

and political implications of natural phenomena, but it also serves as a fine synthetic history of the Caribbean region.

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GLOBAL AND TRANSNATIONAL HISTORY

Cubans in Angola: South-South Cooperation and Transfer of Knowledge, 1976–1991. By Christine Hatzky. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015. Pp. xvi, 386. Illustrations. Notes. Index. \$39.95 paper.
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In commemoration of those who sacrificed their lives for the independence of Angola, the former president of Cuba declared, “The history of Africa will be written as that of before Cuito Cuanavale and after Cuito Cuanavale.” This declaration has not really resonated with scholars of the Anglo American world, and the book *Cubans in Angola* seeks to shed light on the role of Cuban educators in the defense of the peoples of Southern Africa.

Fidel Castro’s bold statement emanated from the reality that the Cuban engagement with Angola had changed the course of the history of Africa, with the military defeat of the apartheid army at Cuito Cuanavale in 1988. Yet, despite this defeat at the military and diplomatic level, the rendition of the relations between Cuba and Angola became enmeshed in the scholarly pursuits of the US academy and hence, for mainstream scholarship the retreat of the South Africans from Angola was thought to have emanated from the negotiations that had been embarked on by the USA. This was the thesis of the book by Chester Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa: Making Peace in a Rough Neighborhood*. From this account, based on realist conceptions of international politics, it was the wisdom of diplomacy that had championed over war. It was left to the anti-apartheid forces internationally to set the record straight about the atrocities and destruction that had been carried out in Angola and Southern Africa. Phyllis Johnson and David Martin made a valuable contribution to the understanding of that era with the book *Destructive Engagement: Southern Africa at War* (1986). Education in Angola precluded the time and space for these studies.

In the absence of the voices and pens of Angolans, the dominant view of the antifascist and anticolonial struggle was that it was dominated by ethnic conflict. John Marcum had started down this road with his two-volume study, *The Angolan Revolution* (1969, 1978). Real colonial domination and genocidal violence was sidelined to focus on matters of conflict among Africans. The French scholar Christine Messiant carried forward this theoretical framework of ethnic conflict and structural functionalism to distort the valiant history of the Angolan peoples. Neither Messiant nor Marcus fully represented the challenges that had been unleashed by the military activities of the apartheid army in Angola and Namibia.

Christine Hatzky's book seeks to fill the void with a compelling story of the sacrifices of the Cubans in the struggle for sovereignty and independence. The subtitle of the book suggested that a materialist understanding of the world was at play in the South-South cooperation. However, the real theoretical foundations of postmodernism and the stress on memory negated the evidence of the book of real international solidarity on the part of the Cuban peoples in Angola.

The book's 366 pages are laid out in nine chapters, which are organized into three parts: Angola and Cuba in the Twentieth Century, Cuban-Angolan Cooperation in Education, and Memories of Angola. The author has chosen to anchor the book in postmodern discourse and analysis, focusing on spaces and identities, conflict, and memories. These formulations and reference points detract from the central purpose of the book, which intends to bring to the reader the fact that between 1976 and 1991 more than a half million Cubans directly supported the Angolan project of self-determination. Most of those who served in Angola were soldiers; as Hatzky points out, "War was part and parcel of everyday life in Angola" (p. 225).

Of these Cubans, Hatzky focuses on the role of teachers during the military conflict, bringing in exhaustive detail from contemporary records in Angola and from interviews of Cuban doctors, teachers, construction workers, and technicians who worked under very difficult conditions in Cuba. While the book does bring out the real difficulties, the theoretical framework that focuses on memories in the third part contradicts the emphasis on civilian internationalism that the author successfully documents in the second part. An opportunity to soundly anchor the theoretical framework of South-South cooperation and explore the transfer of knowledge was missed. In the universe of Chester Crocker, Christine Messiant, John Marcum, and Joseph Miller, revolutionary cooperation was not possible in a world dominated by possessive individualism. Hence, though Christine Hatzky has offered exhaustive information on the role of education in generating self-confidence and solidarity in the midst of war, her analysis detracts from the information and devalues an otherwise well-researched doctoral thesis.

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Imperialism and the Origins of Mexican Culture. By Colin MacLachlan. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015. Pp. 340. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$35 cloth. doi:[10.1017/tam.2016.50](https://doi.org/10.1017/tam.2016.50)

Focusing through the lens of imperialism, Colin MacLachlan, the John Christy Barr Distinguished Professor History at Tulane University, has written an ambitious account of the creation of *mestizo* culture in sixteenth-century New Spain. Examining imperial organization in four civilizations—Roman, Aztec, Spanish, and Islamic—he charts the formation of the hybrid polity, economy, and society of early colonial Mexico. The