Case Study: Cuba

Escaping Neo-Colonialism
Case Study: Cuba
Case Study: Cuba

Cuba: small island in Caribbean
- major importance 18th-19th century: sugar
- huge part of story slavery and Atlantic economy
Case Study: Cuba

Cuba: small island in Caribbean
- caught up in first major US imperialist venture against Spain (Philippines)
- Cuba ‘liberated’
- 1901: Platt Amendment gave US right to ‘intervene to maintain order’
- occupied Island militarily: 1906-9, 1912, 1917-22
- “In all but name Cuba became an American protectorate” [Text p.678]
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America in Latin America: Cuba

- US interests in Latin America from Mexico, through Chile, Columbia, Guatemala, Argentina, Brazil... became central to its political and economic interests during first half 20th century

- [Text 806] investments in Chilean copper, Colombia’s coffee, Guatemala’s bananas, Cuba’s sugar created “semi-colonial order”
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**Nationalists reactions 1930s, 1940s:**
- everywhere, turbulent times
- ‘populist’ leaders challenging existing governments
- seeking programmes to reduce foreign control (mostly American – e.g. United Fruit Company operative in Guatemala, Cuba)
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1950s: Guatemala exemplified issues [Text 807]

- American UFC controlled most fertile land and infrastructure (railroads, ports)
- controlled economy according to its needs
- resulted in: fallow land, unemployed peasants, poverty
- local political leader advocated land expropriation, reduction US political influence
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US Saw through ‘Cold War’ Prism:
- read political actions as ‘pro-Communist’ and therefore, pro- Soviet Union
- newly (post-WWII) formed Central Intelligence Agency launched one of several overseas ‘actions’ [also active in Middle East]
- Guatemalan government successfully overthrown (but stability was not the outcome)
- message clear to other regimes!
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Cuba:

- American interests dominant
- controlled main export: sugar
- also banking, transport, tourism: ‘legacies’ of pre-war investments
- also main export market
- as in ‘colonial’ times: US could and did determine much of Cuba’s economy
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Like Guatemala:

- US economy ‘dominated’
- less than 40% land in sugar production because of UFC needs
- Cuba suffering chronic unemployment
- slow growth but meanwhile all profits left country or supported US-allied elite
- young Cubans worked for reform: hopeful for democratic elections
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Batista Coup d'état: 1953

- former military leader
- reinforced US alliance, economic influence, corruption, existing repression
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VIDEO

The Cuban Revolution

[YouTube: 0:00 – 33:35 shown in class]
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**Fidel Castro:** [introduced in Video ‘Castro and Cuba’]

- failed attempt to lead left-wing ‘youth’ uprising led to jail, exile: further radicalization
- university educated: articulate, charismatic
- returned 1956: began recruiting youth, labourers both urban, rural
- launched successful revolution 1959
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**Castro and Guevara:**
- Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara: directly involved in US/CIA Guatemala affair
- fed his revolutionary theory: anti-imperialist but specifically anti-American
- articulate, experienced – also charismatic: major spokesperson for Latin American Revolution
- significant impact in America, internationally
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The ‘real’ Che Guevera (left); iconic image known world-wide! (above)
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“Che” Guevara main ‘theorist’ for Castro’s Government:

- first goal: economic change
- seized uncultivated land and redistributed it to peasants
- lowered rents, raised wages in towns
- within two years: programme nationalization
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For Programme of ‘Nationalisation’: needed economic support

- in cold war world: meant turning to Soviet Union
- (like Nkrumah): found that democracy was not conducive to ‘revolutionary’ economic and social reform
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“There is little evidence that Castro was committed to communism before the revolution but his commitment to break the economic and political power of the US in Cuba and undertake dramatic social reform led inevitably to conflict with the US and to reliance on the Soviet Union”

[Text: 809,10; see also Swift, ‘Missile Crisis’ Add’l Rdgs.]
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Bay of Pigs ‘Fiasco’:
- 1961: plan hatched under Eisenhower but executed under new, young President Kennedy put into play
- (as had ‘worked’ in Guatemala): dissatisfied exiles recruited, trained by CIA
- plan to ‘drop and invade’ via Bay of Pigs: generate insurrection, overthrow Castro

[see Dunne, “50th Anniversary of the Bay of Pigs”, Add’l Rdgs]
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[Map of Cuba with locations labeled: Havana, Bay of Pigs, Guantánamo Bay]

[Images of people in uniform and celebrating individuals]

[Caption: Case Study: Cuba]
Case Study: Cuba

The Bay of Pigs was an attempt by Cuban exiles to invade Cuba in order to overthrow the Cuban government. The United States supported the Cuban exiles by training and supplying them, hoping to establish a new government friendly to gaining US recognition. The Cuban exiles believed the people would rebel and fight with them to take down Fidel Castro.

In 1961, the United States launched an attack on Cuba meant to overthrow Castro's government.

BAY OF PIGS INVASION
Playa Girón

Su'fiyah Fitzgerald

200 KILLED
197 CAPTURED

156 KILLED
4,000 WOUNDED

Much to the CIA's surprise, locals firmly supported Castro and the Revolution.

Cuba is now home to around 11.2 million people. It has a 99.6% literacy rate, with Spanish being its official language. The current political party holding power is

The Cuban Army force managed to defeat the exiles in just 3 days, taking most of the army as prisoners.
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Bay of Pigs: huge embarrassment for Kennedy

[noted: critical Factor in Vietnam, same era]
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Cuban Missile Crisis:
- pushed Castro to accept Soviet military support against future (more effective) attempt
- brought nuclear weapons, missiles bombers to Cuba
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Castro and Khrushchev 1964 (above)
n.d. (right)
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**Cuban Missile Crisis:**

- several explanations for Khrushchev's unexpected initiative: covering up own failures, desire to ‘equalize’ power relations with US, protection of only Communist (as he saw it) stronghold in Americas

- But: positioning of nuclear missiles 90 miles from US intolerable for Kennedy

- had to be removed!!
Locations (spotted from air) of Soviet Missiles and Associated Equipment
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Cuban Missile Crisis:
- any form of invasion dangerous (and Bay of Pigs was still recent memory)
- aerial bombardments had obvious risks attached
- aim was also to prevent Khrushchev from retaliation (e.g. using missiles in Turkey)
- decision was a sea blockade: would prevent delivery of new weapons and hopefully lead to removal of those already installed
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Cuban Missile Crisis:

“Only on the 22 October, when the blockade was prepared, was news of the missiles and America’s response made public. It caused immense shock in the USA and internationally . . . World War III seemed imminent and, across the globe, terrified people prepared for Armageddon. On 23 October, as 27 Soviet ships headed towards the blockade, many carrying military equipment, presumably including missile parts, . . . As the world stood on the brink of nuclear war, news reached Kennedy that the first Soviet ships had stopped and turned back.”

[see Swift, ‘Missile Crisis’, Add’l Rdgs.; also ‘Untold Story’, Resources]
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Reactions to Missile Crisis in London, UK
Khrushchev Offers to Scrap Cuba Bases
Kennedy Calls ‘Statesmanlike Decision’ Aid to Peace

President Moves To Assure UN Role

U Thant To Havana Tomorrow Sees Stevenson On Red Decision

U.S. Would Renounce Cuba Attack, Blockade

India Seen Set to Ask U.S. for More Weapons

Pentagon: No Orders To Relax

Castro Demands U.S. Leave Guantanamo

Premier Accepts UN Supervision

The Threat to World Peace ‘Ends’ (seemingly - for the time being...)
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Cuba: ‘poster boy’ for Revolution

- Missile Crisis (however inadvertently provoked by Khrushchev still convinced other Latin American countries that independence from American economic and political influence was possible
- Cuba still symbolizes the goals of Fidel Castro, even as Cuban society has moved onto the conflicted but increasingly ‘non-aligned’ path it first sought to follow
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