative pretender to the throne.

Nonviolent Resistance and Formation of a Cuban Identity

Two basic strategies were soon obvious to Cuban civilian leaders and movements from the 1830s to 1850s—a time period of colonialist reassertion and authoritarian military rule in Cuba. The first strategy was to support separatist conspiracies that organized violent uprisings in Cuba as well as "filibustering" expeditions, mainly from the United States, that landed in Cuba and incited armed insurrection. The major filibustering expeditions were led by insurrectionary militarist leaders and supported by elite proslavery Cuban exiles, allied to southern US interests seeking US annexation of Cuba. In 1851 the defeat and execution of the annexationist filibuster Narciso López, a disgruntled former military officer, was an important lesson: armed insurrection might appease injured military and patriotic honor, but it had little chance of overcoming the strongest Spanish military establishment outside Spain. Moreover, such violent actions raised dangers of dictatorial caudillo ambition as well as intervention by other foreign powers, especially the United States. Despite these obvious pitfalls and recurrent defeats and repression affecting the island's entire population, separatist violence repeatedly broke out in the following decades.

The second strategy involved continuing and enhancing the liberal, nonviolent economic and political efforts initiated by Creoles of Arango's generation. This strategy eventually encompassed actions to demand and obtain constitutional rights, increased institutional autonomy, free press, and autonomous association in voluntary cultural, educational, professional, and self-help societies and clubs.

As early as the first decade of the nineteenth century, the press organs linked to patriotic societies—voluntary associations formed mainly by Creole elites and professionals—cultivated a sense of the island's economic and distinctive cultural identity in the pages of the newspapers *Papel Periódico* (Periodic Paper) and *Aurora* (Dawn) of Havana. This occurred despite the limits on press freedom imposed by captain-generals and provincial governors. During the first constitutional period of 1812–1814, private and independent pamphlets and periodicals, such as Havana's *Diario Cívico*

(Civic Daily) and *El Patriota Americano* (American Patriot) and Santiago de Cuba's *La Sabatina* (Saturday's), advocated administrative reform and full extension of constitutional rights of free press and association, despite being subject to official censorship and stern vigilance. Associational autonomy was also sought more actively. In 1813, daring members of the Havana Patriotic Society challenged the legality of the captain-general's political interference in the society's internal affairs. Other early cultural and ethnic associations included black societies that preserved Afro-Cuban identities and literary lyceums and philharmonic societies, cultivating artistic and literary contributions to a distinct Cuban culture and collective selfhood. Cuban-born inhabitants of the island could thus rely on an alternative social fabric and polis that contrasted and competed with the rigid colonial social establishment.

A renewed constitutional cycle in 1820–1823 consolidated the liberal constitutionalist character of a new generation of Creole civilian intellectuals who published in the independent newspapers *Revisor Político y Literario* (Political and Literary Examiner) and *Observador Habanero* (Havana's Observer). In these newspapers the articles of influential authors and educators Félix Varela and José Agustín Caballero, the first proponents of Cuba's political autonomy and independence, and their younger disciples urged constitutional changes that implied a thorough colonial reform and increased administrative autonomy. This constitutionalist-reformist spirit spread to provincial patriotic societies and cultural associations that published periodicals such as *La Aurora de Matanzas* (Dawn of Matanzas) between 1828 and 1856 and the *Revista Bimestre Cubana* (Cuban Bimester Review) founded in 1832. Other cultural periodicals included *La Siempre Viva* (Always Alive) and *La Moda* (Fashion). These publications reaffirmed Cuban literary and cultural identity by promoting Cuban authors such as the Afro-Cuban poet Plácido and Cirilo Villaverde, author of *Cecilia Valdés* (1839).

In 1836, a palace revolt in Spain led to the reinstatement of the 1812 constitution, which was immediately adopted by the Spanish governor of Santiago de Cuba, Manuel Lorenzo, who called elections without waiting for authorization from Madrid or Captain-General Miguel Tacón in Havana. Tacón sent troops to Santiago and prominent supporters of Lorenzo's in the Santiago Patriotic Society, including educator Juan Bautista Sagarra, were punished with a period in exile.⁹ Other important leaders with island-wide popularity advocating nonviolent strategies at the time were the liberal constitutionalists and gradualist abolitionists José Antonio Saco and Domingo del Monte who engaged in active unofficial and official opposition in the press and associations, organized networks of Creole intellectuals in *tertulias* (soirées), and encouraged black authors to publish. These activities, too, brought persecution by the Spanish authorities and periods in exile.¹⁰

Underlying patriotic associational and independent press efforts, a conscious emphasis on spreading grassroots education since the early nineteenth century contributed to the formation of a wider Cuban identity. Sociedades Económicas in the most important cities and towns of the island financed and established hundreds of free, nonreligious primary schools for thousands of white and black, male and female students. With practically no official subsidy, Havana's Sociedad Económica funded more than forty free schools with nearly 1,000 students in 1846. Various "model schools" were established, including private high schools run by revered liberal educators such as José de la Luz y Caballero, the defiant director of Sociedad Económica in the 1840s, and Juan Bautista Sagarra who founded the Colegio de Santiago de Cuba on his return from exile. In higher education, too, innovative alternatives were established and reformist Cuban-born professors and medical doctors formed a majority among the island's higher education faculty.

Generations of Cuban children and young people were educated in these schools with up-to-date textbooks by Cuban authors critical of traditional Spanish methods of instruction and historical interpretation. Educational authorities in Spain censored Cuban textbooks for their irreverent views of Spanish religious fanaticism and violent conquest. Furthermore, Spanish political authorities on the island were wary of the challenge posed by Cuban primary and higher education to colonial control and thus redoubled efforts to "assimilate" the island's population to Spanish culture. In 1847, the Spanish colonial state took over the administration of primary schools formerly funded by local Sociedades Económicas. The ensuing centralized administration of education by the Spanish colonial state was perennially underfunded. Despite continued anti-Cuban education policies and bureaucratic harassment, Cuban-born teachers in public schools and the surviving private schools contributed to increasing literacy levels and, with this, to raising the political and national awareness of the Cuban population.¹¹

The Springtime of Civilian Colonial Reformism

In the 1860s, political change in Spain led to a reformist interlude in Cuba that nonviolent civilian strategists were able to exploit to advance the goal of Cuban autonomy. In Spain a wave of reinvigorated associational impetus was sweeping the main cities, bringing to life civil, reform-minded, liberal economic, social, and cultural groups and lobbies that opposed tariff protection and advocated the abolition of slavery in Spanish colonies.

In Cuba, a broadening reform movement also pressed for enhanced fiscal and political autonomy, constitutional and electoral rights, compliance with international treaties banning the slave trade (formally prohibited in

1820), and freer press and association. A more autonomous civil society emerged with the innovation of mutual aid associations, part of a growing international mutualist movement. Mutualism facilitated the self-financing of popular groups such as artisans and workers who were now able to pool resources together. The first labor unions among urban tobacco and other manufacturing and service artisans and workers were formed in Cuba on the basis of mutual aid associations. The first successful tobacco workers strike was organized in August 1865 to demand the right of collective bargaining and higher salaries. In March 1866, slaves of the largest sugar plantations in Matanzas refused to work any longer as slaves and demanded payment for their work. This unprecedented slave strike, however, was soon quashed by government troops.

The establishment of secret, previously outlawed Masonic lodges by returning Cuban émigrés was officially tolerated by Spanish authorities. The Cuban-dominated associations of leisure and culture, such as casinos, centers, and circles, harbored a membership stirred by ideas of political reform and autonomy.¹² Worker, Masonic, and cultural associational leadership was closely linked in this period to reformist political, educational, and cultural activities. The reformist newspaper *El Siglo* (Century) (1862–1868), and the pro-worker *Aurora* (1865–1868), rallied increasing public support for the political club (parties were still outlawed) known as the *Círculo Reformista*. Successful electoral campaigns resulted in the election of leaders like José Antonio Saco to represent Santiago de Cuba in an official colonial policy forum, the Junta de Información (1866–1867) set up in Madrid. Reformist representatives from Cuba and Puerto Rico aspired to use this official assembly on colonial affairs to introduce economic and civil reforms.

Public performances in theaters, cultural associations, and public spaces accentuated Cuban nonviolent demonstrations of solidarity and civic demands. Critical and satirical pieces of Cuban Bufo theater attracted full audiences of Cuban spectators like those who filled Havana's Teatro Villanueva during a tragic night in 1869 when colonialist fanatics fired at the crowd for cheering Cuba's freedom.

In 1862 and 1866, at the funerals first of educator José de la Luz y Caballero and then of cultural and reformist-separatist icon Gaspar Betancourt Cisneros, thousands of citizens gathered in peaceful public processions. These politically charged gatherings symbolized the reality of the past decade—that since the mid-1850s, nonviolent civilian-based organizing and mobilization had advanced the cause of obtaining important civil rights for Cubans as well as a sharp reduction in illicit slave trading into Cuba. A firmly independent civil society had become an important bulwark defying colonial despotism. What came after 1867, however, violently suppressed advances accumulated through open and arduous nonviolent struggle.

War Reversals, 1868–1878

The Spanish government in Madrid turned to the right and closed the Junta de Información in 1867, thus dealing a hard blow to Cuban aspirations of colonial reform. A new captain-general was appointed to undo all reforms advanced during the past few years in Cuba and raise taxes. Reactionary Spaniards and loyalists in Cuba, organized in so-called volunteer militias, worked to eradicate the reformist civilian spaces and associations. However, when in Spain La Gloriosa Revolución deposed Isabel II in 1868, Carlos Manuel de Céspedes—a landowner in eastern Cuba—seized the opportunity to launch an armed insurrection for independence. This led to the Ten Years' War (1868–1878). Brutal warfare in rural areas included the forced relocation of rural populations—later known as the deadly *reconcentración*. Spanish repression of the urban population practically annihilated civil society. Almost all associations with majority Creole membership as well as black societies were forcibly closed or could not withstand political persecution and economic hardship. Thousands of civilians were imprisoned or forced into exile. The war's total death toll among the Cuban population was estimated at 200,000 people, around 14 percent of the total population. Most of the persecuted civilians did not actively support the separatist insurrection. Many of those imprisoned or exiled were nonviolent reformists or ordinary civilians. Internal war supplanted civic engagement and the reformist nonviolent movement dwindled as it got caught in the middle of two violent factions.¹³

The separatist insurrectionary movement in central and eastern Cuba initially emphasized civilian over military leadership, appointing Céspedes head of a separatist government subject to rebel parliamentary control. Soon, however, the military pro-caudillo factions prevailed and deposed Céspedes. The new separatist government pursued diplomatic campaigns through their representatives in New York who unsuccessfully lobbied the US government for recognition. Several waves of Cuban exiles to the United States over the previous decades were joined by 30,000 or more emigrés due to post-1869 political persecution. They formed a militant, though divided, Cuban community in exile. Old annexationist and reformist leaders in exile were opposed by intransigent and radical revolutionaries who rejected any negotiation with the US government or the slightest possibility of a diplomatic settlement with Spain through US mediation or “purchase” of Cuba. Revolutionaries favored instead support to filibustering expeditions and the escalation of military insurrectionary actions into the wealthy western region of Cuba to increase the economic costs of the Spanish war efforts.¹⁴ Despite the costs inflicted on the Spanish government in Cuba, however, the insurrection never managed to succeed militarily or to gain wide support in major urban centers. The protracted, languishing guerrilla

fighting prolonged the conflict and led to a massive Spanish counteroffensive that delayed a nonviolent rebuilding of the cultural, political, and civil basis for an independent Cuba.

The wider international and geopolitical context was not favorable for armed insurrection. Despite expansionist and annexationist pressures, the long-term US diplomatic approach preferred a stable Cuba under Spanish reformed rule to war and instability. Despite their abolitionist pressures, British and other European foreign policies also favored Spanish rule over a US takeover. Once Spain abandoned the attempt to reimpose itself militarily in several former colonies, Latin American governments were mostly indifferent to the Cuban separatist cause during the Ten Years' War, lacked geopolitical weight, or mainly worried about a possible US intervention in Cuba.

A negotiated solution to the conflict and reform in Cuba thus gained momentum by 1876. In circumstances of war, nonviolent movements for expanded rights and autonomy had floundered. A few underground, nonviolent actions ended in the harshest of Spanish loyalist repression and reprisal. In 1871, under suspicion of having desecrated the tomb of a colonialist propagandist, eight medical students were summarily tried and executed and thirty-one others imprisoned. Students had previously protested the captain-general's abolition of Havana University's doctoral degree. Many nonviolent reformist leaders had been persecuted, expropriated, exiled, and imprisoned during the first years of the war. Once released from prison or returned from exile, however, these leaders formed movements to try to end the war. To reach a transitional political compromise with both nonviolent and defeated violent factions, the Spanish authorities promised major constitutional and abolitionist reforms that the nonviolent reformist movement of the early 1860s had previously demanded and supported during the war.¹⁵

Renewed Nonviolent Civic Movements

Slavery was, of course, a central issue. Over time, more slaves came to Cuba than the rest of Spanish America combined. By the mid-nineteenth century, around half of them were working on sugar plantations that supplied a third or more of the world's sugarcane.¹⁶ A powerful lobby supported slavery: Hispano-Cuban slave traders, planters, colonial officials, and colonialist protectionist interests in Spain. The Creole abolitionists, such as José Antonio Saco, generally took a gradualist stance, afraid of the violence that abolition might trigger. The slave trade, illegal since 1820, was finally ended in 1867 shortly after the US decision to abolish slavery, but slavery itself was not abolished until 1886.

During the Ten Years' War, both sides promised to abolish slavery and to free slaves who enlisted militarily in their ranks. At the same time, Spain itself—the last European country to condone slavery—began to change. Spain's Moret Law (1870) freed children born of slaves and slaves over age sixty. In 1873, slavery was completely abolished in Puerto Rico (with compensation to slave owners). When Alfonso XII appointed the reformist Arsenio Martínez Campos as captain-general, Martínez Campos not only signed the Treaty of Zanjón to end the war (and to emancipate those slaves who had fought), but also expanded Cuba's autonomy and civil and political rights, including the right to organize political parties. However, the antislavery law passed in 1880, after Martínez's return to Spain, was based on a concept of Patronato—slaves still had to serve a period of eight years as indentured laborers before they would be free. The Liberal Autonomist Party and the Democratic Party, founded in 1881, campaigned against the Patronato system, as did the Abolitionist Society in Spain. And finally, slavery was abolished by royal decree in 1886.¹⁷ A major nonviolent demonstration in celebration of the end of slavery was held in Havana in January 1887, supported by a wide range of black societies and unions, thus building momentum for further campaigns against racial discrimination and full integration into a freer society.

The major concessions offered by Martínez Campos were achieved fundamentally because of the nonviolent struggles by liberal reformists in previous decades. Those rebels unwilling to sign the Treaty of Zanjón were thoroughly defeated in the Guerra Chiquita (1879–1880). Nonetheless, historians of Cuba generally follow the tradition of exalting patriotic violence and, therefore, argue that such reformist laws were mainly the result of sustained pressure by armed struggle. However, history shows that long- and short-term nonviolent efforts at liberal constitutional solutions to Cuba's colonial oppression from the 1860s throughout the 1880s and 1890s need to be understood as an alternative strategy to armed struggle. These proved to be successful at achieving reformist progress and laying a viable institutional foundation for the future Cuban nation.

After 1879 Cuban subjects enjoyed—although with certain conditions and exceptions—the rights guaranteed by the Spanish Constitution of 1876 and a restricted electoral system. Within that political framework, liberal reformists organized in the Liberal Autonomist Party. Led by middle- and lower-middle-class professionals, and with wide popular support among urban and rural sectors and Creole and black groups, the party pressed for the extension of full rights and political autonomy within the Spanish constitutional monarchy. Despite the opposition and occasional backlash of authorities in Havana and Madrid, the Autonomists struggled persistently for a decentralized autonomous government and parliament similar to that negotiated by the British in Canada.¹⁸ In the political process of the period

(1878–1895) the Autonomists became a massive party, the legal political representative of the Cuban born striving for increased Cuban self-government.

By initiative of the Autonomists and their allies among the business class, several civic movements and lobbies were formed including two—the Junta Magna (1883–1884) and the Movimiento Económico (1890–1892)—that demanded fiscal liberalization and lowering of export taxes during periods of acute economic problems exacerbated by Spanish protectionist measures. These movements united important sectors of the formerly opposed liberal and conservative factions of Cuban producers to achieve national economic goals. Despite an active campaign to advance their demands and intense negotiation with the Spanish authorities, these so-called economic movements failed to maintain a unified front to carry on economic boycott and increase their leverage over government economic policies. The alarmed Spanish military authorities were convinced that such nonviolent movements could bring about Spain's complete loss of Cuba if allowed to grow. Under heightened pressure from the island's government that exploited the divisions among the coalition members of Creole and Spanish origin, several factions withdrew from the movement, effectively ending its activities. However, nonviolent movements for other reforms and rights persisted.

By 1890, there was more space for Cuban civil society than previously and many associations, particularly labor unions and cultural associations, became increasingly racially integrated over the decade. Firmly rooted in this burgeoning civil society, various nonviolent civilian-based movements led by reformists and Autonomists aimed to unify into a larger movement seeking full autonomy. To this end, the now unbanned Masonic lodges, unified in the Grand Lodge of the Island of Cuba, gathered thousands of members in every city. Many Masonic leaders were also Autonomists. Likewise, labor unions continued to multiply and formed leagues encompassing island-wide labor groups with increasing bargaining power and political direction. Unions continued to demand the right to organize, freely associate, and bargain salaries at pressing economic times. Black societies, boosted by the abolition of slavery, organized a Directorio Central de las Sociedades de Color that led important lawsuits and petitions to eradicate segregation and racism. Reformist lawyers, organized through the Liberal Autonomist Party and including members of the Grand Lodge, collaborated both with labor and black societies' leaders and movements to provide legal advice in successfully litigated cases to grant Afro-Cubans access to restricted private and public spaces and to municipal education.¹⁹ These legal victories bolstered constitutional rights and provisions against racial discrimination in the island.

Additional victories by nonviolent movements during the decade include the successful student strike in March 1892, which finally restored doctoral degrees at Havana's university.²⁰ In another instance, labor unions

organized strikes that were successful in achieving higher salaries for workers and more powerful labor organizations and press organs. Civil society organizations and nonviolent movements also increasingly used available political space to spread their message, as when leaders of the Directorio Central voiced its political ideas of independence and separatism peacefully through its main newspapers.

The Liberal Autonomist Party repeatedly demanded electoral reform, especially abolishing property tax qualifications. By the mid-1880s, growing from earlier nonviolent initiatives, the party was Cuba's largest. The Autonomists held mass support in all the provinces and cities and represented Cuban provinces at the Cortes of Spain. However, a conservative-dominated legislature in Madrid increased property tax requirements for voters, thus unduly benefiting higher-income, conservative Spanish candidates in Cuba. This led to a movement of electoral retraction in 1891 aimed at raising political opposition and electoral boycott. This nonviolent tactic, at least temporarily, had a negative impact on the Liberal Autonomist Party, as the recourse to electoral boycott translated into a decline in its popular following.

The nonviolent movements also faced other challenges. One of the structural issues of the nonviolent movements headed by the Autonomists was an unwillingness or inability to amplify the economic and political struggle and turn it into overt, nonviolent conflict with widespread civil disobedience. Despite their increasing popular appeal, Cuban Liberal Autonomists did not amplify their struggle to include more disruptive actions. Mohandas Gandhi (Mahatma) had not yet demonstrated the effectiveness of massive disobedience.²¹ Liberal Autonomist Party leaders had learned, however, that popular, civilian-based nonviolent pressure for reform could ultimately lead to full civil liberties for all Cubans. The Spanish constitutional regime would likely have yielded expanded freedoms and autonomy in Cuba if only more pressure had been exercised. However, in a volatile international situation, nonviolent strategies and methods during the struggle for Cuban independence were still evolving and had not reached the necessary organizational level to launch more unified, disciplined, and effective nonviolent actions. General strikes and mass demonstrations in the streets to attain electoral and autonomy goals required an unprecedented scaling up of social mobilization. Also other, more radical, legal groups such as those led by journalist and politician Juan Gualberto Gómez, an active organizer within black and labor societies and the press in Havana, opted to conspire in support of radical violent separatism instead of nonviolent struggle.

The Perils of Violent Insurrection

The 1895 violent insurrection had been prepared for years by a growing number of Cuban exiles. Separatist military leaders collected funds from

militant exiled communities in the United States, mainly in Florida. However, the anarchist-inclined Florida tobacco workers then began to question how much current nationalist thinking reflected their socioeconomic vision. This led to Martí's recognition of the need to appeal for social and racial unity in a struggle where national independence would lead to social transformation. Martí therefore formed the Partido Revolucionario Cubano (PRC) in 1892, building on Cuban political clubs in New York, Florida, and Mexico.

Detached from the changing realities of Cuba, pro-independence groups in exile were more excited by revolutionary solutions than the nonviolent reformism. The pro-Cuban independence political groups outside Cuba followed a political stance different from that of the nonviolent reformist struggles in the island. Two or three generations of political exiles and dissatisfied workers had brewed support for a violent, republican, and revolutionary solution to the quest of Cuban independence. Major insurrectionist leaders became idols and heroes in the minds of those exiled communities, often out of touch with changes in Cuba. The level of organization of exiled groups and their support for the insurrectionary path further complicated an already problematic geopolitics around the question of Cuba's independence.

Martí designed the PRC with a highly centralized top leadership. Its policy was complete rejection of negotiation, instead engaging in an all-encompassing nationalistic rhetoric geared to unify Cubans of different social and racial backgrounds behind the goal of a republican Cuba. The means to achieve this ideal was armed struggle, hence making the PRC the heir of the historical uprisings and military caudillos who emerged during the Ten Years' War and the Guerra Chiquita.²²

Martí was killed in action shortly after the beginning of the insurrection in 1895. In the aftermath, civilian and military circles vied to apply the military lessons learned from previous insurrectionist warfare in Cuba. The militarist generals Máximo Gómez and Maceo took charge and extended destruction by fire and dynamite to the wealthiest western region of Cuba, bringing its sugar output and trade to a temporary but alarming halt. The Spanish brutal counteroffensive was devastating for the mostly innocent general population and, particularly, the now famished and ill rural inhabitants who were forcibly reconcentrated in urban centers to decrease popular support for the insurrectionists.

As with the Ten Years' War, the separatist insurrection was not powerful enough to achieve military victory. The Spanish Army contained and then reversed insurrectionist penetration into the western part of the island. Maceo was killed in action and Gómez lost support. The insurrection had been unable to gain support in cities from independent civil society: autonomous associations were weary of the violent militarist means. However, faced by a standstill, the Spanish government decided to seek a negotiated solution.

This time, a major political transformation to Cuba's colonial status was introduced. An Autonomous government was formed in 1898 led by Cuban Autonomist and nonviolent leaders. This marked the achievement of an important goal of past nonviolent movements: political autonomy. With autonomy, universal male suffrage was also extended to Cuba. The new government took swift measures to restore rights and freedoms and to advance toward the end of the war, reconstruction, and economic recovery. However, this political transition came in the context of civil war and of immense domestic and foreign pressure. Several historians have argued that autonomist change had arrived too late to give the new government an opportunity to consolidate itself and implement its espoused policies.²³ But the Autonomist government's measures proved initially highly effective and nonviolent parties again offered, as in 1879, viable solutions to the thorny political issues of internal war.

Insurrectionist leaders, unable to achieve a clear military victory, were adamantly opposed to any negotiated solution with the new Cuban government. Despite incessant diplomatic efforts in Washington, DC, and Mexico City, separatist leaders could not obtain official recognition of their belligerent status against Spain. Their public campaigns advocating a solution to the Cuban question through a negotiated annexation of the island to Mexico failed when the Mexican government reaffirmed its neutrality. Mexico, like other Latin American countries, expected a US intervention in Cuba and, therefore, withheld outright support to the separatist insurrection as they awaited a decisive US move.

What would have happened in Cuba if the explosion of the US battleship *Maine* in Havana harbor on February 15, 1898, and the ensuing war between the United States and Spain had not occurred? The War of 1898 changed completely Cuba's internal political evolution. US military engagement in Cuba defeated not only Spain, but also the nonviolent alternative to the ongoing civil war in Cuba. The Autonomist government was replaced by a US military government. The insurrectionists themselves felt betrayed and had to disarm under US pressure. Peace was enforced at a high cost in terms of national autonomy and injured patriotic pride. For example, the Cuban Republican Constitution of 1901, drafted by a group of former Autonomist and separatist statesmen, included the foreign-imposed Platt Amendment allowing US intervention in any future danger of instability in Cuba. However, the constitution also guaranteed basic civil rights, including universal male suffrage and the establishment of other national institutions of Cuban self-government.

After the withdrawal of US troops from Cuba in 1902, Cuba became an independent republic. No immediate resistance (violent or nonviolent) to the US presence developed in Cuba as the promises of military and political withdrawal were kept and important groundwork in infrastructure, sanitation,

and education was accomplished in 1898–1902. However, the political establishment in Cuba after 1902 was thoroughly divided, unable to reconcile feuding factions under a unified and legitimate authority as well as out of step with a resilient and autonomous civil society. The recourse to violence in Cuban domestic political affairs became ingrained in Cuban politics thereafter and evolved on the basis of a cult of nineteenth-century intransigent, separatist heroes. Reformist nonviolent leaders remained active in opposing postindependence constitutional and political transgressions, but were organizationally and politically sidelined. In the first decades after independence, political parties and groups appeared to be dominated by veteran separatist caudillos.

Conclusion

In the long struggle to reform and end the oppressive and divisive socioeconomic and political system of colonialism in Cuba, a distinct cultural and national identity developed in the island. The foundations of this rising collective consciousness were laid by successive waves of innovative nonviolent organizations and actions seeking recognition of autonomous, self-reliant associations and constitutional equality. Distinctly Cuban cultural associations and publications, and self-financed educational drives and liberal policy projects, bolstered growing civil resistance against old-fashioned colonial education and rigid monopolies and protectionism. The long-standing opposition to the slave trade and slavery through tenacious, nonviolent abolitionist campaigns obtained a belated but complete abolition of slavery. Together with the boost and transformation of preexisting free black and labor associations, nonviolent resistance contributed greatly to the integration of former slaves into the emerging Cuban civil society in search of greater racial equality and expanded democratic rights.

Radical nationalist historical accounts have predictably downplayed the important role of reformist nonviolent efforts to build a Cuban national consensus and generate pressure for change to solve Cuba's colonial issues. Cuba's liberal constitutional traditions and the nonviolent organizing and mobilization that accompanied them represented a rational and calculated stance against overwhelming military oppression and menacing foreign ambitions. The growth of autonomy of civil society was achieved in large part through constitutionalist-reformist, nonviolent struggles for basic civil rights, national education, electoral representation, and demands for further socioeconomic autonomy and political independence from Spain. The promising road toward racial and ethnic equality—a fundamental tenet in defeating colonialism and building a unified and more just Cuban nation—had also been opened through nonviolent campaigns and leadership. These were

all irreversible grassroots attainments that formed the foundation of the Cuban postindependence social and political fabric.

What were the lessons and legacies of the nonviolent civilian-based movements and struggles to achieve more democratic autonomy and independence in Cuba? While the strategic nonviolent course was remarkably consistent and fruitful in the long run, nonviolent tactics of defiant conflict, boycott, and civil disobedience did not develop to the level necessary to ultimately supersede the bold radical violent tactics and populist memory of radical revolutionaries. The pro-independence violent alternative developed mostly outside the island and captured the nationalistic narrative of heroism, courageous self-sacrifice, and racial and popular unrest. Violent militaristic separatism soon introduced undemocratic and dictatorial problems and opened the gates for a different kind of foreign intervention.

The gradual, but effective, nonviolent approach to national autonomy produced a stronger postindependence democratic base. Reinforced by evolving twentieth-century nonviolent strategies, the civilian leadership might have enjoyed better conditions within an effective system of checks and balances against undue military influence, violent political militancy, and looming foreign influence. Radical separatism and foreign intervention in 1898 prevented this from fully happening. The legacy of civilian-based nonviolent tradition, however, continued to live on despite end-of-the-century violence and subsequent political setbacks.

Although the Liberal Autonomist Party was dissolved after 1898, other political organizations carried on the struggle for upholding constitutional rights against despotic infringements. Civil society continued to enjoy rights of free association that facilitated the use of public spaces to resist political and governmental intervention. After 1902, civil society in Cuba developed further despite occasional efforts to exert militant or military pressure on its autonomy. The inherent legitimate and nonviolent nature of civil society made it an important bulwark and base for further development of a broad-based, pluralistic democracy. Important civic, nonviolent movements in the twentieth century developed on the basis of civil society and exercised considerable influence in the advancement of socioeconomic improvements and the opposition to dictatorships such as those of former generals Gerardo Machado (1925–1933) and Fulgencio Batista (1952–1958). However, shortly thereafter in 1960–1961, civil society was effectively banned with the imposition of radical revolutionary political imperatives. This drastic curtailment left practically no civilian space for legal dissidence and seemingly insurmountable obstacles for organized, civilian-based nonviolent protest and disobedience. Nonetheless, nonviolent resistance has persisted and its modern forms—such as those developed by the Proyecto Varela constitutional reform movement, and recent struggles for the liberation of political prisoners through hunger strikes and public demonstrations

by the Damas de Blanco movement—are heirs of the nonviolent strategies of the nineteenth century and continue the Cuban tradition of civic organizing for reform, rights, and an open society.

Notes

1. Jorge Mañach, *Martí, el apóstol* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1990 [1933]); John M. Kirk, *José Martí: Mentor of the Cuban Nation* (Tampa: University Presses of Florida, 1983); Philip S. Foner, *Antonio Maceo: The "Bronze Titan" of the Cuban Struggle for Independence* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977).

2. Gómez's correspondence cited in Marta Bizcarrondo and Antonio Elorza, *Cuba/España: El dilema autonomista, 1878–1898* (Madrid: Editorial Colibrí, 2001), 14.

3. The 1841 census recorded a population of 1,007,624, 42 percent white (divided between about 380,000 Cuban born and 38,000 Spanish born), 43 percent slaves, and 15 percent free persons of color. The original indigenous (Indian) population of the island dwindled radically and was absorbed by the white and black population after the Spanish conquest in the sixteenth century.

4. Mildred de la Torre, "Los nuevos autonomistas y la historia oficial" (May 2005), http://www.areitodigital.net/los_nuevos_autonomistas_y_la_his.htm, accessed November 12, 2012. For a more nuanced stance regarding nonviolent organizing and resistance in nineteenth-century Cuba, see María del Carmen Barcia et al., *La turbulencia del reposo: Cuba, 1878–1895* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1998), 109–111.

5. Allan J. Kuethe, *Cuba, 1753–1815: Crown, Military, and Society* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986).

6. Initially a spokesperson for the planter elite, Arango contributed to Cuba's dependence on slavery, although later he was to advocate its gradual abolition.

7. Manuel Moreno Fraginals and José Moreno Masó, *Guerra, migración y muerte: El ejército español en Cuba como vía migratoria* (Oviedo: Ediciones Júcar, 1993), 46–48.

8. The 1812 Cadiz Constitution was repealed in 1814, but returned to force in 1820–1823 and again in 1836–1837.

9. In 1837, the Spanish Cortes again voted to exclude colonial deputies to contain Cuban demands.

10. Larry Jensen, *Children of Colonial Despotism: Press, Politics, and Culture in Cuba, 1790–1840* (Tampa: University Presses of Florida, 1988), 17–18, 43–46, 61.

11. Alfonso Quiroz, "La reforma educacional en Cuba, 1898–1909: Cambio y continuidad," in *Culturas encontradas: Cuba y los Estados Unidos*, ed. J. Coatsworth and R. Hernández (Cambridge, MA: Rockefeller Center, Harvard University; Havana: Centro Juan Marinello, 2001), 113–125.

12. Joan Casanovas, *Bread or Bullets! Urban Labor and Spanish Colonialism in Cuba, 1850–1898* (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 1998), 76–77.

13. Alfonso Quiroz, "Loyalist Overkill: The Socioeconomic Costs of 'Repressing' the Separatist Insurrection in Cuba, 1868–1878," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 78, no. 2 (1998): 265–305.

14. Gerald E. Poyo, *"With All, and for the Good of All": The Emergence of Popular Nationalism in the Cuban Communities of the United States, 1848–1898* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989).

15. Earl R. Beck, "The Martínez Campos Government of 1879: Spain's Last Chance in Cuba," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 56, no. 2 (1976): 268–289.

16. For figures see Christopher Schmidt-Nowara, *Empire and Antislavery: Spain, Cuba, and Puerto Rico, 1833–1874* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999), 4.

17. Ibid.; Jim Powell, *Greatest Emancipations: How the West Abolished Slavery* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

18. J. C. M. Ogelsby, "The Cuban Autonomist Movement's Perception of Canada, 1865–1898: Its Implications," *The Americas* 48, no. 4 (1992): 445–461.

19. Aline Helg, *Our Rightful Share: The Afro-Cuban Struggle for Equality, 1886–1912* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 37–38.

20. Renate Simpson, *La educación superior en Cuba bajo el colonialismo español* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1984), 283–290. I thank Rafael Tarragó for alerting me about this case and reference.

21. Peter Ackerman and Jack DuVall, *A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 65.

22. Antoni Kapcia, "Lucha and Cubanía: The (Re)Construction of a Cuban Historical Identity Through the Idea of (Revolutionary) Struggle," in *Political Violence and the Construction of National Identity in Latin America*, ed. W. Fowler and P. Lambert (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 55–72. Compare to Rafael E. Tarragó, "'Rights Are Taken, Not Pleaded': José Martí and the Cult to the Recourse of Violence in Cuba," in *The Cuban Republic and José Martí: Reception and Use of a National Symbol*, ed. M. Font and A. Quiroz (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006), 53–70.

23. See, for example, Mildred de la Torre, *El autonomismo en Cuba 1878–1898* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales 1997), 199–205.

Appendix:

Conflict Summaries

This appendix has been compiled by the book's editor, Maciej Bartkowski, based on the information presented in the corresponding chapters of the book. Cases are arranged alphabetically. (Any omissions in the tables are either of the editor's own making or the information was not available.)

Key

Method and Type of Nonviolent Action

Nonviolent intervention

Disruptive

Creative

Noncooperation

Political

Economic

Social

Protest and persuasion

Length of the Campaign

Short: 1 day up to 4 weeks

Medium: 1 month up to 1 year

Long: More than 1 year

Level of Participation of People

Low: 1–100 people or less than 20 percent of the population

Medium: 100–1,000 people or between 20 percent and 50 percent of the population

High: More than 1,000 people or more than 50 percent of the population

Cuba

Main Campaigns	Action	Method/ <i>Type</i>	Date	Length	Level of Participation	Direct Impact	Long-Term/Overall Impact of Civil Resistance
Nonviolent social and political reformism	Formation of patriotic societies, including cultural, artistic, and ethnic associations	Nonviolent intervention/ <i>Creative</i>	1812–1814	Long	Low	Built a parallel social structure to colonial social establishment Cultivated a sense of the island’s economic and cultural identity and collective selfhood Advocated freedom of the press and association despite being subject to censorship	Constitutionalist-reformist, nonviolent struggle laid foundations for the growth of autonomous civil society and a stronger call for political independence from Spain Nonviolent campaigns for racial and ethnic equality were crucial for defeating colonialism and helped to build a racially diverse and more unified Cuban nation
	Issuing pamphlets and publishing periodicals and independent newspapers	Protest and persuasion	1820–1823	Long		Promotion of constitutionalist-reformist approach to political change Urged constitutional changes, including administrative autonomy Reaffirmation of Cuban cultural identity	
	Networks of Creole intellectuals were organized independently from authorities		1830s			Prosecutions and forced exiles followed	
	Spreading grassroots education with model schools and private high schools	Nonviolent intervention/ <i>Creative</i>	Mid-19th century	Long	Medium	Cuban textbooks were censored and the Spanish authorities strengthened their assimilation efforts to Spanish culture Literacy level increased and with it political and national awareness and identity of the Cuban population	
	Growth of mutualist movement with setting up and workings of mutual aid associations	Nonviolent intervention/ <i>Creative</i>	1860s	Long	High	Promoted self-financing of artist and worker groups Facilitated formation of first labor unions	
	Tobacco workers’ strike	Noncooperation/ <i>Economic</i>	1865	Short	High		
	Slave strike	Noncooperation/ <i>Economic</i>	1866	Short	High	Quashed by government troops	
	Formation of Masonic lodges and Cuban-dominated associations of leisure	Nonviolent intervention/ <i>Creative</i>	1860s			Reinforced ideas of political reform and autonomy	
	Plays and performances in theaters, cultural associations, and public spaces	Protest and persuasion	1860s	Long		Often through satire, Cubans voiced their opposition toward Spanish authorities and called for political freedoms	
	Mass patriotic gatherings at funerals	Protest and persuasion	1862 and 1866	Short	High	They symbolized people’s mobilization for rights of all Cubans	
	Student protested against captain-general’s abolition of doctoral degree at Havana University	Protest and persuasion	1870–1871	Short	Low		
	Students desecrated the tomb of a colonialist propagandist	Nonviolent intervention/ <i>Disruptive</i>	1871	Short		Eight students were tried and executed	
	Formation of the Liberal Autonomist Party	Nonviolent intervention/ <i>Creative</i>	1878–1895	Long		By the mid-1880s, the Liberal Autonomist Party became the largest political grouping in Cuba	
Nonviolent social and political reformism	Organizing economic movements that demanded fiscal liberalization and lowering of export taxes	Nonviolent intervention/ <i>Creative</i>	1883–1892	Long	Low	United liberal and conservative factions of Cuban producers to achieve national economic goals Failed to maintain a unified front to carry on economic boycott and increase their leverage over government economic policies Eventually, under the pressure of the Spanish authorities, the movement split and ended its activities	Constitutionalist-reformist, nonviolent struggle laid foundations for the growth of autonomous civil society and a stronger call for political independence from Spain Nonviolent campaigns for racial and ethnic equality were crucial for defeating colonialism and helped to build a racially diverse and more unified Cuban nation
	Masonic lodges unified in the Grand Lodge of the Island of Cuba	Nonviolent intervention/ <i>Creative</i>	1890s	Long	High		
	Labor unions grew in membership and formed leagues	Nonviolent intervention/ <i>Creative</i>	1890s	Long	High	Unions became increasingly political, demanding the right to organize, freely associate, and bargain salaries	
	Black societies led petitions and lawsuits to eradicate segregation and racism	Protest and persuasion	1890s	Long	High	Legal victories bolstered constitutional and civil rights activists	
	Student strike	Noncooperation/ <i>Social</i>	March 1892	Short	High	Granting of doctoral degrees at Havana University was restored	