

*Comments and Arguments*

## ‘Cubanalismo’: The Cuban Alternative to Neoliberalism

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### Introduction

When considering potential alternatives to neoliberalism, few individuals would regard Cuba as the vehicle that would drive change throughout much of Latin America and the Global South. Surely, how could a country with a total population of just over 11 million and roughly the size of New York state pave the way for alternative methods of socio-economic development, environmental policies and regional trade agreements? Despite a barrage of skepticism and more than its fair share of ‘experts’ condemning the Caribbean island just 150km south of the US, Cuba has remained unwilling to follow the rightward trend and has instead, decided to follow an alternative path to development based on its own social, environmental, political, economic and cultural specificities and needs. Broadly, this paper strives to contribute to the academic debate regarding the advantages and disadvantages of neoliberal reforms. More specifically, the objective of this essay is to illuminate an alternative path to development when viable alternatives seem few and far between, as if to say, “there is no alternative.” Certainly, while there exist substantial improvements to be made in, for example, human rights and freedom of the foreign (and domestic) press, although one can certainly broaden our scope to include US “allies” in Iraq (e.g. Israel, Turkey, Georgia), the Cuban path represents a unique socioeconomic and political alternative in that it has achieved a level of human development indicators equal or surpassing that of the Global

North. While some commentators have referred to Cuba as a socialist or communist state, more explicit accounts consider the island to be authoritarian, despotic, and/or tyrannical. This essay does not endeavor to substantiate or debate the theoretical or material validity of such claims since both historical and contemporary evidence suggests that the interpretations and definitions of the aforementioned concepts continue to remain highly contested terrain. Rather, the material realities of Cuba’s socioeconomic and environmental policies will be presented as they allow the reader to classify, group, label or brand this model in whichever framework the reader finds appropriate. However, for the purpose of this paper, the Cuban alternative to neoliberalism will heretofore be referred to as “Cubanalismo.”

This essay’s point of departure will be a side-by-side comparison between Cubanalismo and neoliberalism and will consider five main spheres of socioeconomic and political developments. First, Cubanalismo’s state-led growth model will be contrasted with neoliberalism’s private-led enterprise model. Second, Cuban healthcare and education policies will be contrasted with neoliberal guidelines in addition to, thirdly, environmental protectionisms and standards. The fourth point will briefly examine the US-led Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), as compared with the Cuban- and Venezuelan-led Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) and consider whether there is, in fact, as some have

claimed, the dawning of a regional alternative to neoliberalism. The final portion of this paper will address the shortcomings and limitations of this research and suggest related areas of inquiry for future investigations. All things considered, the overarching intention of this paper is to present Cubanismo as a workable alternative to neoliberalism, and to demonstrate the special opportunity that Cuba and others of the Global South have to resist encroaching US-led neoliberalism and to stimulate waves of change throughout the developing world.

### Private Enterprise Versus State-led Growth

Central to neoliberalism is the belief that a *laissez-faire* approach to economics, which encourages free trade, the liberalization of the marketplace, increased efficiency and competition, and the limited role of governments to protecting the interests of capital, is the solution to the developing world's backwardness and inability to catch-up. Neoliberal discourses attempt to roll-back the boundaries of the state by emphasizing the inherent efficiency of market competition, the role of individual capitalists in determining superior economic performance, and the belief that supply and demand will lead to factors of production being paid what the market determines they are worth (Palley 2005). According to this perspective, government regulation and intervention of the economy should be limited to protecting the private interests of capital since, according to neoliberal economists, influences outside the realm of the free market inevitably distort the natural efficiency of self-regulating markets. Following this line of reasoning, the introduction of labour unions, governmentally-mandated tariffs, subsidies and protective measures, for example, ultimately leads to an inflated and destabilized marketplace, which will eventually result in fiscal and monetary policies ballooning out of control. Rather, an autonomous market free from external influences ensures that factors of production automatically self-adjust removing the need for government institutions to regulate economic activities and interfere with the so-called superior performance of unfettered markets (Palley 2005). The "invisible hand" of the free market, it is argued, will automati-

cally adjust to fluctuating market demands by letting economic forces run their natural course.

While neoliberalism assumes that the market is inherently efficient due to self-regulation, cutthroat competition, and continuous information and technological developments, government intervention into the economy is naturally inefficient due to its bureaucratic nature, large size, and conflicting interests (political/social versus economic). Proponents of neoliberalism include the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organization (WTO) and World Bank (WB), while countries that encourage neoliberal policies also include the US, Canada, Japan, members of the European Union, and a number of other nations throughout the rest of the world. As a means of advancement, neoliberals advocate for the liberalization of foreign trade, the opening-up of domestic economies to international competition and foreign direct investment (FDI), the removal of market rigidities, and the limitation of public-sector activity and employment (Palley 2005). A contemporary example of this is the IMF's and WB's structural adjustment programs (Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers), which are most often a prerequisite if developing countries are to access grants or soft loans. In order to be eligible, countries must enter into a neoliberal framework that often compels nations to focus on export-led growth, privatization of public-sector employment, the lifting of import and export restrictions, emphasis on balanced budgets, the removal of price controls and state subsidies, as well as the devaluation of currencies in order to make exports cheaper to purchase on the international marketplace (Saad-Filho 2005a). Unfortunately, however, what proponents of neoliberalism often do not account for are the social and human costs associated with the unfettered pursuit of wealth and resources, which are inextricably linked to the implementation of neoliberalism on a global scale.

Cornia et al. (cited in Johnston 2005), have suggested that the liberalization of developing countries' economies undertaking a neoliberal framework has had a detrimental impact on the purchasing power of the poor arising from drastic cuts in food subsidies and rising user surcharges for government services, especially in the areas of health care and educa-

tion. In these regions, public-sector employment and wages have been drastically cut and attempts at unionization made illegal, while the private sector has rarely expanded to offset this. Instead, when intermittently available, private sector employment has often been precarious and low-wage, as well as susceptible to ramped exploitation and mass layoffs due to the removal of labour legislation and decreased government intervention into the affairs of free market enterprise (Cornia et al.). A major criticism of neoliberalism is that it is often implemented on a “one-size-fits-all” framework without considering the day-to-day consequences of such policies in regards to people’s economic, social, physical and mental well-being (Deen 2007). For example, the removal of price controls and the dismantling of social protectionisms have often exacerbated seasonal and regional price fluctuations, which have actually increased the price volatility of agricultural producers and poorer farmers located in remote regions of the world. Such unforeseen events have created new economic problems as the dependence on volatile foreign capital inflows resulted in the increased insecurity of domestic prices since they were entrenched within an international economic context. Despite sweeping reforms many countries of the Global South that have implemented a neoliberal framework have actually increased their fiscal deficits and raised foreign debt, while savings and investments have fallen sharply. One must not forget the most severe economic collapses in history under the guidance of the US-led neoliberal policies in Mexico and Argentina in 1995 and Brazil in 1999, which were sanctioned in accordance with the IMF and WB (Sadd-Filho 2005b). On the other hand, though, one aspect of neoliberalism which has certainly been successful is the ability of capitalists and supposedly free markets to generate extreme wealth for proprietors of capital; for instance, there has been a clear rise in income inequality between the Global North and South, so much so that some estimates claim that the gap between richest and poorest countries has actually increased five-fold over the last hundred years (Oya 2005). As a result, this raises the question: But haven’t the rich industrialized nations like the US and UK followed a neoliberal framework when they themselves were developing? After

all, what must developing countries be thinking when they refuse to adopt such a tried and tested recipe for economic success and development?

A closer look at the history of capitalism, however, reveals a much different story than the one being championed by supporters of neoliberalism (Chang 2003). For instance, the majority of today’s advanced industrialized countries of the Global North that are actively championing neoliberalism did not themselves in their early history practice free trade, the removal of tariffs and subsidies, or the retrenchment of the state in order to protect the private interests of capital. Instead, the US and UK, for instance, promoted their national industries through tariffs, subsidies, and an active and intervening role of the state into capitalist ventures (Chang 2003). “These two countries were, in fact, often the pioneers and frequently the most ardent users of interventionist trade and industrial policy measures in their early stages of development” (Chang 2003:1). One potential explanation for this may be, as the nineteenth century German economist Friedrich List suggests:

It is a very common clever device that when anyone has attained the summit of greatness, he kicks away the ladder by which he has climbed up, in order to deprive others of the means of climbing up after him. Any nation which by means of protective duties and restrictions of navigation has raised her manufacturing power and her navigation to such a degree of development that no other nation can sustain free competition with her, can do nothing wiser than to throw away these ladders of her greatness, to preach to other nations the benefits of free trade, and to declare the penitent tones that she has hitherto wandered in the paths of error, and has now for the first time succeeded in discovering the truth. [cited in Chang, 2003:5]

If this is the case, as Chang (2003) proposes more than a century later, the historical evidence suggests that advocates of neoliberalism are indeed “kicking away the ladder” that they used to achieve their current level of development so that a very limited and chosen number of nations may reach relative parity. Debunking the neoliberal myth of free trade from the

historical perspective demonstrates the paradox faced by neoliberal economists since the majority of underdeveloped nations in the Global South grew much faster when they used active interventionist policies from 1960 to 1980, than when they did during the following two decades (Chang 2003). Given the history of capitalist development and the substantial differences that exist between what is preached and what is actually practiced, Cuba has chosen to follow its own path to development based not on free trade and laissez-faire economics, but on one centered on a state-led model of growth that emphasizes the social and human responsibilities of economic relations.

The three pillars of the Cuban economy are, first, state-led economic development; second, a high concentration of public sector employment; and third, a high degree of tariffs and subsidies in order to promote domestic production and consumption. Much like the early history of their neighbours to the north, Cubanismo attempts to maintain high and stable trade barriers while protecting their infant industries in order to encourage domestic innovation and a strong industrial sector so as to be self-sufficient and shield the Cuban economy from whirlwind international markets. For the most part, Cuban economists and policy makers oversee the majority of economic activities and decisions. This allows the Cuban economy to remain flexible enough so as to adjust to international fluctuations and changing economic uncertainties both domestically and abroad. As Cuban manufacturing industries gained strength and self-dependence, Cuban officials gradually increased FDI throughout the 1990s. What separates Cubanismo from neoliberalism in this respect, is that Cuban officials allowed greater levels of FDI only *after* Cuban industries had become self-reliant so that they could “stand on their own feet” once productivity levels, efficiency, and quality had been more or less achieved.

Once in a domestically stable and autonomous position, Cuban officials looked to ‘loosen-up’ the economy by increasing FDI in areas where Cuban economists and policy makers had identified as central to their continued development such as the mining, telecommunications, fuel, and tourism industries. High levels of state intervention into the

economy and loose fiscal and monetary restraints allowed the Cuban economy to strengthen and build upon their historical sectors of the economy, while simultaneously developing advanced pharmaceutical and scientific industries. For example, with the international demand for sugar dropping substantially over the years, Cuba has deliberately begun phasing out large-scale sugar production in order to meet domestic needs and consumption, rather than produce sugar as an export commodity. As well, Cuba’s rapidly evolving technological innovations in biotechnology and medicine are reorienting the Cuban economy from a traditionally agrarian marketplace in favour of high technology and advanced medical-scientific research, all of which will be discussed at length later in this paper. Aside from increasing investments in biotechnological and pharmaceutical industries, one of Cuba’s most affluent investments has been in the tourism industry. Ever since the mid-1990s, Cuban tourism in the form of hotels, restaurants and leisure activities has continued growing at nearly 10% annually and contributes nearly \$3 billion to the economy in gross revenues (Perry et al 1997). The strength of the Cuban economy is demonstrated by the fact that in 2006 the Cuban economy grew at nearly 12% (CIA 2007a) compared with the US economy, which grew at only 2.9% in the same year (CIA 2007b). Although the Cuban economy has oriented itself to one focused on high technology and has also increased the amount of FDI, public sector employment remains very high and stable at roughly 76% of the working population (Uriarte, 2002). Given Cubanismo’s emphasis on state-led economic flexibility, high levels of public sector employment, and the maintenance of high tariffs and subsidies in order to protect infant industries, Cubanismo remains a workable economic alternative to neoliberalism, which is further expressed by the vast differences demonstrated towards environmental policies.

### **Environmental Cost versus Environmental Protection**

Neoliberal policies have had severe environmental consequences for the poorest and most marginalized of individuals since many live off the fruits of the

land. That is to say, local agricultural producers, communities and indigenous populations receive their drinking water from local rivers, their basic foodstuffs from community farms, and unavoidably, breathe in the oxygen that is often laced with various chemicals and pollutants. This antagonism stems from the fact that environmental laws and protectionisms are often viewed as a barrier to capital accumulation due to their high-costs and time-consumption. However, since many countries in the Global South are in such dire need of economic assistance—many due to a history of colonialism, prior debts, or government corruption—many governments under the direction of the IMF, WB, and WTO make concessions allowing large and powerful multinational corporations (MNC) to bypass environmental and labour laws. Even when upheld, the windfall gains of shifting the costs of environmental clean up and protection to the physical environment far outweighs any potential fines or penalties that MNC's may face (Adeola 2003). The consequences have been increased deforestation and the loss of biodiversity, widespread toxic and chemical dumping, relaxed environmental laws, and a substantial decrease in air quality and overall health. On the flip side, lax environmental laws has meant abundant capital gains, often from foreign multinational investors, and the entrenchment of a worldwide economic system that embeds countries within a neoliberal framework. The costs associated, however, include intensifying environmental degradation, increasing polarization between the rich and poor, growing poverty and malnutrition, as well as rising dependency and marginalization.

Turning to Cubanismo, recently, the World Wildlife Federation (WWF) ranked Cuba as the only country in the world to be developing sustainably without undue harm to the environment and environmental protection as a clearly mandated policy objectives (WWF 2006). The WWF came to this conclusion by examining Cuba's Human Development Index (HDI), which according to the United Nations "is deeper than economic income or growth, since the HDI looks at health and education indicators, nutrition, cultural freedoms, social opportunities, standard of living and a countries ecological

footprint<sup>1</sup>" (WWF 2007:1). The study's authors credit the high levels of literacy, long life expectancy and low levels of individual consumption of energy for Cuba's success. Furthermore, Cuba is also replacing chemical fertilizers with nitrogen-fixing bacteria<sup>2</sup>, recycling the residues leftover from the processing of harvests, and pesticides are being replaced with polyculture, which are natural enemies against parasites and insect pests, while increasingly using goats and horses as weed control rather than tractors that produce excessive carbon monoxide and waste essential animal foods (Levins 2004). Cuba leads the world in active compliance with the environmental agendas of Rio and Kyoto, nearly all urban vegetable production and approximately half the total food production is organic, and freon is being replaced in refrigerators with a Cuban-developed natural substitute derived from sugar cane in order to protect the ozone layer (Levins 2004). Special programs have been developed that aim to protect fragile mangroves along the coast, resist desertification, and integrate development of rural and mountainous regions. Whereas only 14% of pre-revolution Cuba was covered by forests, by 2003 that had increased to 21% with the goal being around 27% in the years to come. While neoliberal discourses often view environmental protectionisms as an added cost, Cuba has been able to expand its economy and social services and simultaneously protect the environment by developing local and national projects, recycling, and developing bio-fertilizers that may potentially be a valuable export commodity in the near future. All things considered, given Cubanismo's concern for the environment, which in turn affects people's health and well-being, Cubanismo remains a workable and preferable alternative to neoliberalism, which is perhaps, only eclipsed by the even larger differences that exist in the areas of healthcare and education.

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1 A country's ecological footprint measures how much land and water area a human population requires to produce the resources it consumes and to absorb its wastes under prevailing technology. (See WWF 2006)

2 Nitrogen-fixing bacteria are fungi that mobilize soil minerals, earthworms, compost and animal manure. (See Levins 2004)

## Private Healthcare and Education Versus a Social Safety Net

On May 2, 2002, George Bush argued, “we know that Cuba is collaborating with other state sponsors of terror. Castro has repeatedly denounced the war of terrorism. Last year, Castro visited Iran, Syria and Libya—all designees on the same list of terrorist sponsored states” (Associated Press 2005). Bush further went on to argue that if Cuba has the biotechnological capacity to develop vaccinations and oral contraceptives then surely they must be able to develop biological weapons of mass destruction. Bush is, to some extent, right. As Richard Levins has argued in his paper, “Cuba’s Biological Weapons: The World Needs More of Them,” Cuba’s biological weapons are universal, free and quality health care, ecological agriculture, and the preservation of sustainable biodiversity (Levins 2004). For instance, ever since the 1959 revolution, one of Cuba’s policy mandates has been to provide a “social safety net” that would guarantee medical care, education, medicine, social assistance, oral health care, and basic food-stuffs for all—not just for those that could afford to attend private schools and clinics. Cuba’s health care system is internationally recognized as one of the most technologically-advanced, forward-looking and effective in the world. At 6.5/1000 live births, Cuba’s infant mortality rate is tied with Canada for the best record in the Western Hemisphere, and life expectancy is equal, and sometimes greater than, the developed high-income nations of the world. In addition, Cuba has the highest number of physicians per capita in the world, the most complete coverage of infant immunizations, and the most equitable access to medical care (Levins, 2004). Government-sponsored initiatives include the encouragement of increased use of fruits and vegetables, gender and racial equity campaigns, environmental awareness campaigns, and cross-country preventative measures against sexually transmitted infections, which includes the distribution of contraceptives and community-wide information sessions. As a percentage of GDP, Cuban health care spending represents about 7%, which is equivalent to roughly \$251 (US dollars) per person (WHO 2007a)—hardly enough to fix a cavity in most countries of the Global North.

When one compares this with the US, which does not provide universal and free health care but minimally-funded public health care programs, health and vitality rates between the two countries and nearly parallel (WHO 2007b). The fact that Cuba is able to do so much more with so much less raises the possibility that the Cuban alternative to a competition-based health care system may be preferable since it does not privilege the already-privileged wealthy classes, and provides basic necessities for all of its citizenry.

The Cuban educational system, of course, is state-led and universally free of any additional charges. School attendance is compulsory from ages 6 to 16, and notebooks, writing materials, and course textbooks are provided free of charge (UNESCO 2003). Literacy rates in Cuba are on par with their US neighbours, and Cuban elementary and high school students actually score higher in mathematics, science and reading (Schugurensky, 1998). In developing closer relations with their Latin American, African, and Middle Eastern counterparts in the Global South, Cuba has developed an exchange program that allows foreigners to study in Cuban medical schools absolutely free of charge. Furthermore, the encouragement and promotion of gender and racial equity campaigns has resulted in substantive benefits for the Cuban populace as greater proportions of women and Afro-Cubans are participating in university level science and engineering programs, as well as local, provincial and national legislatures (UNESCO 2003). In ensuring that all Cubans have the right to universal, free and quality healthcare and education, Cubanismo remains a viable and preferable alternative to neoliberalism due to its social and human emphasis, as compared to monetary emphasis, in measuring society’s quality of life and living conditions.

## Dawning of a New Era: Free Trade Versus Needs-based Trade

Latin America was one of the first areas in the world to implement neoliberal reforms on a regional scale. Paul Kellogg (2006) suggests that these reforms were premised on the suppression of national development strategies in favour of a new regionalism

under the hegemony of US imperialism. The organizing feature of this new regionalism was to have been the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), which was structured along free market initiatives, privatizing public assets, opening-up natural resources to private exploitation, as well facilitating FDI and free trade (Kellogg 2006). In addition, free trade agreements have also been known to include currency devaluations in order to make exports more attractive to international marketplaces, the near complete removal of tariffs and subsidies, and the limitation of governments to guardians of private interests. In keeping with Cubanismo's goal, which is to offer a viable alternative to neoliberal discourses, the Cuban-Venezuelan developed Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) on the other hand, is centered on regional solidarity, self-sufficiency and the right of countries to pursue whichever path to development they see fit. On this, Cuban President Fidel Castro once remarked, "Together we shall strive for development, against an international financial and economic order heedless on our needs that submits us all to increasing poverty and dependence" (Castro 2003). ALBA rejects trade rules that jeopardize local agricultural and industrial production, prevent effective national planning, and grant inordinate intellectual property rights to the countries of the North. According to Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, ALBA is "a flexible model for the integration of Latin America that places social concerns at the forefront" (Kellogg 2006:200). Furthermore, ALBA has opened the door to "compensated trade," which bypasses financial markets in favour of an equitable exchange of goods, and represents a monumental shift in trade policies for it completely defies the logic of neoliberal monetary exchange. Among the agreements, Cuba offers university scholarships, as well as medical and healthcare professionals, and in return, Venezuela offers highly subsidized oil and energy resources. "ALBA places the emphasis on the fight against poverty and social exclusion" (Kellogg 2006:202), which is fundamentally incompatible with the interests of neoliberalism, and more specifically, the private interests of capital.

In keeping with ALBA's goal of regional solidarity, internationalism and mutual assistance, last

year Cuba sent over twenty-five thousand doctors, nurses, surgeons and dentists to over sixty-eight developing countries, and in the majority of cases provided medical aid totally free of charge or future debt (Fawthrop 2006). Since then, Cuba has sent more physicians abroad than any developed nation, and has actually dispersed more doctors worldwide than the entire World Health Organization during the same period. Furthermore, Cuba's ratio of one doctor for every one-hundred and seventy persons not only exceeds the US's one for every one-hundred and eighty-eight, but Cuba is also training over 1,800 doctors in developing countries free of charge (Fawthrop 2006). On Cuban internationalism Nelson Mandela once remarked:

Cubans came to our region as doctors, teachers, soldiers, agricultural experts, but never as colonizers. They have shared the same trenches with us in the struggle against colonialism, underdevelopment, and apartheid. Hundreds of Cubans have given their lives, literally, in a struggle that was, first and foremost, not theirs but ours. As Southern Africans we salute them. We vow never to forget this unparalleled example of selfless internationalism. [Mandela 1995:1]

The main objective of ALBA "is to help the weakest countries overcome the disadvantages that separate them from the most powerful countries of the hemisphere" (Kellogg, 2006:191). ALBA has recently emerged as a challenge to the US-sponsored FTAA, and has become synonymous with the leftward movement in Latin America as a whole. With the election of Morales in Bolivia, and Ortega in Nicaragua, these left-leaning governments formally rejected the FTAA, instead choosing to enter into the ALBA mix in 2006 and 2007 respectfully (Kellogg, 2006:191). The emergence of a regional block on the basis of anti-neoliberal policies, which is made up of Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua, and some Caribbean island economies, represents a monumental challenge to not only the US, but to the entire neoliberal world order. Without question, the emergence of ALBA as a direct opponent to neoliberalism suggests that changes are indeed on the horizon, and that the dawn of a new era is likely

on the rise. The Cuban-Venezuelan led ALBA is premised on an entirely different set of theoretical principles and goals, which rejects the liberalization of markets, the retrenchment of the state, and policies that jeopardize the most marginal and underprivileged classes. Rather, by challenging the logic of neoliberalism, ALBA places the elimination of poverty and inequality as its key objectives making it not only a potential alternative to neoliberal discourses, but one highly sought after.

### **Alternatives to Neoliberalism Do Exist: Limitations, Future Research and Conclusion**

As this paper has attempted to integrate throughout this discussion, alternatives to neoliberalism do, in fact, exist. The anti-neoliberal declaration that “another world is possible” simultaneously represents the growing distrust and cynicism in regards to neoliberalism, as well as the mounting optimism that change on a local, national and regional level is achievable. Through struggle, trial and error, mistakes along the way, and intermittent uncertainties about the success of the revolution, Cubanismo remains a work in progress that is yet to fully mature. Whereas neoliberalism emerged in the mid-1980s as a dominant player in the realm of domestic and foreign policy, this ideology has long standing, deep, and historical roots that date back to classical liberalism. When considering the material realities of the two frameworks, however, in the case of private-led growth versus state-led development, Cubanismo has implemented policies that attempt to achieve the “greatest good for the greatest number of people,” while neoliberalism has all too often created “wealth for some and poverty for many.” When comparing environment policies, Cubanismo not only establishes and enforces environmental laws, but also considers the consequences of inaction on people’s health, well-being and social relations. Neoliberalism, on the other hand, considers environmental policies to be a barrier to economic growth and accumulation. When comparing healthcare and education poli-

cies, the US (neoliberal) and Cuban (Cubanismo) citizenry are nearly parallel. The difference is that Cubanismo offers free and universal healthcare and education for all, whereas neoliberalism treats social expenditures as a commodity to be purchased, consumed and repurchased, which often creates severe differences in accessibility, scope and implementation. Lastly, when comparing the FTAA with ALBA, free trade for the purpose of capital accumulation and profit maximization is matched up against needs-based trade for the purpose of self-sufficiency, independence, and the improvement of health and living conditions.

Although this paper has presented Cubanismo as a workable alternative to neoliberalism, it is in no way the only alternative. Rather, Cubanismo is an example of one tiny Caribbean nation’s efforts to achieve a greater level of equality, prosperity and affluence for the majority of its citizenry and has, in only half a century since the revolution, achieved substantial improvements in healthcare, education, the economy, and the overall quality of life that few nations in the Global South have been able to achieve. Although the bulk of this paper has focused on comparing the social, environmental and economic realities of Cubanismo and neoliberalism, it has omitted significant issues such as race, gender, religion and ethnicity, which constitute significant and valuable areas for future research. In addition, future explorations may strive to consider how Cubanismo relates to the larger global struggle against neoliberalism as countries of the periphery struggle for equality, subsistence and sovereignty. The significance of Cubanismo is that it has resisted the pull of neoliberalism, and that regional solidarity in direct confrontation to neoliberalism is transforming and challenging the dominant ideologies of the Global North. Through unity, struggle and solidarity Cubanismo has demonstrated that despite overwhelming pressure and coercion from the most powerful nation-states alternative modes of socio-economic and environmental policies can and do continue to exist.

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