

"The Cuban Missile Crisis was caused by the provocative and ill-judged policies of the USA." Assess the validity of this view.

American policies or actions that contributed to the CMC	To what extent were these policies 'provocative' or 'ill-judged'?
→ Castro was invited to the USA in April 1959 by the American Society of Newspaper Editors. Eisenhower demonstrated his revulsion at the execution of Castro's opponents by refusing to meet with them (Nixon and Herter met with him instead)	- Denies the opportunity for any kind of diplomacy between Castro and Eisenhower
→ Castro accepted Soviet oil at below-market prices so the USA refused to refine the oil (led to the nationalisation of all American owned oil refineries in Cuba in August 1960)	US actions push Castro closer to the USSR - begins a process of nationalising US property
→ The USA impose economic sanctions on Cuba and reduce their imports of Cuban sugar by 95%. In September 1959 the State Department advised Americans to avoid all unnecessary travel to Cuba. There was an approved embargo on most exports to Cuba in October. There was a step up in efforts to maintain relations with other Latin American nations (evidenced in NSC 5902/1 from Feb 1959)	Leads to Castro seizing American sugar mills - jeopardises their economic stability → Further alienates Cubans → strangling them economically
→ US break off diplomatic relations 3 Jan 1961	→ Not a productive response

17 April 1961 - 19 April 1961

1400
trained
exiles
→ Bay of Pigs invasion: US govt spent close to \$5 million on the project. It was a disaster with casualties amounting to the death of 200 rebel forces → further 1197 are captured. This shook Castro who requested assistance from the Soviets in the defence of Cuba.

→ Operation Mongoose was a secret project run by CIA operative Lansdale. It was aimed at removing Castro and many attempts were made to assassinate him.

- Hugely provocative and a key trigger for the CMC (in terms of Castro reaching out to the Soviets for defence).

- Lying on the cable. Proves the US aren't willing to work with Castro.

Other causes of the CMC:

+ Khrushchev took the decision to place missiles in Cuba.
US informed 15 Oct → this directly challenged the US and the secrecy surrounding the missile placement was provocative and ill-judged.
→ he was looking to recover from the humiliation of the Berlin Wall crisis. Cuba receives nuclear warheads for MRBM 4 Oct '62

Operation Anadyr

+ Castro acted provocatively against the USA. They seized and nationalised US owned oil companies in May 1960 and seized and nationalised sugar mills in August 1960.
→ Nationalised the remainder of properties by October 1960.
→ Castro stood for revolution. Groups of Nicaraguans, Dominicans and Haitians left Cuba with the intention of inspiring uprisings against the dictators of their respective countries

Order of significance:

BoPs and OM → Kh military support → US sanctions → Castro's actions and retaliations.

"The Cuban Missile Crisis was caused by the provocative and ill-judged policies of the USA". Assess the validity of this view [25]

	For	Against
2	BoPs + om	1 Kh missile deployment
4	Sanctions	3 Castro's provocations

Although the immediate trigger for the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962 is often seen as Khrushchev's decision to place nuclear weapons on Cuba, tracing the roots of the crisis offers an alternative perspective. "Provocative" and "ill-judged" are strong but largely accurate descriptions ^{of} US actions towards Cuba and could certainly be used when ~~examining~~ examining the Bay of Pigs incident in April 1961. Castro's actions did indeed provoke US intervention, but that intervention can be seen as ~~being~~ a central cause of the Cuban Missile Crisis, strengthening the validity of this view.

The trigger for the Cuban Missile Crisis was Operation Anadyr, which placed nuclear weapons on Cuba in direct proximity of the US. By the beginning of October 1962, Cuba had received nuclear warheads for MRBMs in addition to Sopska cruise missiles and 5000 Soviet military personnel earlier that year. ~~Khrushchev~~ Khrushchev, looking for an opportunity to recover some prestige following the Berlin Wall Crisis in 1961, placed the missiles on Cuba knowing this would provoke US reaction. This, combined with the haphazard placing of the missiles (delivered in secrecy but constructed in full view for U2-planes to conduct reconnaissance) added to the confrontation and sparked a crisis. However, in examining the causes of the crisis further, it is revealed that Soviet aid came in response to Castro's pleas for defence following the US's disastrous attempts to remove Castro from power.

In support of the statement, it is clear that the Bay of Pigs, an incident that could be deemed both provocative and ill-judged was responsible for causing the Cuban Missile Crisis. Kennedy, who criticised Eisenhower's policy on Cuba in his election campaign, stood for inaction. It was this poor judgement that led him to pursue an ill-thought project many advisors warned against. The invasion was a utter failure with 200 of the 1400 trained exiles perishing and the remaining force was captured by the Cuban army. Despite US failure, this event sent a clear message to ~~Castro~~ Castro who subsequently appealed to the Soviets for assistance. This, in combination with operation Mongoose headed by CIA operative Lansdale, can be seen as hugely provocative. Kennedy misjudged the extent of resistance to Castro's rule and as a result drove Castro into Khrushchev's arms, who was willing ~~to~~ to provide the necessary assistance.

This being said, the US cannot be entirely blamed for the tensions that contributed to the Cuban Missile Crisis. At the time Castro took power, there were only suspicions of a communist influence within the Cuban revolution. However, tensions heightened in April 1959 when a group left Cuba for Panama with the intent to overthrow the Panamanian government. Though Castro denied involvement, Cuba came to be seen as exporting its revolution; ^{this} ~~which~~ was further evidenced when groups of Nicaraguans, Dominicans and Haitians left Cuba with the objective of inspiring uprisings against dictators of those nations. This provoked concern and led to deteriorating relations with the US. Castro acted more directly provocatively in seizing and nationalizing US industries and property. This can be countered when assessing the sanctions the US imposed on Cuba and their ill-judged policies that demanded compensations for companies that had profited from monopolising Cuban trade and suppressing their people.

Thus, the root cause of the deterioration of US-Cuban relations that ultimately resulted in the Cuban Missile Crisis was US policy, both ill-judged and provocative. Eisenhower ~~was~~ poorly judged the situation when he refused to meet with Castro on his visit to the US in April 1959. It confirmed Castro's suspicions on US cooperation and the future of their diplomacy. Moreover, the US's decision to refuse the refining of Soviet oil and impose economic sanctions by reducing their import of Cuban sugar by 95% placed Cuba in an economic predicament. Castro isn't entirely blameless, but the US's decision to flex their power with economic might drew the Soviet Union into ~~the~~ Castro's circle. The United States had enjoyed access to Latin American politics and economics for many years and were unwilling to allow a socialist revolution to rob them of that.

In summary, the Cuban Missile Crisis, in both the long and short term can be seen to have been caused by US policy which was often provocative and usually ill-judged. This, in turn, contributed to the rise in tensions which led to a greater relationship between Cuba and the USSR. This in turn led to the events that sparked the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962.