

A Quiet, Loyal Brother and Successor

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Raúl Castro, No. 2 in [Cuba](#)'s political hierarchy, is President [Fidel Castro](#)'s designated successor, although he is seen as lacking his older brother's charisma and political flair. The Cuban leader had surgery on Monday for intestinal bleeding and delegated power provisionally to Raúl.

Raúl Castro, 75, heads the Cuban armed forces as minister of defense and is first vice president of the Council of State, constitutionally first in line to take over from the president in case of incapacitating illness or death.

A low-key figure without the oratorical verve of his brother, Raúl also wields political influence in Castro's shadow as second secretary of the governing Communist Party.

Since the guerrilla days of the Moncada assault, the Sierra Maestra hills and the triumph of their 1959 revolution, Raúl Castro has always been his brother's most trusted right-hand man.

He has taken on a more visible role in public, but indicated in June that collective leadership would probably govern a post-Castro Cuba. Only the Communist Party can succeed his brother, he said. "That's the way it will be," he said. "The rest is pure speculation."

Cuba watchers say Raúl Castro lacks the political skill, the health or even the ambition to succeed his brother and lead Cuba's economically crippled one-party state. Some see him serving as a brief transitional figure who would open up Cuba, a mediator for a "softer" communism or a figurehead for a younger collective leadership. All scenarios include him in the picture.