

The Normalization of U.S.-Cuba Relations: the Best Accomplishment of President Barack Obama

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“At the beginning of 1959, United States companies owned about 40 percent of the Cuban sugar lands—almost all the cattle ranches—90 percent of the mines and mineral concessions—80 percent of the utilities—practically all the oil industry—and supplied two-thirds of Cuba’s imports.” Senator John F. Kennedy (1917-1963), (speech at a Democratic Dinner, Cincinnati, Ohio, October 6, 1960, during the 1960 Presidential campaign)

“I believe that there is no country in the world including any and all the countries under colonial domination, where economic colonization, humiliation and exploitation were worse than in Cuba, in part owing to my country’s policies during the Batista regime.

—I approved the proclamation which Fidel Castro made in the Sierra Maestra, when he justifiably called for justice and especially yearned to rid Cuba of corruption. I will even go further: to some extent it is as though [Dictator] Batista was the incarnation of a number of sins on the part of the United States. Now we shall have to pay for those sins.

—In the matter of the Batista regime, I am in agreement with the first Cuban revolutionaries. That is perfectly clear.” President John F. Kennedy, October 24, 1963, (interview with journalist Jean Daniel, The New Republic, published on December 14 1963, pp. 15-20)

“It is clear that counter-terror became the strategy of the Batista government. It has been estimated by some that as many as 20,000 civilians were killed.” A Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence Volume 2, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969, p. 582.

In December 2014, U.S. President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro announced that they would begin [normalizing diplomatic relations](#) between the two nations, an agreement brokered by Catholic Pope Francis. [Last Saturday](#), April 11, U.S. President Obama and Cuban President Castro met in Panama to finalize the new reality and to “turn the page and develop a new relationship between our two countries,” in Mr. Obama’s words.

This development is about to put an end to more than a half-century scandalous boycotting of the small island of Cuba by American politicians, as this small Caribbean island became a pawn in the [Cold War](#) between the U.S. and the USSR. In the U.S., this was done also mainly for purely domestic electoral motives, i.e. to obtain the Miami exiled Cubans’ votes and money, and against basic human morality.

This is a sad chapter in 20th Century American foreign policy history, especially considering

that the U.S. government has established full diplomatic relations with countries such as China and Vietnam, and also considering that Canada has recognized and has traded with Cuba since 1960.

Indeed, a few years after the 1959 [Cuban revolution](#) that overthrew the corrupt [government of dictator Fulgencio Batista](#) (1952-1959), a government under the direct influence of elements of the American mafia who controlled the drug, gambling, prostitution, racetrack and casino businesses in Cuba, successive U.S. governments imposed on the inhabitants of Cuba a blanket of severe economic and political sanctions that crushed the small Cuban economy and lowered its people's standard of living.

Two generations of Cubans were the victims of this cruel policy. That President Obama agreed to restore diplomatic ties with the Cuban government, ties that were unilaterally broken off by Washington in 1961, is all to his credit. Kudos also to Pope Francis, an Argentine, who pressed for ending such an insane policy that saw a powerful country crush a small neighbor, irresponsible to the human suffering that resulted.

As the two quotes above from President John F. Kennedy show, there were American politicians who felt that Cubans were in their right to overthrow the mafia and their corrupt local collaborators who controlled most of everything in Cuba under Dictator Batista. How could a nation that threw off the yoke of British king George III not understand that?

An obvious question begs to be asked: To what extent President Kennedy's statements and intentions played a role in his assassination one month later, on October 23?

Three groups had special reasons to be adamantly opposed to President Kennedy's support of the Cuban revolution and to his avowed intention to establish political and economic relations with Cuba.

First, the elements of the American mafia who had been kicked out of Cuba and had to abandon their lucrative trades in that Caribbean island country.

Second, the Cuban supporters of dictator Batista who left Cuba for an exile in Florida, leaving behind properties and other possessions, with no hope of returning to their country if the U.S. government was to have normal relations with the Cuban-Castro government.

A third group is composed of some elements of the United States government's [Central Intelligence Agency](#) (CIA), under then [CIA Director Allen Dulles](#) (1953-1961), who had sponsored the failed [Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba](#) in April 1961, and whose objective was the overthrow of the Cuban government of Fidel Castro. Such a plan had been drafted under the previous Eisenhower administration (1953-1961). (Keep in mind that CIA Director Allen Dulles was the brother of John Foster Dulles, Dwight D. Eisenhower's Secretary of State.)

After his election, President John F. Kennedy had been informed of the CIA's invasion plan and had initially approved it, but when it unfolded, he refused to commit U.S. armed forces to the operation. The CIA thus had ample reasons to blame President Kennedy for the glaring failure of the Bay of Pigs para-military invasion of Cuba, considering that a similar [invasion of Guatemala in 1954](#) had required the assistance of U.S. troops to succeed. Later, President Kennedy discharged CIA Director Allen Dulles and replaced him with John McCone (1961-1965).

Cui Bono? (Who profits?) All three of these groups had special motives for blaming President John F. Kennedy for their misfortunes in Cuba. And all three of them had reasons to be violently opposed to President Kennedy's intentions to normalize political and economic relations with Cuba.

The 1964 controversial [Warren Commission Report](#) on John F. Kennedy's assassination did not establish any link between these groups who had reasons to hate the President, and his assassination, concluding instead that Lee Harvey Oswald had acted alone in the November 1963 shooting of the President. And this, even after it had been established that the murderer had been monitored by the FBI under Director J. Edgar Hoover and by the CIA under Director Allen Dulles in the months before the assassination.

It is true that not all the evidence surrounding the Kennedy Assassination has been released to the public, some of which has been classified and kept secret. However, these documents are scheduled for release two years from now, in 2017. It is anybody's guess if they might reveal new information about the circumstances that led to President Kennedy's assassination in 1963.

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