

Topic: Cuba After Fidel

Topic
Introduction

The life of Fidel Castro, Latin America's last revolutionary leader and towering and charismatic anti-imperialist torch-bearer, came to signify the high point of Cold War ideological hostilities of the 20th century. At home, his policies **to promote affordable and accessible health care, housing and education**, as well as **his standing up to global hegemony**, endeared him to the majority, even as his record on human rights came in for serious scrutiny. But these domestic issues played out in the larger shadow of his defiance of American power, which has outlasted that of the Soviet Union. When **Castro captured power in 1959**, there were few signs that the **Marxist radical** would emerge a global champion of Third World countries in his **nearly fifty-year rule**. But the **failed 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion**, by Cuban exiles trained by the U.S., to overthrow his regime began a pragmatic partnership between **Castro and the Soviet Union**, bringing the **Cold War** into the western hemisphere. This was the context to **Russian preparations to house nuclear missiles in Cuba to threaten the U.S.**, which took the world to near-catastrophe in 1962. The U.S. misperception of the threat posed by Castro led to **CIA plots to assassinate him**. As it turned out, he lived long enough to see the rollback of Washington's decades-long sanctions that crippled the Cuban economy. The clearest example of **Castro's** global standing was the clout he commanded in the Non-Aligned Movement. In more recent times, **his slogan of "socialism or death" inspired the nationalization** of natural wealth by governments across Latin America as a counter to the appropriation of oil and mineral resources by corporations.

Changes in the global economic climate may have exposed the deficiencies of an economic model reliant on riding the commodity cycle. But **the process of resumption of diplomatic ties between Havana and Washington** under the stewardship of his designated successor and brother, Raúl, is still fragile. **U.S. President Barack Obama**, who undertook a historic visit to the Caribbean nation earlier this year, sought to build the new **rapprochement** between Washington and Havana based on the relative distance of current generations in both countries from the painful memories of the past. Clearly, this is the path for President-elect Donald Trump to pursue, assuming that his pre-poll rhetoric would make way for a more reasoned approach once in office. Meanwhile, with incumbent **Raúl Castro** having announced his intention to **step down by 2018**, it will be a long transition in Havana.

How Castro defied the US:

Throughout the Cold War, **Fidel Castro was a thorn** in Washington's side. An accomplished tactician on the battlefield, he and his small army of guerrillas **overthrew the military leader Fulgencio Batista in 1959** to widespread popular support. Within two years of taking power, he declared the revolution to be **Marxist-Leninist** in nature and **allied Cuba firmly** to the Soviet Union - a move that led to the **missile crisis in 1962**, bringing the world to the brink of nuclear war before the Soviet Union abandoned its plan to put missiles on Cuban soil. **Despite the constant threat of a US invasion** as well as the long-standing economic embargo on the island, Castro managed to maintain a communist revolution in a nation just 90 miles (145km) off the coast of Florida. Despised by his critics as much as he was revered by his followers, he maintained his rule through **10 US presidents and survived scores of attempts** on his life by the CIA. He established a **one-party state, with hundreds of supporters** of the Batista government executed. Political opponents have been imprisoned, the independent media suppressed. Thousands of Cubans have fled into exile.

How has the world reacted to Castro's Death?

Many world leaders have paid tribute to Castro. **Russian President Vladimir Putin** described him as a "**reliable and sincere friend**" of Russia, while **Chinese President Xi Jinping** said his people had "**lost a good and true comrade**". The Soviet Union's last leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, said: "Fidel stood up and strengthened his country during the harshest American blockade, when there was colossal pressure on him." However, **US President-elect Donald Trump** said **Castro had been a "brutal dictator"**.

Cuba Health Care system- A Model for the World:

The Cuban health system is recognized worldwide for its **excellence and its efficiency**. Despite extremely **limited resources** and the **dramatic impact caused by the economic sanctions** imposed by the United States for more than half a century, Cuba has managed to guarantee access to **care for all segments of the population and obtain results** similar to those of the most developed nations. Cuba's health care system is based on **preventive medicine** and the results achieved are outstanding. Moreover, **in May 2014, in recognition of the excellence of its health care system, Cuba chaired the 67th World Health Assembly**. With an **infant mortality rate of 4.2 per thousand births**, the Caribbean island is the best performer on the continent and in the Third World generally. This is also demonstrated by the quality of its health care system and the impact it has on the well-being of children and pregnant women. **The infant mortality rate in Cuba is lower than it is in the United States and is among the lowest in the world**. With a **life expectancy of 78 years**, Cuba is one of the best performers on the American continent and in the Third World, achieving results similar to those of most developed nations. On the average, **Cubans live 30 years longer** than their Haitian neighbors. **In 2025, Cuba will have the highest proportion of its population over the age of 60** in all of Latin America.

Fidel Castro's key dates:

- **1926:** Born in the **south-eastern Oriente Province of Cuba**
- **1953:** **Imprisoned after leading an unsuccessful rising** against Batista's regime
- **1955:** Released from prison under an **amnesty deal**
- **1956:** With Che Guevara, begins a **guerrilla war** against the government
- **1959:** **Defeats Batista**, sworn in as **prime minister of Cuba**
- **1961:** Fights off CIA-sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion by Cuban exiles
- **1962:** Sparks Cuban missile crisis by agreeing that USSR can deploy nuclear missiles in Cuba
- **1976:** **Elected president** by Cuba's National Assembly
- **1992:** Reaches an agreement with US over Cuban refugees
- **2006:** **Hands over reins to brother Raul** due to health issues, stands down as president two years later
- **2016:** **Died on 25th November 2016** at the age of 90.

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<http://edition.cnn.com/2016/11/26/politics/fidel-castro-trump/>

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/castros-death-casts-doubt-on-cubas-relations-with-u-s-1480179677>