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Exit, Voice, and the Lessons from the Cuban Case.
Conceptual Notes on the Interaction of
Emigration and Political Transformation

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Abstract

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Conceptual Notes on the Interaction of Emigration and Political Transformation

This paper applies Albert O. Hirschman's famous scheme on the interaction of exit and voice to the case of emigration in Cuba since the 1959 Revolution, particularly contrasting the Cuban experience during the crisis since 1989 with that of the demise of the GDR. If emigration of the Revolution's opponents has effectively served as an efficient political escape-valve (exit undermining voice), the closer empirical analysis provides important additional insight, showing that the crucial question about exit is less how many emigrate, but much more the social and political modalities under which they do so. Moreover, we expand the Hirschmanian model in a decisive way by moving it beyond the nation-state framework, arguing that emigration does not translate merely in a loss of domestic voice, but that from it also an internationalized voice with long-term political consequences can emerge. Similarly, the recent Cuban experience takes us to challenge the notion of emigration as a dichotomous "either you leave or you don't" issue by incorporating migration theory approaches that emphasize the importance of transnational social ties. Thus, the paper intends to show both: The new insights the Hirschmanian concept can bring provide for scholars of emigration and political transformation; and the need to refine its analytical tools and to combine it with other approaches.

Resumen

Salida, voz y las lecciones del caso cubano.

Notas conceptuales acerca del nexo entre emigración y transformación política

El artículo aplica el famoso esquema de Albert O. Hirschman sobre la interacción de "salida" y "voz" al caso de la emigración cubana desde la Revolución de 1959, en particular contrastando la experiencia cubana de la crisis después de 1989 con la del derrumbe de la RDA. Si la emigración de los opositores a la Revolución efectivamente sirvió como una política de válvula de escape (la salida reprimiendo la voz), un análisis empírico más profundo revela importantes explicaciones adicionales. Así demuestra que la cuestión crucial acerca de "salida" es menos cuánto emigran, sino bajo qué modalidades políticas y sociales lo hacen. Además, expandimos el concepto Hirschmaniano de forma decisiva en transferirlo más allá del marco estado-nación. Proponemos que emigración no sólo se traduce en la pérdida de voz doméstica, si non que de ella también puede emerger una voz internacionalizada con consecuencias políticas de largo plazo. De forma similar, la reciente experiencia cubana nos lleva a desafiar la noción de "salida" como un asunto dicótomo ("o te vas o te quedas"); a su vez introducimos enfoques de teoría de la migración que enfatizan la creciente importancia de lazos sociales trasnacionales. Así, el artículo intenta enseñar tanto la utilidad de las categorías según Hirschman para entender el nexo entre emigración y transformación política, como la necesidad de seguir refinando sus instrumentos y de combinarlos con otros enfoques.

EXIT, VOICE, AND THE LESSONS FROM THE CUBAN CASE.
CONCEPTUAL NOTES ON THE INTERACTION OF EMIGRATION AND POLITICAL
TRANSFORMATION[*]

1. Introduction

What effect does emigration have on the political dynamics of the country of origin? When does emigration induce the articulation of protest, when does it stabilize political rule? To address these questions, we aim to revitalize a conceptual instrument the creative mind of Albert O. Hirschman has put in the tool-kit of social science scholars: his model on the interaction of exit, voice and loyalty (Hirschman 1970). If Hirschman's initial formulation of the concept gave rise to a wealth of research in diverse fields of economic, social and behavioral sciences,[1] one field in which it proved particularly fruitful were issues of spatial mobility, ranging from housing and urban development to international migration.[2]

Regarding the political implications of emigration for the country of origin Hirschman himself presented a remarkable empirical study using his categories to analyze the demise of the German Democratic Republic (Hirschman 1993). This case invites comparison with the contrasting experience of Cuba after 1989, in which emigration indubitably played a key political role. However, while there has been a large turnout of studies on the GDR using Hirschman's organizational framework,[3] so far the Cuban case has only exceptionally been explored in the light of these categories,[4] and we argue, important aspects have not yet been addressed. In the following analysis we will provide important clues on how the different interplay between "exit"

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[1]   On a number of occasions Hirschman himself presented overviews of "the expanding sphere of influence" that his concept rapidly became, revising the growing exit and voice literature and refining his own concepts (Hirschman 1981b; 1981a; 1981c; 1981d; 1986). For a more recent survey, see Dowding et al. (2000) who provided a comprehensive review of the current state of 'exit, voice and loyalty' in 2000, aimed at critically assessing and revitalizing the concept for contemporary research.

[2]   See e. g. Kuhnle (1981), Feinstein/Susan (1980), MacDonald (1963), Laponce (1974); Lee (1992); O'Donnell (1986); see also Hirschman (1986: 89-96; 1981c; 1981b).

[3]   E.g. Pollack (1990), Offe (1994), Brubaker (1990), Torpey (1995), to cite just some. It is telling that in 1991, the German Research Foundation (DFG) officially listed the application of the exit and voice approach to the analysis of the defunct GDR in its call for research proposals eligible for its grants, as Hirschman (1993: 175) recounts.

[4]   Hirschman himself makes brief mention to the Cuban case in Hirschman (1986: 91) and in Hirschman (1981b: 227-28); of the scholars who have applied the exit and voice model to the Cuban case particular mention deserve Colomer (2000) and Pedraza (2002); their contributions will be discussed later in this paper.

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and "voice" in both the Cuban and the GDR cases crucially contributed to the contrasting political outcomes: the collapse of the system in one, regime stability in spite of severe crisis in the other.

Moving beyond the basic see-saw mechanism postulated by Hirschman (1970) according to which the availability of exit options (emigration) undermines voice (the articulation of public protest), we argue that a closer analysis of the *modalities* of exit and voice opens up insights which go well beyond of what can be considered a standard interpretation of the Cuban case: that the emigration of the Revolution's opponents served as an efficient political escape-valve for the Castro government.

If the political impact of voice is not a mere function of the number of protesters,[5] we argue that also regarding exit the crucial question is less how many emigrate, but much more under what social and political circumstances they do so. Particularly, the empirical study shows the importance of whether the government of the country of origin maintains effective forms of control over emigration, as the Cuban government managed to do, or not, as in the East German case.

At the same time the study of the Cuban case leads us to a decisive expansion of the Hirschmanian model by overcoming its conception of the nation-state as a quasi-closed unit. We will argue that emigration does not translate merely in a *loss* of domestic voice, but that it can also lead to the emergence of an externalized and internationalized voice, as the strong political role played by the Cuban emigrant community in the USA demonstrates. In this line we will also challenge the notion of emigration being a clear-cut dichotomous "either you leave or you don't" issue by incorporating migration theory approaches that emphasize the importance of emigrants' ties to their place of origin and the emergence of transnational communities (Pries 1999; Portes et al. 1999) – which in the Cuban case find their most striking expression in the emigrants'

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5   Against the mechanistic notion that the effectiveness of mass political action is a matter of sheer "power in numbers", as the title of De Nardo (1985) postulates, the study of Lohmann (1994) on the dynamics of informational cascades in the Monday Demonstrations in Leipzig convincingly argues that not size, but the political momentum and context were crucial for the great impact they had in the final days of the GDR in 1989 – whereas at a later stage, while being much more numerous, their political role greatly decreased.

remittances which played a key role in the Communist government's economic survival strategy of the 1990s.

The article unfolds as follows. In the first section we will sketch the categories and functioning of the Hirschmanian concept as formulated in 1970, and then as modified in its application to the GDR – and we will formulate a few caveats on what we will *not* do in this paper. In section 2 we will then turn to the Cuban case, interpreting the different waves of Cuban emigration to the United States since 1959 in what in Hirschmanian terminology we can call the "Cuban safety valve theory". In the following sections we present a more detailed analysis of the Cuban case. We will focus on the modalities of exit and their implications, particularly on the question of the state maintaining control over emigration or not (section 3) and on the turn from private emigration into a public affair (section 4). In the following sections we will argue for moving beyond the nation-state framework, first analyzing exit as leading to an internationalization of voice (section 5), and second challenging the notion of emigration as a dichotomous exit function (section 6). The following conclusions are essentially twofold: For one, we argue that the Hirschmanian concept significantly enhances our understanding of the political implications of emigration and the specific ways in which this interaction marks Cuban politics. Second, the empirical analysis has led us to sharpen the analytical instruments applied, arguing for important expansions and modifications of the Hirschmanian concept which will be of great relevance to social science scholars studying the interaction of emigration and political transformation.

2. Hirschman's Exit and Voice Model and its Application to Emigration

While Hirschman's exit and voice model has been intensively applied to migration issues, its original design is much broader, claiming validity as much for economic market behavior as for organizations, social institutions or national governments (Hirschman 1970). Its general model is an essentially dualist structure of two contrasting reactions of consumers, members, or citizens to what they sense as a decline in the provision of services or goods. "Exit" typically is the action of changing to buy a product from a competing firm, of leaving an organization, or, in the case of nations, the decision of a number of its citizens to emigrate. "Voice" typically is the act of complaining or protesting, with the intention of achieving by this a change in the behavior of the firm, organization or government, which leads to a recuperation of the quality of the product or

service. The core idea of the concept is its postulation of an essentially "hydraulic relation" or "seesaw pattern": the easier available the exit option, the less likely is voice, up to the point that "the presence of the exit alternative can (...) atrophy the development of the art of voice" (Hirschman 1970: 43).

In addition, Hirschman introduces a third category, loyalty, which he includes in the very title of his 1970 book. Loyalty, Hirschman argues, essentially delays exit (as well as voice) when there is a decline in the performance of an organization to which one belonged or felt particularly attached to. This third category, however, never received the same prominence as exit and voice and tended to be somewhat marginalized in the academic career of the concept.[6]

When applying his general thesis of exit undermining voice to the nexus of emigration and political protest, he cites as the most prominent example the "Turner thesis" which had explained the absence of a strong workers' movement in the United States by the existence of the "open frontier" – the possibility, real or imagined, of exiting by "going West" (Hirschman 1970: 106-19; Turner 1920). Taking up Turner's "labor safety valve" theory, in a later essay Hirschman argued that similarly we should speak of a "European safety valve theory", with the massive overseas emigration from Europe in the 19th and early 20th century being the functional equivalent to the "open frontier", greatly reducing the extent of labor militancy and social conflict at home (Hirschman 1981b: 225-26).

Latin America served Hirschman as an exemplary illustration in another aspect. Referring to the continent's tradition of political exile, he writes: "Latin American powerholders have long encouraged their political enemies and potential critics to remove themselves from the scene through voluntary exile. The right of asylum, so generously practiced by all Latin American republics, could almost be considered as a 'conspiracy in restraint of voice'" (Hirschman 1970: 60f.)

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[6]   It is telling that the German translation of Hirschman's 1970 work already omits "loyalty" from the book's title, reducing it to exit and voice ("Abwanderung und Widerspruch"; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr 1974). Hirschman himself follows the concentration on the two categories of exit and voice in the titles of his 1986 and 1992 articles.

Hirschman expanded on the use of exit and voice for the case of international migration in a later essay noting that "the state has one option that is not available to other organizations and to firms: by virtue of its territorial authority and by using its monopoly of force, it can lock up its members within its own borders" (Hirschman 1986: 93). More than two decades after his 1970 book, Hirschman took up the exit and voice scheme in an award-winning article analyzing the fate of a state, who had made use of this option in particularly spectacular form, the German Democratic Republic (Hirschman 1993).[7] After long years in which the Wall greatly impeded the exit option for dissatisfied GDR citizens, this changed dramatically when in mid-1989 emigration via Hungary and Czechoslovakia became possible due to the political upheavals in these countries. However, this increase in the availability of the exit option did not undermine the voice option, but quite to the contrary: In the GDR, it was precisely the beginning of large-scale emigration that led to large-scale protest. Hirschman's reading of the political dynamics of the GDR's collapse leads the author to modify the basic model of the interplay of exit and voice; in this case – Hirschman, concludes – exit and voice did not work against each other but rather as a "tandem" (Hirschman 1993: 177) or as "confederates" (Hirschman 1993: 186), reinforcing one another.

We will return to this analysis in more detail in the following sections which analyze the Cuban case in contrast to the GDR experience. However, before we proceed to the empirical study, a caveat is necessary on what this study will not be about. If this paper explores the interplay of emigration and political protest in the country of origin, we should briefly recall the much broader conceptualization of both, exit and voice, in Hirschman's original approach. According to this, voice "can be graduated, all the way from faint grumbling to violent protest" (Hirschman 1970: 16).[8] Understood in these terms, voice would not be limited to – taking the Cuban case – to events like the open riots on August 5, 1994, but would have to take into account dimensions such as the reform debate in the academic establishment of the mid-1990s (Hoffmann 1996) or –

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[7] This article was first published in German as "Abwanderung, Widerspruch und das Schicksal der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik" in 1992, winning that year's Thyssen Foundation prize for the best article published by a German-language social science journal.

[8] Hirschman explicitly sees such a graduated approach applying also to state-socialist regimes when he refers as an example for voice to "the many complaints about quality and service that have been prominently published for years in the Soviet press" (Hirschman 1970: 34).

since voice often is delegated through spokespersons or intermediary structures (Bourdieu 1986: 301) – the interaction between leaders and the membership at large in the official mass organizations or at the work-place.[9] In addition, O'Donnell (1986) introduced the distinction between "vertical voice", which is addressed to the "top", from customers to managers or from citizens to the government, and "horizontal voice": talking to one's peers, be it consumers, citizens, friends, neighbors or colleagues, arguing that horizontal voice is a necessary pre-condition for the formation of collective identity and the formulation of collective vertical voice. In this sense, objects of fruitful analysis would be as much the analysis of cultural manifestations as changes in every-day discourse amongst families and friends or the political jokes circulating in the streets.[10] Research in this line could take up yet another category O'Donnell added to Hirschman's scheme: To the degree the state represses open horizontal voice, O'Donnell argues the relevance of a particular low-profile type of horizontal voice he termed "oblique voice", often non-verbal signals of common identity intended to be understood only by "others like me", but not to be perceived by the agents of the state (O'Donnell 1986: 261). Finally, as Dowding et al. (Dowding et al. 2000: 477-78) underscore, voice not necessarily has to contradict loyalty or signal disapproval but it can also be raised in order to defend or promote an organization's goals or a government's policies.

Similarly to the category of voice, also exit can refer to a wide spectrum of activities and behavior, not only to emigration. A striking characteristic of Cuban society since 1989 has been an increasing passivity in regard to the official organizations and institutions and a stunning come-back of the importance of family relations and religious structures of all sorts.[11] With

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[9]   For an illustrative study of the Federation of Cuban Women and of the official Trade Unions, both squeezed in between their function as "transmission belts" responding to the Revolution's leadership and as social organizations that should articulate the interests of their members, see Pérez-Stable (1993).

[10]   The "classic" on the role of political jokes in Cuba is "Indagación del choteo" by Jorge Mañach (1928), which sees this type of humor rather as a form of escapism than as an articulation of voice; in contrast, in a remarkable essay on the culture of jokes in state-socialist countries, the Hungarian writer György Dalos (1993), while conceding that these jokes also had the function to compensate for the everyday disobedience, emphasizes their "subversive role" as – put in Hirschman's terms – an articulation of "voice" of those who do not have voice in official media.

[11]   On Cuban every-day life and "every-day religiousness" in the crisis since 1989 see Kummels (1995; 2004).

Hirschman, these developments certainly can be understood as an at least partial exit from the structures established by party and state. With O'Donnell (1986) we may add: a partial "exiting" from vertical structures, and increased articulation of horizontal "voice".

Finally, similar problems also emerge from the third category, loyalty, which from the outset had been "the most criticized concept in Hirschman's framework", as Dowding et al. (Dowding et al. 2000: 476) resume. Loyalty, while more than an "ad hoc equation filler", as (Barry 1974) had polemicized, indeed is a very broad category, which encompasses a spectrum ranging from unconditional identification and enthusiastic support to passive acceptance, inertia or even submissive silence – a range of attitudes that social science scholars should be keen to differentiate carefully.[12]

However, if indeed the whole range of possible dimensions of *exit* and *voice* and of third or fourth categories are taken into consideration, this makes it increasingly difficult to operationalize the categories; moreover, the more complex the categories are made, the more the possibility to postulate mechanisms of the type "the more exit the less voice" will tend to evaporate. To cite Hirschman(1981c: 258): "Fortunately, the model does not explain everything."

In the following our aim is to analyze the interplay of emigration and political dynamics, not to undertake an all-encompassing analysis of Cuba's social and political dynamics by „so primitive a model" (Hirschman 1993: 176). Therefore, just as Hirschman did for the case of the GDR, we will work with the narrow categories of exit as emigration, and voice as public protest against government actions, understanding this as one piece in the larger puzzle – albeit an essential one, as we will argue.

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[12] A number of authors have called for a modification of this category or for the introduction of an additional one. Rusbult et al. (1982) introduced "neglect" as a fourth category; Keczkes (1994) argues for "passivity"; Dowding et al (2000: 43) suggest that, instead of "loyalty", "non-exit" and "silence" should be considered as the logical complements to exit and voice. For the Cuban case, Pedraza (2002: 252)joined in on advocating the concept of "neglect".

3. Emigration and Revolution: The "Cuban safety valve theory"

Cuba seems particularly suited for Hirschman's concept as ever since the Revolution in 1959 emigration has been a central social and political issue with far-reaching consequences. With the exodus of the former elites in the early years, and later, of dissatisfied people from diverse social backgrounds, over the years close to a million Cubans emigrated to the United States, forming not only a particularly successful immigrant community but also a particularly politicized "exile" community.[13]

The interplay of exit and voice in the wake of the Revolution indeed very plausibly follows Hirschman's assumption of a see-saw pattern between both. In what we could call "the Cuban safety valve theory", the profound socio-economic transformation the Revolution brought to the island could be carried out with such a relatively low degree of open conflict only because so many of those whose political, economic and social interests were most affected made use of an easily available exit option, leaving for exile in the USA. While this eased domestic pressures, one consequence was that the issue of emigration became an essential part – a battlefield, the Cuban government would say – of U.S.-Cuban bilateral relations.[14]

While never embarking on an actual analysis of the Cuban case, Hirschman saw the Castro government as a prime example of a state deliberately using emigration as a "management tool"

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[13]   E. g. Portes (2003), Angeles Torres (1999), Portes/Stepick (1993), Rieff (1995), Hoffmann (2002).

[14]   Josep M. Colomer (2000) focuses on this aspect of Cuban emigration when he uses Hirschman's exit and voice framework in a game-theoretic model analyzing the interaction of both, the Cuban and the U.S. governments. Colomer parts from the assumption that there are only two alternatives for Cuban citizens, the present system and "a democratic regime with a capitalist economy such as the one represented by the USA" (Colomer 2000: 424). While this already is debatable, the author enters in an irreparable logical mistake which distorts the entire structure of his arguments when he equates a type of regime "as represented by the USA" with "the USA" as such. On these grounds he comes to define voice as "an action against the existing state" and exit as "an action in favor of the alternative", as if emigrating to the United States and acting in favor of bringing about a U.S. style democracy in Cuba were the same thing. On this faulty equation of "regime change = USA" the author also builds his introduction of "hostility" as a fourth category besides exit, voice, and loyalty, defining hostility as "an action against the alternative (manifested in anti-American and anti-imperialist sentiments)" (Colomer 2000: 424) – as if the question of under what regime Cubans desire to live were equivalent to the question of how they feel about the USA.

from the top: "At times, the voice-weakening effect of exit is consciously utilized by the authorities: permitting, favoring, or even ordering the exit of enemies or dissidents has long been one – comparatively civilized – means for autocratic rulers to rid themselves of their critics, a practice revived on large scale by Castro's Cuba" (Hirschman 1986: 91).[15]

The contrast between Cuba and the GDR could hardly be more striking: At the very same time the leaders of the German Democratic Republic opted for the construction of the Wall in 1961, not only closing the exit option but doing so in an extremely costly way (materially as well as symbolically), the Cuban leadership was eager to hold the exit option wide open.

Graphic 1 shows four clearly distinguishable peaks, corresponding to four different waves of emigration.[16] In a first wave between 1959 and 1962 no less than 230,000 Cubans, mostly from the upper and middle classes, left the island by plane or boat. The second wave between 1965 and 1973 brought another 330,000 Cubans to the United States, again mostly from the upper and middle classes, leaving their country by an airlift established between Cuba and the USA. It is worth noting that it was the U.S. government, not the Cuban leadership that closed this emigration arrangement in 1973.

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[15] In another essay Hirschman (1981b: 227) underscores this by introducing a third variable, arguing that exit not only has to be seen as an alternative to voice but, from the state's point of view, also as an alternative to repression.

[16] For a brief historic overview over Cuban emigration to the USA see Lisandro Pérez (1999), for a concise panorama of the recent Cuban emigration Max J. Castro (2002); for a perspective from scholars from the island, see Aja Díaz (2000) and Rodríguez Chávez (1997), the latter including a useful annex with numerous official documents on U.S.-Cuban migration.

Graphic 1: Cuban emigration to the USA, 1959-2000
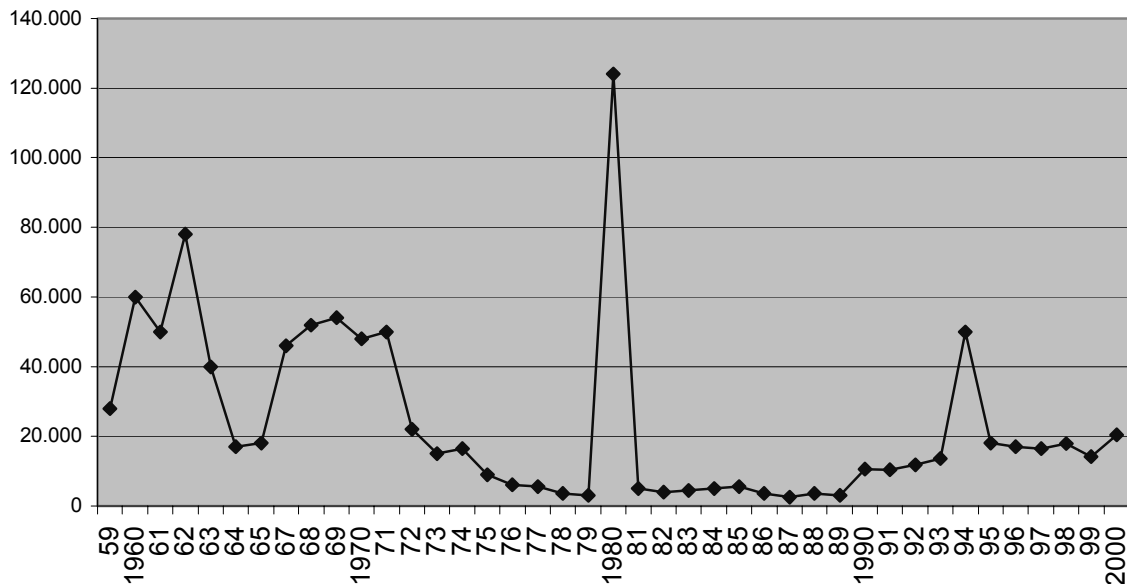
Sources: For 1959-1989: Pérez, Lisandro (1999: 20); for 1990-2000: U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, cited by Max J. Castro (2002)

Note: Years refer to legalization in the USA, except for the mid-1990s where this would lead to a distorted picture, since in the wake of the *balsero* crisis of 1994 thousands of emigrants were temporarily interned in the U.S. base of Guantánamo, formally entering the United States only in the following years. The figures for 1994-1997 therefore are estimates made to adjust the emigration flow to its actual 1994 peak.

If emigration numbers fell to rather low levels after 1973, the accumulation of emigration pressure became evident in 1980, when more than 15,000 Cubans stormed the grounds of the Peruvian embassy hoping to be able to leave the country this way. In the face of this crisis the Cuban government returned to the exit option without waiting for the U.S. government to resume a migration accord but by unilaterally opening the port of Mariel for mass emigration by boat, resulting in the third emigration peak with more than 120,000 Cubans leaving the island within five months. This operation was not accorded with U.S. authorities, but instead the Cuban government called on the emigrants in South Florida to evacuate their relatives; they did so in great numbers, providing the transportation for this unique boat-lift and *de facto* cooperating with the Cuban government in this mass exodus against the will of the U.S. government.

The fourth wave of Cuban emigration to the USA is associated with the profound economic and social crisis after 1989,[17] which - combined with the Cuban leadership's reluctance to political change – resulted in steadily mounting emigration pressures. With the numbers of the so-called *balseros* (from *balsa* = raft) who tried to reach U.S. shores on makeshift-rafts steadily rising in the early 1990s, the Cuban government once again opted for a spectacular opening of the flood-gates. In August 1994 Fidel Castro declared the maritime borders open for anyone leaving the island on his own means. In the following weeks more than 30,000 Cuban rafters left the island, most of them being picked up by the U.S. Coast Guard and transferred to refugee camps in the U.S. base of Guantánamo, from where they were gradually admitted to the United States in the following years.

Not surprisingly, also the emigration of the 1990s and the 1994 *balseros* crisis in particular can be read in the Hirschmanian sense as a political escape-valve, with exit undermining voice. If this can be considered the exit and voice "standard interpretation", there are a number of important aspects which have not yet been addressed by Hirschman and other scholars using his categories, and which, in my opinion, are key to adequately understanding the dynamics of the interaction of emigration and political transformation in Cuba. Therefore, in the following section we will take a closer look on the modalities and implications of voice and exit in Cuba since 1989, sharpened by the comparison with the contrasting case of the GDR.

4. A Closer Look at the Modalities of Exit: Who is in Control?

In the 1990s, here, as in earlier periods, the Cuban government showed itself quite favorable to the exit option via emigration. As we will argue, the effort of the Cuban government centered on maintaining control over emigration and defining its modalities, not on limiting its numbers. While there were certain restrictions on emigration (particularly in regard to children, for "sensitive" professional groups and for medium-to-high ranking officials), by far the bigger obstacles came from the United States, the number one destiny for Cubans leaving the island ever

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[17]   See CEPAL (1997), Eckstein (1994), Domínguez (2003), Pastor (1998), Hoffmann (2001), Dilla (2000), Carranza Valdés (1995), Dirmoser (1997), Monreal (2002).

since the 19th century. If Washington had adopted an "open arms" policy towards Cuban immigrants after 1959 this had had been buried in the 1980 Mariel crisis. It gave way to a highly ambivalent and often outright contradictory attitude, that still marks U.S. policy today, and which cristallyzes in two different terms: On the one hand, in line with the traditional Cold War perspective, Cubans are seen as "refugees" that can not be sent back to the "totalitarian dictatorship" in their home country; on the other hand, as "immigrants", they are seen as part of the inflow of poor people from the South, which have to be kept at bay by restrictive laws and border patrols.

In the early 1990s, the restrictive side was shown in the United States' reluctance to grant immigration visas to Cubans. While in a 1984 migration accord with Cuba the USA had declared that it would grant "up to 20,000" immigration visas annually, figures remained very much below this. Although demand was huge, between 1990 and 1994 an average of less than 1,000 immigration visas annually were granted by the U.S. Interests Section in Cuba (see graphic 2). As a consequence, of the 47.500 Cubans who emigrated to the USA between 1990 and 1993, less than 11 % did so with a legitimate immigration visa.[18] Almost twice that number, 20.6%, was admitted from the island with a refugee visa, issued under a broad interpretation of the category of former political prisoners and their families. Another 16.9% entered the United States through third countries under the protection of the so-called "Exodus" Program, which had been organized by the Cuban exile's most potent lobby organization, the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF), in order to help emigrated Cubans settle in the United States.

More than half of the Cuban immigrants, however, came without the required legal documents. About 31.7% entered with visitors' visas, which they overstayed, and an increasing number of Cubans – 20.1% for the whole period – entered the United States as what became the emblematic form of Cuban emigration in the first half of the 1990s: as *balseros* (from *balsa* = raft) who tried to reach U.S. shores on makeshift-rafts, often risking their lives in the 90-mile passage. While leaving the island illegally, once they escaped the Cuban border patrols and made it through wind and waves, these *balseros* fell as much as those Cubans overstaying their visitors' visa under the so-called "Cuban Adjustment Act" of 1966 which provides for a special procedure under which

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[18] For this and the following data: Rodríguez Chávez (1997: 93), who draws on official data from Cuban and U.S. authorities (see also graphic 2.)

all Cuban nationals or citizens who reach the USA almost automatically obtain lawful permanent residence (U.S. Congress 1966).

Graphic 2: Cuban Immigration to the USA 1990-1993 by form of arrival
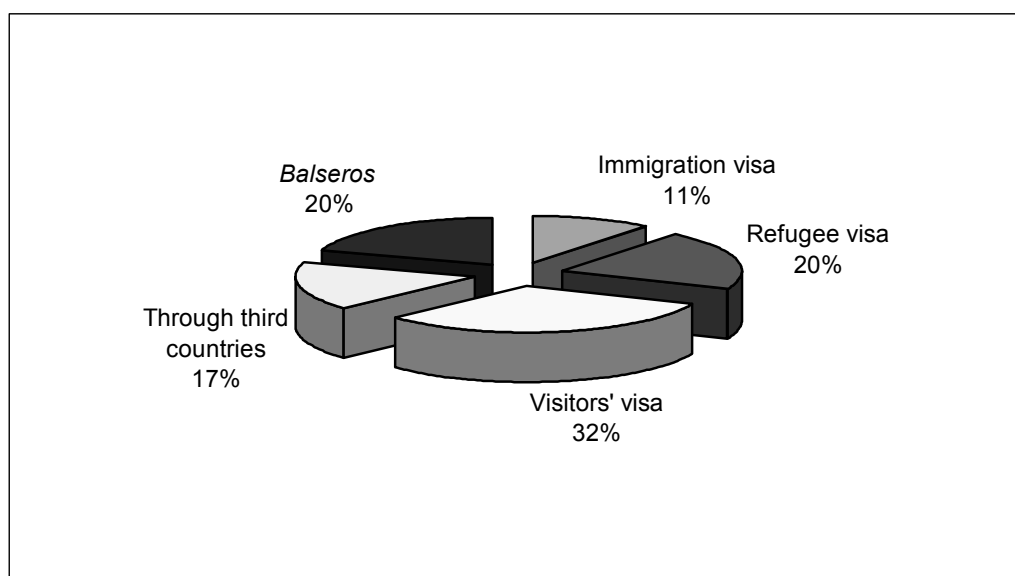
Source: Rodríguez Chávez 1997: 93

For media worldwide the *balseros* on their improvised rafts struggling to survive on open sea became the landmark illustration of the desperate living conditions Cubans were facing on the island. No doubt, for Washington the *balseros* were a boon in the PR side of the U.S.-Cuban conflict. For Cuba, they were a major problem not only because of the negative image they created, but more importantly still because this type of emigration evaded government control and thus created a precedent of authority loss the Castro government was eager to stop. In the first half of the 1990s, it became a major task of the Cuban border guard to intercept *balseros*. Nevertheless, their numbers were steadily rising. According to official data they increased from 2,000 intents in 1990 to 15,000 in the first 7 months of 1994 alone (of which between one third and one fourth escaped the patrols and made it to the United States).

Graphic 3: U.S. Immigration Visas for Cubans and Number of Cuban Balseros, intercepted and successful (1990-1994)[19]

Year	U.S. Immigration Visas issued to Cubans	Balseros intercepted by Cuban border guard	Balseros that reached the USA
1990	1,098	1,593	467
1991	1,376	6,596	1,997
1992	910	7,073	2,511
1993	964	11,564	4,208
1994	544	10,975*	4,092*
Total 1990-1994	4,892	37,801**	13,275**

* only Jan - July 1994

** Jan 1990 – July 1994

Sources: For U.S. Immigration Visas: Data by Masud-Piloto 1996, p. 135, cited in Max Castro (2002: 8).
for data on *balseros*: Fidel Castro, in: Granma Internacional, 7 Sept 1994: 6

Uncontrolled exit did play a crucial role in sparking what was the strongest articulation of oppositional voice in many years: It were precisely incidents near Havana's port related to acts of illegal emigration which led to the open riots on August 5, 1994, in which hundreds of mostly young Cubans gathered on the *malecón*, Havana's broad coastline avenue, chanting anti-

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[19]   The *balseros* data lack a third category, that of those who died in the intent. The author personally has witnessed a dead *balsero* being washed ashore in 1994, and there is no reason to doubt that numerous others shared his fate. However, there are no formal data available, and estimates not only differ wildly, but they also have been subject to politically interested manipulation, and scholars have not been immune to this. For instance Ackerman (1994: 5) writes that "only one in four rafters survives the trip", citing as proof the Fidel Castro speech in which he gives precisely the data presented in the above graphic. According to Castro's speech, however, the one-out-of-four ratio refers to those making it to the USA, while the other three-out-of-four were intercepted and returned to Cuba – which is something different than "not surviving the trip".

government slogans and breaking the windows of dollar shops and tourist hotels. This outbreak of voice was resolutely subdued, dispersed within a few hours without bloodshed, with the evening news already being able to show Fidel Castro at the helm of the government's counter-mobilization. It was only after this resounding reaffirmation of the state's willingness and capacity to repress voice that the government turned to what seemed a daring move: to declare the borders open for a mass exodus of *balseros*. The tense weeks of the *balsero* crisis showed the country's profound social crisis, but in this order of events they did not ignite public protest.

Opening the borders for the *balseros* implied high political costs for the Cuban government in terms of image loss, as much internationally as domestically. The compensation for this was not only the escape-valve function of emigration, as a first interpretation along Hirschmanian lines would suggest; instead, we argue, an additional and probably more important objective was to force Washington to the negotiating table in order to regain control over emigration by changing the overall conditions for illegal Cuban emigration to the USA.

In fact, in the United States, the arrival of hundreds of Cuban boat people daily had an immediate political impact. While there was broad public outrage against the Castro government, at the same time the U.S. government came under strong pressure to stop this mass inflow of poor Cubans. Soon, U.S. Coast Guard ships began to patrol the Florida Straits to pick up the *balseros* at sea. Instead of bringing them to Florida, where public opinion showed increasing uneasiness (to say the least) about receiving the Cuban boat people, thousands of *balseros* were brought to the U.S. base of Guantánamo Bay, accommodated in rapidly built refugee camps and left in a legal limbo.

Parallel to this, the U.S. administration began secret negotiations with the Cuban government on how to end the seemingly interminable exodus of rafters from the island. In September 1994, a new migration accord was reached which marked a major turning-point in two regards: For one, the U.S. government accepted the commitment to issue a *minimum* of 20,000 immigration visas per year to Cubans (instead of the previous "up to 20,000" which allowed to issue much less); and second, it declared that from now on boat people picked up at sea would not be given entry to

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the United States.[20] The ink on the September 1994 accord was not yet dry, when the Castro government declared the maritime borders once again closed for any undocumented emigration.

For the Cuban government the *balsero* crisis was a perhaps risky, but eventually highly successful gamble. It obtained a major change in U.S. policy towards the island from what prior to the crisis had seemed a very poor bargaining position. For the argument made in this text it is important to underscore, that the issue fought about was less the "how many" of the exit option, but rather the "how": Whether emigration would take place in the form of rafts or speed-boats that illegally leave the island, eroding government authority by violating border statutes; or whether it would pass through the formal procedures established by the Cuban authorities and the country's bilateral migration accords. The 1994 and 1995 migration accords went a long step toward the latter. Even though the accords maintain the privileges of the Cuban Adjustment Act for those Cubans who are not intercepted at sea and do reach the U.S. territory (the so-called wet-foot / dry foot-policy), this change greatly decreases the likelihood of successfully emigrating the *balsero* way. The result was a massive decline in the number of Cubans leaving illegally the island on boats or rafts in the ten years since the 1994 *balsero* crisis.[21]

The comparison with the course of events is illuminating. When Hungary started to dismantle the barbed wire fence on its frontier to Austria on May 2, 1989, this was the kick-off for a steadily growing exodus from the GDR to West Germany through third countries. The emergence of this - still illegal and rather clandestine - possibility mobilized citizens in the GDR to publicly raise their voice to demand the right to emigrate legally, the demonstrations of the so-called "*Ausreiser*" (literally: "outward-bound travelers"). It was this growing number of emigrants and

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[20] The September 1994 document speaks of transferring balseros picked up at sea to refugee installations outside of the United States (e.g. the U.S. base of Guantánamo Bay). However, in a follow-up agreement on May 2, 1995, this was changed into sending them back to Cuba (with the Cuban authorities guaranteeing that they would suffer no reprisals). The refugees transferred to the U.S. base at Guantánamo during the 1994 *balsero* crisis were gradually admitted to the United States in the following years as part of the 20,000 contingent of legal Cuban immigrants (also see note to graphic 3).

[21] In addition to the U.S. authorities adopting tougher measures against Cuban refugees who used open force to emigrate, such as hijackers of boats or planes, ten years after the 1994 *balsero* crisis uncontrolled exit has become much less of a problem for the Cuban government than at the beginning of the 1990s.

the emerging articulation of pro-exit voice that in turn led to the mobilization of pro-change voice by the so-called "*Bleiber*" ("those staying"), who threw in their loyalty to their place of home to demand political change from the authorities. However, contrary to the rapid repression of the 5 August 1994 riots in Havana, in the GDR the question of repressing the Monday demonstrations in Leipzig led to severe friction in the governing elite, highlighted by the forced resignation of Honecker (Hertle/Stephan 1997: 49-58). The result was comparatively timid repression and eventually tolerance towards the demonstrations.

However, not only in the reaction to voice but also in the conditions of exit the contrast is crucial. Whereas in the opening of the borders in August 1994 it was the Cuban government that held the exit option wide open (and which closed it again when convenient), in the GDR the exit option was opened up by the former "brother states" of Hungary and Czechoslovakia when they broke files and let East German citizens travel to the West through their territory. As Hirschman reminds us the GDR more than any other state had turned the closing of the exit option into its martial symbol of authority by building the Wall in 1961: "The decision to tear the city of Berlin asunder with a 165-kilometer-long wall, turning it into two no communicating halves was an extraordinary affirmation of state power that signaled the GDR's general readiness to be more aggressive against 'state enemies'. In other words, not only did the building of the Wall restrain exit, but it also projected an enhanced willingness to rein in voice" (Hirschman 1993: 186). 28 years later, the East German government was utterly helpless against the uncontrolled drain of its citizens via Prague and Budapest, and the loss of authority proved unrestorable. "The events of 1989 – Hirschman resumes – look like the exact inverse of what happened, or failed to happen, after August 1961. The inability of the GDR (...) to prevent a large-scale flight of its citizens to West Germany (...) signaled a novel, serious, and *general* decline in state authority. It was thus taken to imply a similar decline in the ability and readiness to repress voice" (Hirschman 1993: 187).

It is highly symbolic that in the GDR the actual opening the Wall was *not* an intentional act by the Politburo.[22] The government's televised press declaration read in the evening of November 9 was meant only to announce plans for a new travel law and interim regulations that would ease

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[22] The events are described in detail and with truly fascinating documentation in Hertle (1998) and in Hertle/Stephan (1997).

the process of applying for emigration. These declarations, however, were highly inconsistent, and their interpretation was effectively left to the people on the streets and Western media; as a result, growing crowds gathered at the border's check-points in East-Berlin demanding to pass without any further formality, claiming that this now had become legal. The embattled commanders of the check-points desperately sought for instructions from their superiors. However, Honecker and other top party leaders could not be contacted; the more immediate superiors hesitated to decide either way and only took ad hoc-decisions aimed at buying time, but neither dispersing the protesters by force nor allowing them to pass freely. Pressure steadily increased, and shortly before midnight, the officer in charge of the check-point at Bornholmer Straße finally informed his superiors that he no more saw any alternative to opening the border turnpikes, using words that became emblematic: "*Wir fluten jetzt!*" (We are flooding now!) (cited in Hertle 1998: 187)

While in Cuba it was clear to everybody that the decision "to open the flood-gates" in the 1994 *balsero* crisis was a decision calculated and deliberately taken by the highest political authority, the flooding came as an uncalculated emergency measure from a subordinate position. The chain of command had broken – not by disloyalty from below, but because the top did not respond. The Politburo leaders learned of the fall of the Wall when they awoke next morning: "All of us were aware that something had happened that had not been intended", Politburo member Hans Modrow recalled (cited in Hertle/Stephan 1997: 7).

The loss of control over the exit option was merely the prelude to the regime's collapse. The articulations of both the *Ausreiser* and the *Bleiber*, though seemingly antagonistic, eventually merged under the slogan "*Wir* sind das Volk!" (*We* are the people!), which, with its accentuation of the first word, outrightly denied the government the right to speak in the name of the people, challenging the very fundaments of the state-socialist regime.[23]

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[23] Finally, a little twist in the slogan, the turn form "We are the people!" to "We are one people!", accompanied the fast-moving trend to German unification. While Hirschman wonderfully describe this evolution of the demonstrators' slogans, another one of the most prominent rallying calls of the mobilizations at a later stage of events, when the issue was no longer the GDR's regime change but the conditions of unification with West Germany, passes unnoticed, although it seems as if made for him. It says: "*Kommt die D-Mark, bleib'n wir hier – kommt sie nicht, geh'n wir zu ihr!*" („If the (West German) Deutsch-Mark comes to us [i.e. is introduced in the
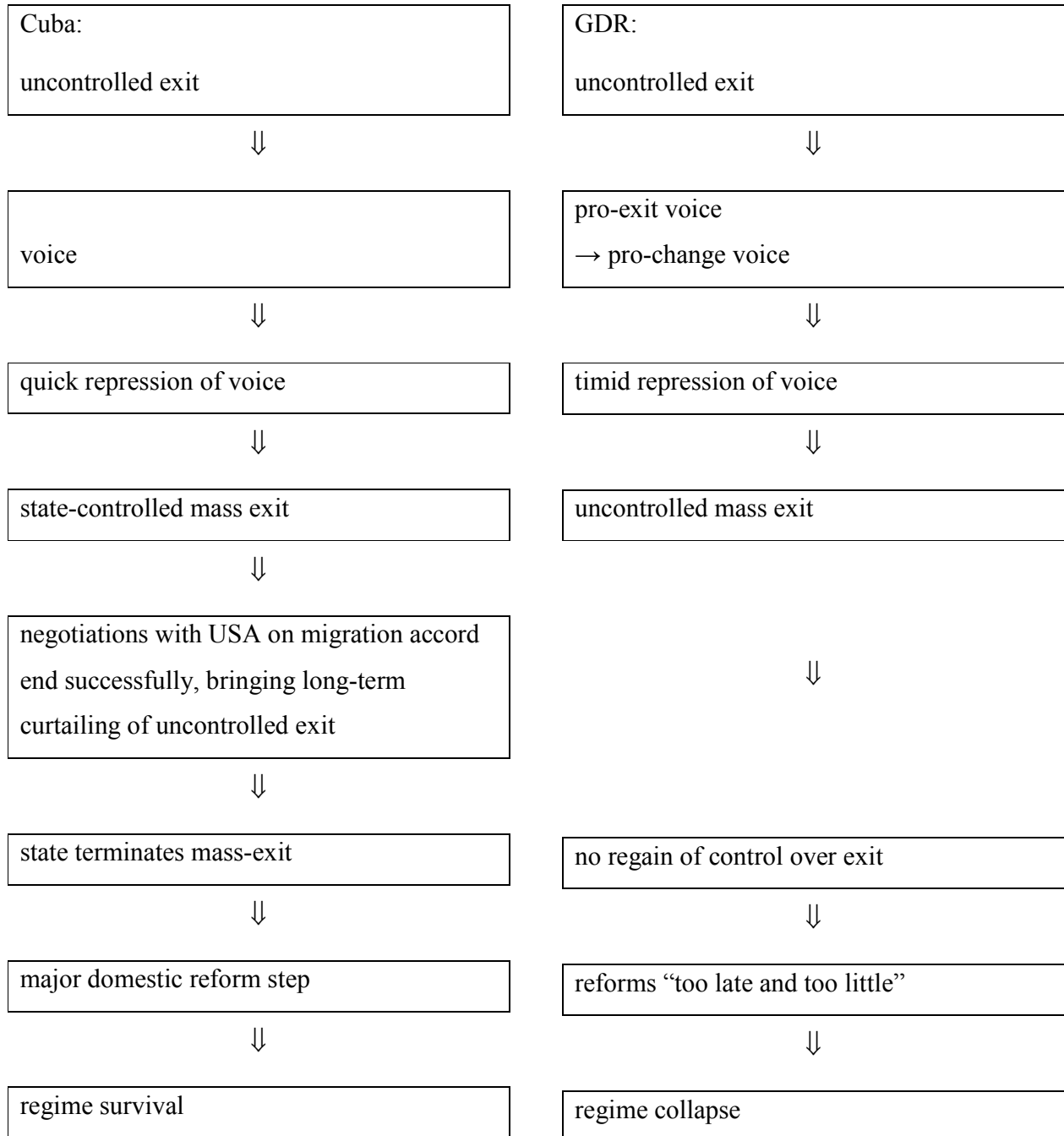
The story, however, does not come to an end here. The Cuban government not only was able to effectively enforce closing the maritime borders closed for the *balseros* once the negotiations with the USA had come to advantageous results, it also did not hesitate to follow up on the sequence of repressing voice and opening exit with a third step: a reformist response addressing a key problem of the socio-economic situation of its citizens. Within one week after declaring the maritime borders closed, Fidel Castro's brother and head of the Armed Forces, Raúl Castro, announced the re-opening of food markets. This was a highly symbolic reform step, which Fidel Castro personally had repeatedly rejected ever since he ordered the then existing peasant markets closed in 1986, arguing that they foster the emergence of bourgeois mentality. Now Raúl Castro announced this step explicitly on the premise that the provision of food was the country's highest "economic, political and military priority" (Granma Internacional, September 28, 1995).

In Hirschman's original design both forms of reaction, as much exit as voice, were seen primarily as mechanisms of alert for the management of a company (or the leadership of an organization), indicating a need to change in order to improve the product or service offered. In the GDR, the Honecker government entrenched itself all too long in a "We do not shed a single tear over those who leave" position, and initiatives for a process of controlled reform from above came "too far and too little". Instead in Cuba, with the opening of food markets the Cuban government managed to enact a reform step of great and immediate practical impact for the population. Given the ever more scarcer rations of the distribution system and the excess of increasingly worthless money in hands of the population for which they did not find anything to buy, the food markets greatly alleviated everyday life on the island. It would be a subject for a different article to explain why this landmark decision did not lead, as many expected or hoped at the moment, to a coherent reform process that would gradually continue and expand; for the purpose of this study, however, it shows that the Cuban government did read the signals of exit and voice as calls for change, and that, faced with acute crisis, it did not hesitate to turn to reform policies it ideologically disliked in order to preserve the system.

East], we will stay; if it does not come, we will go to where it is." Here, voice is raised to threaten exit in order to demand a precise political decision.

Graphic 4:

Schematic representation of exit and voice in the GDR and in Cuba

Cuba:	GDR:
uncontrolled exit	uncontrolled exit

<div align="center">⇓   ⇓</div>

voice	pro-exit voice → pro-change voice

<div align="center">⇓   ⇓</div>

quick repression of voice	timid repression of voice

<div align="center">⇓   ⇓</div>

state-controlled mass exit	uncontrolled mass exit

<div align="center">⇓</div>

negotiations with USA on migration accord end successfully, bringing long-term curtailing of uncontrolled exit	⇓

<div align="center">⇓</div>

state terminates mass-exit	no regain of control over exit

<div align="center">⇓   ⇓</div>

major domestic reform step	reforms "too late and too little"

<div align="center">⇓   ⇓</div>

regime survival	regime collapse

5. When and how private emigration turns public

In developing his scheme, Hirschman noted the contrasting characteristics of exit and voice: exit typically is individual, private and silent, whereas voice is typically a collective and public activity (Hirschman 1970: 15-16). He highlighted the importance of this distinction in his study of the demise of the GDR points out that "the real mystery of the 1989 events" was the transformation of the private and individual efforts to emigrate into a broad movement of *public* articulation and protest (Hirschman 1993: 198). In fact, the GDR government had always been bent on treating emigration to the West as non-public as possible.[24] Even after building the Wall in 1961, the number of refugees and authorized emigrants combined never fell below 10,000 annually, with figures reaching as high as 40,000 in 1984 and 36,000 in 1988; however, this emigration took place "*heimlich, still und leise*" (in secret, silently, and on tiptoe) and was hardly recognizable as a public affair.

In 1989, however, what still had been intended as a purely *private* activity – the effort of individuals to move from East to West Germany – became public in different forms: First, when the pictures of the first East Germans leaving the GDR via Hungary and Czechoslovakia flooded the TV news (of the West German channels only, of course, but which were broadly watched by the East German population); and second, when the Ausreiser, gathering on key point such as border crossings, railroad stations and embassies, became aware of their common goal, developed a sense of community and eventually turned into what could be called a single-issue movement around the chant of "*Wir wollen raus!*" (We want to leave!) (Hirschman 1993: 199). This, as noted, kicked off the articulation of voice that eventually would lead to the collapse of the GDR.

In Cuba, once again things have been very different. Here, it was the state itself that repeatedly turned private emigration into public events. After 1959, official news readily showed the former

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[24]   The major exception was the expulsion of the critical song-writer Wolf Biermann in 1976, whose GDR citizenship was withdrawn while he was on tour in West Germany, making him unable to return home. This public act caused considerable unrest in the intellectual community, and in a rare act of civil disobedience dozens of writers and artists signed a protest note against the government's action. Revealing insight into the debates and conflicts among the GDR's intellectuals in the wake of the Biermann case is provided by the clandestine tapes during intellectuals' meetings at that time whose transcriptions are presented in Krug (1997).

upper and middle class Cubans boarding planes that would take them to the USA as welcome illustrations of the defeat the old elites had suffered.

A striking example is the 1980 exodus. This started as a typically private migration intent, when a few dozen Cubans stormed the Peruvian embassy in the hope of political asylum and, hence, be able to leave the island. It was the Cuban leadership that underscored the political character of the decision to emigrate ("traitors"), explicitly and publicly interpreting the exit option as a manifestation of voice – and calling on all "revolutionary Cubans" to demonstrate their loyalty in public acts of repulse. Still today, in Havana you can visit the "*Museo del Pueblo Combatiente*" (Museum of the Combative People), dedicated the 1980 mobilizations that made the emigrants run the gauntlet, celebrating them as a pride of the Revolution.

A similar contrast can be observed in the 1994 *balsero* crisis. The GDR's leadership, when in summer of 1989 it decided to let the "Ausreiser" that had sought refuge in the West German embassies in Prague and Warszawa emigrate to the Federal Republic, tried to evade any contagion effect of this emigration by transporting them in sealed trains and at night through GDR territory – a strategy that failed miserably (Hirschman 1993: 191). The Cuban leadership, instead, once it had declared the maritime borders open for *balseros*, readily tolerated groups of refugees transporting their make-shift raft through Havana at plain daylight with dozens of youths cheering behind them. Even the weather report of the state TV's evening news included storm warnings for precarious embarkations on sea.[25]

This time no public repulse demonstrations were organized, but nevertheless the mass emigration was deliberately turned into a public event: a show of force that the regime can resist this kind of pressure over weeks and weeks without bowing in. If this public demonstration certainly carried a domestic message, it also was the government's trump card in forcing the U.S. government to negotiate a new migration accord: the credibility of its claim to endure this kind of exodus for indefinite time, if needed.

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[25] Author's personal observation in Havana at the time of events.

6. Moving Beyond the Nation-State Framework: Exit as Internationalization of Voice

If Hirschman defines voice "as any attempt at all to change, rather than to escape from, an objectionable state of affairs" (Hirschman 1970: 30) his scheme tends to see emigration as effectively renouncing on the possibility to articulate voice. This "either-or" perspective turns a blind eye on what could be called the "boomerang effect" of exit. In a first version, this is the classic idea of exile and return; in a second version it is the externalization of voice: If a citizen by choosing the exit option can free himself from the conditions that have impeded articulating voice domestically, after emigration he might raise his voice all the louder from the outside.[26]

Cuba holds examples for both: The first is illustrated as much by the national hero José Martí, who returned from exile in New York to die in the country's war of independence, as by Fidel Castro who left Cuba in 1953 to exile in Mexico only to make his re-entry on board of a motor yacht three years later, landing with the nucleus of a guerilla army in the Southeast of Cuba and taking up the revolutionary struggle. The second version is illustrated all too well by the Cuban exile after 1959. While there is a line of intents to militarily "re-enter" the politics on the island, which included the failed Bay of Pigs invasion as much as assassination attempts on Fidel Castro or bombs against tourist centers in the 1990s, the most sustained and forceful activity of the Cuban emigrants in the United States had been that of raising their voice against the antidemocratic nature of the Castro government.

Silvia Pedraza (2002: 254) takes up this idea when she asks whether for the Cuban society "those who exited became its voice" and whether the émigrés and their highly vocal organizations can substitute the independent civil society missing on the island. Her answer is rather skeptical since, as she writes, all the organizations and parties formed by the exile community "can only be effective to the extent that they are in touch with those inside of Cuba" (ibid), a condition she sees difficult to fulfill given the Cuban government's efforts (and possibilities) to stop such contacts.

Pedraza is right that the Cuban émigré community's links to the island are weak; similarly, all intents to provide oppositional media, from Radio and TV Martí to the numerous Internet

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[26]   In a different context, Kato (1998) in his study of party discipline among Japanese legislators pointed to the possibility of people choosing to exit and then to raise their voice from outside.

publications that surfaced in recent years, have severe problems in reaching their audience on the island due to the government's ability to interfere their transmission or to curtail access (Hoffmann 2004: 186-200). However, putting forward the question in these terms misses a crucial point: the issue is not a "substitution of civil society", but the externalization and internationalization of voice. The Cuban exile and its dominant organizations have over decades not only strived to make the world aware of the undemocratic and intolerable character of the Cuban regime as they perceive it, but moreover they have been highly effective in interacting with and exerting influence on the U.S. government's policy versus Cuba. Their voice may pass with little effect when directed at Cuba, but it is a political factor of great weight when articulated via Washington and galvanized in U.S. legislation and political action towards Cuba. While few would doubt that the influence of the exile's voice is high, its almost symbiotic appearance with the traditional right-wing line of U.S. foreign-policy making makes it virtually impossible to entangle its precise contribution. In the USA, Cuba policy is a prime example of what has come to be called an "intermestic affair", in which international and domestic considerations are profoundly interwoven (Hoffmann 2002).

While the dominant political groups of the exile community spend much energy and resources on maintaining their influence on Washington's Cuba policy, this has also been a boon to the Cuban regime, since it serves as evidence for what is a key thesis of the Cuban government: That you are "either with Fidel or with the Yankees", with no alternative in between. This polarization has been a most instrumental mechanism to delegitimate any type of dissenting voice on the island. Thus, exit via emigration cannot be seen only as reducing oppositional *voice* but in addition it may also impact negatively on the conditions of articulating voice domestically for those who stayed.

For the analytic interest of this paper we can resume that 1) exit has not simply done away with voice, but in a boomerang effect it has resulted in the externalization of oppositional voice with far-reaching consequences for the country; and 2) that over time the line between externalized Cuban voice and the action of the U.S. government action as an external actor has become so

blurred, that in many ways what had been an internal conflict of Cuban society is now framed to a considerable extent as part of the international conflict between Cuba and the USA.[27]

Comparison to the case of the GDR is somewhat difficult in this aspect since the context conditions are different. Though considerable in numbers, the GDR emigrants never constituted a particular community in the West nor did it settle in particular regions, but rather blended in with the population at large. Moreover, except for a number of writers and artists they hardly raised a publicly hearable voice *as* ex-GDR citizens. This may be somewhat astonishing particularly when compared to the quite powerful political lobby organizations of the so-called "Heimatvertriebenen", that is those ethnic Germans who left the former German territories East of the Oder river which as a consequence of the re-drawing of the European boundaries after WW II became part of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Russia. The reason for this may be that in case of the East German emigrants, what could have been their particular cause was absorbed by what the West-German state as such had defined as its claim: to be the only legitimate German state. Even after the Willy Brandt's *Ost-Politik* brought a certain normalization of relations with the Eastern neighbor, government discourse never renounced on reunification as the long-term goal, questioning the very fundaments of the East-German state.[28]

In the West's voice that reached out to the GDR, as much in the broadly accessible regular TV and radio programs as in the programs specifically dedicated to the so-called "*Deutsch-Deutsche Angelegenheiten*" (German-German affairs), the particular voice of the emigrants was hard to identify. Instead, voice was internationalized from the very start with the Federal Republic's non-acceptance of the GDR's sovereignty.

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[27] A particularly thorny example is the Helms-Burton law passed by the U.S. Congress in 1996, in which U.S. law prescribes in detail the conditions for what would be accepted as a democratic government on the island (Hoffmann 1997).

[28] The echo this had in public discourse in general perhaps best is illustrated by the fact that up until 1989, West-Germany's leading newspaper publishing house, the *Axel Springer Verlag*, wrote the word "GDR" in quotation marks each and every time it used it in its papers, so as to underscore the non-legitimacy of this "so-called GDR".

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7. How dichotomous is exit? Emigration and transnational communities

Hirschman's model holds two assumptions regarding the exit category that deserve a closer look: One is that exit, just as it leads to reduced incomes for a firm, also represents a loss for organizations and states.[29] The second is that, whereas voice can "can be graduated, all the way from faint grumbling to violent protest" (Hirschman 1970: 16), exit is a clear-cut dichotomous category: "One either exits or one does not" (ibid: 15).

The notion of emigration as loss still seems perfectly valid for Cuba after 1959 as well as for the GDR prior to 1961. The East German government felt the steadily growing drain of qualified professionals as such a terrible hemorrhage that radical action had to be taken. (Although not precisely in terms of the corrective functions ascribed to exit and voice by the Hirschmanian scheme, leading to the improvement of the products and services offered, but by impeding exit through a draconian fortification of the border.) In the Cuban case, although the government reacted so differently to the exodus of the members of the former upper and middle classes, there was still a sense of loss. If the government nevertheless celebrated the departure of many of the country's professional elites as the liberation from the chains of bourgeois mentality and power structures, this signaled that it felt the loss compensated by the accompanied political gains, but not that there had been no loss.

However, the case looks already different for the emigration of the 1990s. In a situation of severe food shortages and an evident surplus of labor force, the emigration of thousands of Cubans not only offered political gains in the sense of the escape-valve function, but also economically the indubitable loss of human capital went hand in hand with an economic relief in the sense of "less mouths to feed". Such a perception, in fact, is not a Cuban singularity: Many Third World

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[29] This does not contradict Hirschman's analysis of the "labor safety valve theory", which sees emigration as rather beneficial for the sending country (Hirschman 1970: 106-19). However, these gains are rather seen as politically compensating what economically is a loss. In a later essay, Hirschman does concede "the possibility that emigration relieves a country's economic or political stress, is therefore *welcome*, and may even be encouraged by the state" (Hirschman 1986: 93). This, however, remains timid, with Hirschman immediately stating: "But massive emigration is at some point bound to be viewed as dangerous: it will no longer be compared to a 'safety valve,' but rather to a dangerous 'loss of blood'." (ibid). He reinforces the point arguing of "exit as a threat to the small modern state" in Hirschman (1981c: 258-65).

governments tend to see emigration, particularly if of low-skilled workers, less as a loss than as an alleviation of a tense labor market situation and as absorbing a work-force that elsewise would increase the number of unemployed; in this perception, it essentially depends on the level of skills of those who leave if emigration is seen as "brain-drain" or as "stability gain".

However, more important still is another challenge to the Hirschmanian conception of exit: Recent migration research fundamentally questions the dichotomous character of emigration, emphasizing instead the importance of transnational networks that maintain far-reaching social and economic ties to their countries of origin (e.g. Portes et al. 1999; Pries 1999; Massey 1998). If strong bonds are kept with both the community of origin as much as with the target community, then the exit via migration is a rather relative affair. In Haiti, alluding to the country's administrative division in nine departments, the Haitians abroad are commonly referred to as the "Tenth Department" as to symbolically underscore that albeit living in New York or Paris they still belong to "the imagined community" (Anderson 1983) of the nation. The debate over "transnational citizenship", which for instance in Mexico has put the debate over civic and voting rights for the more than 8 million Mexican emigrants living outside of the nation's borders on the public agenda (e.g. Parra 2003; Fitzgerald 2004), is challenging the notion of exit as a clear-cut "either you leave or you stay" issue even in its most fundamental political implications.

Today, perhaps the most spectacular expression of the transnational migration networks ties is represented by the remittances from emigrants to their relatives at home. These have increased so greatly in the past two decades that they have come to play a crucial role in many Third World economies. For Latin America remittances amounted to no less than US$ 32 billion in 2002, a higher figure than all international aid and development cooperation for the region and at par with the total amount of foreign direct investment (MIF 2003). These money flows by no means should be understood either as temporary or as mere altruism. Much rather, just like firms have transnational production chains, recent migration research shows that also families and households increasingly constitute themselves as transnational communities, with remittances serving as informal family loan arrangements (Poirine 1997).

In Cuba, as long as the U.S. dollar was no legal currency, any monetary remittances had to be exchanged at the official rate of one U.S. dollar equaling one Cuban peso, making this operation extremely unattractive. An old Spanish saying goes: *Enemigo que huye, puente de plata* – "The

enemy that flees turns into a bridge of silver". After 1959, the Cuban Revolution appreciated the political gains of the flight of its enemies, but for more than three decades it showed no interest in turning them into a bridge of silver. This changed with the severe economic crisis of the 1990s. The legalization of the U.S. dollar, announced by Fidel Castro in the summer of 1993, was designed precisely to foster family remittances which – through rapidly opened dollar stores – the government could easily siphon off in order to obtain the hard currency revenues desperately needed to maintain the economy afloat (even if at precarious levels).[30] Since then, remittances to Cuba have grown to an estimated US$ 1,100 million (MIF 2003), surpassing by far the combined revenues of the island's traditional export products, sugar and tobacco, and being only second to the gross revenues of tourism as the country's principal source of foreign currency.[31]

Taking up the theoretical approaches of transnational social networks, the Cuban economist Pedro Monreal (1999) in a remarkable study concluded that the 'export' of emigrants and the 'import' of their remittances to the island effectively became a key element in Cuba's world market integration of the 1990s: "Even if for some this may be a troublesome idea: The phenomenon of the remittances can be seen as expression of the fact (...) that de facto a significant part of the Cuban economy's 'modern' sector is located outside of its national boundaries" (Monreal 1999).

As in the section on the externalization of voice, comparison to the GDR results problematic due to the highly exceptional context of the two German states. Transnational social ties between East and West were not created by emigration, but much rather it was the division of Germany that cut through existing social ties. Contacts between people in the West and in the East of Germany were not limited to and not even dominated by those who had emigrated but instead always

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[30] Author's Interview with José Luis Rodríguez, the country's current Economy Minister, in Havana; published in: *die tageszeitung* (Berlin), 11 November 1993.

[31] In the first year after the legalization of U.S. dollars, the balance of payments for 1994 showed an entry of US$ 574.8 million under the heading "current transfers" which, as is expressly explained, is "mainly due to the income from donations and remittances" (Banco Nacional de Cuba 1995: 20f). Already two years later CEPAL estimates US$ 1,100 million. For 2001, the Cuban Central Bank showed "current transfers" of US$ 812.9 million (Banco Central de Cuba 2001). For a discussion of different estimates and their methodology, see Monreal (1999: 74).

depended to a good deal on family links existing prior to the foundation of the GDR as a separate state. Since Western currency was not allowed, monetary remittances played no major role; remittances in kind during visits and in the form of packages were quite common, but never constituted a major factor in the GDR's national economy.

We may add: They do not only cross national boundaries, but also a profound political and ideological abysm. It is precisely those who chose the exit option and who in their majority are staunchly against the Castro government, who at the same time, through their remittances, have provided a financial life-vest for the government's management of the economic crisis that was crucial for the political system's survival. To bring in Hirschman's third category: Exit is not the antipode of loyalty – at least if one distangles what in the exit and voice scheme all too easily tends to be fused: country, government, people. Those who exit may maintain strong bonds of loyalty, be it emotional sentiments of belonging or in the form of material support to those who stayed.

It is remarkable how little of these understandings of migration has found its way into the broader discussion on the exit and voice approach. For instance, Dowding et al. (2000), while being quite critical in their appraisal of the Hirschmanian concept and its extensions, fully endorse the dichotomous understanding of exit: "Exit is a fairly crude, binary response. (...) Operationally, exit is a dichotomous, voice a continuous variable" (471). At least when applied to migration, this understanding seems hardly adequate in today's globalized world.

Disentangling nation, state, and government leads us to another important point: if dissatisfaction with living in a specific country leads to emigration, this might have to do little with the present governments' actions or the availability or not of the articulation of voice.

In the market model, whose logic Hirschman's scheme transfers to social and political processes, competition for clients is absolutely legitimate, and it takes place in a framework that should provide equal conditions for all competitors. As a consequence, exit and voice are seen as reactions to decline in the quality of services which is the responsibility of the referring firm or, in our case, government, and due to their "erroneous behavior".

However, in the political, economic, and social reality that frames the migration between Third World and First World states these assumptions are hardly met. The structural roots of underdevelopment and the enormous differences in income levels between North and South can

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only to a very limited degree be attributed to the decisions or "mistakes" of any specific government, but much rather they are the result of long-term processes connected to the countries' subaltern integration into the world market. Beyond the differences in income levels, migration theory has emphasized a number of other factors inducing migration, amongst others arguing that patterns of human migration follow linkages or bridges established by political domination, as in the case of former colonies, and by global flows of capital, goods, and services (e.g. Sassen 1988; 1998), and pointing to the importance of "chain migration" in which transnational networks from past migration build up social capital that serves as catalyst for future migration, independently of the initial causes of emigration (Arango 2003: 15-16; Massey 1998). The exit and voice model, with its emphasis on "repairable mistakes" and focusing on governments and their actions, needs to be complemented with this type of explanations, if long-term and structural factors are to be taken into account adequately.

Here, the distinction between the state and its government is so important because both act on different time scales; the state usually is a rather long-term affair, while governments typically change every few years. (Even in the Cuban case, where Fidel Castro is at the helm for four-and-a-half decades by now, the Cuban nation-state has been there before him and, we may suppose, will be there after his demise.) In the Cuban case we have argued, that emigration after 1959 was dominantly influenced by the particular political upheaval brought about by the Revolution. Nevertheless, Cuban-U.S. migration also must be understood as part of Third World – First World migration. While this was less evident in the first stages, when the emigrating Cubans were mostly from the former upper and middle classes, this aspect has come to the forefront of public perception with the more recent waves of emigration, made up of Cubans from diverse social background, but almost all materially poor by U.S. standards.

Of course, Cuba's political system and its relations to the USA are highly atypical in many ways.[32] Nevertheless, a look at other countries of the region is instructive. If we have spoken of the high emigration numbers from Cuba during the 1990s it is worth noting that these are below those of its major Caribbean neighbors, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Jamaica even in

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[32] A particular element that negatively incites on the economic performance of the Cuban government are, of course, the U.S. economic sanctions, which are to be seen rather as action of an external force or part of the complex bilateral relations between both countries than attributable solely to Cuban government behavior.

absolute numbers, and all the more so if calculated as per cent of the population (see the data from the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, cited by Max J. Castro (2002: 5). While Haiti's recent past has been politically tumultuous, the Dominican Republic and Jamaica both have had rather stable political multi-party systems with comparatively high availability for the articulation of voice. In both cases, emigration can be explained not so much as reaction to particular government behavior, but as a result of the structural conditions of the country and the perceived perspectives in the reception country (in both cases greatly favored by existing émigré communities in the United States).

As plausible as it is that in the Cuban case the exit option serves to undermine the articulation of domestic voice, warning lights should be on hot red against any interpretation suggesting too strongly the inverse. More room for voice could reduce emigration in the case of some political activists, and changes in economic policy that open up (or legalize) a number of new income possibilities on the island might take off some pressure. However, given the long-term structural economic discrepancies between Cuba and the USA and the close bonds to the large community of Cuban émigrés, it is highly unlikely that with whatever liberties given to the articulation of voice and in whatever transformation or pos-Castro scenario one might imagine, Cuban migration to the USA will be at significantly lower levels than at present if not forcefully restricted by administrative means.

8. Conclusions

Hirschman's work is not that of a dogmatic guru who establishes guide-lines to follow but, as Foxley, Mc Pherson and O'Donnell (1986: 3) write, rather that of an intellectual "provocateur". If his concepts have been thought-provoking, this includes the need to refine and rethink them in the light of empirical evidence. Hirschman himself made gala of what he called his "propensity to self-subversion" (Hirschman 1995), critically revisiting his theorems and models and modifying, qualifying, and complicating them in various respects. In this sense, the criticism, modifications and additions sketched out above (as debatable as each of them may be) do not speak against the model developed by Hirschman but rather attest to its vitality and to the continued stimulation emerging from it.

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His exit and voice model may best be understood not as a grand theory providing exhaustive explanations of phenomena as complex as international migration or political change, but rather as a conceptual framework with great heuristic value. We have taken this framework to a specific empirical field, and we hope to have shown, that it indeed can take us a long way in better understanding the interplay of emigration and the political dynamics in Cuba since 1959, and more specifically in the crisis since 1989. At the same time our empirical study has led us to modify or "complicate" the conceptual approach in a number of important ways.

In accordance with the working mechanisms described by Hirschman's classic work, the high levels of emigration have served as an important political escape-valve that has made possible the rather low (compared to the dimension of the socio-economic upheaval) level of manifest conflict on the island since the Revolution. In the following, however, we identified six aspects, in which a closer look on the modalities and dynamics of exit and voice led to important qualifications of the conceptual approach. This proves highly useful not only for understanding the Cuban experience after 1989, in which regime stability is maintained despite severe social crisis and high emigration pressures, but particularly so when comparing it to the contrasting case of the GDR, where emigration played a catalyzing role in the collapse of the socialist state.

In our study on the modalities of exit and voice in these cases we underscore the crucial difference it can make whether the government maintains control over the exit option, as in the case of Cuba, or not, as in the case of the GDR; and we explore the implications of when and how exit turns from a private to a public activity – with the GDR government futilely trying to keep emigration as "silent" as possible while the Cuban government turned it into a political show of force by pulling it out into the open in drastic form.

In addition, we argued for moving the exit and voice model beyond its fixation on the nation-state, postulating that emigration may not merely undermine domestic voice, but that it also can lead – as the influence of the Cuban emigrant community on U.S. policies towards the island impressively shows – to an externalization and internationalization of voice with far-reaching political implications. In this line we also challenged the notion of emigration as a clear-cut dichotomous "exit" emphasizing instead the increasing relevance of transnational ties between the émigrés and their country of origin – an aspect highlighted in Cuba by the emigrants' remittances to the island which have played a key role in the Cuban government's economic

survival strategy. Finally, we stress the need to combine the exit and voice concept with research on the structural dynamics of international migration, which makes ongoing high emigration pressure from Cuba to the United States very likely in any future political scenario and independently of the availability or not of voice options.

In sum, this paper hopes to have shown both: The usefulness of the Hirschmanian concept for scholars of emigration and political transformation; and the need to refine its analytical tools and to combine it with other approaches.

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