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Authoritarian and Single-Party States

Allan Todd
and Sally Waller

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Authoritarian and Single-Party States

Allan Todd and Sally Waller
Series editor: Allan Todd

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Dedication

In memory of 'Don' Houghton (1916–2008)
who first taught me to love History (AT).

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1 Introduction

This book is designed to prepare students taking the Paper 2 topic – *Origins and development of authoritarian and single-party states* (Topic 3) – in the IB History examination. It will examine the various aspects associated with four different **authoritarian** and single-party states, including the origins of such regimes, the role of leaders and of **ideology** and the nature of the states concerned. It will also look at how such regimes maintained and consolidated power, the treatment of opposition groups and the range of domestic policies followed.

Such states are typified by Nazi Germany under Adolf Hitler (1889–1945), and the USSR under Joseph Stalin (1878–1953). Some historians, especially during the early years of the Cold War (1945–91), tried to argue that Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia were essentially similar regimes. Some even argued that Stalin's regime was worse than Hitler's. Also considered in this book are the regimes of Mao Zedong in China and Fidel Castro in Cuba.

Themes

To help you prepare for your IB History exams, this book will cover the themes relating to authoritarian and single-party states as set out in the *IB History Guide*. For ease of study, it will examine each state in terms of four major themes, in the following order:

- the origins and historical contexts that led to the rise of authoritarian and single-party states
- the role of leaders and ideologies in the rise to power, and the nature of the states that emerged
- the methods used to establish and maintain power in such states
- the domestic economic and social policies of such regimes, their impact and the success or failure of such policies.

Each of the four detailed case study chapters will have units dealing with the four major themes, so that you will be able to focus on the main issues. This approach will help you to compare and contrast the roles of the individual leaders and parties, and the main developments in the various states covered – and so spot similarities and differences.

A mass grave discovered by Allied troops when they liberated Belsen Concentration Camp in April 1945



authoritarian This term refers to regimes that are essentially conservative and traditional and that try to defend existing institutions and keep all sections of society politically and organisationally passive.

ideology This term usually refers to the logically related set of ideas that are the basis of a political or economic theory or system. In single-party states, ideology has often been promoted via propaganda and censorship.

States and regions

The case studies in this book cover four of the most popular topics:

- the Soviet Union and Stalin
- Germany and Hitler
- China and Mao
- Cuba and Castro.

IB History and regions of the world

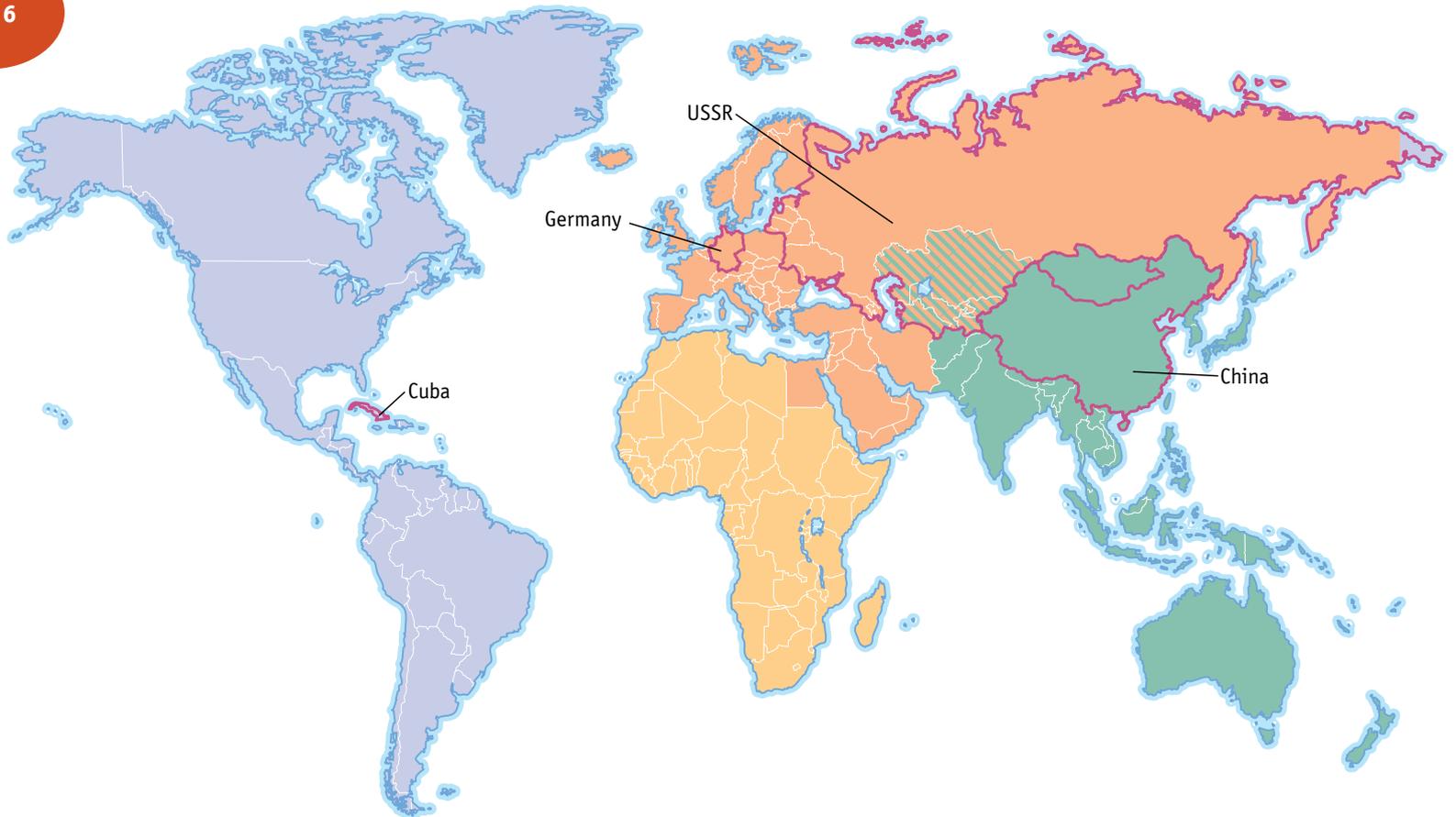
For the purposes of study, IB History specifies four regions of the world:

- Europe and the Middle East
- Asia and Oceania
- the Americas
- Africa.

Where relevant, you need to be able to identify these regions and discuss developments that took place within them. They are shown on the map below, which also indicates the states covered by this book.

The four IB regions are shown on this map, along with some of the states covered by this book.

Remember that if you are answering a question that asks you to choose two different states or leaders, each from a *different* region, you *must* be careful and choose correctly. Every year, some examination candidates attempting such questions select two states from the *same* region. This limits them to a maximum of 7 marks out of the 20 available for Paper 2 questions.



You may well, of course, study some other examples of one-party states specifically identified in the *IB History Guide* – such as Kenya and Kenyatta in Africa; Argentina and Peron in the Americas; or Egypt and Nasser in the Europe and Middle East region. You may even study relevant regimes not specifically mentioned but still acceptable, such as Italy and Mussolini, or Russia and Lenin.

Theory of knowledge

In addition to the broad key themes, the chapters contain Theory of knowledge (ToK) links to get you thinking about issues that relate to History, which is a Group 3 subject in the IB Diploma. The authoritarian and single-party states topic has clear links to ideas about knowledge and history. This topic is highly political, as it concerns opposing ideologies, and at times these have influenced the historians writing about the various states and leaders involved. Thus questions relating to the selection of sources, and to interpretations of these sources by historians, have clear links to the IB Theory of knowledge course.

For example, to make their case, historians must decide which evidence to select and use and which evidence to leave out. But to what extent do the historians' personal political views influence their decisions when they select what they consider to be the most important or relevant sources and when they make judgements about the value and limitations of specific sources or sets of sources? Is there such a thing as objective 'historical truth'? Or is there just a range of subjective historical opinions and interpretations about the past that vary according to the political interests and leanings of individual historians?

You are therefore encouraged to read a range of books giving different interpretations of the origins and development of the authoritarian and single-party states covered in this book, in order to gain a clear understanding of the relevant historiographies.

Exam skills needed for IB History

Throughout the main chapters of this book, there are various activities and questions to help you develop the understanding and the exam skills necessary for success. Before attempting the specific exam practice questions that come at the end of the main chapters, students might find it useful to refer *first* to [Chapter 6](#), the final Exam Practice chapter. This suggestion is based on the idea that if you know where you are supposed to be going (in this instance, gaining a good mark and grade) and how to get there, you stand a better chance of reaching your destination!

Questions and markschemes

To ensure that you develop the necessary understanding and skills, each chapter contains a number of questions in the margins. In addition, three of the main Paper 1-type questions (comprehension, cross-referencing and reliability/utility) are dealt with in [Chapters 2 to 5](#). Help for the longer Paper 1 judgement/synthesis questions and the Paper 2 essay questions can be found in [Chapter 6](#).

For additional help, simplified markschemes have been put together in ways that should make it easier to understand what examiners are looking for in examination answers. The actual IB History markschemes can be found on the IB website.

Finally, you will find examiners' tips and comments, along with activities, to help you focus on the important aspects of questions and their answers. These will also help you avoid simple mistakes and oversights that, every year, result in even some otherwise good students failing to gain the highest marks.

Terminology and definitions

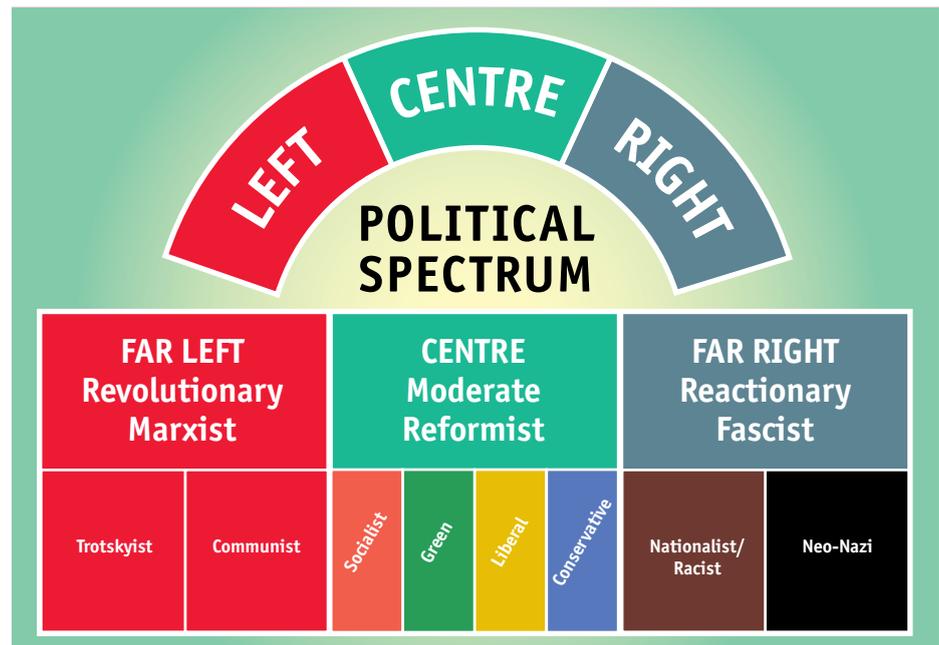
The history of the single-party states that emerged in Russia and Germany after the First World War (1914–18), and in China and Cuba after the Second World War (1939–45), is often seen as extremely complicated. In part, this is the result of the large number of different political terms used to describe the ideologies and the forms of political rule that existed in those states. There is also the added complication that different historians have at times used the same terms in slightly different ways. To help you understand the various ideologies and the historical arguments and interpretations, you will need to understand the meaning of such terms as 'left' and 'right', 'communist' and 'fascist', and 'authoritarian' and 'totalitarian'. You will then be able to focus on the similarities and differences between the various single-party regimes.

Ideological terms

At first glance, understanding the various political ideologies appears to be straightforward, as the history of most single-party states can in many ways be seen as being based on one of two opposing political ideologies: 'communism' or 'fascism'.

Unfortunately, it is not quite as simple as this, as both communism and fascism have more than one strand. Consequently, historical figures and historians have often meant different things despite using the same terms. At the same time, some have argued that communism and fascism should not be seen as two extremes at opposite ends of the political spectrum. Instead, they argue that the spectrum almost forms a circle. In this way, they stress the similarities rather than the contrasts between the extremes. However, this approach relates to practice rather than to political theory.

The political spectrum



Fact

The terms 'left' and 'right' are based on the political terminology that developed from the early stages of the French Revolution of 1789. At this time, the most radical political groups sat on the left side of the National Convention, while the most conservative ones sat on the right. Communists can be described as being on the far (or extreme) left, while fascists are on the extreme right, with fundamentally opposed ideologies.

Fact

The terms 'communism' and 'fascism' emerged during the 19th and 20th centuries. They are generally seen as two diametrically opposed ideologies or theories, at the opposite ends of the political spectrum. Generally, the fundamental difference between these two political theories is that communism is dedicated to destroying capitalism, while fascism in practice has often been described as capitalism's most ruthless defender.

Communism

Marxism

The political roots of Marxism can be traced back to the writings of one man, Karl Marx (1818–83) – or two men, if Marx’s close collaborator Friedrich Engels (1820–95) is included. The writings of Marx were based on the materialist conception of history that he developed, and on his theory that human history was largely determined by the ‘history of class struggles’ between ruling and oppressed classes. Marx believed that if the workers were successful in overthrowing capitalism, they would be able to construct a socialist society. This would still be a class-based society but one in which, for the first time in human history, the ruling class would be the majority of the population (i.e. the working class).

From this new form of human society, Marx believed it would eventually be possible to move to an even better one: a communist society. This would be a classless society, and a society of plenty rather than scarcity because it would be based on the economic advances of industrial capitalism. However, Marx did not write much about the political forms that would be adopted under socialism and communism, other than to say that it would be more democratic and less repressive than previous societies, as the majority of the population would be in control.

Marxist theory of stages

Marx believed in the idea of ‘permanent revolution’ or ‘uninterrupted revolution’ – a series of revolutionary stages in which, after one stage had been achieved, the next class struggle would begin almost immediately. He did not believe that ‘progression’ through the stages of society was inevitable. He also argued that, in special circumstances, a relatively backward society could ‘jump’ a stage. However, this would only happen if that state was aided by sympathetic advanced societies. He certainly did not believe that a poor agricultural society could move to socialism on its own, as socialism required an advanced industrial base.

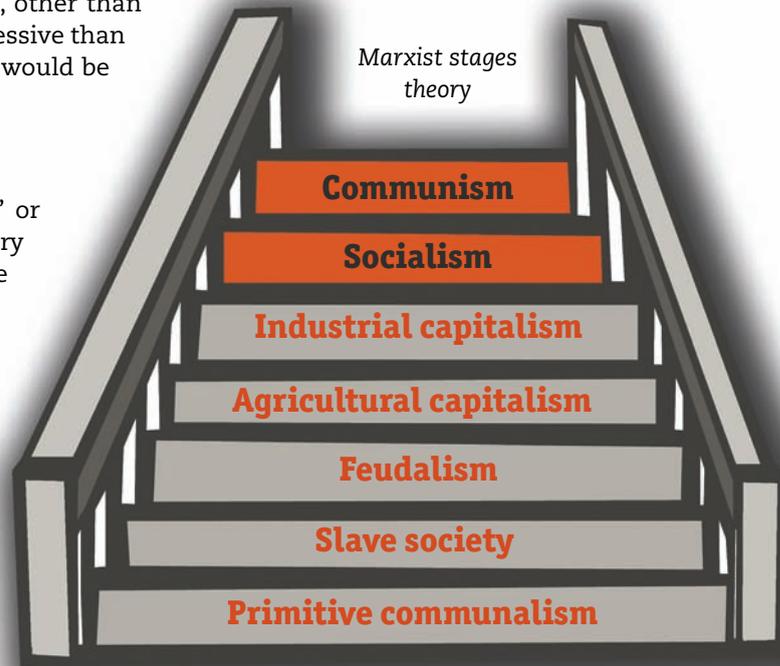
Leninism

Marx did not refer to himself as a ‘Marxist’. He preferred the term ‘communist’, as in the title of the book he and Engels wrote in 1847, *The Communist Manifesto*. However, many of Marx’s followers preferred to call themselves Marxists as well as communists. In this way, they distinguished themselves from other groups that claimed to be communist, and emphasised that Marxism and its methods formed a distinct philosophy.

One such Marxist was the Russian revolutionary Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (1870–1924). Lenin developed some of Marx’s economic ideas but his most important contribution to Marxist theory related to political organisation. His main ideas, based on the extremely undemocratic political system operating in tsarist Russia, were ‘democratic centralism’ (see page 27) and the need for a small ‘vanguard’ party (a leading group) of fully committed revolutionaries.

Fact

The materialist conception of history was set out by Marx in his *Critique of Political Economy* (1859). Essentially he argued that the economic structure, based on the relations of production in any society (i.e. which class owns the important parts of an economy, such as land, factories, mines and banks) is the real foundation of any society, and on this are built the legal, political and intellectual superstructures of society. He went on to say that it was social existence that largely determines people’s consciousness or beliefs, rather than the other way round.



However, Leon Trotsky (1879–1940), a leading Russian Marxist, disagreed with Lenin. From 1903 to 1917, Trotsky argued that Lenin’s system would allow an unscrupulous leader to become a dictator over the party. Nevertheless, both Lenin and Trotsky believed in the possibility of a society moving through the revolutionary stages quickly to the socialist phase. This idea was similar to Marx’s idea of ‘permanent revolution’, which argued that, as soon as one stage had been achieved, the struggle for the next would begin almost immediately.

Like Marx, Lenin and Trotsky both believed that Russia could not succeed in carrying through any ‘uninterrupted revolution’ without outside economic and technical assistance. When this assistance failed to materialise, despite their earlier hopes of successful workers’ revolutions in other European states after 1918, Lenin proved to be an extremely pragmatic – or opportunistic – ruler. He was quite prepared to adopt policies that seemed to be in total conflict with communist goals and even with those of the ‘lower’ socialist stage: these policies were seen as adaptations to the prevailing circumstances.

Marxism–Leninism

The term Marxism–Leninism, invented by Stalin, was not used until after Lenin’s death in 1924. It soon came to be used in Stalin’s Soviet Union to refer to what he described as ‘orthodox Marxism’, which increasingly came to mean what Stalin himself had to say about political and economic issues. Essentially, Marxism–Leninism was the ‘official’ ideology of the Soviet state and of all communist parties loyal to Stalin and his successors. Many Marxists – and even members of the Communist Party itself – believed that Stalin’s ideas and practices (such as ‘socialism in one country’ and the purges – see [Chapter 2](#)) were in fact almost total distortions of what Marx and Lenin had said and done.

Stalinism

The term Stalinism is used both by historians and those politically opposed to Stalin to describe the views and practices associated with Stalin and his supporters. Historians and political scientists use it to mean a set of beliefs and a type of rule that are essentially deeply undemocratic and even dictatorial.

Marxist opponents of Stalin and post-Stalin rulers were determined to show that Stalinism was not an adaptation of Marxism but, on the contrary, a qualitative and fundamental aberration from both Leninism and Marxism, and from revolutionary communism in general. In particular, they stress the way in which Stalin and his supporters – and later Mao in China – rejected the goal of **socialist democracy** in favour of a permanent one-party state. They also emphasise how Stalinism in practice and in theory placed the national interests of the Soviet Union above the struggle to achieve world revolution.

Fascism

Attempts by historians to agree on a definition of ‘fascism’ have proved even more difficult. Stanley Payne defined fascism as ‘a form of revolutionary **ultra-nationalism** for national rebirth’. However, this definition says nothing about fascism being a movement committed to the destruction of all independent working-class organisations – especially socialist and communist parties and trade unions. Also absent is any reference to anti-Semitism or racism in general. Other historians stress these aspects as being core elements of fascism.

Fascism is certainly one of the most controversial and misused terms in the history of the modern world. For example, it is often used loosely as a term of

socialist democracy This term refers to a form of democracy advocated by revolutionary socialists, in which government is in the hands of the people, who have the right of immediate recall of elected representatives who break their promises. In this system, all parties that accept the goal of ending capitalist exploitation should be allowed to exist, and the state makes newspaper facilities available to all groups with sufficient support.

ultra-nationalism This is an extremely strong belief in the superiority of one’s own country and a desire to advance that country at the expense of others – including by waging wars.

abuse to describe any political regime, movement or individual seen as being right-wing or authoritarian. The issue is further complicated by the fact that, unlike with Marxism/communism, there is no coherent or unified ideology or *Weltanschauung* (world view).

Fascism and the 'third way'

Some historians and political commentators have seen fascism simply as a series of unconnected and unco-ordinated reactions to the impact of the First World War and the Russian Revolution (1917), which varied from country to country and about which it is therefore impossible to generalise. Thus fascism is seen as an opportunistic form of extreme nationalism that in political terms lay somewhere between communism and capitalism. In other words, it was a political 'third way' or 'third force'.

Fascism and ideology

Unlike Marxism/communism, the 'ideology' of fascism does not appear to have existed before the end of the First World War. It was in Italy that Benito Mussolini (1883–1945) and other ultra-nationalists took the term *fascio* (meaning 'band', 'union' or 'group') for their own political organisation.

It is possible – with the benefit of hindsight – to trace the intellectual origins of fascism back to a rudimentary form of fascism that developed in the 19th century. Sometimes referred to as 'proto-fascism', this developed as a result of a 'new right' reaction against the late 18th-century liberal ideas of the Enlightenment and early 19th-century 'positivism'. Both of these philosophies had emphasised the importance of reason and progress over nature and emotion.

Fascism and Nazism

In addition to trying to establish a specific and coherent fascist ideology, there is the problem of comparing the different states of fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, and assessing to what extent they were similar. Those who argue that there is a general fascist category to which all fascist parties conform, to a greater or lesser extent, tend to see right-wing and left-wing dictatorships as being fundamentally different. One problem with the attempt to portray all fascist parties as being broadly similar is the question of racism and, more specifically, anti-Semitism. While anti-Semitism was not a core belief in Italian fascism, it was one of the main tenets of the German Nazi Party.

Dictatorships – authoritarian or totalitarian?

As well as having to understand the various political ideologies, it is also necessary to be familiar with several terms used by historians and political scientists. Dictatorship is the term used to describe a regime in which democracy, individual rights and parliamentary rule are absent. Dictatorships have tended to be divided into two categories: authoritarian and totalitarian.

Authoritarian dictatorships

According to Karl Dietrich Bracher, authoritarian dictatorships do not come to power as the result of a mass movement or revolution. Instead, such regimes arise when an existing **conservative** regime imposes increasingly undemocratic measures, intended to neutralise and immobilise mass political and industrial organisations. Alternatively, they can arise following a military coup. Whatever their origin, authoritarian regimes are firmly committed to maintaining or restoring traditional structures and values.

conservative A conservative political doctrine favours keeping things as they are and upholding traditional structures and values. It is a right-wing doctrine.

totalitarian A totalitarian dictatorship is often defined as a system in which a dictator is able to impose their will on party, state and society – all of which are strictly disciplined. Such regimes come to power as the result of a mass movement or revolution and, at least in theory, are committed to a radical ideology and programme of political, economic and social change. The term is usually applied to regimes such as Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union. However, many historians question whether all sections of society in such regimes were totally passive. Even the historian Robert Conquest, who used to advocate a stronger totalitarian interpretation, now concedes that Stalin was not always able to impose his will. Other possible examples of totalitarian dictatorships are those of Mao in China and – less convincingly – of Castro in Cuba.

Totalitarian dictatorships

In any comparative study of single-party states, it is important to understand the debate surrounding the application of the 'totalitarian' label. In fact, the history of the term 'totalitarian' is complex. Those historians who argue that fascist and communist dictatorships were similar tend to believe that all such regimes were totalitarian dictatorships with many features in common.

SOURCE A

Stalin's police state is not an approximation to, or something like, or in some respects comparable with Hitler's. It is the same thing, only *more* ruthless, *more* cold-blooded ... and *more* dangerous to democracy and civilised morals.

Eastman, M. 1955. Reflections on the Failure of Socialism. New York, USA. Devin-Adair. p. 87.

However, such totalitarian theories were first developed by US theorists during the Cold War in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Several historians and political commentators from the 1960s onwards pointed out that the attempt to equate the Soviet Union with Nazi Germany was essentially a crude attempt to persuade public opinion in the USA and other Western countries to accept permanent war preparations and military threats against the Soviet Union after 1945.

The concept of totalitarianism – or total political power – was first developed systematically by Giovanni Amendola in 1923. In 1925, Mussolini took over Amendola's term and claimed that fascism was based on a 'fierce totalitarian will', stating that all aspects of the state, politics, and cultural and spiritual life should be 'fascistised': 'Everything within the state. Nothing outside the state. Nothing against the state.' Since then, several historians have attempted to define the meaning of the term 'totalitarian' by identifying certain basic features that are not normally features of authoritarian dictatorships. For a fuller examination of these, see page 30.

Summary

By the time you have worked through this book, you should be able to:

- understand and explain the various factors behind the origins and rise of single-party states, and be able to evaluate the different historical interpretations surrounding them
- show an awareness of the role of leaders and ideology in the rise to power of such regimes
- show a broad understanding of the nature of different single-party states
- understand the methods used by such leaders and regimes to maintain and consolidate power, including how opposition groups were treated, and the use of repression and propaganda
- understand the key economic and social policies of such regimes, their impact on society, and their successes and failures
- understand and explain the various policies towards women, ethnic minorities and organised religion.

5 Castro and Cuba

1 Origins and rise, 1933–59

Timeline

1868 Oct: First War of Independence (Ten Years War) begins

1895 Feb: Jose Martí begins a Second War of Independence

1898 Jul: USA defeats Spain in Spanish–American War; Cuba is ceded to the USA

1901 Mar: the US Platt Amendment

1902 May: Cuba becomes independent, under US ‘protection’

1927 May: Machado’s dictatorship begins

1933 Aug: Machado flees – de Céspedes becomes president

Sep: Sergeants’ coup takes place, led by Batista; Grau becomes president

1934 Jan: Batista increases power; Grau steps down; opposition is repressed

1940 Aug: new constitution is passed

Oct: Batista is elected president

1944 Jun: Batista is succeeded by Grau

1952 Mar: Batista heads another coup

1953 Jul: Castro launches an attack on the Moncada army barracks

1955 Jul: Castro goes to Mexico; 26 July Movement is formed

1956 Dec: Castro’s band of revolutionaries lands in Cuba; guerrilla war begins in the Sierra Maestra mountains

1958 May: Batista’s unsuccessful offensive

Dec: Batista resigns

1959 Jan: Castro enters Havana



Fidel Castro (centre) entering Havana on 8 January 1959, following the 26 July Movement’s victory over Batista’s forces

Key questions

- How did the historical context of Cuba before 1953 contribute to Castro's rise to power?
- What were the key stages in Castro's struggle against Batista's dictatorship in the period 1953–59?
- Why was Castro successful in his bid to overthrow Batista?

Overview

- Before 1902, Cuba was a Spanish colony. Nationalist Cubans fought two Wars of Independence against Spain – from 1868 to 1878 and from 1895 to 1898. Following four years of US control, Cuba became independent in 1902.
- However, the US Platt Amendment of 1901, which the 1902 Cuban constitution had to include, gave the USA powers of supervision and intervention.
- Cuban politics was corrupt and, in the 1920s, students and others launched radical protest movements.
- From 1927, Cuba was ruled by the dictator Gerardo Machado, but protests and a general strike in 1933 forced him to flee.
- The hopes of the 1933 radicals ended in 1934, when power increasingly passed to Fulgencio Batista. From 1934 to 1959, Batista ruled directly or through a series of puppet presidents.
- In 1953, Fidel Castro launched an unsuccessful attack on the army barracks at Moncada. In Mexico, his 26 July Movement planned Batista's overthrow.
- In 1956, Castro landed in Cuba with a small group of revolutionaries. The group included Che Guevara. By 1959, their guerrilla war had forced Batista to flee Cuba.

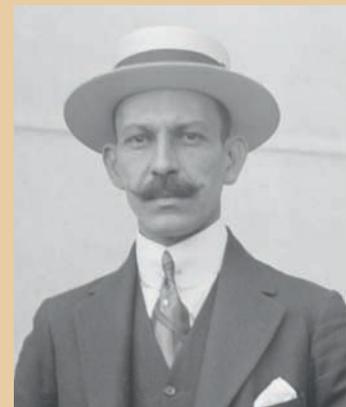
How did the historical context of Cuba before 1953 contribute to Castro's rise to power?

Castro's rise to power was unexpected – the start of his political revolt was marked by lack of resources, early mistakes and mishaps. Nevertheless, within the space of three years, his movement was able successfully to overcome the armed forces of a brutal US-backed military dictatorship. The origins of a single-party state in Cuba lie in the political and economic problems of Cuba before 1956 – especially in the period after 1933 – and in Castro's guerrilla war of 1956–59.

The situation before 1933

During the 19th century, a strong independence movement had grown in Cuba. An unsuccessful revolt against Spanish rule, the First War of Independence (or Ten Years' War), took place between 1868 and 1878. This was followed by a Second War of Independence from 1895 to 1898. At first, this was led by **José Martí**, a revolutionary poet, political thinker and lawyer known as the 'Apostle'. By then, Cuba was Spain's last colony in the region. In 1898, when it looked as if the rebels were winning, the USA declared war on Spain. This short Spanish–American War ended in defeat for Spain, which was forced to give up Cuba in December 1898.

José Martí (1853–95) After the First War of Independence, Martí spent 15 years in exile in New York, raising money to re-launch the struggle for Cuban independence and racial equality. He felt the US party system was corrupt, saw US imperialism as a threat to Cuban independence, was anti-capitalist and pro-labour movement, but was critical of Marx. In 1892, he set up the Cuban Revolutionary Party (PRC).





A map of Cuba showing the regions of Cuba and the sites of Castro's 1956 Granma landing and the failed US-backed Bay of Pigs invasion of 1961

Question

Why was the Platt Amendment of 1901 a disappointment for those Cubans wanting complete independence for their country?

In many respects, Cubans had merely replaced one colonial power with another: in 1901, by the terms of the Platt Amendment, the USA claimed the right to intervene in Cuba's affairs. The USA did not grant the new republic of Cuba formal independence until 1902, and insisted that the new Cuban constitution include the Platt Amendment. From 1902 to 1921, the USA intervened militarily four times to ensure that Cuban governments followed policies that were good for US investments, which increased greatly after 1902.

Fact

By 1926, US investments in Cuba were valued at \$1360 million – mainly in sugar, railways, mining, banking, electricity, telephones, commerce and land. They reached their peak in 1958. Organised crime, controlled by the US mafia, also had considerable influence on Cuban political and economic life, especially as regards corruption.

From the beginning, Cuba's politicians were corrupt, and elections were often rigged. Opposition to this and a desire to end Cuba's economic subservience to the USA inspired two radical student movements (1923 and 1927–1933), based on Martí's radical anti-imperialism and egalitarianism. Despite repression, opposition continued.

The revolution of 1933–34

On 12 August 1933, increasing unrest forced Machado (who, elected in 1925, had ruled as a dictator since 1927) to resign and flee to the USA. The USA then helped put together a conservative-dominated and pro-US provisional government, headed by Carlos Manuel de Céspedes.

However, protests and strikes continued and, on 4 September, army NCOs (non-commissioned officers, known as 'sub-officers' in some countries) staged a coup. With students and other civilian leaders, they proclaimed a new Provisional

Revolutionary Government, led by Ramón Grau San Martín, a university professor. Grau's government, sworn in on 10 September, issued a manifesto promising national sovereignty, a new constitution, democracy and reforms for a 'new Cuba'. The Platt Amendment was abolished, women were given the vote, prices were cut and wages increased. These developments worried business people, and the US ambassador began to suggest US military intervention.

Batista's counter-revolution, 1934

The leader of the NCO army group in this 'sergeants' revolt' of September 1933 was **Fulgencio Batista**. The USA refused to recognise Grau's government because of its proposed reforms, and a split developed between moderates and a more radical left, led by Antonio Guiteras, who was minister of the interior, war and the navy. Another leader of the radical left was Eduardo 'Eddy' Chibás. However, unrest continued. Batista – concerned with military matters – then had meetings with the US ambassador, who persuaded Batista to take power by using his control of the army to impose a president and government that would 'protect' US economic and political interests in Cuba. On 16 January 1934, Batista transferred his support to Colonel Carlos Mendieta, a conservative politician who was immediately recognised by the USA. This ended the reforms of the short-lived 1933–34 revolution.

Puppet presidents, 1934–40

For the rest of the 1930s, Batista and the army were the real power behind seven civilian puppet presidents, who could only enact measures approved by Batista and the USA. During the years 1934–35, students resumed protests and over 100 strikes took place. Batista soon turned on the left, and used the army to crush and kill opponents. Guiteras formed the *Joven Cuba* (Young Cuba), which became an urban guerrilla movement, and called general strikes in 1934 and 1935. The general strike of March 1935 collapsed after a few days, and the severity of the military repression soon ended political protest. Mendieta and Batista imposed martial law: strike leaders were arrested and unions banned. Guiteras was later shot dead by soldiers as he tried to flee to Mexico in order to carry on the struggle, while many demonstrators were executed by firing squad.

Grau formed a new middle-class movement, based on Martí's old party: the *Partido Revolucionaria Cubano Auténtico* – known as the Auténticos. The communists – founded in 1925 – were renamed the *Partido Socialista Popular* (PSP). They agreed to co-operate with Batista and replaced revolutionary with reformist politics.

New constitution, new coup, 1940–52

In November 1939, Batista organised elections for a constituent assembly to draw up a new constitution – Grau's Auténticos won 41 of the 76 seats. The assembly met in February 1940, and the new constitution was passed in August 1940. Batista was elected as president in October 1940. However, as a result of economic problems, Grau and his Auténticos party won a sweeping victory over Batista's preferred candidate for the role of president in the 1944 elections, and Batista – in charge of the army and with US support – went back to ruling from behind the scenes until 1952.

Grau's government of 1944–48, aware of Batista's power, soon abandoned the reforms expected by their supporters, and corruption continued. This disappointed those Auténticos wanting social reforms, so in 1947 Chibás formed the more radical PRC *Ortodoxo*, known as the Ortodoxos.

Fulgencio Batista (1901–73)

Batista was born on a sugar plantation. He joined the army at the age of 19, became a stenographer and rose to the rank of sergeant, participating in military tribunals. He dominated Cuban politics from 1934 to 1959 and, though remembered as a corrupt and brutal dictator, he enjoyed genuine popularity when he was the elected president from 1940 to 1944.



Question

Why are the Cuban presidents from 1934 to 1940 often called 'puppet presidents'?

Fidel Castro (b. 1926) Castro was the son of a successful Spanish immigrant. He followed the classic path of the son of a *peninsular* (the most recent immigrants from Spain and the Canary Islands, and from mainland Latin America) – educated by Jesuits; in 1945, he went to university to study law. He became involved in radical student politics, but stayed clear of the communists. After graduation, he travelled around Latin America, meeting other radical nationalists; he was caught up in the short-lived popular rising in Bogota in 1948.



The 1948 elections were won by the Auténticos. This government of 1948–52, according to Julia Sweig, became one of the most corrupt and undemocratic in Cuba's history to date. Prior to the 1952 elections, Batista led another coup on 10 March 1952, cancelled the elections and ruled directly until 1959.

What were the key stages in Castro's struggle against Batista's dictatorship in the period 1953–59?

Batista's coup in 1952 met with little resistance from either the Ortodoxo or Auténtico parties, or the general public – especially as Batista promised an election in 1954. However, one person who was determined to oppose the coup was **Fidel Castro**.

Castro and the Moncada attack

On 26 July 1953, Fidel Castro and his brother, Raúl, led 165 youths in an attack on the Moncada army barracks in Santiago de Cuba in order to obtain weapons – but it was a failure. Half of the attackers were killed, wounded or arrested. Batista's police then began to slaughter any suspects, so the Castro brothers gave themselves up. They, along with about 100 others, were put on trial. Castro took on their defence.

Batista's troops looking at the corpses of some of the rebels killed during Castro's failed attack on the Moncada barracks in Santiago de Cuba on 26 July 1953



SOURCE A

It looked as if his [Marti's] memory would be extinguished forever. But he lives. He has not died. His people are rebellious, his people are worthy, his people are faithful to his memory. Cubans have fallen defending his doctrines. Young men, in a magnificent gesture of reparation, have come to give their blood and to die in the hearts of his countrymen. Oh Cuba! What would have become of you if you had let the memory of your apostle die! ... Condemn me, it does not matter – history will absolve me.

The concluding part of the speech Castro made at the trial following the attack on the Moncada barracks. No record was made of the two-hour speech at the time – he recreated it from memory later. Quoted in Gott, R. 2004. Cuba: A New History. New Haven, USA. Yale University Press. p. 151.

Castro's 'History will absolve me' speech (see Source A) later became the manifesto of his movement, and contained the '**five revolutionary laws**' that would have been published if his attack had been successful. Only 26 of the group were found guilty, and most were treated leniently. Fidel Castro was sentenced to 15 years in prison and Raúl to 13 years.

Batista won the 1954 election unopposed – in effect, Batista's control meant moderate political opposition had no way to present an alternative. His return to repression opened the way for armed opposition. During 1955 and 1956, armed groups such as *Directorio Revolucionario Estudiantil* (DRE) and the *Organización Auténtica* (OA) were set up to resist Batista's brutal repression. However, it was to be Castro who, in the end, organised the movement that was to end Batista's dictatorship.

The 26 July Movement

On 15 May 1955, Fidel and Raúl Castro were among many prisoners released by Batista in an attempt to improve his public image. Immediately, they began to form what became known as the 26 July Movement. At first, Fidel Castro identified his new movement with the *Chibatismo* (the Chibás wing of the *Ortodoxos*) but, in July, he and his supporters decided to go to Mexico, to plan Batista's overthrow.

Preparing the revolution, Mexico 1955–56

Castro and his 26 July group stayed in Mexico for almost a year, plotting against Batista and raising money to print two manifestos. On 19 March 1956, he published a letter publicly separating his 26 July Movement from the *Chibatismo* and the *Ortodoxos*.

While in Mexico, one of Castro's early recruits was Ernesto 'Che' Guevara, who soon became a loyal collaborator, and later became an important international symbol of rebellion.

The five revolutionary laws

- 1 Return power to the people by reinstating the constitution of 1940.
- 2 Land rights for all those holding (or squatting on) less than 67 hectares (165 acres).
- 3 Workers in large industries and mines to have 30% share of profits.
- 4 Sugar planters to have 55% share of the profits from their production.
- 5 Action to stop corruption – property confiscated from those found guilty of fraud would be spent on workers' pensions, hospitals, asylums and charities.

Castro also promised reorganisation of public education, nationalisation of public utilities and telephones, and rent controls.

Question

Why was Castro's movement known as the 26 July Movement?

By February 1956, Castro had begun to train his 'army'. However, the Mexican authorities discovered their plans and Castro, Che Guevara and some others were arrested. Once released, planning was renewed in greater secrecy. Following more raids by the Mexican police, Castro decided it was time to take his band of revolutionaries to Cuba – on the *Granma*, an old motor yacht. They left Mexico on 25 November 1956.

From Mexico to the Sierra Maestra

Castro had arranged for an armed rebellion to take place on 30 November in Santiago, under Frank País, the movement's leader in Cuba. This was intended to coincide with Castro's expected arrival in Cuba, but the revolt had been crushed before his group landed. On 2 December 1956, Castro and his small group of 81 revolutionaries landed on Cuban soil – in the wrong place and two days late. Batista's forces – alerted by the failed 30 November revolt – were there to meet him. In two days of fighting, several of the *Granma* party were killed, and 22 captured and later put on trial. Only 16 of Castro's group remained free and alive, and many of their weapons, ammunition and supplies had been lost.

This photograph, taken in the Sierra Maestra, shows Fidel Castro (wearing glasses), with leading guerrillas in the 26 July Movement, Celia Sánchez (behind him) and Camilo Cienfuegos (right); Celia Sánchez was Castro's closest friend and his lover, and had been a political adviser to him since 1953

Questions

What can you learn about the nature of Castro's movement from this photograph? What is the significance of the armband Castro is wearing?



The surviving **Fidelistas** retreated to the south-eastern mountain range known as the Sierra Maestra. It was from here that Castro began to organise a campaign of **guerrilla warfare**.

Batista responded to the guerilla campaign by forcibly clearing peasants from the lower slopes of the mountains – those remaining in the area could be killed as revolutionaries. Batista also used bombers and paramilitary death squads, known as *Los Tigres*.

Attacks by the 26 July Movement were increasingly successful, and soon the movement began to attract recruits from the local population, allowing Castro to organise bigger offensives. However, until February 1957, most people thought Castro had been killed, as this was what Batista and the Cuban press reported.

What changed things were the reports of **Herbert Matthews**, foreign correspondent of the *New York Times*, who was taken to meet Castro by Frank País. Matthews reported Castro's successes, which encouraged Batista's opponents and brought extra recruits. Throughout 1957 and early 1958, the size of Castro's rebel army increased and the area of military operations expanded. The sympathy and respect they showed for the poor peasants gave them valuable support amongst the local population.

The urban resistance

Castro also organised a 'civic resistance movement' on a national scale, to get support from workers and liberal middle-class professionals. This movement was established first in Havana, and saw 26 July Movement supporters collaborating with middle-class Ortodoxos. In overall control was **Frank País**.

In July 1957, just before he was gunned down by Batista's police, País had persuaded leading Ortodoxo politicians and business people to issue a joint 'Pact of the Sierra', which called for a 'civic revolutionary front' to force Batista from power and hold new elections.

In early 1958, the communist PSP finally gave its support to Castro. Castro's movement then began to discuss plans for a revolutionary general strike in the cities. Faustino Pérez, the new leader of the movement and the 'civic resistance' in Havana, thought the time was ripe – Castro was less sure.

However, Castro let the planned strike go ahead. He and Pérez signed a manifesto, *Total War Against Tyranny*, calling for a strike and declaring that the struggle against Batista had entered 'its final stage'. The manifesto also outlined political plans for the post-Batista period. The date of the general strike was set for 9 April 1958.

But the police and the army were ready, and the uprising was soon defeated. However, although this failure led Castro to decide to concentrate on the guerrilla war, the working class remained an important part of the movement's campaign against Batista, and was to be significant for developments after Castro's victory.

The final stage

By this point, Cuba was on the verge of revolution. In February 1958, Castro's 26 July Movement had announced a war on property and production, in order to further isolate Batista by hitting the economic élites – both national and foreign – that had up to then supported him.

Fidelistas Originally, this referred to the close group of early supporters of Fidel Castro and the 26 July Movement – in Mexico, the Sierra and in the first governments. They were a cross-section of Cuban society – workers, peasant, black people and middle-class liberals – who responded to Castro's charismatic appeal.

guerrilla warfare This is the name given to war fought by small forces of irregular soldiers against regular armies, involving unorthodox methods; guerrillas tend to be most effective when they have the support of local people.

Herbert Matthews (1900–77)

Matthews, a reporter during the Spanish Civil War (1936–39), was a strong supporter of the republican cause against Franco in Spain. Castro's supporters contacted him and smuggled him up to Castro's armed group. His articles praised the bravery and commitment of the rebels, and exploded Batista's claims that Castro was dead. They also made Castro into an international figure.

Frank País (1930–57)

País trained as a schoolteacher but, after Batista's coup in 1952, he became a full-time activist for the 26 July Movement. He first met Castro in Mexico in August 1956 and was instrumental in ensuring that weapons and supplies reached the guerrillas in the Sierra. He also persuaded journalists such as Matthews to report on Castro's war. He was assassinated in Santiago in July 1957 and his funeral was followed by a general strike that lasted five days.

SOURCE B

[Commerce, industry and capital], which have whole-heartedly supported President Batista since he took over the government in 1952, are growing impatient with the continued violence in the island.

Comments in a telegram sent by the resident New York Times correspondent in Havana, 15 September 1957. Quoted in Bethell, L. (ed.). 1993. Cuba: A Short History. Cambridge, UK. Cambridge University Press. p. 90.

By mid 1958, four other guerrilla fronts had been opened up, while mergers with other rebel bands succeeded in gaining more local recruits for the 26 July Movement. In May 1958, Batista launched a massive 'liquidation campaign' to crush Castro's forces, involving over 12,000 troops. By then, Castro's forces were about 5000 strong.

Question

What was the significance of the Pact of Caracas of July 1958?

In July 1958, while the offensive was still taking place, representatives of the leading opposition groups met in Caracas, Venezuela, to organise a united front against Batista. The resulting 'Pact of Caracas' saw Castro recognised as the principal leader of the anti-Batista movement, with his rebel army as the main arm of the revolution.

Castro's counter-offensive

By August 1958, the government offensive had collapsed. This proved to be an important turning point and, in the late summer, Castro's forces launched a counter-offensive. Within weeks, the government's forces in the east were overrun and cut off from reinforcements. More and more provincial towns went over to the rebels. After these successes, several leaders of the communist PSP, which had allied itself with Castro's forces in early 1958, took up positions within Castro's movement.

Castro now turned his attention to the west and Havana. Batista's increased use of terror (including torture and executions) at last provoked spontaneous uprisings across the island, and more and more people joined the urban resistance or the guerrilla groups.

By the end of 1958, Castro's guerrilla army numbered about 50,000 and was clearly in control of the countryside. This provoked several military plots against Batista so, on New Year's Eve 1958, he resigned and fled with his family. Batista's army units then ceased to offer any resistance to Castro's forces.

On 1 January 1959, after an unsuccessful US-backed coup, command of the army passed to Colonel Ramon Barguin, who on 2 January 1959 ordered an immediate ceasefire. On the same day, in Santiago de Cuba, Castro made a speech in which he said that 'The Revolution begins now', making it clear that this time, unlike in 1898, the USA would not be allowed to dominate Cuba's history.

A week later, on 8 January 1959, after a slow progress through cheering crowds, Fidel Castro entered Havana to a hero's welcome.

Fact

The communist PSP had considerable support amongst workers and black people, but was not trusted by groups on the left – especially as it had given limited support to Batista after 1937. In 1942, two communists even entered Batista's cabinet. However, after the start of the Cold War and his 1952 coup, Batista banned the PSP. By 1957, they were openly in opposition to Batista.

Why was Castro successful in his bid to overthrow Batista?

Military and political factors

One reason for the success of Castro's guerrilla movement was the quality of his commanders, including **Che Guevara**, Raúl Castro and Camilo Cienfuegos. Another reason was that, despite the disastrous start, the area in which his small group of survivors began operations was an unimportant part of the island, with only a few Rural Guard (a paramilitary police force) outposts. Moreover, the local population had been terrorised by commanders from the Rural Guard for decades, and resented the central government in Havana. The growing success of the guerrilla group's military offensives meant Batista was forced to divert troops to the rural areas from the cities, allowing opposition there to mobilise.

SOURCE C

The Cuban revolutionary struggle was a national one, encompassing all sectors of Cuban society. However, critical to its success was the working class, which 'provided a backdrop to the revolutionary struggle'. The labour movement was a dominant force in the political development and direction of the revolution. Workers were prominent actors throughout the urban wing of the revolutionary struggle, which complemented the rural armed struggle.

Saney, I. 2004. *Cuba: A Revolution in Motion*. London, UK. Zed Books. p. 11.

Batista's brutality and repression increased opposition to him and brought additional support for Castro's guerrillas. Furthermore, there were other problems facing Batista – as the rebel movement grew, so did dissent within the army ranks. This resulted in a series of army conspiracies that undermined Batista's confidence. By the late 1950s, Batista was thus facing mounting popular opposition and armed resistance, but with an increasingly unreliable army.

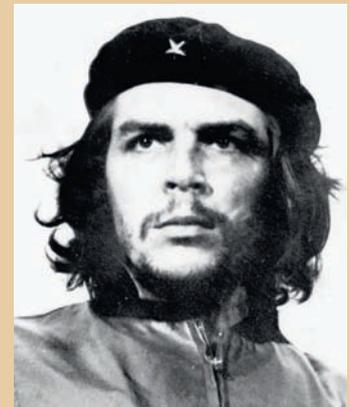
Economic developments

Another reason for Castro's success lies with the economic situation of Cuba in the 1950s. Between 1952 and 1954, the price of sugar declined, triggering the first of a series of recessions in the Cuban economy. In addition, the effects of the 1934 trade treaty with the USA, which removed tariffs, greatly contributed to the inability of Cuban industry to develop. Consequently, there was growing unemployment: by 1957, 17% of the labour force were unemployed, while a further 13% were underemployed.

Role of the USA

Another reason for Castro's eventual success was the attitude of the US government. In late 1957, the US government decided that, in order to protect US investments in Cuba and prevent Castro coming to power, it was necessary for Batista to give way to a caretaker government acceptable to US interests.

Ernesto 'Che' Guevara (1928–67) Guevara came from an upper-class Argentine family, suffered from chronic asthma, and was a medical doctor. He was in Guatemala in 1954, where he witnessed the US-backed coup that overthrew the radical Arbenz government. From Guatemala, he went to Mexico, where he met Castro. He was more socially radical than Castro, and introduced him to a wider range of political ideas.



Historical debate

Historians are divided over the importance of the urban resistance to Batista in the final victory of Castro's 26 July Movement. Read Source C on page 173 again. Do you think this is a fair statement concerning the significance of the urban resistance?

Discussion point

Working in pairs, develop arguments for a class presentation on the main reasons why Castro was eventually successful. Concentrate on three aspects:

- 1 factors that relate to Castro's actions
- 2 the role of other oppositionists
- 3 mistakes made by Batista.



Theory of knowledge

History and ethics

Is armed struggle or resistance against a government ever justified? What if there are elections, but they are manipulated or rigged? Is such a question related to moral relativism and the particular political and social contexts of different societies, or is it an example that falls under the heading of universal values?

On 9 December 1957, a financier sent by the US State Department tried but failed to persuade Batista to retire. In March 1958, the US government began to reduce its support for Batista's dictatorship. Its first step was to place an arms embargo on both sides – this both weakened Batista's hold over his military and civilian supporters, and made resistance to Castro's forces more difficult.

SOURCE D

According to US ambassador Earl E. T. Smith, intimations that Washington no longer backed Batista had 'a devastating psychological effect' on the army and was 'the most effective step taken by the Department of State in bringing about the downfall of Batista'.

Bethell, L. (ed.). 1993. *Cuba: A Short History*. Cambridge, UK. Cambridge University Press. p. 91.

End of unit activities

- 1 Carry out some further research on the attitudes of the PRC Auténtico, the PRC Ortodoxo and the communist PSP in the 1940s and 1950s towards Castro and others who advocated armed struggle as the way to end Batista's dictatorship.
- 2 Re-read pages 168–72 and, using any extra information you can obtain from other sources, produce a chart summarising the main steps in Castro's rise to power from 1953 to 1959.
- 3 Find out more about Raúl Castro and Che Guevara. Then write a couple of paragraphs to explain the significance of the roles they each played in the victory of the 26 July Movement.
- 4 Try to find a transcript of Castro's 'History will absolve me' speech. Do you think history has, in fact, absolved Castro in relation to the legitimacy of his decision to resort to armed rebellion?

2 Ideology and the nature of the state

Key questions

- What role did ideology play in Castro's rise to power before 1959?
- Did Castro become a communist after 1959?
- What is the nature of Cuba's Castroist state?

Overview

- Before 1959, Castro's ideology was a radical mix, influenced by Cuban radical nationalists such as Martí and the leaders of resistance in the 1920s and 1930s. The main aims of his ideology were for fairness, social welfare, modernisation and independence from US interference.
- Also important was the idea of *cubiana* (see page 177) – but there was little traditional socialism in the various manifestos published by his 26 July Movement between 1953 and 1959. This, along with his recourse to armed struggle, meant that the Cuban communists did not support him until after the Caracas Pact of July 1958.
- From as early as April 1959, when Castro announced the suspension of elections, relations with the USA became more and more strained. By January 1960, the USA had drawn up a plan to overthrow Castro.
- In 1960, Cuba made several trade agreements with the Soviet Union, East European states, and China. As a result of increasing US economic restrictions, Castro nationalised US companies operating in Cuba.
- In April 1961, Castro made the first announcement of Cuba's move to socialism. This was reinforced by the Bay of Pigs incident. Over the next few years, Cuba moved closer to the Soviet Union – and to a Soviet-style economy and state.
- In 1976, a new constitution was brought in to achieve *Poder Popular*, or People's Power. This constitution was amended in 1992, establishing direct elections to all three legislative tiers.

Timeline

- 1953 Jul:** *Manifesto of the Revolutionaries of Moncada to the Nation* is published
- Oct:** Castro makes his 'History will absolve me' speech
- 1956 Mar:** Castro writes a letter publicly announcing the 26 July Movement
- 1958 Jul:** Caracas Pact; communist PSP begins co-operation with the 26 July Movement
- 1959 Jan:** Castro's movement takes power
- Apr:** Castro announces suspension of elections
- Jun:** Agrarian Reform Act
- 1960 Feb:** trade deal is signed with Soviet Union
- May:** US oil companies in Cuba refuse to refine Soviet crude oil
- Jun:** Castro nationalises US refineries
- Jul:** US reduces quota for Cuban sugar; Soviet Union agrees to buy the surplus
- Aug:** main US businesses in Cuba are nationalised
- Sep:** Castro makes his 'First declaration of Havana' speech; all remaining US companies are nationalised
- Nov:** first US trade embargo on exports to Cuba
- 1961 Apr:** Castro proclaims Cuba's socialist revolution; failure of Bay of Pigs invasion
- 1962 Mar:** Castro moves against the Escalante faction of the communist PSP
- Oct:** Cuban Missile Crisis
- 1976 Feb:** new constitution to establish *Poder Popular* is approved
- Dec:** first meeting of the new National Assembly
- 1993 Feb:** first direct elections to the National Assembly

communist ideology Before 1958, the communist PSP was opposed to Castro's insurrection, and had publicly condemned the 1953 Moncada attack for being 'guided by mistaken bourgeois conceptions' and inspired by 'putschist methods, peculiar to bourgeois political factions'. It was not until the mid 1960s that, for several reasons, Castro decided to carry his revolution into the communist camp.

Antonio Guiteras (1906–35)

Inspired by Martí, Guiteras had views that were a mixture of nationalism and anti-capitalism. In 1933, after the overthrow of Machado, Guiteras served in Grau's government. When Batista overthrew Grau, Guiteras formed *Joven Cuba* and began urban guerrilla warfare to spark off an insurrection. In May 1935, Guiteras was shot dead by soldiers (see page 167).

Fact

The 1940 Constitution – even though it was contradictory and impractical – was a symbol of democracy and freedom for most Cuban oppositionists and revolutionaries. It had a strong social democratic content (8-hour day, paid holidays, pensions, social insurance). It gave the vote to all over the age of 20, including women, and political rights such as multi-party elections. Following his 1953 *Mainifesto*, Castro repeated his promise to restore the 1940 Constitution several times over the next six years.

Question

Does Castro's determination to remove poverty and inequality prove that he was a communist?

What role did ideology play in Castro's rise to power before 1959?

Castro adopted aspects of **communist ideology** after 1960, but Richard Gott states that nationalism was more important in his ideology than socialism, with Martí being more influential than Marxist ideology, with its emphasis on class conflict.

While the main factor in Castro's rise to power was his movement's guerrilla war against Batista, the stated aims of the movement were also important in gaining public support. These aims were publicised in various manifestos issued before 1959.

Manifestos

Castro saw manifestos as essential – 'Propaganda must not be abandoned for a minute, for it is the soul of every struggle.' According to Herbert Matthews, Castro's attack on the Moncada barracks in 1953 was inspired by patriotism, with aims similar to those of Martí and **Guiteras**. In the 1920s and 1930s, Guiteras had advocated a programme of radical reforms with vague socialist undertones. Castro was part of this radical Cuban nationalist tradition, as is shown by his first manifesto, *Manifesto of the Revolutionaries of Moncada to the Nation*, dated 23 July 1953. Prepared before the attack, it indicates the kind of revolution he had in mind: independence from foreign control, social justice based on economic and industrial modernisation, and restoration of the 1940 Constitution.

Castro's second 'manifesto', his 'History will absolve me' speech of 16 October 1953, developed these ideas. It included promises of agrarian reform, rent reductions, industrial development and modernisation, expansion of education and healthcare, and taking control of public utilities, which were mostly in the hands of US companies.

Poor peasant housing in Oriente Province, Cuba, before 1959



Two formal ‘manifestos of the 26 July Movement’, issued by Castro while he was in Mexico, showed no signs of communism or ‘Marxism–Leninism’ and lacked any systematic ideas or ideology. In fact, while Castro wanted a radical social revolution for all Cubans, he angrily rejected claims that he was inspired by communism.

During 1957–58, when Castro was in the Sierra, there was a continuous stream of manifestos – and, after the spring of 1958, talks on *Radio Rebelde* (the illegal radio station of Castro and the rebels). These only offered broad outlines of policies and reforms rather than a coherent programme. A manifesto issued on 12 March 1958, to help prepare for the unsuccessful 9 April general strike, mainly repeated elements of his ‘History will absolve me’ speech. In July 1958, the Caracas Pact, which was signed by all the groups opposed to Batista – except the communist PSP – resulted in the issue of another manifesto. This manifesto mentioned agrarian reform but otherwise contained no radical socialist policies.

In fact, it was not until 1958 that serious contacts between Castro and the Cuban communists began. By July, Carlos Rodriguez, one of the leaders of the PSP, had joined the rebels in the Sierra and there was growing co-operation between the movement and the PSP. However, while Castro was prepared to accept support from all quarters, he made it clear that he was in charge.

Nationalism and *cubiana*

The main source of inspiration for Castro’s ideology was the more radical version of Cuban nationalism, stretching back to 1868 and the First War of Independence, the student rebellions of the 1920s and 1930s, and the idea of *cubiana*. Castro believed the 26 July Movement, as the custodian of *cubiana* and as the vanguard (the leading group that maintained and promoted revolutionary aims), needed to achieve Cuban independence and modernisation. Castro’s political ideas before 1959 appear to have been more nationalistic and less radical than those of his two closest allies: his brother **Raúl Castro** and Che Guevara. According to Sebastian Balfour, even they (though more familiar with Marxism than Fidel) were ‘unorthodox communists’. While it is possible that a Cuban version of ‘socialism in one country’ (see [Chapter 2](#), page 25) may have begun to emerge from the political discussions Fidel had with Raúl and Che in the Sierra, this was not reflected in the movement’s manifestos.

SOURCE A

Because of my ideological background, I belong to those who believe that the solution of the world’s problems lies behind the so-called iron curtain, and I see this movement [26 July] as one of the many inspired by the bourgeoisie’s desire to free themselves from the economic chains of imperialism. I always thought of Fidel as an authentic leader of the leftist bourgeoisie, although his image is enhanced by personal qualities of extraordinary brilliance that set him above his class.

An extract from a letter written by Che Guevara to René Ramos Latour, national co-ordinator of the 26 July Movement in December 1957. Quoted in Franqui, C. 1980. Diary of the Cuban Revolution. New York, USA. Viking Press. p. 269.

cubiana A term first used by the 19th-century rebels struggling for Cuban independence, *cubiana* refers to the collective national interests of Cuba. *Cubiana* meant modernisation – the socio-economic and cultural development of Cuba – on Cuban terms, not on the terms set by liberal capitalism and foreign imperialism. Its aims were economic growth, a high level of social welfare, and socio-economic fairness.

Question

What was *cubiana*, and how did it relate to Castro’s ideology?

Raúl Castro (b. 1931) Raúl was the youngest of the five Castro siblings. Unlike Fidel, he was always known as a radical. At university, he became involved in the youth movement of the Communist Party. In 1953, he attended the World Youth Congress in Sofia, and visited Bucharest and Prague. He fought alongside Fidel from 1953, and was the first to welcome Carlos Rodriguez, the political leader of the PSP, to the Sierra in July 1958. His strong pro-communist views worried anti-communists in the 26 July Movement. He is now president of the Cuban Council of State and the president (as premier) of the Council of Ministers of Cuba.

Fact

Both Castro and Guevara had at first been inspired by Juan Perón's movement in Argentina. Castro was much inspired by the popular Colombian politician Jorge Gaitán, had attended the anti-imperialist student congress in Colombia in 1947, and had joined in the riots sparked off by Gaitán's assassination in that year. Guevara had been in Guatemala in 1954, where he witnessed the fall (as a result of a US-sponsored military invasion) of the reforming government of democratically elected Jacobo Arbenz. Both of these events showed how US interests and power made reform difficult if not impossible.

Fact

Before January 1960, the CIA had proposed 'harassment' by CIA-funded Cuban exiles, using small planes to carry out sabotage attacks on Cuban sugar mills. Eisenhower asked for a more ambitious scheme to topple Castro. The result was the Bay of Pigs incident in April 1961 (see page 180).

As well as the 19th-century nationalist struggles, Castro was inspired by the various Latin and Central American anti-imperialist movements of the 1930s and 1940s. Castro's movement was similar to these national liberation movements, which mobilised the masses against powerful traditional élites and attempted to escape from the controlling influence of US economic interests.

Did Castro become a communist after 1959?

According to Balfour, before 1959 Castro had a radical programme of reforms but no clear view of the future direction of his revolution – suggesting he was not a communist before 1959. It was only after 1959 that Castro saw socialism as providing a structure within which to achieve the radical nationalist aims set out in his manifestos.

Did the USA make Castro a communist?

After Batista's fall, Manuel Urrutia, president of Cuba from January to July 1959, nominated a cabinet drawn from moderate members of the 26 July Movement, who were acceptable to most sections of public opinion in Cuba and even the USA. However, the US government's attitude altered after the June 1959 Agrarian Reform Act (see page 198). The USA issued a Note of Protest and began to plan Castro's overthrow. The threat from the USA, and frequent CIA-organised sabotage attacks by Batista's supporters and Cuban exiles, led Castro to establish trade links with other countries, including the Soviet Union, in order to reduce Cuba's dependence on the USA.

In June 1959, Guevara visited various developing countries to find new markets for Cuban sugar. In July, the Soviet Union placed an order for 500,000 tonnes, as they had done in 1955 while Batista was still in control. The Soviet Union was at first uncertain about Castro's intended direction but, in February 1960, Anastas Mikoyan, the Soviet Union's deputy premier, arrived in Cuba to open a Soviet trade exhibition.

The Soviet Union then agreed to purchase a million tonnes of sugar each year for five years, and to provide \$100 million credit for the purchase of plant and equipment. Cuba then signed similar agreements with several other Eastern bloc countries.

As early as January 1960, a draft plan to overthrow Castro had been presented to the US president, Dwight D. Eisenhower – he had pushed for more than the 'harassment' initially suggested by Allen Dulles, director of the CIA. These decisions were made well before May 1960, when the Soviet Union restored diplomatic relations with Cuba (these had been broken off following Batista's coup in 1952).

In early 1960, sabotage attacks were stepped up. On 4 March, a French ship carrying Belgian small arms was blown up in Havana harbour, killing 100 people and injuring over 300. At the mass rally that followed to condemn this outrage, Castro warned of the possibility of a US-backed invasion and, for the first time, used the now-famous slogan '*Patria o muerte, venceremos*' ('Fatherland or death, we shall overcome').

The previous month, the first delivery of crude oil – cheaper than that sold by US companies – had arrived from the Soviet Union. The US government, wanting to break the Cuban economy, pressured US companies in Cuba into refusing to refine the oil – so Castro nationalised the oil companies in June 1960.



Fidel Castro (left) with Che Guevara (centre) and USSR deputy premier Anastas Mikoyan (right), during the latter's visit to Havana in February 1960

In July, the USA retaliated by reducing the import quota for Cuban sugar, leaving Cuba with 700,000 tonnes of unsold sugar. The Soviet Union agreed to purchase this and soon China signed a five-year agreement to purchase 500,000 tonnes a year. On 6 August 1960, Castro nationalised all the main US-owned properties, including the sugar mills.

In September 1960, Castro made his 'First declaration of Havana' speech, in which he strongly condemned US imperialism. Following this, all US-owned businesses and public utilities, including US banks, were nationalised.

In November, the USA imposed an embargo on all exports to Cuba, apart from food and medical supplies. The Soviet bloc then agreed to buy 4 million tonnes of Cuban sugar in 1961 – a million tonnes more than the USA usually purchased. The Soviet Union also agreed to make good Cuba's import gap.

Castro first mentioned the 'socialist' nature of the revolution in a speech made on 16 April 1961, following air-raids on 15 April (which preceded the Bay of Pigs incident on 17 April). His speech on 1 May, following the defeat of the US-planned invasion, spoke of 'our socialist revolution'.

Question

Is this photograph evidence to prove that Castro was a communist?

Fact

Since the early 20th century, US governments had attempted to ensure that Cuban governments followed policies that benefited US investments in Cuba. US companies owned large proportions of the main banks and public utility companies in Cuba (see page 166) as well as considerable amounts of the best agricultural land. In particular, the USA pushed for Cuba to concentrate on sugar production. Cuba also produced some tobacco, coffee and rice, but the production of sugar was the main source of income for Cuba. US governments agreed to purchase a large proportion – or quota – of Cuba's sugar crop at prices that were usually slightly higher than average world prices. However, in return, Cuba had to agree to give preferential access for US products (such as reducing or even abolishing import duties). This meant it was very difficult for the Cuban economy to develop and industrialise and the Cuban economy was heavily dependent on the US economy. Any reduction in US sugar quotas or in the price Washington was prepared to pay for sugar would seriously affect the economy. Consequently, many Cubans yearned for greater economic and political independence.

The Bay of Pigs incident, April 1961

Two events – both related to US policy decisions against Castro's Cuba – contributed to the radicalisation of Castro's revolution. These were the Bay of Pigs incident in April 1961 and the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962. Both of these developments pushed Castro closer to the Cuban communists and the Soviet Union.

In March 1960, President Eisenhower had approved plans for US-backed Cuban exiles to invade Cuba. These invasion plans (Operation *Zapata*) were put into operation by John F. Kennedy, the newly elected (and strongly anti-communist) US president. On 15 April, CIA pilots helped exiles to bomb Cuban air bases. On 17 April, about 1500 exiles – trained and armed by the CIA – left Nicaragua with a US naval escort and a CIA command ship. The exiles landed on two beaches – the majority on Playa Girón in the Bay of Pigs. However, the expected anti-Castro uprising never took place.

Castro immediately rushed from Havana to take charge of the defences, and the exiles were defeated after two days despite heavy air strikes, authorised by Kennedy, against the Cuban militia. Over 100 were killed, and 1179 captured. Most of the Cuban exile commanders had been officers under Batista – five were executed and nine sent to prison for 30 years. The rest were eventually returned to the USA in December 1962, in exchange for \$53 million worth of baby food, medicines and medical equipment.

Despite this humiliation – and the obvious popularity of Castro as a nationalist resisting a 'Yankee' (US) invasion – Kennedy ordered the CIA to continue with sabotage and its attempts to overthrow or assassinate Castro.

The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962

After the Bay of Pigs incident, Castro feared that the USA would attempt another invasion and, in November 1961, Kennedy did in fact authorise one. For protection, Castro asked the Soviet Union for more weapons; from May 1962, the Soviet Union delivered tanks and military aircraft, and increased its troops on Cuba to 42,000.

Given the USA's big lead in nuclear weapons, Nikita Khrushchev, the Soviet premier, thought that placing nuclear missiles in Cuba would balance the threat from the US missiles in Turkey – this move did not originate from Castro. In September 1962, Soviet technicians began to assemble nuclear missile sites in Cuba. The USA was aware of this and, on 14 October, a US U-2 spy plane took photographs showing sites almost ready for intermediate and short-range nuclear missiles, with warheads already on site.

For the next 13 days, the world seemed close to a nuclear war. On 22 October, Kennedy imposed – against international law – a naval blockade of Cuba. Although the Soviet Union said it would not comply, on 24 October, Khrushchev ordered Soviet ships heading for Cuba to turn back. The USA then said it would invade Cuba if the missiles were not removed. Khrushchev – without consulting Castro – sent letters to Kennedy on 26 and 27 October, promising to remove the missiles if the USA promised not to invade Cuba and remove US missiles from Turkey. Kennedy agreed, but insisted that the US side of the deal should be kept secret: the threat of a nuclear Third World War ended.

Question

What were the Bay of Pigs incident of April 1961 and the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962?

Castro's revolution and communism

During the period December 1961 to March 1962, Castro proclaimed his 'Marxism-Leninism' several times, claiming he had always been a Marxist 'in embryo', or a potential or 'utopian Marxist'.

SOURCE B

At the time of Moncada I was a pure revolutionary but not a Marxist revolutionary. In my defence at the trial ['History will absolve me'] I outlined a very radical revolution, but I thought then that it could be done under the constitution of 1940 and within a democratic system. That was the time I was a utopian Marxist ... It was a gradual process, a dynamic process in which the pressure of events forced me to accept Marxism as the answer to what I was seeking.

Extract from a conversation between Castro and the US journalist Herbert Matthews, 29 October 1963. Quoted in Matthews, H. L. 1970. *Castro: A Political Biography*. London, UK. Penguin Books. pp. 182–83.

However, the Cuban Revolution had not been led by the Communist Party, and was not directly the result of class struggle. Instead, Castro's revolution had more to do with economic growth and social reform in the conditions resulting from Cuban history, and the USA's military threats and economic embargo.

For Castro, socialism was mainly a strategy for a nationalist project of modernisation, based on state control of the economy, prioritising production over consumption – and hostility to US imperialism. Castro came to believe his revolutionary programme of reforms required central political and economic control – not private enterprise or even a mixed economy. The latter options could lead to political pluralism which, given the power and influence of the USA and its economic blockade, would be difficult to control. Socialism also provided the moral and ethical codes expected of Cuban citizens, and a vision of a world free from poverty, exploitation and injustice.

Soon after the 1959 revolution, Castro had talks with communist leaders, and several who were sympathetic to Castro's policies were given positions in the new government. Yet some of the PSP remained doubtful about Castro and tried to get more 'orthodox' communists into positions of power.

However, in March 1962, Castro asserted his authority and launched an attack on the PSP's leading member, Anibal Escalante, who was accused of packing the party with his own family and supporters, and of trying to undermine the government's authority.

Over the following decades, Castro's politics fluctuated between orthodoxy and heterodoxy as far as Marxism-Leninist ideology was concerned.

Fact

Lenin's *What Is to Be Done?* had argued for a revolutionary vanguard of intellectuals to lead the workers, while his *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* – developing Marx's points – had argued that imperialism created the conditions in which revolution in backward states was possible. Although the Soviet Union often only paid lip service to Marxist ideals, these ideals matched well with Castro's nationalist aim for Cuba to become independent.

Fact

While acknowledging Stalin's achievements in successfully modernising a backward economy, Castro criticised Stalin's repression. In many ways, Castro was too independent to fit into the 'orthodoxy' of Soviet 'Marxism-Leninism'.

Question

Why did the question of 'peaceful co-existence' cause problems between Cuba and the USSR in the 1960s?

Fact

Castro was prepared to accept the Soviet Union's idea of a peaceful road to socialism, but insisted that some roads might be non-peaceful. In the years 1965-68, Castro's relations with the Soviet Union suffered over his attempts to establish revolutionary guerrilla groups in other Latin American and developing countries. These attempts conflicted with the Soviet Union's aim to establish good relations with the USA and the West (peaceful co-existence). In 1967, Castro seemed to be attacking the USSR for having 'capitulated' to capitalism by preferring good relations to supporting revolutionary groups.

Fact

Trade agreements between Cuba and the USSR were based on Cuba providing a certain amount of sugar to the USSR in return for oil and industrial goods. However, a gap had opened between exports of sugar and imports of oil and industrial goods, leaving Cuba 7.5 million tonnes in arrears by 1969. Hence Castro declared 1969 to be the 'Year of Decisive Endeavour' - in an attempt to increase sugar production to 10 million tonnes.

The Soviet connection

For some time after Castro's declaration of socialism in April 1961, the Soviet Union continued to support those in the PSP who were critical of 'Castroism'. However, it was not only US hostility that pushed Castro towards the Soviet Union and Soviet-style socialism. The Soviet command economy model of modernisation (see Unit 4) suited the Cuban leaders. They saw Joseph Stalin's industrialisation of the Soviet Union without any outside assistance as a way of constructing a fairer society in Cuba in the face of hostility from their powerful neighbour.

The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 temporarily disrupted good relations with the Soviet Union as Castro felt Cuba had been used. However, in April 1963, Castro and some other *Fidelista* leaders went to Moscow, following an invitation from Khrushchev. Castro stayed until June, and had several important trade discussions. In January 1964, Castro paid a second visit to Moscow, promising to follow peaceful co-existence and to finalise economic deals. Relations cooled again when, in 1967, Castro attacked communist governments - including that of the Soviet Union - for trading with countries that applied a trade embargo against Cuba. Consequently, the Soviet Union delayed the signing of trade agreements and cut back on oil supplies to Cuba.

Cuba's economy then began to experience difficulties - as well as Soviet restrictions on oil supplies, there was a massive debt to the Soviet bloc. Less able to defy Moscow, Castro gave qualified support to the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. This opened the way for Moscow to repair relations with Havana in the following decades.

Thus the decision to adopt Marxism for their new Cuban state was not just to do with the need for a strong power's protection from the USA. It was also based on the belief of Castro and his vanguard that communism offered the only possible model of economic growth and the only international movement with which they could identify - especially because of its anti-Americanism.

What is the nature of Cuba's Castroist state?

Since 1959, the Cuban state under Castro has been variously described as a 'communist dictatorship', an 'authoritarian democracy' and a 'guided democracy'. The siege conditions resulting from US hostility and threats have played an important role in the development of the Cuban state. In particular, Castro feared that a market/private enterprise economy and a multi-party political system would allow the USA to continue to influence the economy and politics of Cuba.

In 1959, Castro claimed a people's government had come to power - but he also repeatedly stressed that the people were not yet ready to assume government. The movement's revolutionary vanguard, guided but not controlled from below, would carry out policy on behalf of the people. He summed it up thus: 'First the revolution, then elections'.

Cuba and democracy

Prior to Castro's revolution in 1959, many Cubans had grown disenchanted with the corrupt multi-party political system that had operated throughout the first half of the 20th century, and with the external dependence that allowed the USA to dominate the Cuban economy and society.



Question

How far did Castro's statements and policies reflect the views of Marx and Engels?

A photograph taken in Havana in about 1977–78 of a poster depicting Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, authors of *The Communist Manifesto*

Like Martí, Castro and the *Fidelistas* believed elections were less important than the things that governments do for the people. After 1959, at mass meetings, the people also apparently rejected elections and the old way of conducting politics. This was confirmed by Urrutia, president of Cuba from January to July 1959.

SOURCE C

The first time I heard the promise of elections repudiated was when Castro and I attended the opening of the library at Marta University at Las Villas. At the end of the meeting, Castro mentioned elections and a large number of his listeners shouted against them. After the speech, Castro asked, 'Did you notice how they spoke against elections?'

Extract from a speech made by Manuel Urrutia. Quoted in Perez Jr. L. A. 1988. *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*. New York, USA. Oxford University Press. pp. 321–22.

Fact

Other political parties in Cuba include the Christian Democratic Party of Cuba, the Cuban Democratic Socialist Current, the Democratic Social-Revolutionary Party of Cuba, the Democratic Solidarity Party, the Liberal Party of Cuba and the Social Democratic Co-ordination of Cuba.

Though Castro's Cuba was a one-party communist or socialist state until 1992, it was also populist – but with limits on individual and collective freedoms in the name of security and ideological correctness.

SOURCE D

What we have, obviously, is not the democracy of the exploiters ... Now we are speaking of another democracy, the democracy of the people, of the workers, of the peasants, of the humble men and women, the democracy of the majority of the nation, of those who were exploited, of those who had no rights in the past. And this is the true democracy, the revolutionary democracy of the people, the democracy of the humble, by the humble and for the humble.

Extract from a speech delivered by Castro in 1961. Quoted in Saney, I. 2004. Cuba: A Revolution in Motion. London, UK. Zed Books. p. 49.

Since 1992, other political parties have been legalised. Nevertheless, the Communist Party of Cuba remains the official state party. However, all parties are prohibited from campaigning in elections.

Constitutions and elections

In April 1959, during a visit to the USA, Castro announced the suspension of elections in Cuba. From 1959 to 1976 there was thus no elected legislative body in Cuba.

The 1976 Constitution and *Poder Popular*

In 1976, a new constitution was introduced. This set up a three-tier system of *Poder Popular* (People's Power) – municipal, provincial and national assemblies to allow for democratic decision-making. However, only municipal elections were direct – those to the other two tiers were indirect.

Citizens and the various mass organisations (see pages 190 and 193) – not the Communist Party of Cuba – directly nominated the list of candidates for the different levels of representation. According to Isaac Saney, this formal socialist democracy had four elements – political participation, economic equality, the merging of civil and political society and the *mandat imperatif*. However, Balfour argues that the 1976 reforms did not really shift power from the leadership to the people. The first meeting of the new National Assembly was in December 1976 – at which the Council of Ministers, which had exercised legislative and executive powers for 18 years, formally handed over these powers.

The 1992 constitution

In 1991, at the start of the 'Special Period' (see pages 205–06), it was decided to modify the 1976 constitution to allow a direct vote in elections for members of the National Assembly and the provincial assemblies. A draft was approved by the National Assembly in July 1992, with the first direct elections in February 1993. In the early 1990s, popular councils (*consejo populares*) were also established to increase the power of local government.

mandat imperatif This means elected representatives must listen to voters and respond to their complaints and suggestions.

Fact

Mass and grassroots organisations include the trade unions, the Cuban Confederation of Women, the Committees to Defend the Revolution, the National Association of Small Farmers, the Federation of University Students, and a range of professional organisations.

Question

What do you understand by the term *Poder Popular*?

***Poder Popular* after 1992**

The 1992 reforms have arguably resulted in more effective political participation for the Cuban people. The National Assembly chooses from its members the Council of State, which is accountable to the National Assembly. The Council of State also carries out the National Assembly's functions when it is not in session, but the next National Assembly must ratify any decisions.

The influence of the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC) was reduced by the 1992 reforms; it is prevented by law from playing any role in the nomination of candidates. According to Castro, this avoided the politicking and corruption often associated with multi-party political systems.

At the provincial and national levels there are candidacy commissions, made up of representatives from the various mass and grassroots organisations, presided over by workers' representatives chosen by the unions. The commissions sift through thousands of people and present their recommendations to the municipal assemblies for final approval.

Thus it is Cuban citizens who both nominate and elect representatives. Turnout in elections is usually high – about 90%. There is no formal campaigning. Instead, a month before the elections take place, biographies of candidates are displayed in public places.

End of unit activities

- 1 Carry out some further research on the ideas of 'Eddy' Chibás and *Chibasismo*, and those of Antonio Guiteras. Then complete a chart, with the headings: 'Chibás', 'Guiteras' and 'Castro'. Underneath these headings, write down the main aims and/or policies of each in the period before 1959, trying to place similar ideas next to each other.
- 2 Re-read pages 176–82 and 182–85 and produce a chart summarising the main steps taken by Castro between 1959 and 1976 in moving Cuba towards socialism/communism.
- 3 Carry out some additional research on the Bay of Pigs incident. How important was this event in helping Castro maintain support in Cuba for his regime in the 1960s and 1970s?

Historical debate

Historians are divided over whether Castro was or was not moving towards communism before 1959. Try to find and briefly summarise the views of at least four different historians on this question. Which arguments do you find the most persuasive?

Discussion point

Working in pairs, carry out some additional research to gather evidence for a class presentation on the actions taken by the USA against Cuba in the years 1959–63. In particular, focus on the Bay of Pigs incident, Operation *Mongoose* and Operation *Northwoods*. Then develop arguments to show how these actions can and cannot be justified.



Theory of knowledge

History, culture and bias

The post-1976 Cuban form of democracy known as *Poder Popular* is clearly different from the values and perceptions of democracy that hold sway in liberal democracies such as the USA and Britain. Is it possible for historians – and students of history – to evaluate in an unbiased way the values of a significantly different culture?

3 Establishment and consolidation of Castro's rule

Timeline

1959 Jan: Office of Revolutionary Plans and Co-ordination is established

Feb: Castro becomes prime minister

May: National Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA) is set up

Jul: Urrutia resigns as president; Osvaldo Dorticós takes over

Oct: Huber Matos and supporters are imprisoned

1960 Sep: Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDRs) are set up

1961 Apr: Bay of Pigs incident

Jul: 26 July Movement, communist PSP and Directorio Revolucionario (DR) merge to form the Integrated Revolutionary Organisations (ORI)

1962 Mar: Escalante is removed from positions

1963 Jul: ORI becomes the United Party of the Socialist Revolution (PURS)

1965 Oct: PURS becomes the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC)

Nov: Camarioca Exodus

1968 Feb: 'Microfaction' Affair

1976 Dec: Fidel Castro becomes president

1980 Apr–Oct: Mariel Boatlift

1989 June–July: Ochoa Affair

1992 Sep: Aldana is sacked; purge of reformists from PCC

1994 Aug: Malecón Exodus

1996 Mar: actions against the Centre for the Study of America (CEA) group

2002 Jun: National Assembly amends constitution to make socialist system of government permanent

2003 Mar: Varela Project activists are arrested

2008 Feb: Fidel Castro announces his resignation; Raúl takes over

Key questions

- How did Castro establish his power in the period 1959–75?
- What measures were taken after 1975 to further consolidate Castro's power?
- What other methods did Castro use to consolidate his power?

Overview

- After 1959, Castro began to create a politically centralised one-party state – with political, social and economic decision-making concentrated in his hands and those of his *Fidelistas* élite.
- During 1959, Castro began to establish a situation of dual power by creating alternative organisations that increasingly bypassed the government.
- Castro also began to move against liberals opposed to his more radical policies. By July, Urrutia had been forced to resign and other liberals and anti-communists either resigned or were gradually removed over the following months.
- Between 1961 and 1965 the 26 July Movement, the DR (the *Directorio Revolucionario*, the successor to the DRE) and the PSP were merged to form the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC) – taking action in 1962 against Escalante for attempting to promote his own supporters.
- In 1965, the numbers of Cubans leaving Castro's Cuba increased in what became the first large 'exodus' – this Camarioca Exodus and two others (the Mariel Boatlift in 1980 and the Malecón Exodus in 1994) effectively 'exported' potential oppositionists.
- From 1968, internal opposition also emerged within the PCC and from groups of intellectuals (such as the Varela Project): first it was against the growing ties with the Soviet Union; then in the late 1980s opposition developed in response to Gorbachev's liberal reforms in the Soviet Union; and later, in the 1990s, it emerged during the Special Period.
- On 18 February 2008, illness forced Fidel Castro to resign his leadership posts and his brother Raúl took over.

How did Castro establish his power in the period 1959–75?

In January 1959, a new government was installed. The president, as promised by Castro before 1959, was the moderate judge Manuel Urrutia. José Miró Cardona was prime minister. They presided over a cabinet in which there were only three members of Castro's rebel army (and only one of these was from the 26 July Movement). However, it soon became clear that the real power lay with Castro, who was appointed military commander-in-chief of the new Rebel Armed Forces.

As promised by Castro, there were trials (broadcast on TV) of several hundred of Batista's political supporters, especially senior police and torturers. Most were found guilty and many were executed by firing squad.

Dual power, January–November 1959

In January 1959, Castro formed the Office of the Revolutionary Plans and Co-ordination (ORPC), an unofficial committee composed of his closest advisers, including his brother Raúl and Guevara. This soon created a situation of **dual power** between the ORPC and the cabinet, as the former began to push forward the revolution Castro wanted.

In February, Castro became prime minister, taking on extra powers, and presiding over a government comprising both radicals and moderates. In April, he announced the suspension of elections and, in May 1959, the National Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA) was set up, absorbing the ORPC. Castro was its president, and Núñez Jiménez – a Marxist economist – its director. Its formal role was to deal with the issues of agrarian reform and industrial development, but INRA quickly became, in practice, the effective government.

In June 1959, several moderate members of the cabinet resigned over what they saw as 'communistic' policies. As communists were increasingly appointed to administrative posts, Urrutia and others began to make public criticisms of the growing influence of communists.

Castro then decided to end the dual power situation. In July, Urrutia was forced to resign. He was replaced by a supporter of Castro, Osvaldo Dorticós. More sympathetic to the communists, Dorticós remained in post until 1976.

By the end of November 1959, most of the remaining moderates or liberals had either resigned or been forced out of office; four more went in 1960. The removal of anti-communists and non-communists resulted in a new coalition containing several communists.

Revolutionary consolidation

From 1960, Castro and this new leadership consolidated a centralised form of rule by Fidel and a handful of friends, via a cabinet that held all legislative and executive powers. By December 1960, the press had been brought into line – often through seizure by communist-led trade unions. Castro also assumed the power to appoint new judges.

dual power This term refers to a situation where political power, in reality, is shared between the formal government and an unofficial body. Such situations rarely last for long, as each authority tries to impose its power.

Question

Why was Castro's formation of INRA important in establishing his power?



Fidel Castro in 1964, relaxing while planning consolidation of his revolution

Fact

The Communist Party of Cuba (PCC), established in 1965, had never functioned as a mass party. It did not even hold its first congress until 1975. In 1972, it was given a new party structure, with a 100-strong central committee, as well as a smaller politburo and secretariat. It also produced new party statutes and a new programme. Membership rose steadily from 50,000 in 1965 to over 500,000 by 1980. By then, over 9% of all Cuban citizens aged over 25 belonged to the party. These changes turned it into more of a typical ruling party. At the same time, the proportion of military personnel in the leading bodies dropped significantly, making it a more normal civilian party.

However, from 1968 Cuba became increasingly dependent on the Soviet Union. New state structures and institutions were developed along Soviet lines. In 1972, the cabinet was enlarged, with an executive committee of eight which took over many of Castro's functions. The shift from individual to collective responsibility was designed to create a more formally democratic system and give greater political stability. At the same time, the Communist Party was also enlarged and reorganised along more 'orthodox' lines to make it more representative.

Castro thus no longer had the unlimited authority he had in the 1960s. Despite differences at the top over later economic policies, Castro's regime remained fairly stable and united.

Opposition

There were many opponents of the regime in the early years. Many in the movement disliked the growing influence of the communists in Castro's regime. On 19 October 1959, Huber Matos, the governor of Camagüey province and one of the leading figures of the revolutionary war, resigned in protest. Matos, along with others sharing his views, was put on trial for 'rebellion'. Castro then used this crisis to further establish his own position by creating armed militias as part of the new revolutionary structure of power.

Some opponents, whose social and economic interests were threatened by the revolution, resorted to counter-revolutionary guerrilla warfare. This was often supported by the USA. Thousands of Cubans died in this civil war between 1960 and 1966. By 1966, however, these opponents had been convincingly defeated.

The US-sponsored Bay of Pigs incident (see page 180) in April 1961 had led to the immediate arrest of all suspected 'counter-revolutionaries' – about 3500 were detained in Havana alone. The resulting wave of nationalism and pride following Cuba's victory meant those opposed to Castro's regime could be seen as traitors. However, the political centralisation and state control that followed was partly a response to genuine feelings of insecurity.

SOURCE A

According to US Senate reports, the CIA's second largest station in the world was based in Florida. At the height of the undercover American offensive [against Cuba] in the 1960s and 1970s ... the CIA controlled an airline and a flotilla of spy ships operating off the coast of Cuba, and ran up to 120,000 Cuban agents, who dealt in economic sabotage, assassination and terrorism, and economic and biological warfare ... Over 600 plans to assassinate Castro were devised. Nearly 3500 Cubans have died from terrorist acts, and more than 2000 are permanently disabled. As an ex-CIA agent has said, 'no country has suffered terrorism as long and consistently as Cuba'.

Balfour, S. 2009. *Castro*. London, UK. Longman. p. 190.

Fact

The USA's offensive against Cuba, to undermine its government and society, was massive. Castro used these real US threats to increase his control, to bring about a one-party system and to mobilise the people to transform Cuba.

With the most serious oppositions defeated by the mid 1960s, Castro felt able to consider a more 'liberal' approach.

The Communist Party

As the 26 July Movement was mainly a guerrilla army, Castro needed the political experience provided by the communist PSP. The PSP had had long experience of party politics and of organising mass movements such as the Confederation of Cuban Workers (CTC) and, unlike members of the 26 July Movement, it had prior governmental experience. Castro began negotiations with leading members of the PSP for the creation of a new Communist Party. He hoped to fuse this with the more radical wing of his movement, and so strengthen his control. In July 1961, the 26 July Movement, the DR and the PSP merged into the Integrated Revolutionary Organisations (ORI).

Initially, the old PSP came to dominate the ORI. Anibal Escalante, the ORI's Organisation Secretary, was particularly powerful – he gave preference to his old PSP comrades who were likely to be loyal to him. So, in March 1962, Castro denounced Escalante for 'sectarianism' and removed him from his post. A massive restructuring of the ORI then took place – almost half its membership was expelled, most from the PSP faction. Huge efforts were made to recruit new members. In 1963, the ORI became the United Party of the Socialist Revolution (PURS); on 3 October 1965, the PURS became the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC). Thus, by the end of 1965, revolutionary power had been consolidated and Castro had established his pre-eminence over all potential rivals.

Fact

The organisation of party cells, selection of party members, and all promotions and dismissals had to be cleared through Escalante's office. Increasingly, party cells asserted their authority over administrators, and a preliminary system of political commissars was introduced in the armed forces. Much of this was similar to the methods used by Stalin as general secretary of the CPSU in the Soviet Union to establish a powerful position for himself during the 1920s (see [Chapter 2](#)).

Question

What were the main stages in Castro's formation of the PCC between 1961 and 1965?

However, this did not mean that Castro was in full control of the new party. From 1965 to 1968, his criticisms of the Soviet Union over peaceful co-existence and revolution in developing countries (see page 182) were opposed by some traditionalist communists in the PCC. In February 1968, their leaders were put on trial for factionalism. The result of this ‘micro-faction’ affair was even greater control for Castro. After 1968, the party posed no serious challenge to Castro.

Mass organisations

As well as the communists, there were several mass organisations through which opposition could be expressed. In particular, Castro made early interventions to influence the trade union movement and university students, in favour of unity between communist delegates and anti-communists within his movement.

Federation of University Students

On 18 October 1959, the election for president of the students’ union, the Federation of University Students (FEU), was between Rolando Cubelas (the ‘Unity’ candidate, backed by the PSP) and Pedro Boitel, the 26 July Movement’s candidate. After Castro intervened, the election was won by Cubelas, who later aligned the FEU closer to ‘Marxism–Leninism’.

The trade unions

In November 1959, the Confederation of Cuban Workers (CTC) held its 10th Congress to elect a new leadership. The 26 July Movement’s slate seemed certain to win a clear majority, but Castro pushed for ‘unity’ with the communists.

However, in 1970, opposition emerged from the trade unions and the workers – shown by absenteeism and poor productivity. On 26 July 1970, in a long speech to a massive crowd, Castro admitted his mistakes and argued for more democratic methods of consultation at grassroots level, and greater delegation of powers from the centre. Up until this point, Castro accepted, the government had tended to treat workers as a production army.

What measures were taken after 1975 to further consolidate Castro’s power?

By the end of 1975, Cuba had a well-established and well-organised communist system. The mid 1970s saw Castro attempt to consolidate his rule by changes to the system of popular representation. This was done in 1976, via a new constitution, which introduced a system of *Poder Popular* (see page 184).

Rectification campaign, 1986–87

The changes to government and party structure in the early 1970s meant Castro no longer had unlimited authority. However, he remained as head of the Communist Party and of the armed forces; and, on 2 December 1976, he replaced Osvaldo Dorticós as president. In the mid 1980s, Castro was able to use these positions and his personal authority to impose his will on domestic economic policy.

At the Third Congress of the PCC, Castro had launched a new campaign – the ‘Rectification of errors and negative trends’. While this was mainly connected to economic issues (see Unit 4), it also became a drive against corruption and those who Castro felt were opposed to what he saw as Cuba’s economic needs.

In the mid 1970s, the System of Direction and Planning of the Economy (SDPE) had been set up to introduce decentralisation of planning and management, and to replace moral with material incentives to encourage greater productivity. In 1985, a plan was drawn up, in line with these principles, by the Central Planning Board (*Juceplan*). The board's director was Humberto Pérez, a Moscow-trained economist. However, Castro decided that this system and the new plan failed to take account of the new economic crisis in Cuba. So Pérez was removed from his post and from the politburo (the most important committee in the Communist Party). Castro then by-passed *Juceplan* by setting up a new committee to draw up a revised plan, which attempted to introduce some increased centralisation.

During 1986 and 1987, Castro widened his campaign, making a series of speeches in which he admitted 'errors', criticised the economic liberalisation of the 1970s and attacked signs of corruption. In particular, he singled out bureaucrats and technocrats, and those who had enriched themselves under the 1970s' market mechanisms that were introduced into the Cuban economy on the advice of the USSR. In large part, this campaign was a response to growing dissatisfaction amongst workers who were angry about increasing shortages and income differentials. Castro put himself at the head of this popular discontent as their self-appointed spokesperson, thus increasing his personal prestige.

The Ochoa Affair, 1989

In June 1989, Cuba experienced its most serious internal opposition crisis since 1959. Four senior military and intelligence figures – including General **Arnaldo Ochoa** – and several others were arrested on charges of corruption and drug smuggling. They were tried by military tribunals. Four, including Ochoa, were condemned to death and executed on 13 July; others received prison sentences ranging from 20 to 30 years. There is speculation that Ochoa and the others, who favoured Gorbachev-style reforms, were planning a coup. The crisis caused serious divisions in Cuba. However, the economic crisis of the Special Period that soon followed (see pages 202–04) brought about a new sense of unity.

Fidel Castro and Mikhail Gorbachev embrace during an official visit by the Soviet premier to Cuba in 1989



Arnaldo Ochoa (1930–89)

Ochoa was in charge of the Cuban troops sent to Angola to fight against South African forces in 1988. The Cuban troops won an impressive victory at Cuito Cuanavale on 14 February 1988. This helped force South Africa out of Angola and Namibia, contributing to the collapse of apartheid in South Africa. Two years later, Nelson Mandela was released from prison and, in July 1991, he visited Cuba to thank the country for its role in the struggle against apartheid. Ochoa had, as a result, become something of a hero.

Question

What were the main reasons for the Ochoa Affair in 1989?

Fact

Gorbachev visited Cuba in April 1989. He was associated with three reforms – *perestroika*, *glasnost* and *demokratizatsiya*. He introduced these in the Soviet Union after 1985, and encouraged their adoption by the Eastern European regimes. Castro associated these policies with the fall of these regimes in the period 1989–91.

Aldana and the 1992 purge

However, during the ‘Special Period in Time of Peace’ (see pages 202–04), announced by Castro at the end of 1990, another reformist tendency emerged in the PCC and the Young Communist Party, where several members admired Gorbachev’s policies. This opposition was led by Carlos Aldana, and called for some limited political pluralism.

The collapse of the regimes of Eastern Europe and then the Soviet Union in the period 1989–91 made Castro decide to move against this opposition, as well as other groups of reformists. In 1991, with the Soviet Union no longer a reliable ally against the USA, Castro created Rapid Response Brigades of volunteers to act against potential ‘fifth columnists’. These brigades often harassed oppositionist groups demanding political reform and the various organisations calling for human rights. In September 1992, Aldana was sacked from his party; and Castro, using his personal authority, began a purge of other reformists from the party.

To help diffuse this opposition, amendments to the constitution were made in 1992 to make *Poder Popular* more of a reality. Despite the post-1991 economic suffering, these reforms were relatively successful, and Castro’s regime did not collapse like the Soviet bloc states in Europe, as some had speculated would happen. In part, this was because most Cubans saw the revolution as *their* revolution – whatever its failings, it had also had real successes.

US actions, 1992–96

The idea of a revolutionary Cuba under siege is part of the mythology of the revolution, and had led to mass mobilisations, revolutionary political offensives and popular militarisation. In the 1990s, moves against potential opponents were also a response – once again – to increased threats from the USA. The Torricelli Act of 1992 and the Helm-Burton Act of 1996, respectively, tightened US economic sanctions against Cuba and sought actively to ‘assist’ in the creation of the USA’s form of democracy in Cuba. In March 1996, Castro acted against academics in the Centre for the Study of America (CEA). They did not lose their jobs, but they were moved to different posts.

‘Re-moralisation’ and the Varela Project

By 1996, most of the economic measures of the Special Period had been stopped (see page 203); then, in 2003, Castro decided on a partial return to anti-market centralisation. This also involved the ‘re-moralisation’ of economic life. Associated with this were further moves against potential opponents, dissidents and human rights activists. The minister for economics and planning and the minister of finance, both of whom were closely connected to the liberalisation policies under the Special Period during 1993–96, were replaced by ministers favouring centralised political control of the economy and society.

After the 2000 US presidential election, the USA stepped up its attempts to interfere in Cuba’s internal politics and President George W. Bush included Cuba in his new ‘axis of evil’. This led to renewed fears of an imminent US invasion. Castro then became concerned about the activities of members of the Varela Project, who were campaigning for a law of democratic reform and more private enterprise. Castro’s government organised a counter-petition to amend the constitution to make the socialist nature of the Cuban constitution

Fact

Set up in 1988, the CEA was mainly composed of academics, most of whom belonged to the PCC. By 1990, they had begun to suggest reform of Cuba’s internal political system. After Castro made moves against them in 1996, some went into exile to continue their opposition.

Fact

The Varela Project was named after Felix Varela, a 19th-century advocate for Cuban independence, and was associated with the Catholic Church. Its leader was Osvaldo Payá, who had been involved in the Christian Liberation Group. Its members tried to use the clause in the Cuban constitution that said a new law could be proposed if a petition with 10,000 signatures was presented to the National Assembly. They managed to get 11,000 signatures, and presented it during a visit by ex-US president Jimmy Carter, who supported them.

'irrevocable'. This counter-petition included 8 million signatures – about 99% of the electorate. At the same time, the Cuban authorities began to harass members of the Varela Project. On 15 March 2003, 75 members were arrested and many received long prison sentences.

Mass organisations

As well as with repression, Castro has tried to consolidate his regime by increasing the participation of citizens in a range of mass organisations. Since 1976, such organisations and methods have been used and adapted to make *Poder Popular* more of a reality, and so integrate the population of Cuba with the regime.

Unions

The main mass organisation is the Confederation of Cuban Workers (CTC), which unites all 19 unions and organises national congresses for workers to discuss issues. These are preceded by months of meetings of workers' assemblies at local level. Castro and other leaders participate at times, to answer questions and to explain important issues. According to Saney, the workers' assemblies have considerable input and say in their workplaces and in major national political decisions. By law, workers meet twice a year in their workplaces to discuss their company's economic plans. They can reject management proposals, decide production norms and rates, and any new proposals are subject to ratification. Though they work closely with the PCC, they are independent of the government, which must consult the unions on all labour matters.

PCC

The PCC attempts to integrate citizens by 'promoting the development of a socialist consciousness and society' by trying to persuade people to put society's needs above those of the individual. While Hobart Spalding and others see the influence of the PCC as suffocating, according to Peter Roman the party does not meddle in the operation of people's power. Though it does 'screen' those selected as candidates, Carollee Bengelsdorf argues that Cuban citizens exercise significant political sovereignty.

About 1.5 million Cubans (15% of the population) belong to the PCC and its youth body, the Union of Young Communists (UJC). Massive nationwide discussions – open to both party and non-party people – take place before the party congresses.

What other methods did Castro use to consolidate his power?

Castro has also tried to maintain his revolution in other ways.

Committees for the Defence of the Revolution

With control over the FEU and the CTC established by 1960, the leadership created a militia with tens of thousands of members to build support, intimidate internal opponents and defend Cuba against external enemies. Particularly important were the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDRs), established in September 1960 primarily for civil defence. CDRs were set up in every city district, in each large building, factory or workplace.

Question

What was the Varela Project?

Fact

In 1994, the CTC rejected plans to tax workers' wages; in 1995, they rejected proposed alterations to social security, which were sent back for amendment.

Fact

In later years, CDRs became involved in recycling drives, cultural and educational activities, and health campaigns (e.g. vaccination and blood donation). Though they are grassroots organisations, they do not necessarily function effectively as a way for people to express their views.

In the early days of Castro's regime, they involved the people in identifying enemies of the revolution and repressing counter-revolutionary opinions and activities (e.g. sabotage and terrorism). They are the largest of all the mass organisations, with a membership of over 7 million – helping many people identify with the revolution.

Emigration and exile

From the mid 1960s, waves of Cuban emigrants went into exile in the USA. The first wave were supporters of Batista, and especially those who had tortured or killed his opponents. Between 1959 and 1961, at least 40,000 emigrants left Cuba. The next wave of emigrants were disillusioned middle-class liberals, as well as members of the business and professional élites who opposed Castro's increasing moves towards communism after 1961. In the period 1961–62 alone, at least 150,000 left.

Question

How did the large numbers of Cuban emigrants help Castro to consolidate his regime?

Since then, there have been several major emigrations – the Camarioca Exodus in 1965, the Mariel Boatlift in 1980 and the Malecón Exodus in 1994. According to Leslie Bethell, while the loss of professional and technical skills had a negative impact on Cuba's development, the 'exporting' of potential leaders of opposition or counter-revolution helped Castro establish political centralisation and control.

Castroism

Castroism, or *Fidelismo* – the idea that the Cuban Revolution is largely based on the teachings and principles of Fidel Castro – has not resulted in an obvious cult of personality, as happened for instance in the Soviet Union under Stalin or in China under Mao. In Cuba itself, there are not many posters depicting Castro – although Che's image is found almost everywhere.

Posters on a wall in a street in Havana. Che Guevara is depicted in the top-left poster

Question

Who do you think is depicted in the top-right poster?



Castro certainly had great charisma – even liberals who went into exile acknowledged this – and the ability to speak well to crowds, sometimes for 12 hours at a time! This was apparent when, before 1959, he broadcast on *Radio Rebelde*. Since 1959, Castro has made good use of television to explain his aims and policies.

Despite difficulties, many still had faith in him; as long as he was in charge, they did not seem to mind what he did – even when he moved towards Marxism. Castro's legitimacy was also based on his identification with the heroic myths of Cuban patriotism – and on his personal ethics: he has not used his position to amass a private fortune. His prestige was strengthened by the development of *Poder Popular* from the mid 1970s. Yet Castro appears not to have wanted any adulation. His general style was much milder and warmer than other rulers of one-party states; and his good relationship with the public meant ordinary people felt able to approach him and speak of their problems and dissatisfactions.

On 18 February 2008, after almost two years of illness, Fidel Castro announced his decision to stand down as president and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. His brother Raúl, the acting head of state, took over.

Although he is no longer directly in charge, Fidel still exerts influence; despite five decades of US economic and military actions against himself and his Cuban Revolution, he managed to turn Cuba into one of the best-educated and healthiest societies in the world.



Raúl Castro, acting president of Cuba, looks at the empty chair of Fidel Castro during a session of Cuba's National Assembly in December 2006; Fidel finally resigned in February 2008, and Raúl took over as president

End of unit activities

- 1 In pairs, carry out further research on the different opposition groups that emerged in Cuba after 1959 – both within the 26 July Movement and the Communist Party, and amongst intellectuals and artists. Then try to establish the reasons for their lack of success. You can then present your findings in the form of two charts – one to show how the different groups were formed and what they did, and another to show how and why they were defeated.
- 2 Find out more about the different reasons why so many Cubans emigrated to the USA. Were they mainly political or economic reasons? Why do you think Castro usually tolerated this emigration?
- 3 Carry out an investigation to explain why Castro's popularity remained so high among so many Cubans, right up to – and beyond – his resignation in 2008, despite Cuba's many political and economic problems.

Historical debate

There is considerable debate amongst historians about the support for/opposition to Castro's policies and the regime he created. Some, like Bethell, are negative, while others, such as Saney, present a much more optimistic picture. Which 'side' do you think presents the most realistic assessment?

Activity

Using the information in the units of this book that you have already read, and any other materials you have access to, write a couple of paragraphs to explain how the USA's actions against Cuba made it easier for Castro to consolidate his power.

Question

As you work through the next unit, try to analyse the relative importance of Fidel Castro's various economic and social policies in helping to maintain his power from 1959 to 2008. Were these more or less important than repressive measures?



Theory of knowledge

History and art

Most people would agree that artists should be free to express their views and thoughts. Yet many governments – especially those in one-party states – have tried to confine art to those works that support their political and economic system. Is it possible to make a case for Castro's assertion in 1961 that creative freedom could be allowed 'within the revolution', but not 'against the revolution'; or his appeal in 1971 that art should be a 'weapon of the revolution'?

4 Domestic policies and their impact

Timeline

1959 Mar: nationalisation of public utilities; Castro makes his 'Proclamation against discrimination'

May: Agrarian Reform Act

1960 Apr: Soviet crude oil is delivered

Jun: nationalisation of foreign oil refineries

Aug: Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) is set up

1961 Apr: 'Year of Education' mass literacy campaign begins

Feb: Guevara becomes minister of industries

1962 Feb: Kennedy announces full US embargo on exports to Cuba

1969 Nov: 'Year of Decisive Endeavour' is launched

1970 Jul: 10 million tonne campaign for sugar

1972 Jul: Cuba becomes a full member of Comecon

1975 Mar: Family Code

1977 Centro Nacional de Educación Sexual (CNES) is founded

1979 Same-sex relations are decriminalised

1986 Apr: 'Rectification Campaign'

1989 Apr: Gorbachev visits Cuba

1990 Jan: 'Special Period' begins

1991 Dec: Soviet Union collapses

1992 Jul: constitution is amended

1993 Jan: US embargo on Cuba is tightened; Castro introduces some market reforms

1996 Feb: US trade embargo is made permanent

1998 Jan: Pope John Paul II visits Cuba

2010 state provides free gender reassignment surgery

Key questions

- What were the main features of Castro's economic policies?
- How successful were Castro's economic policies?
- What were the main social policies in Castro's Cuba?
- What were Castro's policies towards women, ethnic and other minorities, and religion?
- What impact has the Cuban Revolution had on education, young people and the arts?

Overview

- After 1959, Castro moved quickly to carry out earlier promises to help the poorer sections of society by redistributing wealth and resources. In May 1959, the Agrarian Reform Act gave confiscated land to landless and poor peasants.
- Castro nationalised public utilities in March 1959 and, after foreign oil companies refused to process Soviet crude oil, the refineries were nationalised in June 1960.
- Castro and his team wanted rapid industrialisation and diversification in agriculture. In February 1961, Guevara became minister of industries, and a central plan was quickly drawn up.
- During the years 1963–64, a more Soviet style of economic planning was adopted. This increased after 1968 and, in July 1972, Cuba joined the Soviet bloc's Comecon (the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance). From 1972 to 1982, Cuba experienced real growth during what became known as the 'Brezhnev Years'.
- From the late 1970s, increasing problems led to a rising trade debt. By 1986, Castro launched a 'rectification' campaign.
- The collapse of the regimes of Eastern Europe and then the Soviet Union in the years 1989–91 led to great economic problems. In January 1990, Castro announced the start of the 'Special Period'.
- In the early years, Castro moved quickly to push through many social policy reforms. Priority was given to expanding healthcare. In 1961, a successful mass literacy campaign was launched.
- At the same time, moves were begun to equalise educational access, pay and employment opportunities for women. Policies to end discrimination against, and improve resources and opportunities for, black people also began from the start of Castro's regime.
- The government was slower to tackle the discrimination and inequalities affecting gay men and lesbians. Until the 1970s, the government itself treated such people unfairly.
- As regards religion, the state at first moved to reduce the wealth and influence of the Catholic Church and, in 1976, formally declared Cuba to be atheist. However, in 1992, the constitution was amended, with 'secular' replacing the term 'atheist'.

What were the main features of Castro's economic policies?

A large proportion of Cuba's citizens seemed to share Castro's conviction that his government had a mission to help Cuba improve and serve its people. His redistribution policies in income – as well as education and healthcare – benefited people on lower incomes and so helped solidify support for his regime. Even when Castro admitted failures, people were mindful of the successes of his redistribution policies. Thus Castro's social policy delivery and his redistribution of wealth – as well as his nationalism in the face of US power – all helped to maintain the legitimacy of his rule.

Fidel Castro, delivering his 'First declaration of Havana' speech in September 1960, to a large crowd in the Plaza de la Revolución; during his speech, Castro cancelled the 1952 Mutual Aid Treaty, signed between Batista and the USA, and went on to tear up the August 1960 San José Declaration, which was an agreement made between Latin American countries that supported the interventionist policies of the United States

Question

Why would some Cubans have supported the tearing up of the San José Declaration?



Fact

In Japan, after 1945, the USA had imposed a land reform that limited individual ownership to only 1 hectare (2.47 acres), and had given a lower rate of interest on the compensatory bonds. In 1963, Castro's government passed a second Agrarian Reform Act to nationalise the middle-size farms. By the end of 1970, the state owned 70% of all land, with only small farms remaining in private ownership.

Fact

Compensation was based on the value that the landowners had placed on their land for tax purposes. These values were always deliberately lower than the land's real worth, in order to reduce their tax bills.

Question

What were the main steps that led to the USA imposing an embargo on all exports to Cuba in November 1960?

Fact

Although employment rose, productivity declined sharply. Inefficiency and under-employment became institutionalised in the new economic structures.

Fact

Mass mobilisation 'volunteers' (according to Bethell, many lacked the right to refuse) were used throughout the country, but were often not very effective. They were supplemented by a large number of the Cuban armed forces. Having defeated the prospect of internal counter-revolution by 1966, the armed forces were frequently used for direct productive economic activities.

The early years, 1959–68

The new revolutionary government moved quickly in the first six months to benefit its supporters in the poorest sections of Cuban society.

Agriculture

In March 1959, a minimum wage was introduced for sugar-cane cutters and, in May 1959, Castro announced details of his plans for land reform in the Agrarian Reform Act. All *latifundia* (large estates) would be broken up into smaller units: owners could keep 402 hectares (1000 acres) – the rest were liable to expropriation. In all, about 40% of Cuban farmland was expropriated and divided up into individual plots of 27 hectares (67 acres) for landless plantation workers and small farmers or peasants. Larger ranches and plantations were to be run as state farms (later to become co-operatives).

This was, in fact, quite a moderate land reform, but the landowning classes opposed the May 1959 Agrarian Reform Act. Many US companies and individuals owned large estates in Cuba, and the US government complained that compensation was inadequate.

In July 1960, the USA decided to destroy the Cuban sugar industry by cutting the sugar quota normally purchased by the USA. Castro's reaction was swift: 'They will take away our sugar quota pound by pound, and we will take away their sugar mills one by one.' In August, Castro nationalised all major US properties on the island; in November, the USA announced a ban on all exports to Cuba.

The Soviet Union agreed to purchase Cuban sugar at the favourable rate of 6 cents a pound, at least until 1970. This would enable long-term planning, but meant Cuba would have to concentrate on sugar.

Before the revolution of 1959, unemployment had been high, especially in rural areas – but the new government's policies quickly reduced this. By the mid 1960s, there was in fact a labour shortage. However, production began to fall, as the material incentives for better or more work were removed and were replaced with 'moral incentives' and calls for voluntary labour. Castro's response was to call for mass mobilisation for work in the sugar fields as well as in other sectors of the economy.

Industry

Immediately after 1959, the real wages of non-agricultural workers rose sharply and rents for the cheaper urban dwellings were reduced by up to 50%. In March 1959, several utility companies were taken over and prices reduced. In April 1960, following Mikoyan's visit to Cuba in February (see page 178), and the signing of trade agreements, 300,000 tonnes of Soviet crude oil were delivered to Cuba. When the foreign-owned oil refineries refused to process it, Castro nationalised them in June 1960. Then, on 13 October 1960, 382 Cuban firms, including all the sugar mills, banks and large industries, were **socialised**.

Castro saw his policies as necessary both for national security, given the growing confrontation with the USA, and as a pragmatic approach to ensure proper economic planning. A more centralised approach via a **command economy** was seen as the quickest way to ensure economic growth.

SOURCE A

We were carrying out our programme little by little. All these [US] aggressions accelerated the revolutionary process. Were they the cause? No, this would be an error ... In Cuba, we were going to construct socialism in the most orderly possible manner, within a reasonable period of time, with the least amount of trauma and problems, but the aggression of imperialism accelerated the revolutionary process.

Comments made by Castro on the events of 1960–61. Quoted in Balfour, S. 2009. Castro. London, UK. Longman. p. 64.

The main aim of Castro's early economic policy was development via a programme of rapid industrialisation. This was seen as necessary as, since 1959, the Cuban economy had declined and was thus threatening the fulfilment of social policies for health, housing and education. By the end of 1960, the economic structure of Cuba had changed dramatically: 80% of industry was under state control and state enterprises were producing 90% of Cuba's exports. In November 1959, Guevara, who was determined to end Cuba's overwhelming dependency on the sugar industry, was made director of the National Bank. In February 1961, he became minister of industries.

Guevara, minister of industries, taking part in voluntary labour at a public housing construction project in Havana in 1961; he gave most of his spare time to such activities



socialise This term refers to the bringing of private companies into public ownership and control, to form local co-operatives or collectives, local authority ventures or state/government enterprises. ('Nationalisation' refers specifically to the bringing of companies into government or state ownership and control.)

command economy A command economy is directly opposed to a capitalist economy, which is based on the private ownership and control of major resources and businesses. When the state is in control, once businesses and banks have been socialised (i.e. taken into public ownership and control), the government can then make plans about investments, productivity and growth.

Question

Why was voluntary labour seen as being important in the construction of a revolutionary Cuba?

Fact

The endogenous model, favoured by Guevara, involved rapid industrialisation, similar to that adopted by Stalin in the USSR after 1928 (see pages 43–45), central state planning, the elimination of the market laws of supply and demand, prioritising social need, and moral incentives. Supporters of the exogenous model argued for the need for an economic policy similar to Lenin’s New Economic Policy (NEP) (see page 22), with its elements of capitalism (including market mechanisms, decentralisation and material incentives).

Fact

Guevara went on a tour of African and Asian countries and, on his return, he resigned his government positions and Cuban citizenship. However, he and Castro remained close. Guevara returned to Cuba in secret in 1966 to gather and train a group of veterans for a new guerilla campaign in Bolivia, and undergo plastic surgery to change his appearance. He was later captured and shot in Bolivia in 1967.

Discussion points

Working in pairs, develop arguments for a class presentation on:

- 1 Why Guevara resigned his government positions
- 2 What Guevara did abroad in the period 1965–67.

However, there was considerable debate amongst the revolution’s leaders about how best to bring about diversification and industrialisation. According to Balfour, there were two main models – the ‘endogenous and exogenous models’. Guevara favoured the endogenous model, arguing that Cuba’s links to the Soviet bloc meant it could jump ‘stages’ in the transition to socialism.

To bring this about, central state ministries were established, along with a Central Planning Board (*Juceplan*). In 1961, *Juceplan* was instructed to draw up a plan for 1962, and a draft four-year plan for 1962–65. These plans were, according to Bethell, unrealistic and unrealisable. Despite this, during the first years there was a rise in consumption for the poorer sections of society who gained access to better food and housing.

During April–June 1963, Castro visited the Soviet Union and, in view of mounting problems, changes in economic policy were later announced – in particular, Guevara’s plans for diversification were abandoned and his ministry was broken up. Instead, Soviet assistance would be given to get Cuba to concentrate on sugar production once again. Guevara left his post in 1965, just 18 months after these changes, to undertake revolutionary work in Africa and Latin America. His ministry was divided into its former sub-divisions.

However, by early 1968, there were signs of an emerging economic crisis – in part, because the Soviet Union was drastically reducing its supplies of fuel and gas.

The Soviet camp, 1968–90

Agriculture

From 1960 to 1990, production of sugar grew by 40%, and the industry was employing over 375,000 people by the late 1980s. However, when unpaid overtime (‘voluntary labour’) became compulsory and material incentives were replaced by moral ones, mounting dissatisfaction led to falling yields. In 1966, a new deal with the Soviet Union saw Cuba agree to provide 5 million tonnes in 1968 and 1969, with a guaranteed price. But, despite Soviet investment funds to modernise the sugar industry, the harvests of 1968 and 1969 each only yielded 3.7 million tonnes. Hence Castro launched a spectacular plan to raise the sugar harvest for 1970 to 10 million tonnes – this ‘battle for sugar’ lasted from November 1969 to July 1970.



SOURCE B

The 10 million tonne harvest represents far more than tonnes of sugar, far more than an economic victory; it is a test, a moral commitment for this country. And precisely because it is a test and a moral commitment we cannot fall short by even a single gram of these 10 million tonnes ... 10 million tonnes less a single pound – we declare it before all the world – will be a defeat, not a victory.

Extract from a speech by Castro, 18 October 1969. Quoted in Balfour, S. 2009. Castro. London, UK. Longman. p. 92.

Though it failed to reach the unrealistic target set by Castro, a fantastic figure – the highest in Cuba’s history – of 8.5 million tonnes of sugar was reached: almost double the usual yield. The following year, production was 5.9 million tonnes. This improved production was maintained during the 1970s.

After 1970, Cuba was helped by the soaring price of sugar in the world market. As sugar accounted for about 80% of all Cuba’s exports, this enabled Castro’s government successfully to undertake new policies and directions. From 1980, once they had met state quotas, farmers were allowed to sell any surplus in markets where prices were no longer regulated.

Then, in 1986, new economic problems led to the ‘rectification’ campaign (see below). The consequent policy changes mostly affected industry but, as regards agriculture, the newly legalised private farmers’ markets were closed.

Industry

By 1968, Cuba had become increasingly dependent on the Soviet Union, and by 1970 the Cuban economy was in massive debt to the Soviet bloc. Castro then moved closer to the Soviet Union and his government increasingly turned to Soviet economic advisers, along with some of the old Cuban communists. By November 1971, when Alexei Kosygin, premier of the USSR, visited, Cuba was already well integrated into the Soviet camp. Especially important was the supply of Soviet oil.

In July 1972, Cuba joined Comecon (the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance), the economic and trading union of communist states. In December, Castro went to Moscow, where he signed a 15-year economic agreement with Leonid Brezhnev that substantially increased the Soviet subsidy to the Cuban economy. This included increasing the price paid for sugar, deferring all debt payments for 15 years (then to be repaid over 25 years, with no interest), and new investment credits (totalling \$350 million over the next three years).

This marked the beginning of what some historians, such as Gott, and many Cubans have described as the ‘Brezhnev years’ – when, from 1972 to 1982, the Cuban economy was increasingly reorganised along Soviet lines. Soviet advisers helped the Cuban government establish a new planning system: the System of Direction and Planning of the Economy (SDPE). The adoption of its first Five-Year Plan in 1975 was designed to industrialise the island by helping state enterprises become self-financing, developing decentralisation and efficiency, and introducing profit and incentives.

However, at the Third Party Congress in 1986, Castro argued that Cuba still lacked ‘comprehensive national planning for economic development.’ So, in April 1986, Castro launched his programme of ‘rectification’. From May 1986, various anti-market measures were introduced and Castro repeated earlier calls for moral incentives as a way of motivating people to improve productivity and build a better society. Overall, there was a return to a more centralised command economy.

In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev became the new ruler of the Soviet Union. He was determined to cut down on Soviet support for the Cuban economy. In April 1989, he made his first visit to Havana, where he spelled out the changes to come – especially the phasing out of the price subsidies to the Cuban economy, the aim to restore a greater balance of trade between the two countries, and the requirement for Cuba to pay for Soviet goods with US dollars.

Fact

Rectification involved moving Cuba away from market mechanisms in order to improve productivity and efficiency. It was not a return to the ‘war economy’ of 1966–70, nor a rejection of the new SDPE system of economic planning and management, but an attempt to restore a balance between the two.

Question

Why did Castro launch the ‘rectification’ campaign in 1986?

By 1989, Cuba began to feel the impact of these changes and the effects of the collapse of the East European communist regimes. From 1989 to 1991, Cuban imports of petroleum products from the Soviet Union dropped by over 60%. All former East European states cancelled their economic assistance programmes and reduced their trade with Cuba. From 1989 to 1991, the Soviet Union reduced its economic subsidies. With the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991, all subsidies were cancelled.

The Special Period and beyond, 1990–present

Agriculture

After 1959, while Cuba’s economy was dependent on the Soviet Union, it was less affected by world prices. However, after the collapse of the East European communist states in 1989–90 and the Soviet Union in 1991, economic problems were inevitable. The ending of subsidies for sugar meant that Cuba was again dependent on the world market and its price fluctuations. In 1990, the average price of sugar to the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and the West was \$602 per tonne; by 1992, the world price had dropped to \$200. At the same time, external financing from the Soviet Union dropped from \$3 billion in 1989 to nothing in 1992. This led to the ‘Special Period in Time of Peace.’

SOURCE C

There may be other forms of aggression for which we must prepare. We have called the total blockade period a ‘Special Period in Time of War’. Yet, in the face of all these problems we must prepare ... plans for a ‘Special Period in Time of Peace’.

An extract from Castro’s speech in January 1990 to the Cuban Workers’ Federation, first announcing the Special Period. Quoted in Gott, R. 2004. Cuba: A New History. New Haven, USA. Yale University Press. p. 289.

Fact

Initiatives during the Special Period included:

- in October 1990, a ‘Food Programme’ was launched to encourage local production
- scarce funds were allocated for research and development in biotechnology
- a recycling campaign
- a far-reaching austerity drive
- a mass mobilisation of volunteers – with many (such as students) from outside the agricultural sector
- development of tourism in place of sugar.

In March 1990, farmers were urged to use draught animals such as oxen and horses, and food was rationed. Thousands of workers from industries that had to be closed because of their dependence on foreign imports were sent to the countryside to grow food. Before 1990, Cuba obtained 63% of its food from the Soviet Union, and much food had been imported from Eastern Europe, so alternative sources of food supplies were needed. With no dollars available to buy from the West, food production at home had to be increased and various initiatives were undertaken.

However, by 1993 it was clear that further measures were needed. One of the three main measures was the establishment, in September 1993, of agricultural co-operatives (known as *Unidades Básicas de Producción Cooperativa* – UBPC) to replace the state farms, which were reduced in size, as was the number of workers. The state agricultural sector – which had controlled 75% of the agricultural economy – dropped to 30% by 1996. The land remained nominally in the hands of the state, and the UBPCs still had to produce quotas at prices fixed by the government. Also, private farmers’ markets – abolished during the ‘rectification’ campaign of 1986 – were allowed once more.

The Special Period ended in 1996 but the constant fallback for the Cuban economy for centuries – sugar – was gone. In 2002, the government announced that 71 of the 156 sugar mills would be closed and half the land devoted to sugar would be given over to other crops.

Industry

After 1975, few of the planned targets for increased productivity had been fully met, and real economic growth had been modest. In addition, the Cuban economy had become increasingly reliant on the Soviet Union. Cuba imported 80% of its machinery from the Soviet Union, while the Soviet Union purchased 63% of its sugar, 95% of its citrus and 73% of its nickel. Since the 1960s, the regular deliveries of cheap Soviet oil had been Cuba's economic lifeline: in 1989, almost 13 million tonnes had been delivered – at very favourable rates. The Special Period really began in 1990, when oil supplies from the Soviet Union dropped dramatically: by 1993, supplies dropped to 5.3 million tonnes and replacement supplies had to be bought on the world market, at higher prices and with US dollars.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991 removed the crucial role played by the Soviet bloc in keeping the Cuban economy afloat. Between 1989 and 1993, Cuban GDP sank by 35%, while exports fell by 79%. By 2000, they were still only 43% of the figure for the pre-1989 years. In March 1990, gas, water and electricity supplies were cut off for short periods throughout the country. In August, oil and gas deliveries were cut by 50% across the island, and electricity consumption by 10%.

However, because of *Poder Popular*, the economic crisis of the Special Period does not seem to have been resolved at the expense of the workers. Thus conflict between government and unions appears to have been limited. In 1992, the constitution was amended to allow for state property to become part of joint ventures with foreign companies. But, by 1993, it was clear that Cuba's internal economy was still experiencing great problems. So Castro brought in a team of young economists led by Carlos Lage (the youthful vice-president) and José Luis Rodríguez (as minister of finance).

The first reforms were announced in Castro's Moncada speech on 26 July 1993. Particularly significant – and painful – was the Decree-Law 140 of August 1993, which made the US dollar legal tender in Cuba. Then, in September, the Decree-Law 141 re-introduced self-employment in some occupations and by 1995 more than 200,000 Cubans (about 5% of the workforce) were registered as self-employed. Yet, throughout the Special Period, Castro maintained his opposition to capitalism.

SOURCE D

Authorising private commerce would be a political and ideological turnaround; it would be like starting along the path towards capitalism ... I find capitalism repugnant. It is filthy, it is gross, it is alienating ... because it causes war, hypocrisy and competition.

Castro speaking in January 1994. Quoted in Balfour, S. 2009. Castro. London, UK. Longman. p. 155.

To help the Cuban economy survive, tourism was strongly promoted, and soon became Cuba's largest earner of foreign currency. The government invested heavily in it and worked with partner companies from Spain, France and Canada in particular. Yet just as things were improving, and Cuba might have been expected to benefit from the end of the Cold War, the USA turned up the pressure, passing the Torricelli Act in 1992 and the Helms-Burton Act in 1996 to tighten trade sanctions on Cuba. However, the European Union – by then the main investors in Cuba – objected strongly to US attempts to stop them trading with Cuba. Eventually, the USA was forced to exempt EU countries. The 1996 act failed to stop Cuba expanding its world trade – though it remained as a potential threat.

In 2003, a new programme of anti-market re-centralisation was introduced: the dollar was no longer legal tender and the ministry for foreign trade was recreated to re-establish control over exports and imports.

How successful were Castro's economic policies?

The early years, 1959–68

Agriculture

Sugar production, already in trouble under Batista before 1959, was disrupted by managers fleeing to the USA during 1959–61. Early attempts at agricultural diversification away from sugar created further problems. As a result, the 1963 sugar harvest (down by over 30% compared to 1961) was the worst since the Second World War, while agriculture in general suffered similar problems.

However, in 1964, the Soviet Union signed the first of a series of long-term agreements that guaranteed better and stable prices for sugar; sugar production then increased from the 1963 level of 3.8 million tonnes.

Industry

There were also problems in industry and, in 1962, the Cuban economy collapsed. Castro's government froze prices and had to bring in rationing for most consumer products. However, this meant resources were fairly distributed. The fair distribution of food was a first for Cuba and contrasted strongly with other states in the region, which were marked by inequalities and mass poverty.

In 1963, the Cuban economy declined even further, as imports of machinery for rapid industrialisation, on top of the decline in income from sugar, resulted in a balance-of-payments crisis. At the same time, the replacement of money incentives for workers with moral incentives proved ineffective, as workers were paid the same, regardless of effort or quality. Part of the failure of Guevara's plans was down to the US embargo – the US had previously supplied the raw materials and machine parts needed for factories producing consumer goods and, at first, there was no alternative source. In 1963, industrial production fell by 1.5%, having grown by 0.4% the previous year.

The Soviet camp, 1968–90

Agriculture

Problems in agriculture continued after the policy changes of the mid 1960s. Production in cattle-raising and forestry declined; even fishing – the best

Fact

Material incentives included higher pay for certain types of workers, bonuses for increased productivity and payment for overtime. Those who saw money as a capitalist corruption wanted to stress moral incentives, such as taking pride in working to achieve a better society and resisting the efforts of the USA to undermine the gains of the 1959 Revolution, for example by volunteering to work overtime for no extra pay. Such people would be keen to be part of the movement to bring about a worldwide revolution and so create a better world for the majority of the people.

performer – experienced some declines as well as successes. By 1970, Cuba’s economy in general was in crisis; and by 1982, Cuba’s terms of trade with the Soviet Union were over 30% lower than in 1975 – largely as a result of lower sugar prices.

Industry

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, a new management system was introduced to give more autonomy to managers. Once again, higher wages and bonuses were paid for higher quality work, increased productivity and overtime.

Consequently, the economy prospered spectacularly during the first half of the 1970s. From 1975 to 1985, there was good economic and industrial growth, with an annual growth rate of 4.1%, and with a significant improvement in the early 1980s (the comparable figure for Latin America as a whole was 1.2%). By 1982, its hard-currency debt reached about \$3 billion; by 1986, Cuba had a record deficit of over \$199 million and a foreign debt of \$3.87 billion, 6.9% higher than in 1985. An economic recession thus began in 1986, and continued for the rest of the decade.

The Special Period and beyond, 1990–present

Agriculture

Plaza Organopónico is one of many small organic farm co-operatives in Havana creating work and fresh food for the city’s inhabitants



In 1990, with the start of the Special Period, Cuba experienced an economic disaster. Despite government measures to improve things, there remained mismanagement and shortages. After 1993, 'free' farmers' markets, in which farmers were free to sell directly to the public, were restored, with good results. By 2000, markets (known as 'kiosks') were established on almost every block in Havana, providing a wide variety of foods; they exist in most towns and cities.

Despite such efforts, many areas of agricultural production in Cuba remained weak – apart from eggs and citrus fruits. However, the *organopónicos* – about 7000 small organic plots, mainly located in urban areas – have been a success. These now produce 90% of Cuba's fruit and vegetables, and obviously require no expensive – and harmful – pesticides or fertilisers. In addition, experts from Australia have taught the methods of permaculture – a sustainable agricultural system.

Industry

Cuba's import capacity dropped 70% between 1989 and 1992 (from \$8.1 billion to \$2.3 billion). This was mainly because of the drop in earnings from sugar and the loss of external financing, mostly from the Soviet Union. As well as oil, there were also shortages of spare parts, chemical fertilisers and animal feedstuffs. However, the government maintained the revolution's gains of free education and a free health service – no hospitals or schools were closed during the Special Period.

After 1993, the economy very slowly began to improve. GDP, at 0.7% in 1994, stopped falling and, after 1996, averaged out at 3.5% a year. One important element in helping Cuba overcome its biggest problems was Hugo Chávez, a great admirer of Castro, who became president of Venezuela in 1998. Chávez signed trade deals that were beneficial to Cuba.

In 2000, the first Cuba–Venezuela agreement was reached, to provide Cuba with considerable amounts of oil; by 2006, Cuba was importing 100,000 barrels of oil a day from Venezuela at a preferential price well below average world market prices. Meanwhile, in 2008, Russia agreed to help fund oil production off the coast of Cuba.

What were the main social policies in Castro's Cuba?

When Castro took power in 1959, Cuba ranked amongst the top five Latin American countries for literacy, infant mortality and life expectancy; in healthcare and medical services, it was third. However, these statistics are misleading, as most services were based in Havana and the large regional towns. Conditions and services in the rural areas were very different – many rural areas had few doctors and few schools.

Living standards

Castro's policies to redistribute wealth have been very successful. By providing jobs for all those who are able to work, the goal of ending unemployment was met. Prices of basic goods were kept low, while rationing ensured fair distribution. In particular, the improvement in living standards for the rural poor was outstanding.



Theory of knowledge

History and ethics

Utilitarianism is a theory of ethics that says that the supreme moral principle is the 'greatest good for the greatest number of people'. Do the social policies of Castro's government after 1959 justify the expropriation and nationalisation of land and businesses owned by wealthy Cubans and foreigners? Are the political theories of socialism and Marxism therefore more moral than those of liberal capitalism?

Fact

There was, however, a brief reappearance of unemployment in the late 1970s – it reached 5.4% in 1979.

Healthcare

Healthcare is one of the most successful social policy areas for Castro's government. Healthcare services were quickly established as the right of every Cuban citizen, and the system of free healthcare, which had existed before the revolution of 1959, was greatly expanded. This was especially true of the rural areas. However, the various political and military mobilisations – resulting from real or imagined threats from the USA – disrupted the expansion of medical services.

The improvement in the economy in the 1970s meant great advances were made. By 1981, the infant mortality rate had fallen to 18.5 per 1000 while pre-1959 diseases especially associated with poverty (such as TB and diarrhoeal disease) had been greatly reduced.

Housing

Before 1959, only 15% of rural inhabitants had running water (it was 80% for urban dwellers), and only 9% of households had electricity. However, the revolutionary government's performance in housing was less successful. There were inefficiencies in the construction and construction-materials industries, and insufficient production, as the government gave higher priority to the building of hospitals and schools.

From 1949 to 1959, when the Cuban population was half of the figure for the late 1970s/early 1980s, about 27,000 housing units were built each year. In the 1960s, figures dropped considerably, although they rose to 16,000 units per year during the first Five-Year Plan (1976–80). In 1973, a high of 21,000 units was reached, but by 1980 figures had declined again.

What were Castro's policies towards women, ethnic and other minorities, and religion?

Women

The lives of women changed greatly under Castro's regime after 1959. As well as social policies affecting them – such as easier divorce, free abortions and subsidised family planning – the proportion of women in the labour force doubled from the late 1950s to the late 1980s.

SOURCE E

At present, more than 40% of the workforce is made up of women, constituting an estimated 60% of the upper levels of technicians and 67% of professionals. Women constitute 61% of prosecutors, 49% of professional judges, 47% of magistrates and 30% of state administrators and ministry officials.

Saney, I. 2004. *Cuba: A Revolution in Motion*, London, UK. Zed Books. p. 94.

Fact

A particular problem was the US embargo placed on trade with Cuba, which disrupted medical supplies – at first, Cuban production of these was inefficient. This particularly hit the upper-income urban consumers who had bought imported medicines before 1959.

Fact

According to Bethell, the increase in the number of women in the labour force was not fundamentally the result of government policies (some of which did encourage women's participation in the job market), but was more a social trend of advancing modernisation.

Vilma Espin (1930–2007)

Espin was one of the leaders of the 26 July Movement in Santiago before 1959. She later married Raúl Castro and retained her power base in the FMC when they separated. In 1992, as president of the FMC, she challenged prejudices against gay men and lesbians, and formed a section to support the concerns of lesbians.



Fact

Vilma Espin was the first woman to enter the party’s politburo, in 1986. Women were also under-represented in the middle ranks of leadership.

Question

How far have Castro’s policies for gender equality overcome the pre-1959 traditions of *machismo* and patriarchy in Cuba?

Cuban women are guaranteed equal pay, and the Women’s Commission on Employment monitors hiring and workplace practices for discrimination. However, the highest paid jobs in mining, fishery and construction are restricted to men only, on the grounds that they would damage women’s health. Thus, on average, women’s salaries are 15% behind those of men in the public sector.

There has been an impressive increase in the number of women throughout the education system. Cuba has one of the highest rates of school enrolment of young girls. Also, more than 60% of university students are female, and 47% of university instructors are women – in medicine, women actually outnumber men, forming 70% of students. Although they remain under-represented in engineering, and over-represented in primary and secondary school teaching and in the humanities, a fundamental shift has nonetheless occurred.

In August 1960, the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) was set up. It has gone a long way in changing sexist opinions and behaviour. For many years, its president was **Vilma Espin**.

The FMC played a crucial role in getting an egalitarian Family Code adopted in 1975. This was designed to equalise the status of spouses in the family and obliged husbands to do half of all family chores. However, surveys suggest the persistence of Latin American *machismo* (male chauvinism) and gender stereotyping in the home. Women thus bear the brunt of the ‘second shift’ (i.e. household work), doing 36 hours of household work per week, compared to 10 hours for men.

Women’s participation in politics has been significantly less equal than in the workplace. By the mid 1980s, only 19% of the PCC members and candidate members and only 13% of the PCC’s Central Committees were women. There were no women in the party secretariat or the top government organ, the Council of State. However, by 2003, women formed over 30% of the active membership of the PCC and 16.1% of the Council of State, and five ministries were headed by women. Women also held 52.5% of union leadership positions, and 31% of all managers of state enterprises were women. According to historians such as Saney, Cuba compares favourably with other countries and ranks fifth in the Americas in terms of overall equality for women. In the 1988 elections, 27.6% of delegates were women; in 2003, this rose to 35.9%. Female representation in the National Assembly puts Cuba tenth in the world. Despite some problems, the Cuban Revolution maintains a strong commitment to achieving full equality between women and men.

Black people

Before 1959, Castro’s programmes and manifestos had not alluded to the ‘colour question’. However, after 1959, the improved treatment of black people soon became an important achievement of Castro’s regime. In March 1959, he made his ‘Proclamation against discrimination’ speech, calling for a campaign against racial discrimination and making it clear that differences in skin colour were of no significance. The revolutionary government quickly repealed the pre-1959 laws that allowed or enforced racial discrimination. However, Castro did not support black separatism, and the societies and associations of black intellectuals and politicians that had existed before 1959 were closed.

As a result of government social and economic policies, Cuba’s black and mulatto population – which was disproportionately poor – saw their living

standards improve considerably after 1959. Consequently, surveys show support for Castro's government is greater among black people than among whites.

The leaders of the 1959 revolution were overwhelmingly white, and white people have continued to fill the top political positions. Consequently, as with women, black people are still significantly under-represented in the top organs of both party and state. By 1979, only five of the 34 ministers were black; there were only four black members of the 14-strong politburo of the PCC; and only 16 of the 146 members of its Central Committee. So, at the party congress in 1986, Castro declared it a priority to increase the black share of top political jobs.

Same-sex relations in Cuba

Today, same-sex relations are not illegal in Cuba. However, **homophobia**, though not violent as in many other states, persists in certain sections of society. The situation of gay men and lesbians has altered over the decades since the revolution of 1959. After 1959, same-sex relationships were at first seen as aspects of 'bourgeois decadence' resulting from capitalism. Such early attitudes were strengthened in the 1960s and 1970s as Cuba moved closer to the Soviet Union, whose laws reflected such prejudices.

As early as 1965, the Revolutionary Armed Forces forcibly recruited gay men into UMAP (Military Units to Help Production) work battalions. These military labour camps, however, were mainly intended for men who, as conscientious objectors, refused to do military service, or for young men who were considered unfit for military service. This led to significant criticism in Cuba – in 1967, Castro ordered the camps to be disbanded and the internees released.

However, this did not end discrimination in other areas of life. In 1971, the government described same-sex relationships as incompatible with the revolution – gay men and lesbians were expelled from the Communist Party and several artists, actors and teachers lost their jobs. However, this was overturned by the Supreme Court in 1975, and Armando Hart, head of the new Ministry of Culture, began to promote a more liberal approach.

As a result, during the second half of the 1970s, attitudes towards same-sex relationships were questioned in various ways. In 1977, the *Centro Nacional de Educación Sexual* (CNES) was founded on the initiative of the Cuban Women's Federation (FMC) – this encouraged a more enlightened outlook on sexual orientation and started to undermine traditional sexual prejudices and taboos.

The work done by the CNES has contributed to changes in attitudes and laws. In 1979, the law was changed to remove same-sex acts between consenting adults as a criminal offence from the Penal Code. More recently, the age of consent for same-sex relations was equalised to that for heterosexual relations.

There have been further reforms, often emanating from Raúl Castro and his daughter Mariela Castro. These reforms include free hormone therapy in 2008 and free state-sponsored gender reassignment surgery in 2010. However, there is no recognition of same-sex marriage or civil partnerships or unions. Gay and lesbian organisations and publications are banned, as are gay pride marches. Yet since 1995, gay and lesbian groups have been allowed to participate in – and even lead – the May Day parades. Castro more recently criticised *machismo* and urged acceptance of same-sex relationships, describing these as a 'natural aspect and tendency of human beings, that must simply be respected'.

Fact

The 1981 census showed one-third of the total Cuban population was black, but the black share of the Central Committee in 1986 was only one-fifth. However, in elections to local municipal assemblies, black people were represented in numbers comparable to their share of the population.

homophobia Homophobia is the irrational fear and/or set of mistaken prejudices/ideas/practices held by individuals about gay men and lesbians.

Historical debate

Historians are divided over the degree of toleration of gay men and lesbians in Cuba today. Does the record of Castro's government on this issue since 1959 warrant the many criticisms that have been made of it – including those from some on the left, who have been otherwise supportive of the revolution?



Castro with Pope John Paul II in January 1998, during the Pope's visit to Cuba

Religion

The Catholic Church had not grown deep roots in Cuba as in other Latin American states. By the late 1990s, out of a population of 11 million, only about 150,000 regularly attended Sunday mass. There were also various ecumenical Protestant sects, which experienced some growth in the 1990s. But the numbers of Catholics and Protestants combined was less than the 5 million who followed various forms of Afro-Cuban religion.

At first the Church leadership accepted the revolution; but the secularisation of education, and the reduction of the Church's role in government, changed the situation. By the end of 1959, the radical turn taken by Castro and his *Fidelistas* led to tensions with the Catholic Church.

However, during the 1980s, the Vatican, and the Cuban and US Catholic Churches, condemned the US embargo on Cuba. Pope John Paul II (who was strongly anti-communist) even mildly criticised the effects of neo-liberal capitalist economics.

In July 1992, amendments to the 1976 Constitution declared the state to be secular rather than atheist, while the PCC allowed religious believers to join. Then, in January 1998, Pope John Paul II visited Cuba, where he conducted four masses. The Pope negotiated the release of about 300 prisoners and gained greater room for activity by the Church, despite government concerns about faith-based oppositionist groups, which were still closely monitored.

What impact has the Cuban Revolution had on education, young people and the arts?

Education

Education has been the most impressive of Castro's achievements. Cuba in 1959 had a generally ill-educated population. As early as his attack on the Moncada barracks in July 1953, Castro had promised reform of education; in his speech to the UN in 1960, he promised that the revolution would end illiteracy within a year.

The drive to eliminate illiteracy began in 1961 – designated the 'Year of Education'. The revolutionary government took over all private and Church schools and, after some difficulties, achieved virtual universal attendance at primary schools. Over 100,000 volunteer student teachers, recruited into brigades, took part – most were teenagers. They were often the target of US-sponsored counter-revolutionaries, and over 40 were killed in these terrorist attacks. Yet these teachers taught over 1 million to read and write – thus allowing the fulfilment of Castro's promise. Over 3000 schools were built in the first year, and over 300,000 children attended school for the first time.

The literacy campaign and school reforms continued throughout an extensive adult education system. Later, with some Soviet assistance, Cuba developed a greatly improved educational system, which was free to all – and without parallel in Latin America.

Fact

According to the 1970 census, illiteracy still stood at 12.9%; by 1979, this had dropped to 5.6%.

A primary school classroom in Havana in 2007 – note the poster of Che Guevara on the wall at the back

As a result, average levels of education in the labour force jumped from bare literacy in the 1964 labour census to sixth-grade level in the 1974 census, and to eighth-grade level by 1979. However, differences in access to quality education between urban and rural Cubans – though greatly reduced – did not completely end; but the improvements made in the late 1960s were built on in the 1970s. Many people deserve credit for these improvements: apart from Castro (who pushed for it as a priority), **José Ramón Fernández** played a key role.



Improvements in higher education were more limited. Departments were at first hit, both by the early emigrations and by the dismissal of ‘politically unreliable’ staff. There was a strong bias towards technical education, with engineering being prioritised over the humanities and the liberal arts; and academic study of the social sciences was neglected.

Overall, Castro successfully carried through a real educational revolution after 1959. This has not only been a source of great pride for the Cuban government and people, but has also been an inspiration for other developing countries. Despite economic crises (including the ‘Special Period’) Castro has insisted that the ‘historic socialist achievements of the revolution’ – free education and free medical care – be preserved untouched.

The media and the arts

In 1960, all the mass media came under government control; the only avenue of criticism was via the letters-to-the-editor pages – such letters had to relate to specific problems rather than criticising general policy.

There was greater – though still limited – freedom of expression and publication in the arts and the academic worlds for those who supported the revolution, and who wrote on topics other than contemporary politics. However, in 1961 Castro said about culture: ‘Within the revolution, everything; against the revolution, nothing’. Thus, material opposed to the revolution, or written by known opponents, was not published.

End of unit activities

- 1 Carry out some further research on the methods used by Castro to redistribute economic resources more equally amongst the citizens of Cuba. Then complete a chart, showing which groups have benefitted most.
- 2 Re-read pages 206–211 and produce a chart summarising (a) the main social policies introduced by Castro’s government since 1959 and (b) their results.
- 3 Find out more about the development of organic farming and recycling in Cuba during and after the ‘Special Period’. How significant do you think these have been in helping Cuba survive the loss of support from the Soviet bloc?

José Ramón Fernández (b. 1923) During Batista’s tyranny, Fernández was imprisoned from 1956 to 1959 for his involvement with the opposition group ‘Los puros’. He took part in operations during the Bay of Pigs incident in 1961. He was first deputy minister of education until 1972 and minister of education from 1972 until 1990.

Fact
As part of Castro’s foreign policy, Cuban teachers went to many developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America to give others the benefit of their methods and experience.

Question
How far, and for what reasons, have Castro’s educational policies since 1959 been successful?

End of chapter activities

Paper 1 exam practice

Question

Compare and contrast the views expressed in Sources A and B below on the impact of the Bay of Pigs incident as regards Castro's consolidation of power. [6 marks]

Skill

Cross-referencing

SOURCE A

The victory at Playa Girón was celebrated amid national euphoria. It was as if the United States had finally received its comeuppance after a century of meddling in the affairs of Cuba. Castro's prestige among the population would never be higher ... Later the same year, he declared on television that he was a Marxist and that the Cuban Revolution would have a 'Marxist-Leninist' programme. The words of a popular song of the post-Playa Girón days, 'Cuba Si, Yanquis No', suggest how collective faith in Castro seemed to override the residue of old ideologies; if Fidel was in charge, they implied, it did not matter which direction the revolution went.

Balfour, S. 2009. *Castro*. London, UK. Longman. p. 65.

SOURCE B

The invasion was one of the major strategic errors of the United States in the 20th century, reinforcing Castro's control over Cuba, ensuring the permanence of his revolution and helping to drive him into the Soviet camp ... Before he left Havana [to supervise the military operation against the invaders], Castro had ordered the arrest of anyone suspected of counter-revolutionary activities, and 35,000 people were detained in the capital alone, including the auxiliary bishop of Havana. The CIA's hope that thousands would rise up against the revolution were thwarted on the first day.

Gott, R. 2004. *Cuba: A New History*. New Haven, USA. Yale University Press. pp. 190–94.

Examiner's tips

Cross-referencing questions require you to compare **and** contrast the information/content/nature of **two** sources, relating to a particular issue. Before you write your answer, draw a rough chart or diagram to show the **similarities** and the **differences** between the two sources. That way, you should ensure you address **both** aspects/elements of the question.

Common mistakes

When asked to compare and contrast two sources, make sure you don't just comment on **one** of the sources! Such an oversight happens every year – and will lose you 4 of the 6 marks available.

Simplified markscheme

Band		Marks
1	Both sources linked , with detailed references to the two sources, identifying both similarities and differences.	6
2	Both sources linked , with detailed references to the two sources, identifying either similarities or differences.	4–5
3	Comments on both sources, but treating each one separately .	3
4	Discusses/comments on just one source.	0–2

Student answer

Sources A and B give very different views of the impact of the Bay of Pigs incident on Castro's consolidation of power. Source A gives a much more positive view, pointing out how 'his prestige among the population would never be higher'.

However, Source B focuses on Castro relying on repression, rather than the popularity mentioned in Source A, to consolidate his rule: it refers to how he used the invasion to reinforce his control by arresting any suspected counter-revolutionaries – '35,000 people were detained in the capital alone'.

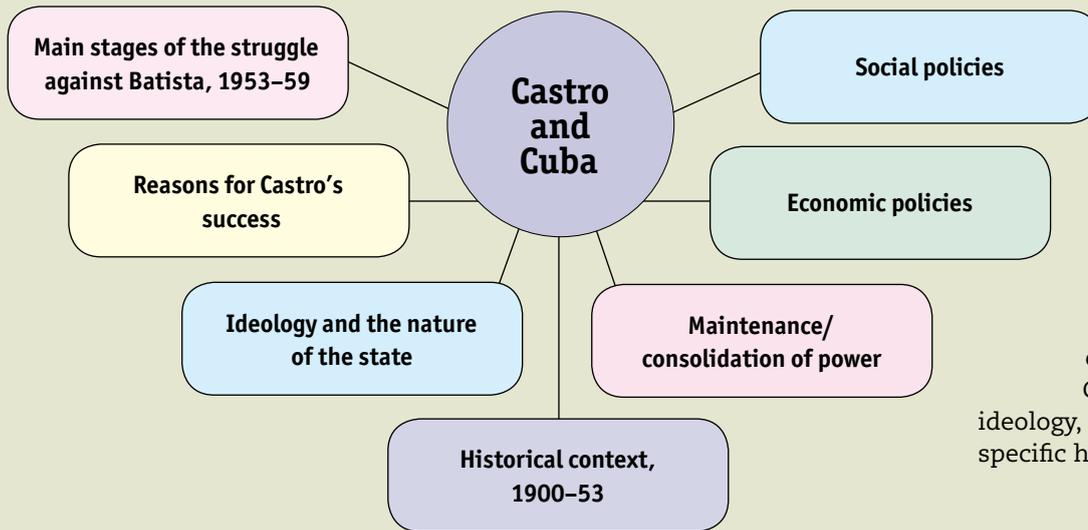
Examiner's comments

There are some clear/precise references to **both** the sources, and one main **difference/contrast** is identified. Also, the sources are linked in the second paragraph, rather than being dealt with separately. But only one clear difference is identified, so the candidate's answer is on the borderline between Band 3 and low Band 2 – this would score 3–4 marks. As no similarities/comparisons are shown, this answer fails to get into Band 1.

Activity

Look again at the two sources, the simplified markscheme, and the student answer above. Now try to write a paragraph or two to push the answer up into Band 1, and so obtain the full 6 marks – as a tip, try to identify any similarities.

Summary activity



Draw your own spider diagram and, using the information from this chapter and any other materials that you have available, make notes under each of the headings. Where there are differences in the relative importance of the various reasons for Castro's success, or his ideology, try to mention the views of specific historians.

Paper 2 practice questions

- 1 Analyse the conditions and actions that helped Castro in his bid for power.
- 2 'The main reason Castro came to power in 1959 was because of Batista's mistakes.' To what extent do you agree with this statement?
- 3 Compare and contrast the methods used by Hitler and Castro to obtain power.
- 4 To what extent, and in what ways, can Castro's ideology be described as Marxist in the years after 1953?
- 5 Assess the methods used by Castro to maintain power.
- 6 Compare and contrast **either** the economic **or** the social policies of Mao and Castro.
- 7 To what extent was Castro successful in achieving his aims?
- 8 Examine the role of education **or** the arts in **two** single-party states, each chosen from a different region.

Further reading

Try reading the relevant chapters/sections of the following books:

- Balfour, S. 2009. *Castro*. London, UK. Longman.
- Bethell, L. (ed.). 1993. *Cuba: A Short History*. Cambridge, UK. Cambridge University Press.
- Coltman, L. 2003. *The Real Fidel Castro*. New Haven, USA. Yale University Press.
- Gott, R. 2004. *Cuba: A New History*. New Haven, USA. Yale University Press.
- Matthews, H. L. 1970. *Castro: A Political Biography*. London, UK. Penguin Books.
- Reid-Henry, S. 2009. *Fidel and Che: A Revolutionary Friendship*. London, UK. Sceptre.
- Sandison, D. 2001. *Che Guevara*. London, UK. Chancellor Press.
- Saney, I. 2004. *Cuba: A Revolution in Motion*. London, UK. Zed Books.
- Skidmore, T. E. and Smith, P. H. 1984. *Modern Latin America*. Oxford, UK. Oxford University Press.
- Skierka, V. 2004. *Fidel Castro: A Biography*. Cambridge, UK. Polity Press.
- Szulc, T. 1987. *Fidel: A Critical Portrait*. London, UK. Hutchinson.
- Thomas, H. 1971. *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom*. London, UK. Harper & Row.



6 Exam practice

Introduction

You have now completed your study of the main aspects and events of Authoritarian and Single-Party States. In the foregoing chapters, you have had practice at answering some of the types of source-based question you will have to deal with in Paper 1. In this chapter, you will gain experience of dealing with:

- a the longer Paper 1 question, which requires you to use both sources and your own knowledge to write a mini-essay
- b the essay questions you will encounter in Paper 2.

Exam skills needed for IB History

This book is designed primarily to prepare both Standard and Higher Level students for the Paper 2 topic Origins and Development of Authoritarian and Single-Party States (Topic 3). However, by providing the necessary historical knowledge and understanding, as well as an awareness of the relevant key historical debates, it will also help you prepare for Paper 1. The skills you need for answering both Paper 1 and Paper 2 exam questions are explained below.

The example below shows you how to find the information related to the 'W' questions that you will need in order to evaluate sources for their value and limitations.

SOURCE X

It is sometimes asked whether it is not possible to slow down the tempo a bit, to put a check on the movement. No, **comrades**, it is not possible! The tempo must not be reduced! On the contrary, we must increase it as much as is within our powers and possibilities ... We are 50 or 100 years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this distance in ten years. Either we do it, or they crush us.

Extract from an article written by **Stalin** in **1931**, on the **need to industrialise** as quickly as possible. Quoted in Laver, J. 1991. *Russia 1914–1941*. London, UK. Hodder Arnold H&S. pp. 60–61.

Extract from an article

WHAT? (type of source)

Stalin WHO? (produced it)

1931 WHEN? (date/time of production)

need to industrialise WHY? (possible purpose)

comrades WHO? (intended audience)

Paper 1 exam practice

Paper 1 skills and questions

This section of the book is designed to give you the skills and understanding to tackle Paper 1 questions, which are based on the comprehension, critical analysis and evaluation of different types of historical sources as evidence, along with the use of appropriate historical contextual knowledge.

For example, you will need to test sources for reliability and utility – a skill essential for historians. A range of sources has been provided, including extracts from official documents, personal diaries, memoirs and speeches, as well as visual sources such as photographs, cartoons and paintings.

In order to analyse and evaluate sources as historical evidence, you will need to ask the following **‘W’ questions** of historical sources:

- **Who** produced it? Were they in a position to know?
- **What** type of source is it? What is its nature – is it a primary or secondary source?
- **Where** and **when** was it produced? What was happening at the time?
- **Why** was it produced? Was its purpose to inform or to persuade? Is it an accurate attempt to record facts, or is it an example of propaganda?
- **Who** was the intended audience? Decision-makers, or the general public?

This will help you to become familiar with interpreting, understanding, analysing and evaluating a range of different types of historical sources. It will also aid you in synthesising critical analysis of sources with historical knowledge when constructing an explanation or analysis of some aspect or development of the past. Remember – for Paper 1, as for Paper 2, you need to acquire, select and deploy relevant historical knowledge to explain causes and consequences, continuity and change; and to develop and show an awareness of historical debates and different interpretations.

Paper 1 questions will thus involve examining sources in the light of:

- a their **origin** and **purpose**
- b their value and limitations.

The **value and limitations** of sources to historians will be based on the **origin and purpose** aspects. For example, a source might be useful because it is primary – the event depicted was witnessed by the person producing it. But was the person in a position to know? Is the view an untypical view of the event? What is its nature – is it a private diary entry (therefore possibly more likely to be true), or is it a speech or piece of propaganda intended to persuade? Even if the value of a source is limited by such aspects, it can still have value – for example, as evidence of the types of propaganda put out at the time. Similarly, a secondary – or even a tertiary – source can have more value than some primary sources – for instance, because the writer might be writing at a time when new evidence has become available.

origin ‘Who, when, where and why?’ questions.

purpose This means ‘Reasons, what the writer/creator was trying to achieve, who the intended audience was’.

Remember – a source doesn’t have to be primary to be useful. Remember, too, that content isn’t the only aspect to have possible value – the context, the person who produced it, etc., can be important in offering an insight. Finally, when in the exam room, use the information provided by the Chief Examiner about the five sources, as it can give some useful information and clues to help you construct a good answer.

Paper 1 contains four types of question. The first three of these are:

- 1 *Comprehension/understanding of a source.* Some will have 2 marks, others 3 marks. For such questions, write only a short answer, making 2 or 3 points – save your longer answers for the questions carrying the higher marks.
- 2 *Cross-referencing/comparing or contrasting two sources.* Try to write an integrated comparison. For example, comment on how the two sources deal with one aspect; then compare/contrast the sources on another aspect. This will usually score more highly than answers that deal with the sources separately. Try to avoid simply describing each source in turn – there needs to be explicit comparison/contrast.
- 3 *Assessing the value and limitations of two sources.* Here it is best to deal with each source separately, as you are not being asked to decide which source is more important/useful. But remember to deal with **all** the aspects required: **origins, purpose, value and limitations.**

These three types of questions are covered in the chapters above. The other, longer, type of Paper 1 question will be dealt with below.

Paper 1 – Judgement questions

Examiner's tips

- This fourth type of Paper 1 question requires you to produce a mini-essay to address the question/statement given in the question. You should try to develop and present an argument and/or come to a balanced judgement by analysing and using the **five** sources **and** your own knowledge.
- Before you write your answer to such a question, you may find it useful to draw a rough chart to note what the sources show in relation to the question. Note, however, that some sources may hint at more than one factor/result. This will also make sure you refer to all or at least most of the sources. When using your own knowledge, make sure it is relevant to the question.
- Look carefully at the simplified markscheme below – this will help you focus on what you need to do to reach the top bands and so score the higher marks

Common mistakes

When answering Paper 1 argument/judgement questions, make sure you don't just deal with sources **OR** own knowledge! Every year, some candidates (even good ones!) do this, and so limit themselves to – at best – only 5 out of the 8 marks available.

As with the other types of Paper 1 questions, a simplified markscheme is provided to help you target the most important skills that examiners are looking for.

Simplified markscheme

Band		Marks
1	Developed and balanced analysis and comments using BOTH sources AND own knowledge. References to sources are precise; and sources and detailed own knowledge are used together; where relevant, a judgement is made.	8
2	Developed analysis/comments using BOTH sources AND some detailed own knowledge; with some clear references to sources. But sources and own knowledge not always combined together .	6–7
3	Some developed analysis/comments, using the sources OR some relevant own knowledge.	4–5
4	Limited/general comments using sources OR own knowledge.	0–3

Student answers

Those parts of the student's answers below will have brief examiner comments in the margins, as well as a longer overall comment at the end. Those parts of student's answers that make use of the sources will be **highlighted in green**; those parts that deploy relevant own knowledge will be **highlighted in purple**. In this way, you should find it easier to follow why particular bands and marks were – or were not – awarded.

Question 1

Using Sources A, B, C, D and E, and your own knowledge, analyse the effects of Stalin's purges. [8 marks]

SOURCE A

I am guilty of nothing, nothing, nothing before the party, before the Central Committee and before you personally. I swear to you by everything that is sacred to a Bolshevik. I swear to you on Lenin's memory. I cannot even imagine what could have aroused suspicion against me. I beg you to believe my word of honour. I am shaken to the depths of my soul.

Zinoviev to Stalin in December 1934, following his arrest after the assassination of Kirov. Quoted in Volkogonov, D. (trans. Shukman, H.). 1991. *Stalin: Triumph and Tragedy*. London, UK. p. 277.

SOURCE B

The first show trial, 1936



SOURCE C

The purges created numberless vacancies in every field. From 1933 to 1938, about half a million administrators, technicians, economists, and men of other professions graduated, and filled the ranks of the purged and emptied offices. They, brought up in the Stalinist cult from childhood, threw themselves into their work with a zeal and enthusiasm undimmed by recent events.

Deutscher, I. 1966. *Stalin*. London, UK. Penguin Books. pp. 380–81.

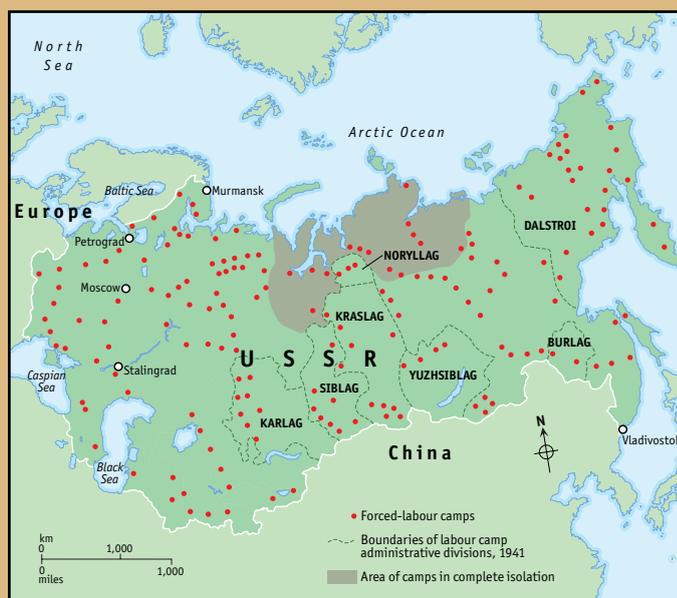
SOURCE D

It cannot be said that the cleansings were not accompanied by grave mistakes. There were, unfortunately, more mistakes than might have been expected. Undoubtedly, we shall have no further need to resort to the method of mass cleansings. Nevertheless, the cleansings of 1933–36 were unavoidable and their results, on the whole, were beneficial.

Stalin reporting to the 18th Party Congress in March 1939 on the purges from 1933 to 1936. Quoted in Ward, C. 1993. *Stalin's Russia*. London, UK. Hodder Education. p. 119.

SOURCE E

The location of Soviet Union labour camps



Student answer

The main effects of Stalin's purges were on the Soviet Communist Party and on the armed forces – but they also affected large numbers of administrators and technicians, and even ordinary people who were denounced by people who simply wanted their jobs, wanted revenge for some past slight, or just wanted to get rid of a rival.

Examiner's comment

This is a good introduction, showing a clear understanding of the topic and the question.

Source A, which is a letter from Zinoviev to Stalin, shows the fear that the arrests and purges under Stalin had on the Communist Party in the late 1930s – he is begging for Stalin to believe his innocence, and says he is 'shaken to the depths of my soul' at being arrested. The fear must have been widespread, as Zinoviev had been one of the triumvirs who, in the late 1920s, had worked with Stalin against Trotsky. This can be related to Source B, which shows the first show trial in 1936 – one of the people in that trial was Zinoviev, along with Kamenev, who had also been one of the triumvirs.

Examiner's comment

There is reasonable and clear use of Sources A and B, with a little own knowledge – but this is not very extensive.

Examiner's comment

Again, there is good explicit use of Sources C and E – but there is limited precise own knowledge.

Sources C and E can also be linked, as they relate to the impact of the purges on administrators and technicians. Source C shows how, from 1933 to 1938, about half a million people were able to get jobs – often merely taking over from those who had been purged. Source E is a map of the many Gulag or labour camps that grew up under Stalin's rule – many of those purged administrators and technicians mentioned in Source C may have been sent there. In fact, the Gulags were first set up in 1930 – before Stalin began his purges; but they soon became filled with the less-important victims of the purges during the second half of the 1930s.

Examiner's comment

This is a better section, with explicit use of Source D and some precise own knowledge, which is integrated to produce a synthesis of both source and own knowledge.

Another impact or effect of the purges is touched on by Source D, which is an admission by Stalin in 1938 that, although the 'cleansings of 1933–36 were unavoidable', there had been some 'grave mistakes'. This refers to those ordinary people and workers who, at local levels, were purged for motives of personal advantage or revenge. In fact, as early as 1937, Stalin raised doubts about the purging of such people. As a sign of this, Beria replaced Ezhov as the person in charge of the NKVD and the purges – Ezhov was executed some months after Stalin made his speech shown in Source D. Shortly after that, the mass purges came to an end, and many were released from prisons and the Gulags.

Examiner's comment

There is some relevant and precise own knowledge here – but this is an 'add-on', rather than being integrated with the sources.

However, the sources do not say anything about the impact of the purges on the armed forces. In May 1937, Tukhachevsky – the head of the Red Army – and several other top officers were arrested and accused of plotting with Trotsky and foreign enemies. These generals were executed, and the purge of the armed forces then spread downwards.

In conclusion, one of the main effects of the purges was to create a state of terror throughout the whole of the Soviet Union, as no one could ever feel entirely safe.

Overall examiner's comments

There is good and clear use of sources throughout, but the use and integration of precise own knowledge to both explain and add to the sources is rather limited. The overall result is an answer clearly focused on the question, but with own knowledge that, in the main, is not integrated with the sources. The candidate has done enough to be awarded Band 2 and 6 or 7 marks.

Activity

Look again at all of the sources, the simplified markscheme and the student answer above. Now try to write your own answer to this question. See if you can make some extra points with the sources and integrate some additional own knowledge to give a fuller explanation of the results of the purges.

Question 2

Using Sources A, B, C, D and E, and your own knowledge, explain why Mao came to power in China in 1949. [8 marks]

SOURCE A

Mao had an extraordinary mix of talents: he was visionary, statesman, political and military strategist of genius, philosopher and poet. To these gifts he brought a subtle, dogged mind, awe-inspiring charisma and fiendish cleverness ... To Mao, the killing of opponents – or simply of those who disagreed with his political aims – was an unavoidable, indeed a necessary, ingredient of broader campaigns.

Short, P. 1990. *Mao: A Life*. London, UK. John Murray. pp. 630–31.

SOURCE B

Has there ever been in history a Long March like ours? No, never. The Long March is also a manifesto ... The Long March has sown many seeds in eleven provinces, which will sprout, grow leaves, blossom into flowers, bear fruit and yield a crop in future.

From a speech by Mao in December 1935 on the importance of the Long March of 1934–35. Quoted in Schools Council. 1977. *Rise of Communist China (Modern World Studies)*. Edinburgh, UK. Holmes McDougall. p. 29.

SOURCE C

We don't want civil war. However, if Chiang Kai-shek [Jiang Jieshi] insists on forcing civil war on the Chinese people, the only thing we can do is take up arms and fight him in self-defence to protect the lives and property, the rights and well-being of the people of the Liberated Areas. This will be a civil war he forces on us.

From a warning, issued by Mao to the GMD in August 1945. Quoted in Tarling, N. 1977. *Mao and the Transformation of China*. Auckland, New Zealand. Heinemann Educational Books. p. 38.

SOURCE D

Mao Zedong announced in 1948 that the communist armies were going to shift from a strategy of predominantly guerrilla warfare to one of conventional battles in open country, employing massed armies of troops. The communists managed to seize and hold Kaifeng for a week in late June ... the communist troops won a propaganda victory by maintaining strict discipline and meticulously refusing to harm the civilian population. The communist retreat therefore brought little lasting comfort to the Guomindang whose senior military officers made a survey of relative troop strengths and came to the conclusion that the communists were making relentless gains. Chiang Kai-shek's [Jiang Jieshi's] waning popularity suffered further damage in July 1948 with the senseless killing of unarmed students by government forces.

Spence, J. D. 1999 (2nd edn). *The Search for Modern China*. New York, USA. W. W. Norton and Company. pp. 481–82.

SOURCE E

A poster depicting Mao as the peasants' hero, 1951



Student answer

Examiner's comment

The opening makes it clear that a number of factors will be considered and the grouping offers an effective structure for the answer. However, it fails to make any direct reference to the source material, even though some of the factors mentioned in it are directly linked to them.

There are a variety of reasons as to why Mao came to power in China in 1949. The main reason was the military victory that he achieved in the civil war, but underlying this are a number of different factors. These include Mao's own leadership, the military advantages of his forces during the civil war, and popular support, particularly among the peasants, which grew from his economic ideas on land reform. Mao's advantages must, however, be balanced against the weaknesses of the nationalists under *Jiang Jieshi* to understand why he was able to rise to power by 1949.

Mao's victory over the GMD followed a civil war that broke out after the surrender of Japan in 1945, which removed the nationalists' and communists' common enemy. Mao's forces were ably led by Lin Biao, who transformed the peasant recruits (increasingly swelled by nationalist deserters) into an effective fighting force. The communists' experience in guerrilla warfare was used to good effect in Manchuria, which they seized early in 1948, but they shifted to more conventional battles once troops were sufficient trained. The communists understood the importance of seizing railway junctions and surrounding major cities, such as Beijing, which was captured in January 1949. The seizure of Nanjing and Shanghai in April and May 1949 were also crucial, allowing the PLA to march into the last nationalist strongholds in southern China and achieve victory, driving Jiang Jieshi from the mainland, so allowing Mao to declare the PRC in October 1949.

Examiner's comment

The paragraph provides a lot of useful detail about military factors but there is no source reference – even though the point about switching from guerrilla to conventional warfare could have been exemplified from Source D.

Mao's victory was also the result of his own leadership and 'extraordinary mix of talents' (Source A). Mao had established himself as an undisputed leader through the Long March (Source B) and during the days at Yan'an. He had removed his opponents and his own 'thought' had become the party's dogma. Communist troops were ideologically indoctrinated and were prepared to endure hardship for their cause. Mao maintained motivation and morale, ensuring unity and confidence, and was a pragmatic decision maker. It was Mao who had ordered co-operation with his former nationalist opponents in the fight against Japan, between 1937 and 1945, but then turned on them after 1945 (Source C). It was also Mao who ordered some restraint in communist persecution of landlords in 1948, when it threatened to get out of hand.

Examiner's comment

This paragraph shows an understanding of Mao's leadership and makes reference to Sources A, B and C. However, it fails to look at the source detail in any depth and leaves the reader to work out the link between the source and essay text.

Another factor contributing to Mao's rise to power was the popular support the communists received, particularly from the peasants. Mao's policy of land reform benefited the poorest peasants as large estates were confiscated in the programme of land redistribution. Furthermore, in communist-held urban areas, an effort was made to control corruption and crime, ensure supplies were fairly distributed and introduce fair taxation. By maintaining production and controlling inflation, the communists widened their support base considerably after 1948. Source E, although propagandist, shows the widespread adulation for Mao.

Examiner's comment

This paragraph makes some relevant comment on Mao's popular support, linking briefly to Source E and observing that this is a piece of propaganda. However, the source reference could have been fuller and relevant material in Source A has not been included here.

Examiner's comment

This paragraph offers some balance and shows some detailed understanding of nationalist weaknesses. The reference to 'Source D' at the end needed comment, however. Merely putting it in brackets has not made it clear which sections the student was referring to. Again an opportunity to incorporate source reference has been lost.

Much of the communist success, however, was due to the weaknesses of the nationalists. Although the nationalists had the military advantage at the beginning of the war with around 2.8 million troops and 6000 artillery pieces as against the communists' 320,000 troops and 600 pieces of artillery, they squandered this and were ultimately overwhelmed. Jiang sent all his best troops to Manchuria at the beginning of the war and never fully recovered from the losses there. The mainly conscript nationalist army suffered from low morale, made worse by meagre pay (and that sometimes stolen by their officers), which led them to ill treat local populations. The nationalists were also over-reliant on corrupt local warlords and foreign support, which added to their poor standing in the eyes of the Chinese people. They were associated with a dictatorial regime in the 1930s, which had done little to improve conditions in China and inefficiency, economic mismanagement, internal splits and Jiang's weak leadership all contributed to the ultimate Communist victory (Source D).

Examiner's comment

This is a weak finish to the essay. Although this conclusion repeats the view advanced in the introduction that military victory was the main reason why Mao came to power, it makes no reference to the sources and ends rather limply.

Mao therefore came to power in China for a variety of reasons, of which the military victory in the civil war was the most important. However, without the nationalists' weaknesses, it would have been far harder for him to have achieved political power, so this must also be seen as a very important factor.

Overall examiner's comments

This answer shows a very good understanding of a variety of factors and provides plentiful and, in places, detailed own knowledge in response to the question. It is also a well-structured response that maintains its focus throughout and offers some judgement. However, its use of sources is minimal. Although each is mentioned, most receive only a reference in brackets and only once is a source directly cited. Despite the instructions in the question, much of the actual detail contained in the sources has been ignored and therefore the answer is not worthy of more than Band 3. Since there is a little more than just own knowledge, it would qualify for the top of the band – 5 marks, but an important aspect of this question that demands clear source reference has been missed.

Paper 2 exam practice

Paper 2 skills and questions

For Paper 2, you have to answer two essay questions from two of the five different topics offered. Very often, you will be asked to comment on two states from two different IB regions of the world. Although each question has a specific markscheme, a good general idea of what examiners are looking for in order to be able to put answers into the higher bands can be gleaned from the general 'generic' markscheme. In particular, you will need to acquire reasonably precise historical knowledge in order to address issues such as cause and effect, or change and continuity, and to learn how to explain historical developments in a clear, coherent, well-supported and relevant way. You will also need to understand and be able to refer to aspects relating to historical debates and interpretations.

Make sure you read the questions carefully, and select your questions wisely – a good idea is to then produce a rough plan of **each** of the essays you intend to attempt, **before** you start to write your answers: that way, you will soon know whether you have enough own knowledge to answer them adequately.

Remember, too, to keep your answers relevant and focused on the question – for example, don't go outside the dates mentioned in the question, or answer on individuals/states different from the ones identified in the question. Don't just describe the events or developments – sometimes students just focus on one key word or individual, and then write down all they know about it. Instead, select your own knowledge carefully, and pin the relevant information to the key features raised by the question. Also, if the question asks for 'reasons' and 'results', or two different countries, make sure you deal with **all** the parts of the question. Otherwise, you will limit yourself to half marks at best.

Examiner's tips

For Paper 2 answers, examiners are looking for clear/precise analysis, and a balanced argument, linked to the question with the use of good and precise relevant own knowledge. In order to obtain the highest marks, you should be able to refer to different historical debate/interpretations or relevant historians' knowledge, making sure it is relevant to the question.

Common mistakes

- When answering Paper 2 questions, try to avoid simply describing what happened – a detailed narrative, with no explicit attempts to link the knowledge to the question, will only get you half marks at most.
- Also, if the question asks you to select examples from **two** different regions, make sure you don't choose two states from the same region. Every year, some candidates do this, and so limit themselves to – at best – only 12 out of the 20 marks available.

Simplified markscheme

Band		Marks
1	Clear analysis/argument, with very specific and relevant own knowledge, consistently and explicitly linked to the question. A balanced answer, with references to historical debate/historians, where appropriate.	17–20
2	Relevant analysis/argument, mainly clearly focused on the question, and with relevant supporting own knowledge. Factors identified and explained, but not all aspects of the question fully developed or addressed.	11–16
3	EITHER shows reasonable relevant own knowledge, identifying some factors, with limited focus/explanation – but mainly narrative in approach, with question only implicitly addressed OR coherent analysis/argument, but limited relevant/precise supporting own knowledge.	8–10
4	Some limited/relevant own knowledge, but not linked effectively to the question.	6–7
5	Short/general answer, but with very little accurate/relevant knowledge and limited understanding of the question.	0–5

Student's answers

Those parts of the student's answers that follow will have brief examiner comments in the margins, as well as a longer overall comment at the end. Those parts of student's answers that are particularly strong and well-focused will be **highlighted in purple**; errors/confusions/loss of focus will be **highlighted in blue**. In this way, you should find it easier to follow why marks were – or were not – awarded.

Question 1

Assess the methods used by one leader of a single-party state to ensure that opposition to his rule was ineffective. [20 marks]

Skill

Analysis/argument/assessment

Examiner's tip

Look carefully at the wording of this question, which asks for an **assessment** of **methods** used in curbing opposition. This will involve consideration of the most/least important or most/least effective methods and does not require a detailed description of 'opposition' in itself.

Student answer

Adolf Hitler was the ruler of a single-party state who was able to ensure that opposition to his rule was ineffective. *He did this through a mixture of legal and illegal actions, policy decisions, propaganda and terror.* As a result no individual or group opposed to his rule ever succeeded in removing him from power.

When Hitler came to power as chancellor of Germany in January 1933, he was faced with the task of *destroying any opposition as swiftly as possible.* At this stage he faced opposition from a number of groups, including the communists, the socialists and those within the army and on the right who regarded him as a rabble rouser and not to be trusted. *His actions in 1933 were crucial to the later ineffectiveness of opposition.* He took action against the communists following the Reichstag Fire and persuaded President Hindenburg to issue a decree whereby communists could be rounded up. *He then proceeded to* influence the elections of March 1933 and got the Enabling Act passed by intimidating the Reichstag. He pruned the civil service in April and in May destroyed the trade unions through which workers could have opposed his rule by joint strike action. *Workers were brought into a new Nazi-controlled DAF, which made opposition impossible.*

Hitler's consolidation of power was completed by overturning local governments and installing Nazi gauleiters, and the Night of the Long Knives of June 1934, which destroyed the power of the SA. Hindenburg's death in August 1934 enabled Hitler to assume the position of Führer and head of the armed forces, and the army took an oath of loyalty. A combination of legal methods and violence had made opposition virtually impossible.

Preventing opposition was also the result of the policy decisions adopted by Hitler. He brought about full employment – removing women from the workplace and setting up public works schemes *and, although this was aided by circumstance,* it brought him widespread support. Concern for jobs, sympathy with his aims – which included the destruction of the hated Treaty of Versailles – and *a traditional respect for authority,* which kept the civil service and army reasonably supportive, all played a part in weakening any opposition. *The traditional élites were won over* and, after the von Blomberg and von Fritsch affair of 1938, that included the army. Furthermore, *what opposition there had been was weak and divided,* whether between right and left, the SPD and KPD or the Protestant and Catholic branches of the Churches.

Examiner's comment

This introduction is quite well thought through. It identifies the leader to be discussed and also itemises the range of methods the essay will examine, but it fails to provide any further comment on those methods – for example, which of them might be considered the most important.

Examiner's comment

There is a full consideration here of the elimination of the opposition in 1933–34 and for the most part this succeeds in avoiding too much listing and descriptive writing. However, it is best to avoid 'then' in essays and the second of these two paragraphs would have been more effective had it begun with a reference to the question and more comment provided on the significance of the events mentioned.

Examiner's comment

This is an effective paragraph that looks at how economic and foreign policies helped Hitler (although it doesn't mention any others – for example, policies towards women, the Churches or youth). It has some depth of understanding in its reference to the traditional élites and the divisions among the opposition.

Examiner's comment

These paragraphs look at propaganda and terror, as promised in the introduction. However, the material on propaganda is not fully linked to the ineffectiveness of opposition. The second paragraph is much better and shows some detail.

Examiner's comment

This is an effective conclusion. It stresses the importance of terror as the main reason behind the ineffectiveness of the opposition and explains why this is felt to be so important. It also shows how this relates to the other factors discussed in the essay, although it still assumes that all of Hitler's policies were successful.

Opposition remained ineffective because of the **heavy use made of propaganda** in the Nazi state. Propaganda was **used to win loyalty** from all sections of society but particularly from the youth who were indoctrinated by the Hitler Youth movement. **Germans were fed a diet of propaganda on their radios and only saw and heard of 'German splendour' in the art galleries and concert halls.**

Finally and perhaps most importantly, **opposition was ineffective because of the security apparatus of the state.** The SS and Gestapo together with a network of informants ensured that everyone lived in fear of being found out for subversive activity and **made the co-ordination of opposition virtually impossible.** Arbitrary imprisonment, a Nazi-controlled judiciary and a concentration camp network enabled potential troublemakers to be readily identified and dealt with. This meant **opposition became largely individual and low-key** and, when individuals tried to widen their net – as in the case of General Beck in 1938, von Stauffenberg in 1944 and Sophie Scholl, a leader of the student White Rose group – they were rapidly discovered and executed as a warning to others.

Hitler's methods to ensure that opposition was ineffective were similar to those of other authoritarians. **By keeping the repressive activities of his regime reasonably unobtrusive or even secret, he was able to give the illusion of total support, which in itself acted as a curb to other potential opponents.** There is little doubt that terror, intimidation and repression were the key element in the prevention of effective opposition, but without Hitler's initial moves to consolidate his power, his propaganda and his successful policies, Hitler would probably have not been able to continue in power as easily as he did.

Overall examiner comments

This answer provides some good focused material on the methods used by Hitler. It is also well organised. There are a few deficiencies in the style and content as outlined in the margin comments, but overall it is a strong survey worthy of a mark at the top of Band 2 –16 marks. To improve it further, more discussion of the individual methods employed and some **mention of relevant historians/historical interpretations** would be necessary and such would secure a Band 1 mark.

Activity

Look again at the simplified markscheme and the student answer, and identify where it can be improved to ensure a Band 1 mark of 20. Try to provide a little more linkage and analysis as well as integrating some references to relevant historians/historical interpretations.

Question 2

Examine and assess the methods used by Castro to maintain power between 1959 and 1996. [20 marks]

Skill

Analysis/argument/assessment

Examiner's tip

Look carefully at the wording of this question, which asks for the methods used by Castro to maintain his power in the period 1959–96. If high marks are to be achieved, answers will need to consider a variety of methods, and their relative success. And remember – don't just **describe** what he did.

Student answer

Castro came to power in Cuba in 1959, at the head of a popular movement that ousted the dictator Batista, who had been supported by the USA. In order to remain in power, Castro used a *variety of different methods – some of which were more successful than others – ranging from popular social and economic policies to repressive actions.*

Examiner's comment

This is a brief but clear and well-focused introduction, showing a good grasp of the key requirements of the question.

For many years, Cuba had been under the political and economic influence of the USA. *This had begun after the Spanish–American War of 1898 and the Platt Amendment of 1901. In 1933, there had been a 'Sergeants' Revolt' in the Cuban army, led by Batista who, from 1934 to 1959, ruled Cuba.*

Many Cubans came to resent the lack of democracy and the influence and power of the USA. One of those to do so was Fidel Castro who, along with his brother, Raúl, and some other supporters, launched an attack on the army barracks at Moncada on 26 July 1953. This failed, and they were imprisoned. On their release, Castro went to Mexico, where he formed his 26 July Movement, and plotted the overthrow of Batista's dictatorship.

In 1956, Castro and a small band of guerrillas – which included Che Guevara – landed on the coast, and set up base in the Sierra Maestra mountains. Castro then began a guerrilla war that gradually became more and more successful. In January 1959, Batista fled and Castro's 26 July Movement took over.

Examiner's comment

There is lot of accurate supporting own knowledge here – unfortunately, it is entirely focused on the period **before** Castro came to power; and thus not relevant to the question.

Examiner's comment

This is better – though rather vague at times. This **is** focused on a method of maintaining power after 1959. Unfortunately, the end of the paragraph then slips back to the pre-1959 period, and so gains no marks at all – despite being accurate. Rather descriptive.

Once in power, Castro used different methods to stay in power. One was the use of his charisma and speeches. He was a brilliant orator and was popular because he had put himself forward as a Cuban nationalist – this was especially true after the defeat of the US-sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961. Since the days of Martí in the 19th century, many Cubans had wanted Cuba to become truly independent. Castro claimed later that he had fused Martí with Marx – this proved a popular claim. On average, Castro made about two speeches a week – some of which lasted hours. This became a main way of staying in power. In fact, he had also used a radio station – Radio Rebelde – before 1959: this had spread messages against Batista and had been used by Castro to proclaim his policies if he came to power.

Examiner's comment

Again, there is some relevant supporting own knowledge – but it is rather vague. In particular, it is a shame that more specific details of the healthcare and educational reforms are not given – for example, how educational reforms have helped poor people and women.

At first, Castro allowed moderates such as Urrutia to head the government, while he took charge of the Rebel Armed Forces. However, he soon set up an organisation of his closest friends, which began to take the most important decisions. Eventually, the moderates either resigned or were forced out, and members of the 26 July Movement or the communist PSP took over their posts.

Some of the things they then did helped Castro to stay in power – these were his social and economic policies. In particular, his healthcare and educational policies were very popular, and have been seen as his greatest achievements – such as the increase and redistribution of doctors, and the wiping out of diseases associated with poverty. These have played a key role in maintaining his power as dissatisfaction with other aspects of his rule were seen as less important than his social reforms. Castro also did much to improve the living standards of the poorer sections of Cuban society.

In addition, he has also tried to get ordinary people involved in mass organisations and movements as a way of staying in power – such as the Committees in Defence of the Revolution. Since 1976, when the constitution was changed, there have also been the many local discussions that take place on social and economic issues as part of Poder Popular, or People's Power.

At the same time, Castro has taken various steps to repress or contain any opposition that does arise. For example, in the first few months after January 1959, many of those who had acted as senior policemen and torturers under Batista were executed. This got rid of potential opponents, and led many more to emigrate to the USA. In subsequent years, Castro has encouraged others to leave – thus reducing potential opposition. However, there were some armed groups – often financed, trained and armed by the USA – who for the first few years carried out counter-revolutionary sabotage and terror against government facilities and personnel.

Examiner's comment

There is some accurate supporting own knowledge, clearly focused on the maintenance of power.



In conclusion, after 1959 and the winning of power, Castro did a variety of things to ensure he remained in power. Despite some opposition, and the failure of some of his economic policies, he was able to stay in power until his health problems forced him to hand over to his brother Raúl in 2008.

Examiner's comment

This is a brief but reasonably well-focused conclusion.

Overall examiner comments

The candidate seems, in the main, to have understood the demands of the question, and there is some relevant own knowledge. However, this is often not very detailed; and there is a slight tendency to drift into narrative. One of its main weaknesses is the fact that, particularly at the beginning, there are sections that are not relevant, as they focus on the period **before** 1959 – these will not gain any marks.

The answer is good enough to be awarded Band 3, but probably only at the bottom end – 8 or 9 marks. To reach Band 1, some examination of economic policies, and those relating to control of the media, would have been useful; as would more specific details of those methods that have been identified. Also needed would be an examination of the creation of a one-party state, and the decision not to hold elections from 1959 to 1976. Finally, mention of the arguments/points of **relevant historians/historical interpretations** would be useful.

Activity

Look again at the simplified markscheme, and the student answer above. Now try to write a few extra paragraphs to push the answer up into Band 1, and so obtain the full 20 marks. As well as making sure you address **all** aspects of the question, try to integrate some references to relevant historians/historical interpretations.

Question 3

Compare and contrast the policies towards women and youth of two rulers of single-party states, each chosen from a different region. [20 marks]

Skill

Analysis/argument/assessment

Examiner's tip

Look carefully at the wording of this question, which asks for similarities **and** differences (comparing and contrasting) between the policies of **two different** rulers, each from a **different** region, towards women **and** youth. All aspects need to be addressed for high marks, so it is important to make a quick plan – ensuring two appropriate rulers are chosen and each part of the question considered. Describing the policies of each ruler in turn will score lowly. This question demands explicit analysis and comparison throughout.

Examiner's comment

The first sentence provides a direct start that clearly identifies the rulers to be considered and shows an understanding of the question. However, the introduction does not go on to set out a view or argument to be maintained and the last sentence **is** unnecessary.

Student answer

Mao Zedong and Adolf Hitler were rulers of apparently contrasting left- and right-wing single-party states in two very different regions. It might therefore be expected that their policies towards women and the youth would be very different. They do, however, have a surprising number of similarities, although there are also a number of differences. In this essay I will look first at Hitler and Mao's policies towards women and then at their policies towards the youth.

The main similarity between the policies of Hitler and Mao is that **both regarded women as having a major role within the state**. Propaganda was specifically directed towards them and in both regimes women were given a specific role alongside men that **differed from the role they held in the previous regime**. Both also emphasised the need for **women to bear children for the state** and to bring them up immersed in the ideology of their country. Their task was to ensure that children attended schools and youth groups, and were correctly instructed. *In Nazi Germany there was even talk of bearing a child for the Führer.*

However, although both Mao and Hitler sought to change women's roles, for Hitler this followed a policy of **reaction against the former liberal views of the Weimar Republic**, whereby women played an active role in politics and public affairs **towards a more traditional outlook**, which placed women in the home, concerned only with domestic duties. In the peacetime Nazi years, **women were discouraged from undertaking professional or factory work** and even in wartime this was only permitted with reluctance. Women were **expected to be child bearers with large families** and there was even a system of medals to reward fecundity.

On the other hand, Mao reacted against a system that had made women second-class citizens. In Maoist China, **women were given full civil rights including the right of property owning, with legislation outlawing arranged marriages**. They were expected to play a role in **party committees** (although few reached the higher echelons of the party) and to **work alongside men in the factories and mines. This made life very hard for women, who often had to combine their roles as mothers and workers**. Few concessions were made for pregnancy and, from a few weeks old, children were placed in crèches and nurseries, the mother's task complete. Although births were encouraged in the early years to build communist support, these were increasingly discouraged once Mao was established in power.

Examiner's comment

These paragraphs are well structured and show good understanding in their consideration of similarity and difference. There are two incidences of extraneous detail creeping in and it is a shame that there are no specific examples to exemplify the Nazi policies or dates to accompany the mention of Maoist legislation.

With regard to policies towards youth, there were also important similarities. Both Mao and Hitler were aware that *young people needed to be made 'ideologically aware'* to ensure the continuation of their regimes. Both thus placed an emphasis on *state-controlled education*, with a restricted curriculum, censored materials and a *heavily vetted teaching profession*. They *discouraged intellectualism* and study for its own sake, seeing all education as developing idealism, patriotism and support for the values of the state. They also built up *youth movements* and saw these as an initial training ground for their powerful armies. *Millions joined the Hitler Youth but it was probably the adventurous activities and comradeship that were the main draw.*

Whilst Hitler built on the traditional system of schooling in Germany, supplementing it *with a few extra Nazi-inspired schools*, Mao built a *whole new educational system*. He *encouraged practical activities* – even involving children in making things, as well as undertaking factory visits and sending young people for spells in the countryside. Although there were a few incidents of pupils reporting their non-ideologically pure teachers in Nazi Germany, this was far more widespread in communist China. Mao deliberately *encouraged the Chinese youth to reject the older generation, ignore and shame 'bourgeois' teachers* and, with the coming of the Cultural Revolution, to take the future into their own hands.

There was nothing in Nazi Germany to resemble the mayhem created when *bands of Chinese youth, known as Red Guards, took to the streets, ransacked homes and caused near anarchy*. Indeed, it was to prevent such activity that *Hitler turned on the rabble-rousing youth of the SA in the Night of the Long Knives in 1934*. *Personal challenges and achievement* were important in encouraging youth to meet Hitler's goals once he was in power and *discipline* through military drill in the ranks of the Hitler Youth was crucial. Mao's youth, however, were expected to lead the way *in rejecting the old or established* and thus played a very different role.

There are clearly a number of similarities to be discerned in the policies of Hitler and Mao towards women and youth, but the differences are probably more striking, especially in the former's case.

Examiner's comment

These paragraphs again address the similarities and differences with clarity and control showing some depth of understanding. There could sometimes be more specific references to policies, however, and the sections indicated in blue are either unnecessary or too general and unsupported.

Examiner's comment

This is a disappointing conclusion that makes a comment but fails to substantiate it. Its length might indicate a lack of time but it is crucial to show an overall awareness at the end of an answer and provide some sensible judgement.

Overall examiner's comments

This answer is very well focused, and well planned to cover all the issues that the question demands. It contains a good deal of analysis and avoids passages of description. However, it is rather thin on precise supporting detail and lacks the 'very specific and relevant own knowledge' that would be necessary for Band 1. Furthermore, it makes no reference to historical views. Some consideration of Hitler's policy of *Volksgemeinschaft* for example, or of the conflict between practical needs and Maoist ideology, could have been included and shown some higher level understanding. The answer is therefore worthy of Band 2 – although not quite at the top because of the limitations of the factual evidence – 15 marks.

Activity

Look back over the material you have studied on both Hitler and Mao and select a number of relevant examples that could be used to provide supporting detail in this response. Re-read the simplified markscheme and consider where you might be able to refer to historiography and/or historical debate as required for Band 1. When you have gathered the necessary material rewrite the answer so that it would be worthy of the full 20 marks. Don't forget that the best essays state their argument in the introduction, sustain it throughout the answer and reach a clear and well-supported conclusion.

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