MAJOR THEMES IN 20th CENTURY LATIN AMERICAN POLITICS

A. Two major events influenced 20th-century Latin American developments: the Mexican Revolution and World War I.
   1. Although most nations remained neutral, the war disrupted traditional markets and caused a realignment of national economies. A spurt of manufacturing occurred among nations forced to rely upon themselves.
   2. At the end of the war all had to face the emergence of the United States as the region's dominant foreign power.
   3. The Mexican Revolution failed to spread because the chaos reduced its appeal and it did not resolve the problem of economic development.

B. The Effects of Depression: 1930-1950s
   1. Latin America was hard hit by the depression, but it did not result in any sweeping revolutionary movement coming to power.
   2. However, various regimes adopted economic nationalism, promoted industrial development, and introduced programs of import substitution - for example: Mexico nationalized the oil industry; Brazil built steel mills.

C. Revolution and Response: 1950s-1990s
   1. The start of the Cold War led to growing U.S. interference in Latin America.
   2. The optimism about Latin America’s prospects were challenged by success of the Cuban Revolution. Despite efforts by the United States to topple it, the Castro regime survived in close alliance with the Soviet Union.
   3. The fear of Communism led to a new wave of authoritarian regimes in the 1960s and 1970s.
   4. Democracy began to return in the 1980s as free elections were held and greater rights were granted to women and minorities.
   5. Regardless of the type of regime, all were committed to economic development.

The United States and Latin America: Continuing Presence

A. The U.S. had emerged as the predominant power in the New World after WW I.
   1. American investors pushed ahead of European rivals.
   2. There was direct involvement in Cuba and Puerto Rico; in other lands the Americans frequently intervened - over 30 times before 1933 - to protect economic, political, strategic, and ideological interests.
   3. The interventions usually were followed by support for conservative, often dictatorial and corrupt, governments friendly to the United States.
   4. The actions produced a growing nationalist and anti-American reaction.
B. The U.S. changed course in 1933 when President Franklin Roosevelt introduced the Good Neighbor Policy; direct interventions stopped.
C. After World War II Cold War thinking led to new strategies, including participation in regional organizations and the support of democratic, anticommunist administrations.
   1. Direct or indirect interventions occurred against governments considered unfriendly.
   2. The belief that economic development would eliminate radical political solutions led to programs such as the 1961 Alliance for Progress. The approach had limited success.
D. During the 1970s and 1980s the U.S. was willing to deal with military dictatorships.
   1. Under President Jimmy Carter an effort was made to influence governments to observe civil liberties and an agreement gave eventual control of the Panama Canal to Panama.
   2. Policy became more interventionist under presidents Reagan, Bush, Clinton and Bush.
A. The Cold War in Latin America
   1. Bipolar structure of world power
   2. Ideological oppositions and conflicts: communism vs. capitalism, democracy vs. totalitarianism
   3. Latin America: critical area for the US
   4. US main goal: to halt the spread of communism
   5. Tactics to halt communism:
      a. US recognition of Latin American dictators - US military / CIA interference in Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Argentina, Chile
      b. Legal elimination of Communist Parties
      c. Control of labor movements
      d. Diplomatic exclusion of the Soviet Union
   6. US policy goals in Latin America:
      a. Protection of "our" raw materials
      b. Prevention of military exploitation of Latin America by the enemy
      c. Prevention of the psychological mobilization of Latin America against "us"

B. Setting the stage
   1. Most of Cuba's population was descended from Spaniards and Africans; the nation had a relatively large middle class and better literacy and health conditions than others in the region.
   2. 1898: Cuba becomes a protectorate of the US
   3. 1901: Platt Amendment authorizes US to intervene in Cuban affairs; in the following decades, US came to dominate Cuban economy
   4. 1933: US helped Fulgencio Batista assume power. He exercised considerable control over the Cuban political process for the next 25 years.
   5. Under the harsh pro-American dictator Batista, American corporations exploited Cuban resources and workers
      a. All major businesses were owned and controlled by American companies
      b. America treated Cuba as their little “Playground” -- Casinos, resorts while the rest of the country suffered
   6. Deterioration in industry, health and education and increasing poverty made Cuba ripe for revolution

C. Fidel Castro
   1. Anti-American and anti-Batista -- overthrew the government in 1958
   2. An educated lawyer, Castro organized a revolutionary group who took over the country to free it from the shackles of American control and the corruption of Batista

D. Why did the US not crush the Revolution?
   1. American public would probably not support an invasion
   2. No large Anti-Castro force to support
   3. Economic pressure plus aid to Cuban exiles would topple Castro anyway, according to the State Department
   4. Invasion would increase anti-American feeling elsewhere in Central America
   5. US had pledged not to invade Cuba

E. Reforms under Castro:
   1. Nationalized USA owned companies (took them over and kicked the Americans out)
   2. Received no aid from the USA
   3. Began closer ties with the USSR (Castro was not communist until the USA cut off ties)
   4. Accomplishments: education, health care, employment, labor and land reforms, nutrition
   5. Thousands of Cuban refugees fled to the USA
F. The Bay of Pigs
1. 1961 – the CIA devised a plan to invade Cuba using trained and supplied Cuban refugees
2. President Kennedy, approved the plan, but used the media to say the US would not get involved.
3. Air cover was supposed to be given to the invasion force by the US
4. Kennedy canceled the air support at the last minute fearing international reprisals.
5. Poor planning and execution resulted in a fiasco: failure of the invasion - Castro defeated them easily.
6. Kennedy told the public it was a spontaneous action by the exiles, but the truth leaked out and Kennedy’s credibility greatly declined.
7. Castro would now seek greater Russian support fearing an American invasion.

G. Cuban Missile Crisis
1. Background
   a. Castro was forced into a political and economic corner by the USA - trade embargo
   b. Castro feared American invasion due to the Bay of Pigs Fiasco
   c. Had to turn to the USSR for support, economic and military
2. Discovery
   a. U-2 spy plane discovers missile installations being constructed in Cuba
   b. No doubt that the USSR was setting up the sites.
3. Issues
   a. missile technology / location / targets favored US
   b. The Americans also had missiles under NATO in Turkey, threatening the USSR
   c. Kennedy announced the discovery to the world on TV
4. What to do?
   a. Kennedy had 3 options: Air strike, Invasion and Diplomacy (negotiations)
   b. Kennedy chooses the use of diplomacy with the threat of nuclear war
   c. He orders a quarantine of Cuba, a complete naval blockade, attempting to stop any Russian vessels from delivering any missiles to Cuba
   d. Khrushchev proposed removing Soviet missiles and personnel if the US would guarantee not to invade Cuba
   e. Next day -- U-2 was shot down over Cuba -- second letter from Khrushchev demanding the removal of US missiles in Turkey in exchange for Soviet missiles in Cuba
   f. Attorney General Robert Kennedy suggested ignoring the second letter and contacted Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin to tell him of the US agreement with the first.
5. Results
   a. Khrushchev would pay a political price for backing down to Kennedy
   b. The “Hot Line” red phone would be installed in the White House for instant contact with the Soviet Premier
   c. Crisis leads to the 1963 Test Ban Treaty
   d. The world is saved from possible nuclear war - probably the closest until . . .

H. Castro’s revolution has had mixed results:
1. Its reforms greatly improved education, health, and housing, especially in rural regions.
2. But industrialization efforts failed and Cuba remained dependent on sugar.
3. Rising oil costs and falling sugar prices made Cuba dependent upon Soviet economic aid.
4. The Soviet Union’s collapse brought serious economic distress.
5. Even with its problems, the Cuban revolution inspired many Latin American revolutionaries in their quest for change.