

Committee: Historical Security Council

Issue: The issue of Cuba (01/12/1956)

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INTRODUCTION

In the late 15th century, Cuba is claimed as Spanish land by navigator Christopher Columbus. As time progresses, Cuba becomes a centre for international trade and some of its seaports, such as Havana's, become fortified commercial hubs. Nevertheless, until the 1700s pirate attacks and permanent political instability are fundamental characteristics of Cuban life. Half a century later, the Spanish forces lose to the British, and thus, the British empire takes control of Havana from 1762-1763. The island remains under Spanish control until a revolution breaks out; however, Spanish forces soon regain control. A decade later, the US declares war on the Spanish, and finally, Cuba is given to the United States after the Spanish-American war in the late 19th century.

The United States consider Cuba to be under "protection status"; they do not consider Cuba an independent nation. US policymakers control Cuban politics, and US forces reside on the island. Independence is granted, however, in 1902 followed by the first elections, overseen by the US. The newly elected president, Tomas Estrada, resigns in 1906, causing a power vacuum that leads to a rebellion. US troops are sent to the island to protect American interests and stabilise the political scene.

In 1933, Sergeant Fulgencio Batista leads a coup which makes him the new Cuban leader. The coup is known as the "sergeant's revolt". Backed by the US, he manages to control the Cuban political scene for years until he steps down quietly in 1944. A decade later, in 1934, the US abandons its right to control Cuban politics.

Batista regains power after a bloodless coup in 1952 and opposition soon appears. A year after the appointment of Batista, Fidel Castro leads a revolt; though, his efforts prove to be unsuccessful. As a result of the failed uprising, after serving some time in prison, Castro exiles himself to Mexico.

It is essential to understand that almost all appointed Cuban leaders thus far have allegedly had backing from the United States. Even if it appears that Cuba is an independent entity, it is claimed that Washington might still influence the Cuban political scene. "A

revolution is not a bed of roses. A revolution is a struggle to the death between the future and the past.” – Fidel Castro

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Protection Status-Protectorate

The protection status, as a term in international relations, describes the relationship between two countries, one of which has decisive control over the other. Cuba, until 1934, was considered a protectorate of the United States; thus, major political decisions were influenced by the US.¹

Coup

A coup d' état (coup) is the overthrow of a government by a small group of people. It is usually violent, and its principal characteristic is the use of the armed forces/ police forces in order to gain control. The main goal of the individuals who try to overthrow a government is (political) power. There has been consistent use of such rebellions in Latin America in the postwar era.²

Revolution

A revolution is the overthrow of the current government of a state, conducted by large numbers of individuals. A revolution's main goal usually is changing the establishment, such as political change.³

Platt Amendment

The Platt Amendment is a treaty signed between the United States of America and Cuba on May 22nd, 1903. Its goal was the protection of Cuban independence, plus it permitted some decisive US control over Cuba. It also allowed the United States to use Cuban land as military bases.⁴

¹ Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Protectorate." Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 6 June 2008, www.britannica.com/topic/protectorate-international-relations.

² Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Coup D'état." Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 15 Dec. 2014, www.britannica.com/topic/coup-detat.

³ "REVOLUTION | Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary." Cambridge Dictionary, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/revolution.

⁴ "Platt Amendment (1903)." Our Documents - Platt Amendment (1903), www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=55.

You can read the Platt Amendment at:

“Transcript of Platt Amendment (1903).” Our Documents - Transcript of Platt Amendment (1903), www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=55&page=transcript.

Good Neighbor Policy

The GNP was a policy proposed by the Roosevelt administration. After its introduction, the United States gave up its right to intervene in South American matters during the Montevideo Conference (1933) and renounced the Platt Amendment.

WW2 proved the success of the policy as the vast majority of the Americas rallied with the Allied war effort. However, as the communist ideology started being developed in the Americas, the US decided to resume their intervention in South American affairs.⁵

Puppet Government

A puppet state is a country that appears to be independent, but little will of its own. Such states often have their own constitutions, governments, armed forces and flag but are controlled by an outside entity. As an example, countries of the Soviet bloc, such as Czechoslovakia, had their army, police, government and constitutions but these were under Soviet control.^{6,7}

Sierra Maestra mountains

The Sierra Maestra is a mountain range on the South-Eastern coast of Cuba (Oriente Province). The mountains are difficult to access from all fronts, especially from the coast, where they are protected by a swampland.

They have been used for guerrilla warfare multiple times throughout Cuban history, such as the Céspedes when Major General Gómez y Báez employed tactics during the Ten

⁵ Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. “Good Neighbor Policy.” Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 5 Aug. 2014, www.britannica.com/event/Good-Neighbor-Policy-of-the-United-States.

⁶ Wee, Rolando Y. “What Is A Puppet Government?” WorldAtlas, 4 May 2016, www.worldatlas.com/articles/what-is-a-puppet-government.html.

⁷ “Puppet State.” Taegan Goddard's Political Dictionary, 11 Feb. 2018, politicaldictionary.com/words/puppet-state/.

Year's War. It is important to understand that the mountains can offer a perfect hideout for a future guerrilla war (employing tactics such as "hit and run").⁸



Map of Cuba - 2

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The 20th century:

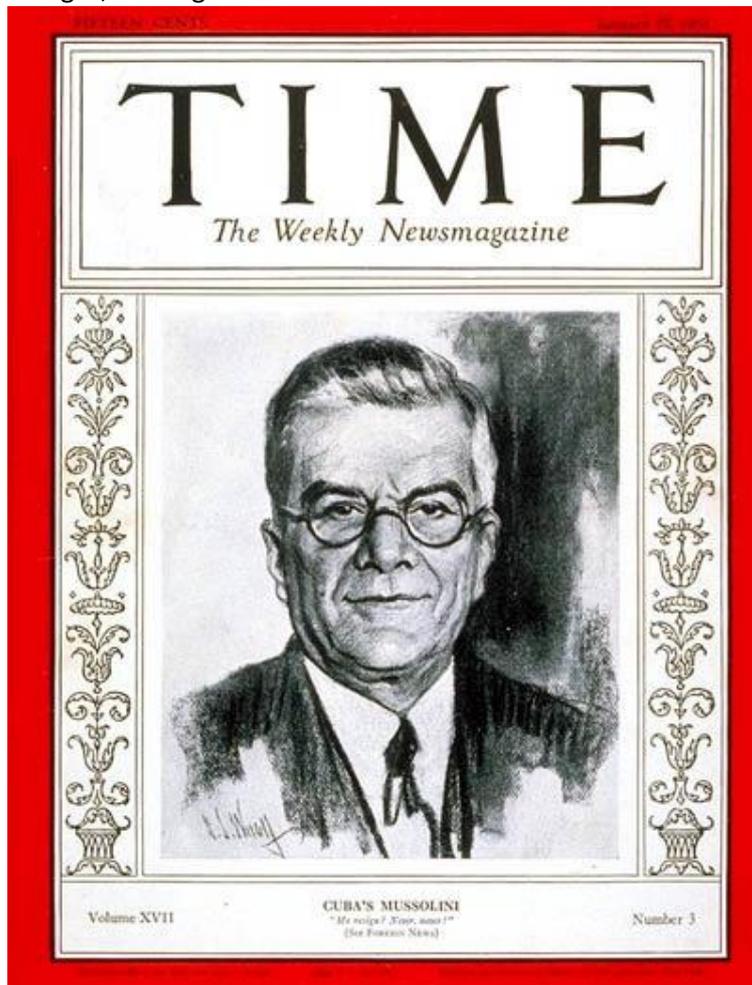
During the beginning of the 20th century, the US has had decisive control over Cuban land. Cuba learned to be dependent on US military intervention when there was instability and on US investments to have a sustainable economy.

⁸ Maestra.", "Sierra. "Sierra Maestra." The Columbia Encyclopedia, 6th Ed, Encyclopedia.com, 2019, www.encyclopedia.com/places/latin-america-and-caribbean/latin-american-and-caribbean-physical-geography/sierra-maestra.

The Gerardo Machado government

G. Machado was a War of Independence hero, who rose to be one of the most prominent figures in Cuban politics. He led the Liberal Party from 1920, and his election as president of Cuba was applauded by the Cuban middle class.

The Machado administration, assisted by the rising prices of sugar globally and a steady US market, managed to reform the -then- crippled Cuban economy. The government initiated a large-scale public works program (such as the Central Highway), improved public healthcare and education. During these first years, G. Machado faced some corruption charges, although no Cuban seemed to mind.



Machado’s economic plan was popular among the Cubans, and when the government announced that the constitution-dictated 4-year term was not enough to achieve the economic reform promised, he quickly increased his term to 6 years. Before the 1928 elections, he managed to minimize the opposition by bribing and threatening members of Congress and thus, both the Conservative and the Popular Party ended up being no real opposition.

Time Magazine cover with Gerardo Machado y Morales. Notice the title "Cuba's Mussolini". - 3

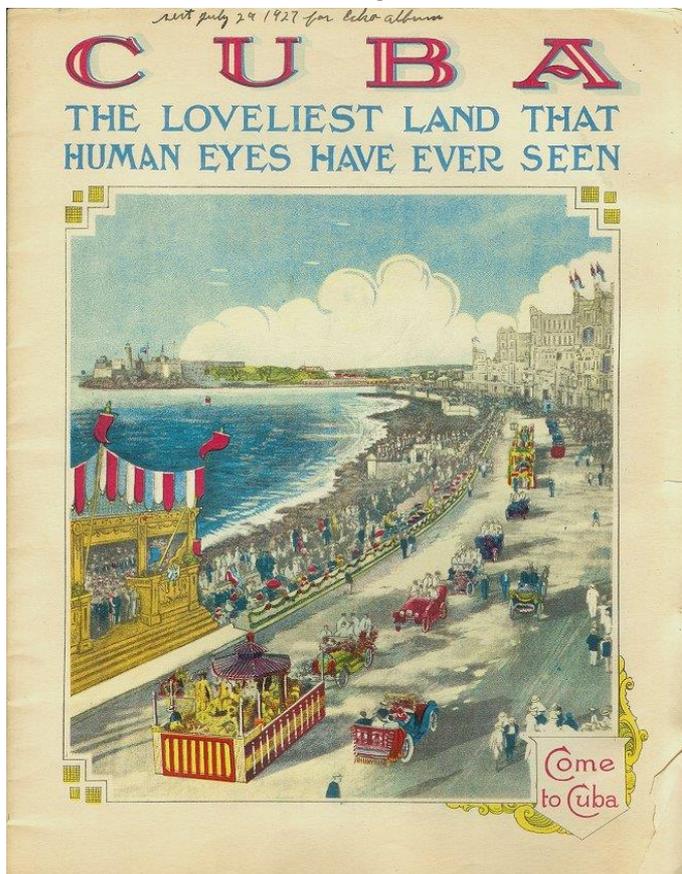
The reformed Cuban economy turned out to be heavily dependent on US capital and high sugar prices. During Machado’s second term, the Great Depression left its marks on Cuba. Starved from a sugar market and US funds, the Cuban public no more supported the president and viewed him as a dictator. Steadily, the opposition started growing, especially among

university students who wanted elections. The police forces answered by raiding meeting places and torturing any conspirators.

Soon, however, the United States sent a mediator, Summer Welles, in order to avoid an escalation. The opposition disliked that move and considered the American diplomat a proof of American imperialism. On August 12 1933, with the apparent failure of the talks, a general strike and an armed forces revolt saw Machado leaving Cuba for Miami, where he lived until his death, in 1939.

The economic prosperity of the 1920s

During the 1920s, with the support of the Machado administration, US capital flooded the streets of Havana, making it the “Paris of the Caribbean”. Prohibition in the US saw thousands of Americans emigrate to Cuba as bartenders and, even more, travel as tourists.



Until 1928, Cuba received a steady 56,000 American tourists per annum; all of whom assisted in the creation of a more pro-American stance in every Cuban.

The prosperity did not only assist the US agenda, but the Machado agenda too, as the flourishing economy was proof of the success of the economic reform promised by the president. However, it was soon over; the Great Depression starved Cuba of dollars, and Machado’s plan was, to the public, just a scheme.

1927 tourist brochure enticing visitors to Cuba (Havana Journal) - 4

Ramón Grau San Martín government

San Martín was a Cuban physician that became the president of Cuba in 1944. His political career started when he led part of the student opposition to the Machado regime, but not long after, in 1931, he was imprisoned. After the 1933 overthrow, the students and

Sgt. Fulgencio Batista, the dictator at the time, designated a 5-man council to rule the country, but this “junta” was short-lived.

In 1933 Grau was chosen by the military and his former students to lead the country, and a new nationalistic and pro-labour government was established. Grau openly criticised US intervention in Cuban affairs and denounced the Platt Amendment. The United States, as expected, disliked this type of policy and did not recognise the president, a reaction that condemned Grau. Soon he was forced to resign by Batista (now chief of the armed forces) in 1934, and he only returned to the Cuban political scene in 1940 to win the presidency in 1944.

His second term was positively affected by the end of WW2 as sugar prices increased and international trade was better than ever before. He initiated an economic reform plan similar to Machado, setting up schools and public works programs while struggling to make a welfare state out of Cuba by increasing social benefits and agricultural production.

Nonetheless, soon enough, the administration was characterized by an epidemic of corruption and nepotism, thus generating opposition in Congress and within his own political party. Grau handed over the presidency to Carlos Prío and practically retired from public life.

Constitution of 1940

The 1940 Cuban constitution was based on the same collectivist ideas as the 1933 revolution. Considered one of the most progressive constitutions of its time, it advocated for minimum industry wages, land reform, public education and multiple social programs. The constitution also established voting rights, private property rights and collective rights while changing the form of the judiciary system and among other governmental reforms, introducing the role of the prime minister.

Its most significant positive aspect, however, was the defense of workers’ rights, for example, the introduction of maternity leave and allocating part of the budget to the educational system, making it very progressive. Still, the constitution consisted of theoretical ideas, not specific programs or laws and in a newly founded republic where laws were insufficient, some of its ideals were never made reality.

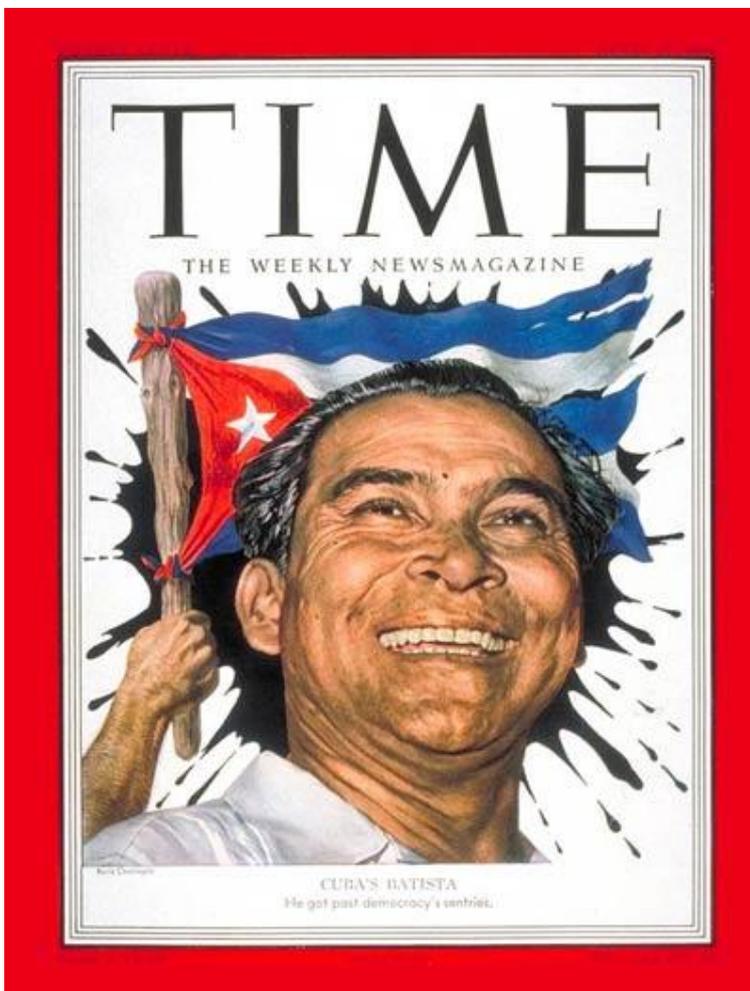
The Batista Rule

Sgt Fulgencio Batista had been a leading figure in the Cuban political scene since the revolution of 1933, when he had led the army in overthrowing president Machado and when he forced president Grau to resign in 1934. Batista grew to be a great ally of the United States

since the US Ambassador's announcement describing Batista as the only person in Cuba with a form of "personal authority".

After the resignation of Grau, multiple presidents, used as puppet presidents, took power in order to hide from the Cuban public that the real source of power was Batista himself. He first rose officially to power in 1939, when he was elected president and initiated an open pro-American agenda. He even introduced consumer taxes to support the American war effort; a move that was deeply unpopular in the poor Cuban public.

He self-exiled himself to Daytona Beach (Florida) in 1944, when Grau became president and only reappeared in Cuban politics when he became a Senator in 1948. When running for the 1952 presidency, Batista soon realized, through polls, that he was the least favored candidate and, in order to gain power, resorted to a military coup. On March 10th



1952, he led a successful revolt, and it took the US government only a few days to recognise him as the legitimate leader of Cuba, when they made a formal announcement in March 27th.

Batista soon became a rather oppressive leader, having suspended the 1940 constitution and establishing a single-party democracy. Wealthy Cubans and Americans profited from the unregulated Cuban economy, and Batista profited from their investments.

Cover of the 1952 Time Magazine - 4

In 1953, Fidel Castro led an attack on Santiago's military barracks, which was a failure. Batista responded with his 10 to 1 order, ordering the death of 10 civilians for every soldier killed (however the death count was much smaller, with a total amount of 59 executions).

Castro's attack, even though unsuccessful, made Batista afraid that the flow of American cash would come to a halt, as civil unrest would make American investors feel uncomfortable.

Confident of his power, he freed the rebels involved in the 1953 attack in 1955, but his rule was facing a considerable challenge. The immense amounts of US capital flooding Havana profited a tremendously small percentage of the public, while protesters were brutally dealt with by police, allowing a specific part of the population to become the ideal targets for Castro's rebels.

The Castro-led opposition

Fidel Castro was the son of a well-off sugarcane farmer, even if the production of such was dominated by US companies. He studied in Catholic schools and entered the School of Law at the University of Havana, where he organized multiple violent groups that had political aims, mixed with personal goals. In 1947, he even joined a group of Dominican exiles and Cubans who intended to invade the Dominican Republic with the goal of overthrowing General Trujillo and in 1948 he joined riots in Bogota, Colombia.

He graduated in 1950 and immediately joined the reformist Cuban People's Party and practiced law. Castro planned to run for a seat in the House of Representatives but Batista canceled the 1952 elections, and overthrew the Carlos Prio Socarras government. Since all legal means to power had been eradicated, Castro started organising a rebel group willing to overthrow the dictator.



Castro and other rebels released from prison in 1955 -5

At the beginning of his rule, Batista had almost no serious opposition and Castro realized that, in order to start a revolution, he had to inspire the Cuban public. On July 26, 1953, he staged a 160-men attack on Santiago's military barracks hoping that this suicide mission would trigger a nation-wide uprising. He believed the attack was 'a gesture which would set an example for the people of Cuba'⁹. Most of his men were killed and he was captured while, his revolt was a failure. After a passionate speech during his defense, he was sentenced to 15 years in prison but was given amnesty and was set free in 1955, when he and his brother Raúl went to Mexico and there organized the 26th of July Movement. The amnesty was possibly the result of either Batista's overestimation of his ability to remain in power or public pressure, led by the Archbishop of Santiago Enrique Serantes.

The only success of Castro's revolt was to cause Batista to fear losing his steady flow of American cash, but while he was in exile, the people of Cuba appear to become disenchanted with Batista's rule. Cuba's poor, who happened to be the vast majority of the population, were now ready for a second attempt.

Castro boarded a small tourist flight to Merida, a Mexican resort on July 7, 1955 stating to reporters at the airport: "One does not return, or if one does, it is with tyranny beheaded at our feet."¹⁰ In Mexico, he started raising funds for his return, while he took a trip to the US, which proved to be a bigger political rather than a financial success, since his supporters were generally poor. Castro and Che Guevara were arrested by Mexican authorities in 1955 as they were found to be stockpiling weapons illegally and spent some time in prison there.

For more details on 26th July attack, visit: "Fidel Castro and the 26th of July Movement." Hacienda Publishing, haciendapublishing.com/articles/fidel-castro-and-26th-july-movement.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

United States of America

The Good Neighbor Policy kept the US out of Cuban matters until the end of the Second World War. However, the danger of a Latin American state falling into Soviet-friendly

⁹ "Fidel Castro and the 26th of July Movement." Hacienda Publishing, haciendapublishing.com/articles/fidel-castro-and-26th-july-movement.

¹⁰ "New Fidel Castro Memoir Recalls Rebel's Life in Mexico." Public Radio International, www.pri.org/stories/2012-02-24/new-fidel-castro-memoir-recalls-rebel-s-life-mexico.

hands was a risk that American policymakers could not afford. As mentioned above, the US continuously supported specific political figures (such as Batista in 1944) and disapproved of others (such as Grau), even before the end of the war.

Batista had been a beneficial ally to the USA, helping American investors while adopting a ruthless stance against communists. Even if part of the US public disapproved of the dictator's inhumane methods, he was steadily backed by the US government. Castro's socialist ideals made him a pro-soviet revolutionary in American eyes; thus, it was rational that the US would continue backing Batista in his fight against communism.

The American intelligence services, such as the Central Intelligence Agency, were given a primary mission during the post-war era: controlling/preventing the spread of communism.

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

The USSR had an embassy in Havana from 1943 to 1952. During the first years of the Batista alliance (junta), Soviet diplomats made contacts with Cuban communists, but later the Grau administration abandoned Soviet relations in order to dismantle the Communist Party. The embassy ceased to exist in 1952 after Batista's second reign started.

It is evident that the Soviets had backed the Communist Party before and, since they shared ideas with Castro's alliance, one might assume that Castro had Soviet backing.

Organisation of American States

Cuba joined the OAS on May 5th, 1948, when it was founded in Bogota. The Organization of American States is a union of the countries of the West Hemisphere, whose main goal is the prosperity of the Americas through economic, military and cultural collaboration. Based on the US Monroe Doctrine (signed in 1823), one of its principles was that an unwanted military intervention on a member state from another alien state factor was to be interpreted as an act of war towards all OAS members.

The OAS succeeded the Pan-American Union, as a more effective security measure against the threat of international communism, as proposed-of course-by the United States. This organization is openly anti-communist and, thus, had no apparent clashes with the Batista Administration. However, should Castro come to power, it was rational to assume that Cuba might have lost its membership, thus cutting off the island diplomatically, economically and politically from its closest neighbours.

The Cuban Communist Party



Time Magazine front page, 1950s -8

Founded in 1925, the Cuban Communist Party followed a Stalinist line. When Batista got power, however, during the 1940s and early 50s, the Party openly supported him, and as a result, many members received high-paid government jobs as rewards. After Castro's failed coup, the Party faced persecution by the Batista administration.

The 26th of July movement

Fidel's Castro failed attempt in 1953 inspired the creation of a new movement, more organised and with a higher probability of success. The July 26th movement, with a name that commemorates the 1953 attack on the Santiago army barracks, was purposed to be a skilled and disciplined rebel group trained and prepared for guerrilla warfare. The movement was first led by exiled revolutionary Fidel Castro from Mexico, while some of the remaining revolutionaries in Cuba conducted multiple political actions and sabotage (such as Enrique Oltuski, Armando Hart and Frank País).

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of Event
1492	Columbus claims Cuba for Spain
1762-3	British rule of Havana
1868-78	The 10-year war of independence again involving Spain
1895-98	Second War of Independence; the US declares war on Spain
1898	The US forces come up victorious; Cuba is now under American protection
1902	Tomas Estrada Palma becomes the first President of Cuba; the Platt amendment, however, gives him little power
1906	Estrada resigns
1906-09	Jose Miguel Gomez leads a rebellion; US forces occupy Cuba
1909	Jose Miguel Gomez is appointed president after elections overseen by the US; corruption charges start to emerge
1912	US armed forces return to Cuba to control anti-discrimination protests
1924	Gerardo Machado y Morales becomes president
1925	The Socialist Party is founded
1933	Sergeant Fulgencio Batista organizes a coup overthrowing Machado
1934	The US officially abandons its right to intervene in Cuban internal affairs, US tariffs change to favour Cuba
1944	Batista retires; Ramon Grau San Martin becomes president
1952	Coup led by Batista takes place
1953	Failed revolt led by Fidel Castro
1955	Castro and his fellow revolutionaries are released from custody

UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

The newly formed United Nations paid little attention to Cuba in the beginning. The only similar UN action taken was the United Nations Security Council resolution 84, signed in 1950, which intended to provide security to the South Korean populations from a North Korean attack. The resolution suggested that a coalition of forces led by the US, under UN insignia, was to be sent to South Korea for the restoration of peace and security in the area should a North Korean attack take place. Having noticed this type of UN reaction, a communist guerrilla war in Cuba might see an official UN peacekeeping forces intervention.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

As mentioned above, there had been no actual international effort to provide a solution to the political, economic and social instability of Cuba. However, one might consider the previous administrations as attempts to solve the issue.

The United States had been supporting specific Cuban parties and presidents to achieve stability in the region. However, their first action to stabilize Cuban politics was the Platt Amendment, which gave the US power to control them. The 1940 constitution did offer every future administration a general guideline but showed the inability of current legislation to make it a reality. The public works programs and the welfare state goal had managed to support even the poorest of Cubans but was always based on specific support from the US. Batista was the United States solution to both instability in the region (as he had eliminated his political opponents) and protecting US-Cuban investments. Even if the US was satisfied, the Cuban people seemed not to share this kind of excitement, thus proving that the Batista administration covered some but not all aspects of the crisis.

Fidel Castro's revolt aimed at satisfying the individuals who were dissatisfied with the solution that Batista offered. Thus, had the support of the vast majority of Cubans, who lived under poor conditions and were unhappy with the lavish lifestyle of government officials. However, after the attack on the Santiago military barracks, one can understand that even if the Cuban public would support the struggle of Castro and his guerrillas, they were not ready yet to fight with them. Castro would help provide a solution to the profoundly dissatisfied masses but did not provide his organisation with a viable plan to do so. Let alone that public unrest would make both the Cuban army and the US uncomfortable with the situation, thus leading to a probable escalation while a revolt would only cause more instability.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

The issue of Cuba is a rather complicated situation, as multiple factors play different roles in the current situation. Before suggesting any solutions, one should set the following goals: satisfying the Cuban public, using democratic means to achieve their goal, minimise the loss of life, prevent civil unrest and prevent an escalation of the conflict that could turn into World War 3. Cuba has been the victim of oppression from both alien and state factors, colonialism, political and economic instability, problems that should be dealt with if one wishes a democratic nation on the island.

In an ideal scenario, the organisation of democratic elections would be a significant step towards supporting democratic procedures in Cuba. In order for fair elections to take place, one might argue that they should be UN-organized.



NYT front page after Truman's order to send troops in Korea -10

UN peacekeeping forces could be deployed on Cuban land, to oversee elections and try to protect Cuban citizens. UN peacekeepers could provide an answer to a possible vacuum of power and could prevent violent takeovers.

A measure that could change the policy of the Batista administration could be an UN-backed blockade both for the protection of the island (from incoming expeditionary forces from, as an example, the US) and the raising of tariffs and blocking exports and imports. The blockade could prevent a country like the US from intervening by sending troops and has the potential of bringing the Batista rule to its knees as both the public will, at some point, be fed up with the terrible living conditions and their American investors would be unable to ship US

dollars there. However, a blockade can lead to a massive escalation of conflict and will bring the already starving Cubans to their knees.

Since the Cuban people are in desperate need of supplies and food, a UN humanitarian mission could be of assistance towards them. Humanitarian support to Cubans could partly solve the humanitarian crisis on the island.

Should the political crisis be dealt with, the economic crisis will be at an all-time high. Foreign investments should be incentivized in Cuba to improve the local economy, while all investments are monitored in order to avoid the situation of an economic colony. The creation of Trade Unions and taking other steps towards transforming Cuba into a welfare state which can provide help to its people is also recommended.

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