**Castro’s Foreign Policy: 1959-2010**

**Aim One:** The Republic had to break free of the **traditional dominating relationship** with the United States



* Gaining back US controlled property in the nation
* Was one of the reasons behind the support of his movement before and after 1959

**The USA:**



* Positive relations with the US allowed domestic consolidation and reforms: domestic stability was needed to give the freedom needed to pursue his goal of exporting the revolution.
* Castro nationalized US owned properties (Esso, Shell and Standard Oil), jailed political prisoners, publicly denounced the US, used anti-US sentiment (linked to José Martí)
* **La Coubre:** Blew up in March 1960, US was blamed, further uniting Cubans. Before this, the CIA initiated several bombings and incendiary raids



* **October 1960:** Washington had severed all diplomatic ties with Havana and placed an embargo on Cuba.
* **Bay of Pigs: April 1961:** Effect related to establishing Cuban independence in foreign affairs, intensifying fear of the US
* **Cuban Missile Crisis: October 1962:** Castro received a US pledge to never invade the island that lasted after the collapse of the USSR in 1991.
* **The Special Period: Collapse of the Soviet Union:** Castro had to make adjustments such as:
* US dollar as a legal currency in Cuba
* Tourists encouraged
* 1994 agreement to allow 20,000 Cubans to leave for the US annually. 1998 agreement allowed Cubans to receive money from relatives in the US
* In 1998, Castro agreed to lift restriction on the Varela Project
* Better relations established with European Union and Mao’s China
* Castro accepted a commercial agreement from the US after a hurricane in 2001

**Aim Three:** Castro had to protect himself against **future US aggression** and **avoid reliance on a great power sponsor** and being subjected **to domination by another power**



* Clearing the nation of damaging influence from powerful foreign nations in Cuba’s affairs
* Provide for economic independence

**Cuban Missile Crisis: October 1962:**



* Castro received a US pledge to never invade the island, protecting Castro from US aggression: USSR a deterrent
* Gave Castro an excuse to push the USSR away and pursue an independent political and foreign policy
* **The USSR:**



* Cuba in debt to USSR by 7 billion dollars: owed international banks 3.5 million
* In 1967: Soviet Union delayed signing of trade agreements and cut back on oil supplies: Cuba’s economy began to experience difficulties
* **1958-1968:** Relations suffered due to Castro’s attempts to spread his revolution
* **Warsaw Pact invasion: 21st August 1968:** Castro gave support towards invasion: signalled the move towards repairing relations with Moscow
* **China:**



* Common history of colonial oppression made the Chinese ideology more applicable: strong Sino-Cuban relations never occurred
* Beijing insured Castro against Soviet unwillingness to pay high prices for Cuban sugar
* Beijing eventually reeled in economic aid, insisting trade must be balanced
* Up to 1968, Castro could not be vulnerable to the Chinese due to independence
* **August 1968:** economic pressure preventedpolicy of rhetorical hostility towards China and the USSR
* **The Special Period:**



* **1991:** USSR collapsed: Cuba could not rely on Soviet sugar purchases or financial grants
* Cuban income dropped by 50% from 1989 to 1992: Oil supplies dropped from 13 million tonnes to 2 million.

**Aim Four: Export the Revolution to the rest of the world**, particularly communities in **Latin America and Africa**



* Strengthen national identity: created feelings of pride
* As early as 196: sent assistance to Angola, Algeria, Bolivia, Palestine, Venezuela and Vietnam

**Latin America:**



* Had the potential to initiate the fall of ‘most of Latin America’
* Gave aid and training for revolutionaries: by 1964, most were experiencing setbacks
* By 1970, groups in Venezuela, Colombia and Guatemala were experiencing setbacks: This coupled with economic problems reduced aid
* **Bolivia: 1966-1967**
* Che Guevara and Cuban fighters went to Bolivia to help the ELN guerrillas (National Liberation Army of Bolivia): fighting against a dictatorship established in 1964
* Lasted from March to October 1967: source of pride for Cubans
* Aim: ‘foco’ system inspired by Cuba: small groups of guerrillas could focus popular discontent against repressive regimes
* Che Guevara was captured on October 8th and murdered on the 9th
* **Chile: 1970-1973:**
* Support given to Allende’s Popular Unity coalition government won the 1970 elections in Chile: no formal military help
* **11th September 1973:** US-inspired coup was not prevented by Cuba
* **Grenada and Nicaragua:**



* **March 1979 in Grenada:** New Jewel Movement was successful: Cuba sent construction workers to build an international airport and military instructors to establish a new policy force
* **October 1983:** US attacked NJM government, killing 25 Cubans
* **1979 in Nicaragua:** Cuba sent 2,500 nurses, teachers, doctors and engineers: gave industrial and technical advice and military training: Cuba offered grants and unconditional loans.
* Sandinistas (Santinista National Liberation Front FSLN) lost elections in 1990, despite winning them in 1984
* President Reagan used money from illegal arms sales to Iran to continue funding the Contras (terrorist group opposing Sandinistas)
* **Venezuela and Bolivarian Revolution:**



* Supported Hugo Chavez: first elected president in 1998: admirer of Castro: ally in Castro’s eyes
* Sent doctors to help medical reforms: received oil, grants, loans and investments
* Helped the struggling Cuban economic after 2003: foreign policy popular with Cubans
* Backed Chavez’s Bolivarian Revolution: in 2006, reformists came to power in Bolivia and Ecuador
* Joined Chavez’s ALBA bloc: alternative to the USA’s Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA)
* **Failure to achieve third aim in Latin America:**



* Isolated diplomatically from Latin American Governments and Latin American Communist Parties
* ‘Rule of Bargaining’ prioritized relations with states friendly to Cuba over their revolutions
* Re-established relations with Chile, Venezuela and Peru by 1969: could participate in southern hemispheric political scene, establishing vital economic ties

**Africa:**



* Send a medical mission to help establish a nationwide free health service in Algeria
* Nelson Mandela publicly acknowledged Cuba’s role in removing the apartheid regime in South Africa
* **The Congo:**



* **December 1964:** Guevara went on a three-month trip to Africa: left for Cuba to recruit volunteers
* **April 1965:** Guevara and 120 volunteers returned but forced to retreat in November
* **Angola and Southern Africa:**



* Began in 1966: response to a request from rebels in Guinea-Bissau: Castro sent doctors and military instructors who stayed until independence was achieved in 1974
* In 1975, a civil war broke out in Angola: South Africa and the US attempted to counter the People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA): Castro sent troops to Angola: US drew up plans to participate in air strikes and mining of Cuban harbours
* 1976: 25,000 Cuban troops in Angola: jeopardised Cuba’s attempts to improve relations
* Some saw the intervention as helping weaken South Africa’s apartheid system
* **Battle of Cuito Cuanavale: 23rd March 1988:** South African advance halted by Cuban troops: the US had ensured no sanctions were imposed on South Africa and no international aid was given to Angola
* **December:** Cuban troops forced the US to push South Africa into surrendering
* Cuban involvement played a large part in fall of apartheid regime in South Africa: 2,400 Cubans were killed overall
* **Horn of Africa:**



* Castro send 12,000 troops to help the new government in Ethiopia to resist an invasion by Somalia
* Resulted in the defeat of Somali forces in 1978

**Humanitarian aid:**



* Teachers, doctors, nurses, construction workers and technicians went to Nicaragua, Algeria and Guinea-Bissau: biggest programme in Angola
* **Late 1977:** 3,500 Cuban aid workers were in Angola: shared Castro’s commitment to internationalism and helping others
* **2010:** Cuba was the first country to send help to Haiti after an earthquake
* **2008 and 2012:** Chavez’s Venezuela provided humanitarian aid **to** Cuba
* 40,000 Africans, Latin Americans and Asians were given full scholarships to study in Cuba: included medical professionals, educationalists, agriculturalists and scientists
* Cuba carried out massive and generous aid programmes despite being undeveloped itself.

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| **Successes** | **Failures** |
| Due to support and pride in the foreign policy, the Cuban government had retained widespread support despite experiencing economic problems | Jeopardized revolutionary success to maintain his position of influence over leftist movements |
| Castro could maintain sentiments associated with the revolution through foreign policy | Death of Che Guevara can be attributed to lack of Cuban support: represented failure of Castro’s attempts to export the revolution in Latin America |
| Castro succeeded in Africa in spreading the revolution, triumphing in all three wars it intervened in Angola and Ethiopia: sent tens of thousands of specialists to African neighbours and trained guerrillas in Zimbabwe | Had to sacrifice his fourth aim in Latin America to establish economic ties: ‘Rule of Bargaining’ undermined aim of exporting revolution |
| Had a hand in winning Namibia’s independence, earning the gratitude of South Africa’s African National Congress | Overestimated ability of Cuban economy to survive without a great power: the special period demonstrated how Cuba was reliant on the USSR: failure in fully achieving aim two |
| Achieved his first aim successfully by 1962 and used the USSR to guarantee protection from the US | Veterans of Angola service regarded themselves the way Vietnam veterans did in the US |
|  | Failed in his attempt to be independent in the realm of foreign policy, returning to the USSR |
|  | Tangible successes in Africa were far from the attentions of great powers |
|  | Overly ambitious in third and fourth aims |

**Main periods of Foreign Policy**



* Initial period: 1959-1962
* Independent foreign policy phase: 1962-1968
* Special period: 1991-2000
* Spreading revolution and humanitarian aid: 1964-2012