Finally, in the case of Peru, the situation was similar to that obtaining in Argentina. In 1993 the governing party, led by Alberto Fujimori, agreed a constitutional reform that included significant judicial reforms in return for its re-election. Once the latter had been achieved, however, it used its legislative majority to undermine the independence, power and autonomy of judicial power. Only after Fujimori's resignation did congress draw up the legislation necessary to reverse the dependency of judicial power.

This comparative analysis is a central component of the book, enabling an understanding of similarities and disparities across the region and confirming the realist viewpoint that sees reforms aimed at strengthening judicial power as only being introduced when governments perceive them as bringing short-term (such as re-election) and medium-term benefits (such as impartial arbitration in the resolution of conflicts in which the government might be involved).

In the light of this, it can be said that this study represents an important contribution for those interested in judicial politics and political processes in Latin America. Nevertheless, I should not like to finish without commenting on some of the reflections the book's analysis inspired in this reviewer. The first of these is connected to a premise seemingly implicit in the theory of political insurance: that politicians have a good sense of anticipation. In the case of Mexico this supposition is difficult to sustain in light of the fact that the reforms took place in the first few months of President Zedillo's mandate, and that some political reforms which were to be decisive in the pluralisation of political representation in the country had yet to take place. It could rather be said, in this instance, that the decision to strengthen judicial power and specifically the Supreme Court in the resolution of political conflict had more to do with the 'hegemonic preservation' thesis proposed by Hirschl et al. in relation to Israel. A second response relates to the consideration of judicial power as an active player in the reform process. Although not the decision maker, it is hard to imagine that judicial power has refrained from participating to some extent in these processes. The possibility of considering implementation in relationship terms, in which not only the preferences of political elites but also those of judicial power itself are relevant and taken into consideration, could suggest a political process of judicial reform in which politicians' preferences are taken into account alongside those of judges.

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Juan Carlos Rodríguez, *The Inevitable Battle: From the Bay of Pigs to Playa Girón* (Atlanta, GA: Pathfinder Press, 2009), pp. xvi + 359, $20.00, pb.

The Inevitable Battle is one of several books published ahead of the 50th anniversary of the Bay of Pigs debacle. Originally released in Spanish by a Cuban publisher, this seamless translation into English is a readable first-hand account of a defining Cold War episode. As the title suggests, one of its main arguments is that Washington was destined to mount a military offensive against Cuba once its island neighbour adopted a political path contrary to US wishes. Another is that the preparedness and determination of the Cuban authorities and military forces defeated the invasion, rather than any botched strategy on the part of the operation's US planners.

Unlike its recently published counterparts, this book adopts a fundamentally Cuban perspective towards the events of April 1961. In addition to limited

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secondary material, it relies on the author's own first-hand experience as a literacy teacher in the neighbouring Escambray Mountains, as well as the testimonies of Cubans directly involved in repelling the CIA-sponsored military invasion. The inclusion of such evidence from Cuban protagonists is refreshing, but dates for most of their testimonies are absent, leaving the reader unsure as to how contemporaneous to real events are their first-hand accounts.

A tendency towards hagiography is evident in the preface by José Ramón Fernández, an important military figure from the campaign and the author of an earlier book on the same topic. He asserts as a fact that Cuba's population was in 'full agreement with Fidel's political ideas' in 1961 (p. xii). While it is true that the Kennedy administration in the United States wildly overestimated the strength of internal opposition to Castro's regime within Cuba, and the operation depended on such support in order to succeed, such an overarching statement provokes scepticism. What is certain is that the Bay of Pigs was one of Castro's and revolutionary Cuba's finest hours.

Rodríguez himself only occasionally strays towards such concrete positions in support of Castro and the Revolution. The strengths of his book lie in its description and analysis of the Cuban authorities' anticipation and preparedness for the invasion. The tense atmosphere in the island leading up to the invasion is brought out, for example, in the very personal accounts of peasants and literacy teachers in the Escambray Mountains, victims of a counter-revolutionary insurgency supported by Washington. Castro had declared 1961 the 'Year of Education', and agents under CIA instructions had already instigated sabotage operations against his regime. For example, the author includes testimony of the capture, torture and killing of a literacy teacher, providing background for the wider narrative on the invasion itself. Such detail provides a new outlook. The Bay of Pigs is remembered more outside Cuba as a humiliating episode for Kennedy's new administration and as an abject defeat for Cuban exiles and mercenaries on the island's southern coast, but this book reminds us that many civilians were tragically caught up in this ill-conceived adventure.

The book also details how agents and underground opposition targeted bomb attacks against commercial and industrial enterprises on the island. A particular source of anger was evidently the destruction through fire of the Encanto department store in Havana. According to Rodríguez, the proliferation of such attacks against the Revolution and Cuban citizens explains the authorities' tactical detention of thousands of counter-revolutionary suspects ahead of the invasion. Related to this, Rodríguez refutes the allegation that Cuban state security had penetrated the CIA operation in Guatemala, where Cuban exiles and mercenaries received preparatory training before the launch of their infamous military invasion (p. 159). As for the battle itself, the book paints a vivid picture of the participation by Cuban militias and the regime's air force, the former transported to the battlefront in buses and attacked from the air by B-26 bombers. The decisive intervention of Cuban pilots is also described in sharp detail. Despite the pre-emptive bombing of Cuban airfields, sufficient numbers of planes were deployed to the battlefront following orders from Castro, and these dealt a *coup de grâce* to the invading force by sinking or incapacitating its main supply ships.

Away from the scene of the physical battle, Rodríguez highlights the difficulties faced by the United States in the forum of the United Nations, where the US representative suffered embarrassment due to a lack of information from his own

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government. Meanwhile, the declarations of Cuba's foreign minister are portrayed as a more faithful depiction of what was really occurring at the scene of battle in the Caribbean.

Common to Cuban publications, the book lacks an index; furthermore, its footnotes are infrequent and lack detail. It does, however, contain an ample and pertinent selection of photographs from the ill-fated invasion. This volume is not therefore based on multi-archival research from both sides of the Florida Straits, but neither are many of its rival publications. This points to the difficulty of researching twentieth-century and especially post-1959 Cuban history: foreign scholars are largely restricted from working in Cuban government archives, while historians based on the island have limited access to non-Cuban sources. Such limitations often add to the existing language barriers for non-Spanish-speaking and non-English-speaking researchers. These barriers to scholarly research still exist, 50 years after this early calamity for Kennedy's foreign policy and early triumph for the Revolution. In this David and Goliath confrontation of the Cold War, *The Inevitable Battle* recounts the battle from David's point of view, a story largely untold by other histories of the Bay of Pigs.

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John M. Kirk and H. Michael Erisman (eds.), *Cuban Medical Internationalism: Origins, Evolution, and Goals* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan with the Institute for the Study of the Americas, University of London, 2009), pp. xii + 228, £60.00; $94.00; €69.00, hb.

Most students and scholars of Cuba, even ideological enemies of the socialist Revolution, recognise the government's outstanding achievements in the provision of universal free health care since 1959. If not derived from study, this knowledge likely comes from first-hand experience on the island. This book, however, will leave even the knowledgeable reader astonished by the Cuban record: 124,000 health professionals have worked in 103 countries since 1963, and tens of thousands of poor foreign students have received free medical training in Cuba. In addition to compiling breathtaking statistics, Kirk and Erisman provide an historical narrative to the emergence and evolution of Cuba's medical internationalism, answering cynics and explaining the 'how' and 'why' of this extraordinary achievement.

Before 1959, private medical care in Havana 'was among the best in the Americas' (p. 27), but access was restricted by cost and location. Commitment to free universal healthcare on the part of the revolutionary government served to close class, race and urban/rural gaps in access. New doctors were trained to be motivated by patient needs, not profit. The book traces the evolution of the Cuban public health system, including the introduction of polyclinics in 1962 and family doctors in 1984. Today there are 32,000 family physicians in Cuba, and the patient–doctor ratio is 170:1, down from 900:1 in 1959. The principles of the Cuban approach are that 'doctors are socialized and are taught to see themselves as revolutionaries' (p. 31), that there is a 'need for health care to be participatory … [and a] belief in cooperation over competition' (p. 35), and that 'emphasis [should be] placed on preventative medicine' (p. 37). The authors discuss the socio-economic and welfare impact of the collapse of the Soviet bloc in 1990. Despite the material shortages,

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