

Cuba

Key facts in 1929

Area: 109,884 km²^[1]

Population: 3.9 Million^[2,3]

Life expectancy: 42 years^[4]

Literacy rate: 71,8%^[5]

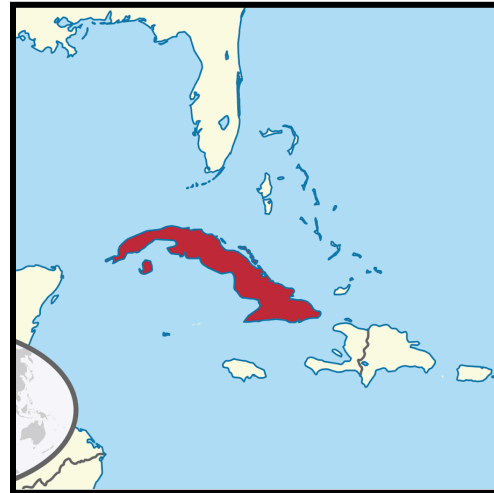
Biggest Minorities: Afro-Cubans,
Chinese immigrants^[3]

Select Main Cities: Havana, Santiago de
Cuba, Camagüey^[1]

Neighboring countries: None, is an
island

Sea Access: Yes, surrounded by the
Caribbean Sea

GDP: 800'000'000 \$1929^[6,7]



Recent Historical Background

Cuba in the late 1920s was experiencing a period of political instability and economic challenges. Following the end of the Cuban War of Independence and the subsequent withdrawal of Spanish forces in 1898^[8], Cuba had come under significant influence from the United States, including several periods of American military occupation^[9,10,11]. The 1920s saw a series of short-lived presidencies and coups, with Gerardo Machado taking office as president in 1925.^[12] His administration initially embarked on ambitious public works programs but later became increasingly dictatorial, leading to political unrest. The global economic downturn towards the end of the decade severely affected Cuba's sugar-dependent economy.^[13]

Political Situation

In 1929, Cuba was governed by an authoritarian, personalist regime led by President Gerardo Machado within a nominally republican framework.^[14,15] Despite the existence of the Liberal and Conservative Parties, both were marginalized by Machado's authoritarian grip on power.^[16,17] The period was characterized by political repression, censorship, and economic dependency on sugar, rendering the country vulnerable to external pressures. Cuba's political situation was hurt even more during the Great Depression, which, as previously mentioned, severely affected Cuba's sugar-dependent economy.^[13]

Economic Situation in 1929

In 1929, Cuba's economy was largely based on sugar production, which accounted for the majority of its exports. Tobacco was also a significant product.^[18] The country was more advanced in its agricultural development but was also experiencing growth in small-scale industries related to sugar and tobacco processing. Cuba was relatively self-sufficient in food production, thanks to its fertile land and favorable climate. Main exports were sugar and tobacco, with imports including machinery, chemical products, and food items to supplement local production. Trading partners included the United States, which was the primary market for Cuban sugar, and various European countries. The Cuban peso was the national currency.^[19] Major industrial and agricultural hubs were located in the western part of the island, particularly around Havana and the Pinar del Rio region. The economic system was characterized by a heavy dependence on a single crop (sugar), making it vulnerable to price fluctuations on the international market. Civilian research was primarily focused on agriculture, aiming to improve crop yields and resistance to diseases.^[20]

Military Strength in 1929

Cuba's military in 1929 was quite weak. It had 13'000 active personnel and its funding was at 2.12% of its GDP.^[21] It didn't have any armored vehicle nor any tank yet.^[22] It also didn't have any military plane yet.^[23] Cuba had 19 ships, which were 8 gunboats, 4 patrol boats and 7 coast guard ships.^[24] In general, it was very unequipped and strongly dependent upon military imports, mostly from the United States of America.

Key Facts about Military Strength of Cuba ^[21,22,23,24]	
Active personnel	13'000
Armored Vehicles	0
Cavalry	Unknown
Ships	19
Planes	0
Funding in 1929\$	16,960,000

Allies/Enemies/Existing territorial disputes in 1929

Main Allies: The United States was a key ally, exerting significant influence over Cuban affairs both economically and politically, a relationship that was complex and sometimes viewed as neocolonial.^[25]

Main Enemies: Cuba did not have explicit enemies during this period, but internal opposition to President Machado's regime was growing.

Territorial Disputes: No major territorial disputes during this period; however, the Platt Amendment (which was abrogated in 1934) allowed the United States significant rights in Cuba, including the lease of Guantanamo Bay, which was a point of contention.^[26]

Some of the main goals for the 1930s

1. **Sugar Industry Expansion:** As the world's leading sugar producer, Cuba aimed to expand and modernize its sugar industry to maintain its global market position.
2. **Political Reform:** The period was marked by political instability and corruption; thus, there was a push for political reform and more effective governance.
3. **US Relations:** Managing and navigating the complex relationship with the United States, which had significant economic and political influence over the island, was a critical goal.

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