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Kennedy, Castro, and the CIA: The Historical and Political Significance of the Bay of Pigs Failed Operation

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Declaration

I, Eva Leclerc, confirm that the work presented in this term paper/thesis... is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the term paper/thesis...

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Introduction

January 1961. At the very height of the Cold War, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the Democratic presidential candidate, has just been elected to the highest office in the United States (US) following a long and harsh campaign against Richard Nixon that Kennedy unexpectedly won.¹ With all the tremendous issues faced by his country during this era, the new president inherited one in particular: Cuba.

In order to begin this thesis, a succinct reminder of the facts is necessary. In January 1959, Fidel Castro, eminent revolutionary political figure at that time, accompanied by his *Barbudos* -namely Ernesto Che Guevara, Camilo Cienfuegos, and his own brother Raúl Castro, to cite only the most famous ones- entered Havana and overthrew the corrupted and violent military dictatorship led by Fulgencio Batista.² The latter had been democratically elected in 1933, remained in post until 1944 and returned subsequently to power after a coup on March 10, 1952 to establish a bloody military dictatorship.³ Castro implemented a new regime which resulted in high hopes for the Cuban population who had suffered during Batista's era. Most crucially, at the times, the US were somewhat relieved that the Batista regime had been overthrown, as they considered the dictator increasingly difficult to control.⁴

Jacobo Machover, Cuban scholar, writer and journalist, even writes that John F. Kennedy, who was preparing his presidential candidacy, thought of Fidel Castro as a follower of the Bolivarian legacy. This reference to the Latin Revolutionary hero Simon Bolivar proves that Castro was of interest to Kennedy and the US population, as this historical figure generated much enthusiasm among Cubans.⁵ For the majority of the population, Bolivar was a liberator after the tyranny. Invited to the US in April 1959 by the American Society of Newspaper

¹ Theodore C. Sorensen, *Kennedy*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1965, 291-305. Indeed, the gap was thin between both candidates: 120,000 popular votes separated Nixon from the victory, suggesting to the opposition an electoral fraud.

² Jatar Hausmann, Ana Julia, *The Cuban Way: Capitalism, Communism and Confrontation*, Kumarian Press, Sterling Virginia, 1999.

The *Barbudos* were Castro's followers to achieve the Revolution in Cuba.

³ "Fulgencio Batista, Biography, Facts & Death", *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Accessed February 4, 2020. <http://www.britannica.com/biography/Fulgencio-Batista>.

⁴ Hugh Thomas, "Cuba: The United States and Batista, 1952-58", *World Affairs, Volume 149, No. 4*, New York: Sage Publications Inc, jstor, 1987. 169-175

https://www.jstor.org/stable/20672109?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents

⁵ Jacobo Machover, *Anatomie d'un désastre, Baie des Cochons, Cuba, 1961*, Editions Vendémiaire, Paris, 2011. Simon Bolivar, byname The Liberator, was a Venezuelan soldier and statesman. He led the revolutions against Spanish rule in the viceroyalty of New Granada, then became president of Gran Colombia (1819-30) and dictator of Peru (1823-26). (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*)

Editors, Castro met with Vice-President Nixon. To reassure the US, the Cuban leader, whilst paying his respects at the Abraham Lincoln Memorial, said that he had come “with a sincere feeling of friendship”.⁶ However, the visit resulted in a very cold encounter on both sides that compromised the relationships between the two American countries, despite every effort made to reinforce the diplomatic relations. Nixon felt that Castro was not going to serve the US’s interests adequately. Furthermore, the leftist policies developed in Cuba that year had started to worry the US.⁷

Amongst such policies were the numerous nationalisations and the closer relations with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), resulting in creating more tension between the US and the island. For the leaders of the Western capitalist bloc the presence of a potential Communist country at less than ninety miles from the Florida shores was not conceivable. However, the Cuban leader did not declare himself to be fully in favour of the USSR at this time, despite his Marxist-Leninist policies. He was confrontational during this trip and refused to beg the US for economic assistance.⁸

After numerous economic measures against Cuba, the preparations for an invasion began. Former General Dwight Eisenhower was the Republican president at the time (1953 to 1961). With his counsellors and with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) he formulated a plan to eliminate Castro and his regime in order to replace it with one closer to America written values, but most importantly with a regime supportive of the US, with whom they could have powerful relations and upon whom they could exert influence.⁹

Created in 1947, the CIA defines itself as “an independent agency responsible for providing national security intelligence to senior US policymakers”.¹⁰ The agency puts the emphasis on its independence in deciding what must be done to ensure national security. During his term, Eisenhower’s administration often worked with this independent agency regarding his “New Look” policy, which differentiated from the “Containment policy”.¹¹ Indeed, rather than

⁶ Jacobo Machover, *Anatomie d’un désastre*, 18.

⁷ Jeffrey J. Safford, “The Nixon-Castro Meeting of 19 April 1959”, *Diplomatic History Volume 4 No. 4*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980. 425-431

https://www.jstor.org/stable/24911225?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents

⁸ Safford, “The Nixon-Castro Meeting of April 1959”.

⁹ Theodore C. Sorensen, *Kennedy*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1965, 291-305.

¹⁰ *CIA’s website*, ‘Today’s CIA, Central Intelligence Agency’, Accessed December 14, 2019.

<http://www.cia.gov/about-cia/todays-cia>.

¹¹ Saki Dockrill, *Eisenhower’s New-Look National Security Policy, 1953-61*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 1996, 1-5. The New Look Policy consisted in reducing the cost of the Cold War by focusing on nuclear weapons, without missing US military obligations.

contain Communism in countries that had already fallen under it, the idea was to immediately intervene with the CIA's help in Communist countries. It was the case in Cuba. Machover explains that if Castro had simply been another blood-thirsty dictator, it would never have bothered the USA, as they had historically preferred to support and sponsor dubious leaders rather than to see a country fall under communism.¹² The example of Batista, at the beginning of his dictatorship, is proof of this.¹³ Augusto Pinochet, dictator of Chile between 1974 and 1990 also benefited from the support of the US.

In early 1960, Eisenhower authorized the training of Cuban exiles recruited in the Miami area in several camps by the CIA: first in Panama and Florida, and then in Guatemala, near Retalhuleu in the Sierra Madre.¹⁴ These exiles called themselves Brigade 2506. They were approximately one thousand and five hundred men at the dawn of the operation, mostly former pro-Castro people disillusioned by Castroism.¹⁵ Indeed, the dictatorship was not their concept of the Revolution and their cohabitation with former Batista supporters was a challenge. However, the numbers of the latter group were limited, since the US were eager to privilege people that would more easily appeal to the Cuban population.¹⁶ For the US administration, the objective was to sponsor and help the Brigade. Cubans were presented as the true continuators of a betrayed Revolution by Castro. The US were only there for support just as they had been at the end of the nineteenth century, during the Latino-American revolutions.¹⁷ In the meantime, the US would be protected from any reprisals because their role would remain impossible to prove.¹⁸

George F. Kennan, John Lukacs, *George F. Kennan and the Origins of Containment: 1944-1946, The Kennan-Lukacs correspondence*, university of Missouri Press, Columbia, 1997, 1-2. The Containment Policy was theorized by George Kennan, deputy head of the mission in Moscow, in 1946. It was about containing communism where it was implanted.

¹² Machover, *Anatomie d'un désastre*.

¹³ Batista did not hesitate to imprison his opponents and make fortune for himself and his associates (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*). However, the US could invest massively in Cuba and Batista protected their interests. (Hugh Thomas, "Cuba: the United States and Batista, 1952-58, World Affairs, Volume 149, No. 4, New York: Sage Publications Inc, 1987.169-175 on jstor)

¹⁴ Phil Carradice, *Bay of Pigs, CIA's Cuban Disaster, April 1961 (Cold War 1945-1991)*, Pen and Sword Military, Barnsley, 2018.

¹⁵ Castroism is the political, social, and Revolutionary theories and policies advocated by Fidel Castro. (*Collins Dictionary*) These men felt betrayed because no elections were taking place in Cuba, freedom of press and thoughts were not respected.

¹⁶ Haynes Johnson, *The Bay of Pigs, The Leaders Story of Brigade 2506*, New York Norton, 1964.

¹⁷ Philip S. Foner, *The Spanish-Cuban-American War and the Birth of American Imperialism Volume II: 1898-1902*, Monthly Review Press New York, 1972. The Spanish-Cuban-American War started in 1898 for the independence of Cuba against Spanish rule. Americans helped the island especially for economic interests. Resulted the Cuban independence in 1902.

¹⁸ Howard Jones, *The Bay of Pigs*, Oxford University Press, 2008.

The Brigade underwent intensive training in 1960. Their political leader was Manuel Artime, one of Castro's former guerrilla fighters, and their military leader was José Perez San Roman, who was less involved with Castro's side in 1959 than Artime.¹⁹

When Kennedy inherited the plan, the growing tension between the US and the Soviet Union (USSR) made him consider more seriously the political consequences of such an operation. On the one hand, the new president wanted to establish his authority and power. He wanted to prove to the US people and to his opponents that he had strong views against communism and that he would not be lenient in his dealings with Castro. On the other hand, one must remember that 1961 was the year of the construction of the Berlin Wall that divided West and East Berlin for almost thirty years. In this context of global unease, Kennedy's main fear was the potential repercussions on the German city.

There were also growing tensions following the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, first prime minister of the independent Democratic Republic of Congo (June until September 1960) executed by a firing squad in January 1961.²⁰ A Senate Report in 1975 indicates the CIA's encouragement of Congolese efforts to eliminate Lumumba, which was classified information back in 1961.²¹ Indeed, Lumumba asked for Soviet planes to assist his troops and stop the Katangese Revolt, a worrying move for Western powers. Nonetheless, the Soviets and the world were not duped and knew that the US participated in this assassination.²²

Thus, Kennedy was faced with the following question: was Cuba worth risking the fragile balance? Nevertheless, with the pressure of the CIA and on the frontline Allen Dulles, its director, accompanied by Richard Bissell, the officer responsible for major projects, the president eventually agreed to the plan and authorized the operation, with extreme insistence on its covert aspect.²³ The set of the operation, *la bahía de Cochinos* gave its name to the Bay of Pigs landing.²⁴ The operation was a complete disaster.

A few questions rise from this debacle: this episode showed that the CIA's methods did

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Sorensen, *Kennedy*.

²¹ "An Interim Report of the Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities," *Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders*, 1975, 13-19.

<https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/files/94465.pdf>

²² Ludo de Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba*, translated by Ann Wright and Renée Fenby, New York: Verso, 2001.

²³ Christopher Andrew, *For the President's Eyes Only: Secret Intelligence and the American Presidency from Washington to Bush*, New York: HarperCollins Publisher Ltd, 1996.

²⁴ Cf. annexes to see the location.

not work correctly. What were the consequences of the defeat for the CIA, the federal government and Cuba? This thesis aims to examine how President Kennedy handled the situation as he feared he would be impeached in the aftermath. It is interesting to analyse whether Kennedy did take any initiative against the CIA or not as the agency planned the operation and was responsible for the debacle. Thus, after considering Kennedy and the CIA's role, this work will turn to Castro's use of the event as a means to denounce US Imperialism when Cuba's victory turned the spotlight to the island and its new government.²⁵

The CIA's role is confirmed in the organisation of this operation. The same techniques were employed against Afghanistan or Iraq during the twenty first century.²⁶ Thus, analysing one of the biggest covert operation is a fruitful means of understanding the agency's methods. As the research below will show, this line of enquiry enables to shed a light on the CIA's key role in shaping the government's intentions, as well as the potential misunderstandings, the lack of communication and disagreements between them. The agency put the plan together, gathered Cuban exiles and coordinated the invasion, formed the heart of the process. While the Eisenhower administration was replaced by Kennedy's in 1960, the agency remained.

The Leader Maximó- Castro's nickname- was not the only one to use the Bay of Pigs as a way to emphasize the strength of his country. Kennedy's strategy was also to reinforce western values against Communism. How were these strategies respectively perceived by the Cuban and American populations? With the aim to show that rhetoric and culture were the main weapons of both countries to make their population perceive what they wanted, this work will also show that Castro's and Kennedy's speeches participated in this work of propaganda just as museums, monuments and commemorations did.

First, this thesis will demonstrate the power of the CIA in shaping US foreign policies starting in the 1950s. This work will analyse the creation of covert operations and its recurrent use under Eisenhower. The examples of Iran and Guatemala are retained for this demonstration. Both these events will be used to show the CIA's successes in the fifties and how it paved the way for the Bay of Pigs landing. Then, this work will compare the different approaches of

²⁵ "Imperialism", *Dictionary.com*. Imperialism is "the policy of extending the rule or authority of an empire or nation over foreign countries, or of acquiring and holding colonies and dependencies."

²⁶ For more information about CIA intervention in Iraq: John Diamond, *The CIA and the Culture of Failure, U.S Intelligence from the end of the Cold War to the invasion of Iraq*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008. For more information about the CIA's intervention in Afghanistan: Charles G. Cogan, "Partners in Time: The CIA and Afghanistan since 1979", *World Policy Journal Volume 10 No. 2*, Duke: Duke University Press, Jstor. 73-82. https://www.jstor.org/stable/40209308?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents

Eisenhower and Kennedy when it comes to plan the invasion. The relationship between Kennedy and the CIA will also be studied. Despite its significance in American foreign policy, the Bay of Pigs invasion is proof that the agency had flaws, such as communication issues or extreme confidence to state but a few. Because of the disastrous outcome of this operation, a geographical approach to the repercussions and perceptions of the Bay of Pigs incident is interesting in order to study its impact. This analysis will aim to understand the consequences for the US and for Cuba, just as the Cuban strategies put in place to remember the event as the first and greatest victory against Imperialism. Finally, this work will evaluate the success of the Cuban version of the landing amongst Cubans.

Part I. The CIA's rise to power from its creation to becoming a valuable instrument of foreign policy

The CIA is still shrouded in mystery nowadays. In the past decade however, the agency aims to appear structured, just as one can see it on its website. Indeed, it is presented as a tool providing tactical and strategic advantage for the US by collecting intelligence. Its presentation aims to be positive: the notion of safety is often mentioned, to prove that it only has at heart the well-being of US citizens. The FAQ section also shows the modern CIA's wish for transparency.²⁷ Being closer to the people is guarantee of trust and facilitates its work.

Analysing the history of the agency points to the fact that the creation process was lengthy and had many stages. Many other intelligence agencies existed and gave the CIA its current structure. The very first US Intelligence Agency was created in 1941 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and was called the Office of the Coordination of Information (COI). World War One General William "Wild Bill" Donovan was appointed to lead this agency with a \$10 million budget and six hundred staff.²⁸ However, in order to have military support, the COI moved some of its sections under the Joint Chiefs of Staff and became the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in 1942. The addition of the word "Strategy" to the name was well thought out. It intended to stress the importance of this notion in the Agency's work. Its goal was to conduct unconventional and paramilitary operations. The major difference with the COI was that the OSS had workers all around the world.

Nevertheless, the OSS did not have the complete jurisdiction for foreign affairs. The Department of State and Armed Services still had their word to say and were often in disagreement with the OSS. It did not, however, put a stop to the expansion of the organisation that employed almost 13,000 people at its peak, among whom 35% were women. The future CIA was already a gender mixed place where any competent person could work.²⁹

²⁷ *CIA's website*, 'CIA Vision, Mission, Ethos & Challenges', Accessed December 14, 2019.
<http://www.cia.gov/about-cia/todays-cia>.

²⁸ Because this organisation was the first of its kind, it was necessary to work closely with the British intelligence to enable them to learn from their advanced services.

²⁹ *CIA's website*, 'CIA makes progress on Women in leadership', Accessed April 16, 2020.
<https://www.cia.gov/news-information/featured-story-archive/2018-featured-story-archive/cia-makes-progress-on-women-in-leadership.html> Women played a very important role in spying and secret businesses right after the World War Two, an element to highlight to show the agency's progressivism.

However, the OSS was meant to last only for wartime, despite Donovan's insistence. In 1945, the organisation ceased to exist. Secret intelligence moved temporarily to the Strategic Services Unit (SSU), becoming in 1946 a small Central Intelligence Group (CIG). The idea of coordination among intelligences was extremely important. The Deputy chief of Naval Intelligence, Rear Admiral Sidney Souers was appointed executive secretary of the CIG. He did not have the personal ambition to rule the organisation but aimed to direct during the time it would take to establish a proper CIG, which was done by January 1946.

It was not only coordination anymore but the production of intelligence and undertaking of clandestine capability. Nonetheless, the Department of State and the armed services still resisted against giving too much power to this agency. Indeed, they wanted to keep a tight rein on clandestine projects for instance. The only solution was to create an independent agency, which was finalised on September 18, 1947, when Harry S. Truman, president of the United States, signed the National Security Act. He appointed the then-Deputy director of the CIG, Roscoe H. Hillenkoetter as the first director of the CIA. One third of the agency personnel were OSS veterans, who already had an experience in intelligence.³⁰

In 1949, Truman signed the CIA Act which authorized the "CIA to fund intelligence operations (secretly) and conduct personnel actions outside of standard US Government procedures".³¹ This retrospective shows the impressive development of the CIA from a shy organisation to an essential tool of intelligence in the USA, as well as its gain of independence within several years.

I.2. Foreign operation, the CIA and the morality debate

After the CIA's creation, covert operations were still a sensitive issue. What happened during the Bay of Pigs was the result of a long process of diversification among the agency. Covert operations raised questions of integrity and morality in a country that first advocated an isolationist policy.³² Could Federal Government authorize an Intelligence agency to intervene abroad whenever a country did not respect the US's interests?

³⁰ CIA's website, 'History of the CIA', Accessed December 14, 2019. <http://www.cia.gov/about-cia/todays-cia>.

³¹ Ibid.

³² George Washington, 'Farewell Address', *Philadelphia Daily American Advertiser*, September 19, 1796. Accessed April 16, 2020. <https://www.owleyes.org/text/farewell-address/read/text-of-washingtons-address#root-3>

Covert operations were actually not created with the CIA but existed since George Washington became president of the US in 1776.³³ However, they became truly the CIA's business once it was in operation. Marcus Eyth depicts these actions as "secret political activities in pursuit of international goals".³⁴ Raphael Ramos precisely defines covert actions as "every secret activity aiming to put pressure on a situation abroad" in his book *Une chimère américaine*.³⁵ Both definitions are similar and demonstrate the international character of these operations. Ramos explains that these kinds of actions were included in the CIA's role, however, the definition was vague.

Clandestine operations were even cited in the first report of the new CIA on September 26, 1947. This report explained that the USSR was trying to destabilize the US and that France and Italy were particularly vulnerable to the Soviets. The first official call for clandestine measures was made in October 1947 by the former US ambassador in Moscow Averell Harriman. According to him, the situation in Europe did not leave any choice to the US: the country had to develop psychological warfare in order to block USSR's propaganda.³⁶ In another words, it meant influencing public opinions from abroad to guide them. Indeed, Raphael Ramos gives the example of the creation of the Cominform, the centralized organisation of every Communist Party around the world, and the anxiety it created among the Truman administration.³⁷

The CIA appeared to be an obvious choice to take care of secret operations. Nonetheless, this idea was not approved by everybody, and the creation of a new agency to avoid the CIA's involvement was even considered by some. These elements demonstrate the taboo around clandestine operations because of the repercussions it could have for the federal Government: if foreign nations discovered that secret operations had been done on their lands, the US could be accused of immorality and interventionism.³⁸ Admiral Souers wrote two documents about the different psychological warfare that could be conducted by the US. First of all, he

³³ Stephen F. Knott, *Secret and Sanctioned: Covert Operations and the American Presidency*, Oxford New York, Oxford University Press, 1996, 1-6.

³⁴ Marcus Eyth, "The CIA and Covert Operations: To Disclose or Not to Disclose-That is the Question", *Law Journal Library Databases*, BYU Journal of Public Law 17 BYU J. Pub. L (2002-2003), 45.

³⁵ Raphaël Ramos, *Une chimère américaine, Genèse de la communauté du renseignement des Etats-Unis, de la CIA à la NSA*, Presses universitaires de la Méditerranée, 2018.

³⁶ Raphaël Ramos, *Une chimère américaine*.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Sarah-Jane Cork, *US Covert Operations and Cold War Strategy: Truman, Secret Warfare and the CIA, 1945-53*, London: Routledge, 2008, 1-6.

campaigned to put a stop to the use of “psychological warfare” words. He also argued that the US should be much more active to counter Soviet propaganda by orienting public opinion towards the United States. That was supposed to be the Secretary of State’s role.

However, the second text written by Souers presented the CIA as a legitimate tool for secret operations. To do so, more freedom for the agency was required. Every person involved in a clandestine operation should know the strict minimum about the mission to avoid any leak. This is what can be introduced as “plausible deniability”. This concept is probably one of the most important ones to enable the CIA to function, especially for secret operations that might anger foreign countries. The less people know, the less risks are being taken.³⁹

These thoughts about the agency were considered during the Truman term. This made the former president’s reaction in 1963 quite illegitimate. Indeed, Truman published a hostile article about the CIA’s role in secret operations and what this agency had become.⁴⁰ This announcement was of bad faith because his responsibility in the development of clandestine operations could not be neglected. It is true that under Eisenhower’s administration, this type of mission reached an unprecedented level, but Truman signed the National Security Act and validated this principle. Maybe his mistake was to minimize the importance of secret spying, but beyond that element, the CIA’s development was logical. This initiative actually pleased most Americans who found the government too lax with regards to foreign affairs.⁴¹ Henry Cabot Lodge, Senator of Massachusetts, even said in November 1947 “I sometimes think that we are a bit too much timorous when it is about interfering in foreign countries internal affairs.”⁴² This sentence summarises well the general opinion on the matter of clandestine operations.

On December 22, 1947, the Office of Special Operation (OSO) became the CIA unit in charge of secret operations. It was the same unit which was in charge of the Bay of Pigs landing. One of the CIA’s first intervention was in Italy in 1948 and coordinated by the OSO. The aim was to help the Christian Government to resist Communist influence. The support was mostly financial and not only handled by the CIA: indeed, the armed forces, unions and Department of

³⁹ Plausible Deniability, *legaldictionary.net*.

⁴⁰ Harry S. Truman, “Limit CIA role to Intelligence”, *The Washington Post*, December 22, 1963.

⁴¹ Raphaël Ramos, *Une chimère américaine*.

⁴² Quoted in David M. Barrett, *The CIA and Congress; The Untold Story from Truman to Kennedy*, Lawrence, University Press of Kansas, 2005, 31.

State were part of it and participated in this victory.⁴³ This operation also exacerbated tensions between the CIA and the Department of State who both wanted a bigger role to play in clandestine operations. George Kennan, the Secretary of State under Truman and architect of the Containment theory, was in favour of political warfare and for the enlargement of the secret operations field of action. The idea was to use these operations in correlation with Containment.⁴⁴ However, the CIA would only have a subordinate role.⁴⁵

On June 1948, Truman approved NSC 10/2 which created the Office of Special Projects which aimed to take care of covert operations. Its director would be nominated by the Secretary of State. Then, the Department of State would not feel sidelined. However, despite the Office of Special Projects being under the theoretical authority of the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (DCI), the head of the CIA, it would make this entity independent from the other parts of the CIA.

Moreover, and this is as a determinant point for future CIA operations such as the Bay of Pigs, the consequent independence of the Office of Special Projects (OSP) made it plausible for the latter organization to deny any role in those missions. The Office of Special Projects had the same missions as in 1961, when it was called the Directorate of Plans and was directed by Richard Bissell: propaganda, economical war, preventive and direct actions, operations of subversion against hostile states etc. Franck Wisner, the first head of the OSP, asked for a strong autonomy in its operating methods from the moment of its creation.⁴⁶

In conclusion, one can say that the shadow of the OSS still lingered over the CIA because many previous employees had been recruited. The CIA was actually responsible for clandestine actions but did not have any authority in these actions because the Department of State had its own ambitions. However, even in the Department of State, few were those assumed the responsibility of such operations. It shows that the CIA was the fruit of a long process that

⁴³ Kaeten Mistry, "Approaches to Understanding the Inaugural CIA Covert Operation in Italy: Exploding Useful Myths", *Intelligence and National Security journal*, Volume 26, Issue 2-3, 2011, 246-268.

⁴⁴ "George Kennan's Long Telegram", February 22, 1946, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, National Archives and Records Administration, Department of State Records (Record Group 59), Central Decimal File, 1945-1949, 861.00/2-2246; reprinted in US Department of State, ed., *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, Volume VI, Eastern Europe; The Soviet Union* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1969), 696-709. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116178.pdf> For further elements on the Containment Theory: David Mayers, *Containment and the Primacy of Diplomacy: George Kennan's Views, 1947-1948*, *International Security Volume 11, No. 1*, The MIT Press, Jstor, 1986.

⁴⁵ Sarah-Jane Cork, *Us Covert Operations and Cold War Strategy*.

⁴⁶ Raphaël Ramos, *Une chimère américaine*.

developed through time. Indeed, covert operations raised ethical questions that had to be taken seriously.

I.3. CIA successes in Iran and Guatemala

In fact, Truman certainly did not participate in the preparation of the intervention in Italy and always tried to limit the agency's power. He also kept away from "Operation Valuable" between 1949 and 1952, when the US and Britain tried to overthrow the Albanian government of Enver Hoxha because he did not take into account US interests.⁴⁷ If Truman was not very concerned by Intelligence issues and kept his distance from every project, this was not the case of Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Eisenhower succeeded Truman as President in 1953. Former supreme commander of the allied forces in western Europe during World War II, he put an end to the Democratic era for the US. Eisenhower demonstrated an enduring anti-communist regime and was determined to act more radically than his predecessor. In the New Look policy context, what better tool than the CIA to organize operations in foreign countries and overthrow any potential threat? The fifties were the period in which the agency reached its maximum strength. At the time, the CIA was implicated in many coups and political intimidations. In the context of this research, the example of Iran in 1953 and Guatemala in 1954 are extremely relevant: they reflect the CIA's ability to lead successful secret operations and justify its confidence before and during the Bay of Pigs landing.

The CIA already had satellites in Iran since the end of the forties. As the historian Mark J. Gasiorowski explains, a network of Iranian agents and sub-agents were carrying missions of propaganda and political actions against the USSR and the Tudeh which was the Iranian Communist Party.⁴⁸ Indeed, in 1941, British and Soviet troops invaded the country in order to create a supply route to the USSR in the World War II context. However, the Soviet did not withdraw after the end of the war and created "autonomous Republics" in the provinces of Azerbaijan and Kurdistan, just like they were doing in Europe to ensure a stronger sphere of influence. Notwithstanding, they failed due to the Iranian government and the intervention of the US.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Cork, *US Covert Operations and Cold War Strategy*, 2.

⁴⁸ Mark J. Gasiorowski, "The CIA's TPBEDAMN Operation and the 1953 Coup in Iran." *Journal of Cold War Studies* 15, no. 4 (October 2013): 4–24. https://doi.org/10.1162/JCWS_a_00393.

⁴⁹ Gasiorowski, "The CIA's TPBEDAMN Operation and the 1953 Coup in Iran."

Despite this victory, the Tudeh remained the most popular and organized party, which made the US fear that the Soviet would gain influence in the country and that they would avoid the Western block to access the Persian Gulf oil resources. However, the US had already many problems to handle (i.e. the European reconstruction) and Iran seemed stable enough not to be their priority.⁵⁰ As the CIA forces grew, Intelligence finally developed in Iran with the creation of the operation TPBEDAMN.⁵¹ The country became a notable site for Soviet, British and US intelligences.⁵²

Before March 1953, Truman and then Eisenhower both supported the president of Iran, Mohammad Mosaddeq. He was not communist but faced a struggle with United Kingdom over the control of Iran's oil industry. Somehow, Eisenhower and the CIA started to believe that Mosaddeq would make the country fall under communism because of this attempt to gain control over oil, and the US president authorized the planning of a coup the same month. American agents worked with British ones and the retired army general Fazlollah Zahedi was supposed to replace Mosaddeq.

A solid propaganda campaign was driven with TPBEDAMN to facilitate the coup: The Iranian president was framed and posed as an enemy of Islam, ally of the Tudeh Party and the USSR, corrupted, destroyer of the economy and the army etc.⁵³ The CIA, by paying religious leaders and hiring crowds from poor neighbourhoods to demonstrate violently as Tudeh partisans, used every psychological warfare method available. The idea was to create the impression that the Tudeh Party was aggressive and that Mosaddeq was not able to control it, and therefore should consequently be removed.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ John Killick, *The United States and European Reconstruction 1945-1960*, London: Routledge, 2000.

After the Second World War, most European countries were destroyed physically and economically. The United States chose to support the continent in its reconstruction to have its commercial partnerships back and avoid the spread of communism in weakened states with aids as the Marshall Plan.

Ervand Abrahamian, "The 1953 Coup in Iran", *Science & Society: Volume 65, No. 2*, 2001, 182-215.

⁵¹ For more information about psychological warfare: Kenneth A. Osgood, "Form before Substance: Eisenhower's Commitment to Psychological Warfare and Negotiations with the Enemy", *Diplomatic History, Volume 24, Issue 3*, 2000, 405-433. TPBEDAMN budget was of \$1 million per year at its peak in the beginning of the fifties and it was the major operation of psychological warfare in Iran.

⁵² Gasiorowski, "The CIA's TPBEDAMN Operation and the 1953 Coup in Iran."

⁵³ Mervyn Roberts, 'Analysis of Radio Propaganda in the 1953 Iran Coup', *Iranian studies, volume 45, issue 6*, 2012, 759-777.

For more general information, Pearse Redmond, 'The Historical Roots of CIA-Hollywood Propaganda', *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology, Volume 76, Issue 2*, 2017, 280-310.

⁵⁴ Gasiorowski, "The CIA's TPBEDAMN Operation and the 1953 Coup in Iran."

A first coup attempt failed, but on August 19, a crowd seized all the main squares. After a very violent uprising and hundreds of deaths, Zahedi made a statement over Radio Tehran, saying he was the new legal prime minister. Mosaddeq had no other choice but to resign.⁵⁵ The Iranian coup was similar to the Bay of Pigs because the US were not directly involved. The propaganda campaign put in place by the CIA managed to turn the population against Mosaddeq. Finally, the US could not be accused of imperialism because the crowd was behind this overthrow.

One year after this brilliant success, Guatemala experienced the same thing as Iran and again, the CIA managed a successful operation. A key point to remember is that Latin America was and is still a very important place for the US. It is part of their sphere of influence, as specified by the Monroe Doctrine.⁵⁶ This influence was reinforced by President Theodore Roosevelt corollary and his “big stick policy”.⁵⁷ With this in mind, it appeared essential for the US to reaffirm their monopoly in the region and contain the expansion of Communism at the end of the forties especially with the beginning of the Cold War. For instance, they did so with the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance.⁵⁸ Guatemala was part of this treaty. Since the Spanish-American war, the country had been led by dictatorship governments.⁵⁹

However, because they served the US’s economic interests, the US supported them. Amongst the US privileges, the US had a complete monopoly over bananas with the United Fruit Company. Likewise, they controlled vast pieces of land and large percentages of Guatemalan infrastructures.⁶⁰ In 1944, a popular uprising followed by a student-led Revolution overthrew the dictator Jorge Ubico and Guatemala became a democracy led by the elected

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ James Monroe, Monroe Doctrine, Seventh Annual message to Congress, December 2, 1823.

<https://www.owleyes.org/text/monroe-doctrine/read/text-of-monroes-speech>

⁵⁷ Policy which “asserted U.S. domination when such dominance was considered the moral imperative”.

(*Encyclopaedia Britannica*)

Serge Ricard, ‘The Roosevelt Corollary’, *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Volume 36, Issue 1, 2006, 17-26.

⁵⁸ United Nations, ‘Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance and Final Act of the Inter-American Conference for the Maintenance of Continental Peace and Security. Signed at Rio de Janeiro, on 2 September 1947’, *Treaty Series, Treaties and international agreements registered or filed and recorded with the Secretariat of the United Nations*, Volume 21, The United Nations Website, 77.

<https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%2021/v21.pdf>

⁵⁹ Julius W. Pratt, ‘American business and the Spanish-American war’, *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Volume 14, No.2, Duke: Duke University Press, 1934, Jstor, 163-201. The Spanish American war between the United States and Spain ended Spanish rule in Guatemala and more generally in Latin-America, like in Cuba.

⁶⁰ The Cold War Youtube channel, *Latin America Post World War II, Guatemalan coup d’etat 1954, Cold War Documentary*, September 14, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XnTZZ55_0zY

president Juan José Arevalo, a conservative that succeeded in keeping communism away from the country.⁶¹

In 1950, Jacobo Arbenz succeeded to Ubico. He was a liberal moderate and aimed to push the previous government reforms further. What immediately concerned the US was his land reform that threatened their participation in the United Fruit Company. After accusing Arbenz of Communism, the CIA received authorization to launch the FORTUNE operation which resulted in a coup d'état. In late 1952, a United Fruit ship was supposed to land with weapons disguised as farming equipment, however, the plan was cancelled without clear explanation.⁶²

After this defeat, a new plan was created: operation SUCCESS, with the backing of Eisenhower. Groups of mercenaries were trained by the CIA in Nicaragua and Honduras to overthrow the Guatemalan government, a strategy similar to the Bay of Pigs operation. In June 1954, 480 men led by Castillo Armas—Arbenz's appointed successor—backed by US air support entered Guatemala. It means that the US were not completely exhibited the way they had been with Cuba. Psychological warfare strategies were used to convince people that these men had already taken the country and that Arbenz needed to surrender. Furthermore, the Officer Corps of the Guatemalan military stopped to support Arbenz who had to resign and flee to Mexico.⁶³ A military junta led by Castillo Armas was put in place in the country. Later, the operation HISTORY aimed to find a connection between Arbenz and the USSR to justify the coup, but it did not work.⁶⁴

These two coups perpetrated by the CIA with the support of the Eisenhower administration prove that the agency was developing rapidly and was powerful. These events paved the way for what happened in Cuba. Every president could have the feeling that they could rely on the CIA to take care of any threat abroad because of these successes.

I.4. The early stages of the Bay of Pigs landing

Iranian and Guatemalan operations were proof that the CIA was successful and that the threat of communism could be managed. Covert operations were definitely part of

⁶¹ The Cold War Youtube channel, *Latin America [...]*.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Nick Cullather, *The CIA's Classified Account of Its Operations in Guatemala, 1952-1954*, Stanford University Press, California, 1999.

⁶⁴ The Cold War Youtube channel, *Latin America [...]*.

Eisenhower's anti-communist strategy. Moreover, the president and Allen Dulles had the same stance concerning the actions to adopt towards threatening leaders or nations. Allen Dulles's own brother, John Foster Dulles, diplomat and politician actually was Secretary of State between 1953 and 1959. They both agreed on interventionist policies.⁶⁵

In 1958, while Batista was facing the attacks of a guerrilla led by Castro, the US government did not worry about the latter. Indeed, Eisenhower strongly positioned himself against Batista policies and the *Barbudos* appeared as a reasonable compromise.⁶⁶ However, despite Castro's popularity in the United States, the CIA shared a very sceptical feeling towards him. Allen Dulles argued in the briefing to the NSC on December 28, 1958, that "If Castro takes over, they [Communist people] will probably participate in the government."⁶⁷ Nonetheless, nothing could prove Cuban regime's concrete position for the Soviet block and the CIA believed that it was possible to try and develop a constructive relationship with the revolutionary, especially given the Cuban government's lack of money.⁶⁸

The Eisenhower administration quickly realized the fact that Castro was not going to serve their interests properly. Revolutionary tribunals multiplied and often resulted in executions, no elections took place, liberal figures were removed from their posts and replaced by Communists.⁶⁹ Because of these elements, Eisenhower refused to meet Castro when he visited the United States in April 1959, which said already plenty about the president's state of mind.⁷⁰ Agrarian reforms continued in Cuba, large estates were expropriated and the ownership of land by foreigners was prohibited. How could the USA accept such decisions? The *coup de grace* was in February 1960. Anastas Mikoyan, USSR vice president, visited Havana and the meeting was a sensational success: Mikoyan depicted Cuba as the "realisation of his youth ideals".⁷¹ Followed a Soviet Trade Fair, signed between both countries. The Soviet agreed to purchase one million tons of Cuban sugar over the next five years and provide \$100 million in

⁶⁵ Stephen Kinzer, *The Brothers: John Foster Dulles, Allen Dulles, and Their Secret World War*, Times Books New York, 2013.

⁶⁶ Peter G. Boyle, *Eisenhower*, Profiles in Power, Harlow: Pearson/Longman, 2005, 141-144.

⁶⁷ Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower: The President*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1984, 505.

⁶⁸ Ambrose, *Eisenhower*.

⁶⁹ Boyle, *Eisenhower*.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Mick Gold, 'Cuba, la révolution et le monde (1/2) -Les combattants', *Arte*, 2019. <http://www.arte.tv/fr/videos/082188-001-A/cuba-la-revolution-et-le-monde-1-2/>.

credit to the island for the purchase of Soviet goods. Simultaneously, Castro nationalized the US oil refineries.⁷²

On January 3, 1961, a trade embargo was implemented and diplomatic relations between the US and Cuba were over. Castro's removal had thus been planned since 1960. Indeed, with British prime minister Macmillan's approval, Eisenhower authorized Allen Dulles to consider ways to overthrow the Cuban dictator.⁷³ It was during this period that the first assassination plots against Castro were thought and perpetrated.

The same 1975 Senate Report which proved the CIA's involvement in Lumumba's death, contains several chapters about Castro. Plans to kill him involving the mafia were thought about. Equally important were the poisoning attempts. The hare-brained characteristics of these plots are reflected in the attempt to make Castro's beard fall for him to lose his distinguishing figure and stop him gathering populations. This same Senate Report does not really manage to determine whether Eisenhower knew or not about these assassination attempts.⁷⁴ However, it appears to be unlikely because Castro might have been replaced by someone worse for USA's interests, such as Ernesto Che Guevara or Raul Castro.⁷⁵

Despite his State of the Union message in January 1960 stating, "The United States has no intention of interfering in the internal affairs of any nations", Peter G. Boyle, writer and lecturer in the History of the US at the University of Nottingham (United Kingdom) in the nineties, argues that Eisenhower had every intention of doing so.⁷⁶ The president aimed for a covert operation perpetrated by a counter-revolutionary force that would remove Castro and put in place a pro-US government. Moreover, the creation of the 5412 Committee in 1955 aimed to better protect the president and the country from trouble in the event of a leak in covert missions. The Committee was actually in charge of verifying the degree of secrecy of any operation put in place by the CIA. Nevertheless, this committee composed of the Under

⁷² Boyle, *Eisenhower*.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ An Interim Report of the Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, *Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders*, 1975, 71-79. <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/files/94465.pdf>

⁷⁵ Boyle, *Eisenhower*.

Richard L. Harris, *Che Guevara: A Biography*, Greenwood New York, 2010. Ernesto Guevara de la Serna joined Fidel Castro in the Cuban Revolution in 1956 and continued this fight across Latin America and Africa. He was executed in 1967 in Bolivia, by the army.

⁷⁶ Dwight D. Eisenhower, 'Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, January 7, 1960. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/annual-message-the-congress-the-state-the-union-6>

Secretary of State, the Deputy Secretary of Defence, the National Security adviser and the Director of the CIA could not do its job correctly because Allen Dulles often acted with the CIA before informing them.⁷⁷

Eisenhower authorized the CIA plan, similar to his wishes, on March 17, 1960. The CIA Director of Operation Richard Bissell was assigned to create a programme in which he would develop a paramilitary exile force, later known as the Brigade, and create a Cuban government-in-exile. Part of his mission was also to bring anti-Castro propaganda into Cuba. The use of psychological warfare still was a key element for the CIA work. By August 1960, 500 Cuban exiles were gathered in Guatemala. Indeed, the US had retained close links with this country since the coup, Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes was an ally.⁷⁸

The number of recruited Cuban exiles fully increased during the end of Eisenhower's mandate.⁷⁹ The original plan was to use this paramilitary force for a future guerrilla action which was abandoned under Kennedy.⁸⁰ However, US Air Force strikes, from bases in Nicaragua during the invasion were planned. It appears that the CIA never truly abandoned this plan despite Kennedy's insistence, which will be discussed further in the thesis. The only fly in the ointment was the formation of the government-in-exile. No leader was found by the end of Eisenhower's presidency. No one succeeded in gathering the Cuban exiles forces under one ideal because they consisted of a "motley collection of very disparate anti-Castro elements" and pro-Batista people were not welcomed.⁸¹ In addition, Cuban intelligence was probably aware of the training camps in Guatemala because the secret was not well-kept locally.⁸² Despite that, Eisenhower told Kennedy during the transition that he was not concerned as long as "the US hands were not shown". Indeed, the invasion plan had to be a priority because the moral of troops was going to decrease. The best would be before March.⁸³

The CIA was fully part of the political machinery. Its creation was surrounded by many moral and ethical questions. If Truman did not seem to be the most concerned president over it, Eisenhower certainly was. His government relied on the agency to deal with sensitive issues

⁷⁷ Ambrose, *Eisenhower*.

⁷⁸ Stephen M. Streeter, *Managing the Counterrevolution, The United States and Guatemala, 1954-1961*, Center for International Studies of Ohio University, 2000.

⁷⁹ Boyle, *Eisenhower*.

⁸⁰ Ambrose, *Eisenhower*.

⁸¹ Boyle, *Eisenhower*, 143.

⁸² Boyle, *Eisenhower*.

⁸³ Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, 585.

abroad. The previous successes in Iran and in Guatemala were proof that the Cuban question was not above the CIA's forces. The same recipe should enable them to conquer Castro.

Part II. The political and technical reasons behind a major disaster

The Bay of Pigs landing turned out to be a complete defeat for the USA. In order to understand the following elements, some contextual elements are necessary. Kennedy's decision to go on with the operation was influenced by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the President's main military advisers headed by Chairman Maxwell Davenport Taylor, as Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. explains in his memoirs.⁸⁴ For the Bay of Pigs invasion, the Joint Chiefs evaluation was mixed but their conclusion predicted a "fair" chance of success. Meanwhile, a Cuban Revolutionary Council started to take shape in Miami. Its role was to provide the operation with a political aim and to be ready to replace Castro's regime. It was directed by José Miro Cardona, the first prime minister of the Revolution in 1959, who had quickly broken off all ties with Castro and fled to the US.⁸⁵

On April 10, 1961, following Kennedy's green light, the Brigade left the Guatemalan bases to reach the boarding site. The bellicosities started at dawn on Saturday, April 15, when eight B-26 painted as stolen Cuban planes took off from Puerto Cabezas, a port in Nicaragua. Their aim was to destroy Castro's air force, yet the Cuban leader had anticipated this attack thanks to leaks in the press and amongst the population and had sheltered his air force. It was the first setback in this invasion.

Immediately accused by Cuba to the United Nations, the US nonetheless continued the operation. The Brigade landed during the night of April 17 in the Bay of Pigs. The place of the landing changed from Trinidad to the Bay of Pigs, a change of plan discussed later in the thesis. The battle took place over three days on and around the beach. In less than seventy-two hours, the Cuban exiles were overcome by a surprisingly competent and well-equipped Cuban army. Indeed, Castro's army possessed Soviet military equipment of high quality and was well-trained. The Brigade could not retreat because they were surrounded by swamps and the sea. Meanwhile, infiltration groups tried to bring about an uprising against Castro but failed. The Brigade was clearly left on its own.⁸⁶

⁸⁴Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*.

Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr, Encyclopaedia Britannica. Accessed April 16, 2020

<http://www.britannica.com/biography/Arthur-M-Schlesinger-Jr> Schlesinger was a US historian, educator and public official who advised Kennedy during his Presidential campaign and became special assistant for Latin American Affairs.

⁸⁵Machover, *Anatomie d'un désastre*.

⁸⁶Christopher D. O'Shea "Bay of Pigs Invasion." *St. James Encyclopedia of Popular Culture*. Ed. Sara Pendergast and Tom Pendergast. Detroit: St. James Press, 2000.

During the night of the second day, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Secretary of Defence Robert McNamara, Richard Bissell, General Lemnitzer, and Admiral Arleigh Burke chose, with the approval of the President, to send reinforcements by jets and planes to help the Brigade. However, this mission was a disaster. Thus, it was a terrible defeat for the Cuban exiles and consequently, for the US. In twenty-four hours, exile troops were overpowered. Many took shelter in the Escambray Mountains, trying to join the guerrilla forces, even though the land was surrounded by swamps. For the President, any back up could have exposed the US, so helping the Brigade was not conceivable. Indeed, the US was already held responsible by the USSR and Cuba in front of the United Nations for what was happening at the Bay of Pigs. They could not risk more exposure. On April 19, 1,100 men were captured.⁸⁷

For the President, the challenge was to understand the situation and start a serious collaboration with the Intelligence Agency, that is to say taking office in a context that required tremendous adjustment correctly and rapidly. However, this collaboration was not a success and there were numerous reasons why the operation failed.

II.1. Kennedy and the CIA

In his memoirs, Theodore S. Sorensen quotes John Fisher at *Harper's Magazine*: "Every President needs about twelve months to get its executive team organized, to feel his way into the vast and dangerous machinery of the bureaucracy...While [Kennedy] was still trying to move in the furniture, in effect, he found the roof falling in and the doors blowing off."⁸⁸ This quotation points out the difficulty for the newly elected President, who had to deal with plans already started by the previous administration. The Bay of Pigs landing was conceived and imagined by people that were mostly no longer part of the White House.

However, a substantial element remained: the CIA. Allen Dulles and Richard Bissell, both heads of the operation were still in office because of the independent character of the agency. It meant that Kennedy and his new administration could work with people completely aware of what decisions had been made beforehand. Kennedy and Nixon had been briefed by Eisenhower during the campaign.⁸⁹ After his election, Kennedy could still count on the former President to answer his questions about current affairs. Then, the CIA also detained important

⁸⁷ Rebecca R. Friedman, "Crisis Management at the Dead Center: the 1960 - 1961 Presidential Transition and the Bay of Pigs Fiasco." *Presidential Studies Quarterly, Military and Intelligence Database Collection vol. 41 issue 2*, 2011. 307-333.

⁸⁸Sorensen, *Kennedy*, 29.

⁸⁹Dean Rusk, *As I Saw It*, London: Penguin Books, 1990.

information about the plan. This part of the thesis aims to analyse the relation Kennedy had with the CIA, and particularly to shine a light on the potential elements the CIA could have hidden from the President.

The CIA is characterized by secrecy. Indeed, the operations organized by the agency must be handled with the most meticulous discretion. With this in mind, the concept of plausible deniability, already explained in the introduction, appears to be crucial. However, the President is supposed to be aware of the crucial elements of any foreign operation, even one conducted by the CIA.

According to Seymour Hersh, investigative journalist and political writer, Kennedy was aware of the assassination attempts perpetrated by the CIA. He apparently told the Agency heads that they should be prepared to kill. Murdering Castro should have helped the Brigade to be supported by Cubans and the government-in-exile's assumption of power.⁹⁰ As a matter of fact, without Castro as a main figure of the Revolution, the US believed that the regime would be destabilized and overthrown by Cuban exiles. Hersh explains that Kennedy's indecisiveness during the operation was not only about US back up, but also about the fact that the CIA plans to assassinate Castro had failed. For the author, Kennedy has often been presented as a scapegoat in this operation, especially by Sorensen and Schlesinger in their memoirs. Hersh tends to think that Kennedy was well aware of the CIA's plans and agreed without being pressured by the agency.

Nevertheless, it is true that the communication between the White House and the CIA was not consistent. This is even truer between the Brigade and the White House. Contrary to Hersh, Sorensen contends that the President understood the problem of the gap between decision and execution or planning and reality, however, Kennedy's approval was presented by the CIA as an obligation to strengthen his place as President against his detractors as well as helping to strengthen his image in front of Cuban exiles.⁹¹ The Brigade was ready, Guatemala was not a safe place anymore because of the leaks about training camps and Castro would soon receive weapons from the USSR. The operation had to take place "now or never".⁹²

Moreover, Allen Dulles used a very persuasive argument: he told Kennedy that back in 1954, he was sure that the Guatemalan operation would succeed and had expressed his feelings

⁹⁰Seymour Hersh, *La face cachée du clan Kennedy*, Archipoche, 1997, 237-262.

⁹¹Sorensen, *Kennedy*.

⁹²Ibid, 296.

to Eisenhower, as he was doing with Kennedy at this moment.⁹³ Here, the psychological persuasion used by the CIA is clear, in contrast to Hersh's point of view. The CIA used its experience and previous successes to convince the President, omitting important elements such as the Cuban exiles understaffing and the lack of Cuban support.

In a phone call interview, Ramos points out that if Hersh revealed any CIA scandals such as the use of the mafia in assassination attempts, Hersh's explanations were to be treated carefully because of his views bordering on conspiracy.⁹⁴ Thus, Sorensen's thoughts are retained for this thesis. It seems self-evident that the relationship between the President and the secret Agency was not easy. Hersh is convinced that Kennedy agreed on every aspect of the operation with the CIA, but Sorensen demonstrates that the Agency was not always open with him and tried to control his judgment. As a democrat, Kennedy's policy would have differentiated from Eisenhower's and Allen Dulles was close to JFK's predecessor. Nevertheless, Kennedy was convinced of the benefits of the Bay of Pigs operation. Despite a few changes, such as the location of the operation, from Trinidad to Bahia de Cochinos, and the transfer from a guerrilla operation to a landing, the President gave the go-ahead.

Franck Daninos, journalist, thinks that the CIA still had hopes that the President would change his mind if he had no choice and would agree to a US intervention.⁹⁵ This hypothesis makes sense when one analyses the speeches made by President Kennedy in April, before the Bay of Pigs landing. On April 12, 1961, during a press conference, Kennedy answered a question about Cuba, saying: "First, I want to say that there will not be, under any conditions, an intervention in Cuba by the United States Armed Forces. This Government will do everything it possibly can, and I think it can meet its responsibilities, to make sure that there are no Americans involved in any actions inside Cuba."⁹⁶ The President's determination is undeniable: he does not leave any room for a direct intervention by the US. The role of the CIA is maintained secret, nevertheless, Kennedy definitely counted on the unobtrusiveness of the Agency, leaving the government out of the operation.

⁹³Trumbull Higgins, *The Perfect Failure, Kennedy, Eisenhower, and the CIA at the Bay of Pigs*, New York: W.W. Norton Company, 1987.

⁹⁴Raphaël Ramos interview, November 2020.

⁹⁵Franck Daninos, *La CIA de 1947 à 2007*.

⁹⁶John F. Kennedy, "The President's News Conference", *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, April 12, 1961. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/the-presidents-news-conference-211>

The President repeated the same argument on April 20, 1961, after the landing, in front of the American Society of Newspaper Editors: “While we could not be expected to hide our sympathies, we made it repeatedly clear that the armed forces of this country would not intervene in any way.”⁹⁷ This sentence demonstrates Kennedy’s opinion towards a possible intervention and his wishes to clear up any doubt. However, Sorensen and Schlesinger both explain that if no one in the high ranks of the CIA questioned the President’s decision, it was probably because they believed that if necessary, Kennedy would go back on his decision. This is a point of view which is shared by many of Kennedy’s administration.

II.2. Reasons for the defeat

The Bay of Pigs was one of the most impressive failures of the secret services in the twentieth century. The poor quality of communication between the CIA and the President contributed to the disaster however, it was not the only reason. Many factors led to the defeat of the Bay of Pigs and this thesis aims to demonstrate the most serious flaws in the operation.

First, the secrecy around the operation was not respected from the beginning. Castro knew that the US government was planning a mission to overthrow him. Therefore, he only needed to know the exact place and the date. In some neighbourhoods of Little Havana in Miami, people spoke about it, and rumours circulated.⁹⁸

Moreover, two front page articles in the *New York Times* gave plenty of information about the operation. The first one dates back to January 10, 1961, not even one month after Kennedy’s election.⁹⁹ The article is titled “US Helps Train an Anti-Castro Force at Secret Guatemalan Air-Ground Base”. The name of the Guatemalan base, Retalhuleu, is mentioned. Further in the article, the number of men appears, along with a description of their training. The role of the United States is also clearly mentioned: “The United States is assisting this effort not only in personnel but in materiel and the construction of ground and air facilities”.¹⁰⁰ The

⁹⁷John F. Kennedy, “Address Before the American Society of Newspaper Editors”, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, April 20, 1961. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-before-the-american-society-newspaper-editors>

⁹⁸Higgins, *The Perfect Failure*.

⁹⁹Paul P. Kennedy, “US Helps Train an Anti-Castro Force at Secret Guatemalan Air-Ground Base”, *The New York Times*, January 10, 1961. <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1385912-u-s-helps-train-an-anti-castro-force-at-secret.html>

¹⁰⁰Kennedy, “US Helps Train an Anti-Castro Force”.

major elements of the operation seem to be handed on a plate for Cuba and consequently, for the preparation of its defence.

The second article was published on April 7, 1961, only a few days before the landing. Here, even more details are given: the creation in the United States of the Cuban Revolutionary Council, just as the “ever-growing underground network engaged in organizing guerrillas, carrying out sabotage and gathering intelligence”.¹⁰¹ What can explain such an amount of delicate information leaked to one of the biggest newspapers in the United States?

One article in the *New York Times* tries to explain how this indiscretion was possible and if there were repercussions on the authors. Tad Szulc, the author of the second article, special correspondent in Rio de Janeiro, did not specify where he heard about the plan but Mr Catledge, the managing editor, explains that Szulc had many details about its proceeding. Clifton Daniel, the editor in 1961, was well aware that *The New York Times* could be blamed if the Bay of Pigs was a fiasco, because they had released secret information. Before the second article was published, the assistant managing editor and the news director went into Mr. Catledge’s office, because they wanted to speak with the publisher, Mr Dryfoos, and know the reasons why this sensitive article should be published. Mr Dryfoos said that “his reasons were those of national security, national interest and, above all, concern for the safety of the men who were preparing to offer their lives on the beaches of Cuba”.¹⁰²

Indeed, James Reston, the plugged-in Washington columnist agreed with the printing as long as the timing of the landing did not leak. Kennedy did blame the newspaper for the fiasco, as was expected, but the harm had already been done. A few weeks after the Bay of Pigs, Mr Catledge among other editors had to come to the White House to “discuss with the President the issue of newspaper prematurely disclosing government security information”.¹⁰³ This element proves the role of the press in the operation and how these indiscretions led to the anticipation of the Cuban regime.

Moreover, Kennedy’s indecisiveness also ruined any chance of success for the Bay of Pigs. Indeed, the President did not have time to study the situation properly and mainly relied on the men who accompanied Eisenhower in the early stages of the operation. Despite his

¹⁰¹Tad Szulc, “Anti-Castro Units Trained to Fight at Florida Bases”, *The New York Times*, April 7, 1961. <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1385910-anti-castro-units-trained-to-fight-at-florida.html>

¹⁰²David W. Dunlap, “1961, The CIA Readies a Cuban Invasion, and The Times Blinks”, *The New York Times*, December 26, 2014.

¹⁰³Dunlap, “1961, The CIA Readies a Cuban Invasion”.

doubts, the President gave the go-ahead for the attack. Nevertheless, he never completely concurred with the proceedings of the mission. A second air support was supposed to take place when the Brigade would be fighting on the beach. The first air mission had been executed before the attack, to destroy Castro's air force with planes painted like stolen Cuban ones. The strategy was to avoid any suspicion towards the United States. The second air support was essential for the operation's success and Kennedy probably knew that when he cancelled it.¹⁰⁴

However, Kennedy did not feel that he had any choice: the international community was aware of the US role in the operation and Castro furiously attacked the US. Kennedy did not have many options: maintaining the air support and being threatened by the USSR, without the UNO's back up was not one of them. So, the question is why, first and foremost, did the President agree to an operation that required the intervention of the US while he had made it clear that he did not want an overt operation? He actually said many times afterwards that he had been very naïve and feeble-minded to think that such an operation could work.¹⁰⁵ Kennedy did not cancel the whole operation because he lacked the confidence and courage to do so. Consequences were important whether he cancelled the Bay of Pigs landing or not. His indecisiveness and his continual backtracking were made worse by the CIA's lack of transparency.

Indeed, the CIA appears to have had its own agenda and used manipulation to achieve its aims, as discussed above. Their extreme confidence was the problem. With the successes in Iran and Guatemala, Allen Dulles and his team trusted their instincts and had no doubts about the proceedings of the operation. First of all, the location was changed just a few weeks before, from Trinidad to the Bay of Pigs. Trinidad was a large seaside resort of 18,000 inhabitants and a less densely populated area was privileged to remain understated. However, this choice was controversial because the bay was very swampy. Moreover, the Cuban exiles were supposed to be able to join the guerrilla in the Escambray mountains if anything went wrong but these mountains were far away and hardly accessible considering the marshes around the site.¹⁰⁶

The airplanes back-up management was also poorly executed. At the very end of the operation, on April 19, facing a probable defeat, a one-hour raid was authorized with jets to help the fighters. These jets were supposed to be escorted by US Navy planes. Nevertheless,

¹⁰⁴Howard Jones, *The Bay of Pigs*, Oxford Press Libri, 2010.

¹⁰⁵Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*.

¹⁰⁶Machover, *Anatomie d'un désastre*.

the planes arrived one hour before the jets, forgetting the time difference between Nicaragua and Cuba. The four pilots were the only US victims of the operation.¹⁰⁷ This example shows once again the poor coordination within the different sections involved in the invasion.

Finally, the best example of the CIA's mistakes was the idea that the Cuban population would support the Brigade. Only 1,500 men were deployed against the whole Cuban army. The plan was that they would be joined by the Cuban people.¹⁰⁸ However, Cubans loved Castro. The popularity of the leader of the Revolution was unquestionable at the beginning of his "reign". Most critiques came with later generations, those who did not place their hopes in the Revolution as many of their grandparents had. One can find a similarity when Castro died in 2016: older generations responded differently to his death; they had a strong attachment to him. "I love so much Fidel... Castro... mi revolución" explains Mercedes Moje Alfonso in a report.¹⁰⁹ This woman is part of the older generation and experienced the Revolution with all its hopes. Thus, many reports argued that the Brigade could not count on the population's support: journalists and Latin-American experts were almost unanimous. Despite that, the CIA and especially Allen Dulles kept this idea in mind. Cuban specialists of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research were not able to provide their opinion on the Cuban's likely reaction to an invasion because the CIA was obsessed by secrecy and these specialists were not aware of this plan.¹¹⁰

This mistake demonstrates a certain self-absorption from the US who had no doubt that they would receive support. Indeed, since World War Two, and their success, the US is the world leader, economically and politically. Despite the importance of the USSR, the US won the Berlin blockade in 1948 by organizing an airlift, the US established their authority on European economy with the Bretton Woods agreements and the Marshall Plan.¹¹¹

Kennedy's indecisiveness, disrespect of secrecy along with the overconfidence of the CIA were the major reasons for the Bay of Pigs' defeat. How could US leaders have made the

¹⁰⁷Wesley M. Bagby, *America's International Relations since World War I*, Oxford University Press, 1999, 223-256.

¹⁰⁸Andrew, *For the President's Eyes Only*.

¹⁰⁹Manuel Bojorquez report, "Generations of Cubans respond differently to Fidel Castro's death", *CBS This Morning*, November 28, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNtwfMMxmhW>

¹¹⁰Lucien S. Vandenbroucke, "Anatomy of a Failure: The Decision to Land at the Bay of Pigs", *Political Science Quarterly Volume 99 No. 3*, New York: The Academy of Political Science, 1984. 5

¹¹¹G. John Ikenberry, "Rethinking the Origins of American Hegemony", *Political Science Quarterly Volume 104 No. 3*, The Academy of Political Science, Jstor, 1989. 1-3

decision to continue with the operation while so many flaws were already perceptible? According to some scholars, the Groupthink hypothesis can explain it. Roderick M. Kramer, scholar, explains that “this theory overstates the influence of small group dynamics and understands the role political considerations played in these decisions”¹¹². The author actually makes a parallel between the Bay of Pigs and the Vietnam crisis under President Lyndon B. Johnson who replaced Kennedy after his death. Decisions for these events were influenced by the way these Presidents construed their options. They primarily thought about political consequences for them and for the nation.¹¹³

II.3. The aftermath

The Bay of Pigs landing is still remembered today as the major failure of the Kennedy administration. The repercussions for the President could have been important, however, Americans still consider him as one of their greatest presidents. How did Kennedy manage to maintain a positive reputation after being involved in such a disastrous mission?

One way to answer this question is to look at Kennedy’s ease when it came to dealing with his image. Kennedy probably knew how to turn the situation to his advantage. His favorable reputation was established, and he would not let the Bay of Pigs landing ruin everything. He was already thinking about a Presidential re-election in 1964. Indeed, Mark White explains that before his presidency, Kennedy already took care of his image: the idea that he was a cultured man was topical since the twenties, when he wrote *Why England Slept*, a critique of British Foreign Policy. He then wrote a second book as senator, *Profiles in Courage*, for which he won the Pulitzer Prize.¹¹⁴ Even Castro, in his interviews with Ignacio Ramonet, depicts John Kennedy as a highly educated man who read many books.¹¹⁵

¹¹²Abstract, About the Groupthink hypothesis: Roderick M. Kramer, “Revisiting the Bay of Pigs and Vietnam Decisions 25 Years Later: How Well Has the Groupthink Hypothesis Stood the Test of Time”, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, Volume 73, Issues 2-3, 1998, 236-271.

¹¹³About the Groupthink hypothesis: Roderick M. Kramer.

Bertram H. Raven, “Groupthink, Bay of Pigs, and Watergate Reconsidered”, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, Volume 73, Issues 2-3, 1998, 352-361.

¹¹⁴Mark White, “Apparent Perfection: The Image of John F. Kennedy”, *History*, Vol. 98, No. 2 (330), April 2013, 226-246.

John F. Kennedy, *Why England Slept*, United States: Wilfred Funk, 1961.

John F. Kennedy, *Profiles in Courage*, New York: Harper Perennial, 1956.

¹¹⁵Ignacio Ramonet, *Moi, Fidel Castro*, DVD. Directed by Axel Ramonet, Paris: Editions Montparnasse, September 25, 2004.

Moreover, Kennedy had the reputation of being a military hero. He was part of the Navy during the Second World War and received the Navy and Marine Corps medal for his efforts to save his crew. Patriotism and military achievement are extremely important elements in US history and politics. Many Presidents or candidates shared that with Kennedy such as Eisenhower, hero of the D-Day. More recently, John McCain, U.S. senator and Republican candidate in 2008 against Barack Obama, served in the Navy and participated in the Vietnam War.

However, the most important part of his image was that he symbolized the perfect family. He had numerous brothers and sisters, appeared very close to his parents and married Jacqueline Bouvier, a woman seen as the symbol of elegance. She was educated, Francophile and spoke several foreign languages. It was mostly thanks to her that the Kennedy administration promoted arts and culture. Thus, the Kennedy family was regarded as “America’s Royal family”.¹¹⁶

John Kennedy was also a sex symbol: he was a young and attractive President, which probably helped him to rise in the inner circles of politics. This element contradicts the image of the perfect family and will be discussed below. As a President, he magnified his erotic appeal with his ties with Hollywood: He was linked to the great sex symbols of this time: Grace Kelly, former actress and Princess of Monaco, Anita Ekberg, Swedish actress famous for her role in *The Dolce Vita*, and especially Marilyn Monroe.¹¹⁷

Kennedy aimed to portray a masculinized image.¹¹⁸ Republicans often tended to accuse democrats of being too lenient with Communism and this façade was a way to prove that he would not be a soft leader. Of course, the reality was not exactly the same: Kennedy had multiple affairs and he was not particularly interested in cultural activities. He was more of a cautious centrist than a progressive leader, even when it came to the issue of the Civil Rights movement.¹¹⁹ However, the President was obsessed with his image because it was a real weapon

¹¹⁶ Mark White, « Apparent Perfection ».

See Pinterest, the front cover of *Esquire*, *The Meaning of Life 2010*, including what we learned from the Kennedy Dynasty 1947-2009. <https://www.pinterest.fr/pin/479140847829028654/>

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ David M. Lubin, *Shooting Kennedy, JFK and the Culture of Images*, University of California Press, 2003.

¹¹⁹ Bruce J. Dierenfield, *The Civil Rights Movement*, London: Routledge, 2008.

of power. Maintaining a good image in the media was the key to his reputation. His purpose was to appear both familiar and new to the American people at the same time.¹²⁰

Kennedy was a contrasted man and his popularity is proof that the US people tend to love contradictions. He mesmerized and fascinated Americans and he still does. Taking care of his image was a matter of importance for Kennedy. He was the first catholic President in a die-hard protestant country and needed to be accepted.¹²¹ So, when he went through the Bay of Pigs disaster, one of his main fears was that he could lose what brought him to power: his seductive image.

Kennedy dealt with the aftermath of the operation with intelligence and verve. The day after the landing, the President addressed the American Society of Newspaper Editors, during which he presented the battle, which had taken place as a struggle of liberty against tyranny. This justification was a recurrent rhetorical and political US strategy throughout the Cold War. It also came from the Spanish-American War of 1898, which had put the US in control of Cuba, Philippines, and Puerto Rico, and was also presented as the US supporting liberty against Spanish tyranny.¹²² Bringing civilization to Cuba was the reason why, according to Albert Beveridge, US senator from Indiana, the United States had to maintain their presence in the island.¹²³

Kennedy also came to the Brigade's defense, saying that they were brave and patriotic to counter Castro's attacks. Moreover, the President explained that lessons had to be learned. He particularly pointed out the fact that Communist countries should not be underestimated. Anticipating the attacks from the USSR on the US intervention in an autonomous country,

¹²⁰ Mark White, "Apparent Perfection".

Terry H. Anderson, *The Sixties*, London: Pearson, 2011. The sixties were actually a period of duality for the US. Most of the population still aimed to perpetuate the "American Way of Life" model, however, a growing population of young people wished for a profound change in the country. It resulted in the Hippie Movement just as social and sexual revolutions such as the commercialization of birth-control pills or demonstrations against Segregation.

¹²¹A & E Television Network, *John F. Kennedy: A Personal Story*, New Video Group Inc, Abridged Edition, 1998.

¹²²For more information about the Spanish American War, see reference 140.

¹²³Beveridge argues that the US should remain in Cuba, Puerto Rico and Philippines after the Spanish American War to civilize the population in "the March of the Flag", speech opening the Indiana Republican Campaign at Tomlinson Hall, Indianapolis, September 16, 1898.

Albert J. Beveridge, *The Meaning of the Times, and Other Speeches* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1908), 47-57 <http://historytools.davidjvoelker.com/sources/beveridge.html>

For more information about US expansionism, see Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire, A History of the Greater United States*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019.

Kennedy chose to refer to the Hungarian Revolution in 1956.¹²⁴ Later in his speech, Kennedy argues that he did not regret the non-overt intervention of the US and that his administration and he intended “to profit from this lesson”.¹²⁵ This discourse cleared Kennedy’s point of view about the Bay of Pigs landing and the fact that the USSR were not in position to lecture the US. Nevertheless, a question remained unanswered: what would be done for the Cubans imprisoned by Castro?

Indeed, the Brigade 2506 played a major role in the Bay of Pigs landing: they were on the frontline. They were mostly former Revolution partisans, disappointed by the turn operated by Castro. Manuel Artime was one of the main figures of the Brigade: he was put in touch with the CIA after severing all contact with Castro and his exile was organized. From that moment, a great operation to find more Cuban exiles who would like to be trained and fight Castro’s Revolution was engaged. It was however easy to take advantage of the many Cubans who spoke some English, and who wished to come back to their country and instore democracy: The United States did not refrain from doing so. The Brigade viewed the Americans with blind trust because they promised to help them.¹²⁶

Thus, according to Haynes Johnson, an American journalist who wrote the Bay of Pigs story from the Brigade perspective, Cuban exiles wanted to win against Castro so strongly that they did not pay enough attention to the weaknesses of the plan. Even when most of them were imprisoned in difficult conditions in Cuba and advised to write letters condemning President Kennedy and the US for this disaster, only approximately 10% did so.¹²⁷

The President owed the Brigade and could not forget their sacrifice. So, in many of his speeches afterwards, he had a word for them and their families: on May 14, 1961, Kennedy wrote a message to Cuban mothers assembled in Miami. His aim was to pay his respect to the bravery of Cuban exiles and to show that he was still thinking about saving them. The sentence

¹²⁴John F. Kennedy, “Address Before the American Society of Newspaper Editors”.

Pr. Lucie Genay, “The Cold War”, Lecture, University of Limoges, 2019. The Hungarian people tried to revolt and ask for more liberties, but they were repressed very violently by Soviet troops sent to back up the Hungarian government.

¹²⁵John F. Kennedy, “Address Before the American Society of Newspaper Editors”.

¹²⁶Haynes Johnson, *The Bay of Pigs, The Leader’s Story of Brigade 2506*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1964.

¹²⁷Haynes Johnson, *The Bay of Pigs*.

“I send you a message of hope” sums up the President’s wish: to reassure Cuban exile families and demonstrate that everything was being done to free the prisoners.¹²⁸

Nonetheless, Kennedy’s major move towards Cuban exiles and their families was at the Orange Bowl, Miami, in 1962. The majority of them had just been released and the flag of the Brigade was presented. Kennedy said, “I can assure you that this flag will be returned to this Brigade in free Havana”.¹²⁹ This sentence proved that, for him, the fight was not over. The President paid again his respects to the exiles’ courage and thanked people who helped with their liberation. The anaphora “that they [Cuban leaders] may” followed by “But they do not/they cannot” encourages a spirit of superiority, of values which surpass those of the Cuban communist regime.¹³⁰ Moreover, Kennedy used once again his image and the popularity of his wife, Jackie, who delivered a speech in Spanish for the same event.¹³¹

This strategy brought the President closer to his audience. More generally, the attention paid to the ones who fought against the Cuban government created a diversion from his administrations and the CIA’s roles in the operation while giving the impression to care about the soldiers.

Finally, Kennedy never publicly accused anyone other than himself for what happened. For him, the President was responsible for greenlighting the operation and no one should pay the price for it other than himself.¹³² In 1962, in a television and radio interview in honor of the two-year anniversary of his presidency, Kennedy explained that “In the Cuba of 1961 the advice of those who were brought in on the executive branch was also unanimous, and the advice was wrong. And I was responsible. So that finally it comes down that no matter how many advisers

¹²⁸John F. Kennedy, “Message to Cuban Mothers Assembled in Miami”, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, May 14, 1961. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/message-cuban-mothers-assembled-miami>

¹²⁹John F. Kennedy, “Remarks in Miami at the Presentation of the Flag of the Cuban Invasion Brigade”, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, December 29, 1962. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-miami-the-presentation-the-flag-the-cuban-invasion-brigade>

¹³⁰Kennedy, “Remarks in Miami”.

¹³¹Jacqueline Kennedy, “Speech to members of the 2506 Cuban Invasion Brigade at the Orange Bowl in Miami, Florida”, *John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum’s website*, December 29, 1962. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JBKOPP/SF007/JBKOPP-SF007-002>

¹³²Sorensen, *Kennedy*.

you have, frequently they are divided, and the President must finally choose”.¹³³ His sentences are short and demonstrate firmness. No one can be blame except himself.

This strategy is understandable. The CIA participated in the debacle of the operation and Kennedy also thought so: he dismissed Allen Dulles and Richard Bissell.¹³⁴ At the same time, the CIA was and still is a secret agency, the public must trust it despite not knowing what they are up to. So, drawing attention to the organization was not an option and even less to its fault. The President probably wanted to learn lessons from the operation and bring renewal within the most powerful people in the US because they had demonstrated that their strategies had limits.

Thanks to the management of his image, Kennedy succeeded in making the Bay of Pigs invasion a strength and a way to improve. He chose to pay attention to those who suffered the most from this defeat: The Brigade. Moreover, he never accused the CIA, the Joint Chiefs or any other member of his administration and always took sole responsibility for the failure.

¹³³John F. Kennedy, “Television and Radio Interview: After Two Years- a Conversation With the President”, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, December 17, 1962.

¹³⁴Machover, *Anatomie d'un désastre*.

Part III. US and Cuban populations take on the Bay of Pigs invasion: fiasco versus victory

The Bay of Pigs landing was presented by the US government as a fight for liberty: Kennedy's administration simply tried to help anti-Castro exiles to return to their land and instate a regime, which would respect western values: freedom and democracy. These reasons were biased, especially during the Cold War period. Kennedy along with the CIA, despite all their commendable intentions, wanted to overthrow Castro to avoid the presence of a Communist sympathizer's regime less than ninety miles from the US shores. Facing the defeat of the operation, how did US citizens react? What was their opinion towards Castro and the plans to overthrow him?

The same question can be asked of the Cuban population. They did not experience the situation in the same manner as people in the US did, especially considering the authoritarian character of the Castroist regime. Did propaganda work well on Cuban people? How did they learn of this event? Did they know of the CIA's involvement in the operation? This part of the thesis aims to analyze US and Cuban reactions to the invasion.

III.1. Perception in the US

The US public's opinion was extremely important to Kennedy's administration. The President was concerned about his image, as mentioned before, thus, the people's opinion about his decisions and in general, his work, was significant. It is important to note that when Castro arrived in power, he was not seen as an enemy of the nation by the majority of the US population: his charisma, eloquence and call to freedom seduced US citizens.

In his article from *The New York Times* "When Americans loved Fidel Castro", Tony Perrotet explains that for many US citizens with leftist sympathies -a growing number amongst young people-, the fact that idealistic young people managed to beat a professional army of 40,000 soldiers in 1959 was an incredible achievement.¹³⁵ Batista was not popular and did play with the US. He was not under control anymore and this is why the guerilla of Castro and his *barbudos* was a democratic option to replace him, even for some high ranked CIA officers. However, the US government quickly understood in 1958 that Castro was a Marxist. When the

¹³⁵Tony Perrotet, "When Americans loved Fidel Castro", *The New York Times*, January 24, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/24/opinion/cuba-fidel-castro-1959.html>

latter entered Havana, Eisenhower's government was on alert. However, it was not necessarily the case of the US population.

Castro tended to reassure the US by showing that he was not an enemy and only wished to overthrow Batista's dictatorship. *Life Magazine* put him on the cover, depicting him as the "bearded rebel scholar", "dynamic boss" or "the liberator".¹³⁶ These labels demonstrate a certain vision of the leader of the Revolution as a Romantic hero who was going to free Cuba.¹³⁷ Furthermore, when Castro came to the US for the first time, he was well received by a sort of "Fidelmania" and a crowd of supporters who gathered in Central Park to listen to him. One of his fans even said, "Fidel Castro is the best thing to happen to North American women since Rudolph Valentino".¹³⁸ This endeavor can be compared to Kennedy's: Castro had a proper management of his image and his presence attracted crowds. It was magnetism.

In *Fighting over Fidel: The New York Intellectuals and the Cuban Revolution*, Raphael Rojas details the type of people who loved Castro in the US, and the quick decrease in the endeavor.¹³⁹ This book shows that left-wing academics, beat poets, Black Panthers and radical journalists, especially in New York, initially embraced the Revolution.¹⁴⁰ Indeed, they were marginalized, and wanted a renewal of the "American Way of Life". For them, Castro was not just an attractive and rebellious leader, he gave hope of change in a capitalist and unequal system. However, Castro's figure eventually disappointed his admirers. His regime turned into a dictatorship, homosexuality was repressed, censorship reigned, and racism from latino Cubans against Cubans of Africa remained a major issue on the island.¹⁴¹

¹³⁶Tony Perrotet, "When Americans Loved Castro".

¹³⁷This vision also applies to Che Guevara and will be discussed below.

¹³⁸Perrotet, "When Americans Loved Castro".

¹³⁹Raphael Rojas, *Fighting over Fidel: The New York Intellectuals and the Cuban Revolution*, Princeton University Press, 2015.

¹⁴⁰"Black Panthers", *Dictionary.com*. Black Panthers were members of a militant black American organization Black Panther party active in the 1960s and early 1970s, formed to work for the advancement of the rights of blacks, often by radical means.

¹⁴¹Raphael Rojas, "How the American left fell in and out of love with Fidel Castro", *The Washington Post*, November 25, 2015. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/book-party/wp/2015/11/25/how-the-american-left-fell-in-and-out-of-love-with-fidel-castro/>

Cuba is considered as a dictatorship because there is one party (the Communist Party) which is in power, all political dissent and opposition are repressed. There is no freedom of the press which has to be the voice of the Castroist regime. (Fidel Castro, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*)

Thus, Castro had a certain popularity with younger and marginalized people in the United States as well as in the western block. However, disenchantment came rapidly, and the great majority of US people wished for his overthrowing.

In the US, polls conducted by the Gallup Company enable the government to know their level of approval among the population. In 1961, one question was, “Do you approve or disapprove of the way President Kennedy is handling the situation in Cuba?”. Despite the fiasco of the Bay of Pigs, the public approved at 61%, 15% disapproved and 24% had no opinion.¹⁴² It shows that the efforts made by Kennedy to recognize and justify his mistakes paid off.

Cuba was a crucial territory for the US in the collective imagination: as previously mentioned, they participated in the Spanish-American War of 1898. The Cuban people attempted several times to free the island between 1868 and 1880. However, they were all unsuccessful and resulted in the Spanish-American war in 1895.¹⁴³

The Spanish-American war, presented as a war for Cuban freedom, was a war of colonization. Indeed, the US wished to control maritime roads towards Asian trade and started this process with Hawaii (finally annexed in 1959). At the end of the nineteenth century, Hawaii was under the authority of the US and was strategically interesting because on the road to the Spanish Philippines. The Battle of Manila Bay between Spanish and Americans was the first battle of the war, even before the hostilities reached Cuba. It shows that the aim of the US was

¹⁴²The American Century’s website, “Public Reaction to the Invasion”, The Bay of Pigs.

<https://americancentury.omeka.wlu.edu/exhibits/show/bay-of-pigs/public-reaction-to-the-invasio>

¹⁴³Adrian A. Bantjes, “The Spanish-Cuban-American War: A Cuban perspective”, *fundacionfaes.org*. 1998, 103-132. https://fundacionfaes.org/file_upload/publication/pdf/20130426134756the-spanish-cuban-american-war-a-cuban-perspective.pdf

Pr. Lucie Genay, “Colonialism and post-colonialism in US history”, lecture, University of Limoges, 2019.

The Teller Amendment, 1898: <https://investigatinghistory.ashp.cuny.edu/files/1898TellerAmendment.pdf>

The Platt Amendment, 1901: Division of Insular Affairs, War Department, Translation of the Proposed Constitution for Cuba, the Official Acceptance of the Platt Amendment, and the Electoral Law, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901. https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3-euw1-ap-pe-ws4-cws-documents.ri-prod/9781138824287/ch3/6._The_Platt_Amendment,_1901.pdf

Spain refused to let Cuba gain independence because the island was one of the main producers of sugar in the world. Spanish atrocities were sensationalized in the “yellow press”. William McKinley, President of the US between 1897 and 1901, thought Cuban conflict did not profit the US investments in the island and this is why his administration chose to intervene. The trigger of the US intervention was the explosion in Havana which made the USS Maine sink. The US accused Spain and went to war with the back-up of their population. To reassure the world, they passed the Teller Amendment which promised that they would not annex Cuba and were not interested in colonization. However, instead of being free, Cuba was placed under the control of the US. Thanks to the Treaty of Paris, Americans could interfere in Cuban affairs and were free to influence the government’s policies. The Platt Amendment was passed in 1901 and allowed US military intervention and the establishment of Guantanamo Bay. Gradually, the US took control over many industries and lands.

to weaken and steal Spanish possessions. The US actually occupied the Philippines from 1899 to 1902 and violently repressed the Filipino insurrectionists who tried to take their country back.¹⁴⁴

The Spanish American War lasted four months and was a success for the US. They acquired the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Guam, and developed a strong influence on Cuba. They argued that they offered civilization to people they administered.¹⁴⁵ This justification is the same as European colonizers, when they arrived on American, African, or Asian shores. On the other side, anti-Imperialism spread during the same era. Mark Twain was famously part of this movement.¹⁴⁶ Thus, the history of Cuban independence and the role played by the Americans are key elements to understand the US public interest in the island. As in 1898 and the conflict with Spain, US economic interests were threatened by Castro's regime.

Significantly, Kennedy's approval rating increased from 78% right after the invasion to 85% in late April.¹⁴⁷ This phenomenon is quite astonishing, considering the fiasco that occurred. The President's mea culpa probably worked to his advantage. Moreover, Americans were ready to use the same strategy as the Bay of Pigs landing, because they agreed to "aid the anti-Castro forces with money and war materials" at 44% against 41% who disagreed.

However, the preferred solution was a refusal to "buy or sell products to Cuba so long as Castro is in power" by 63% people. Finally, 24% agreed with sending US armed forces into Cuba to help overthrow Castro.¹⁴⁸ The latter demonstrates that the US opinion was not in favor of an overt operation. The population was aware of the potential risks such an operation. The President probably knew that most US citizens would never encourage an operation where the US was too exposed and if he did so, his reputation would suffer from it. Despite fear of the USSR's reaction and ethical considerations, support of his population was essential.

¹⁴⁴Dr. Lucie Genay, "Colonialism and post-colonialism in US history".

¹⁴⁵See Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's burden", 1899. Kipling was an Imperialist British poet. He wrote this poem after the Spanish-American War and US victory.
<https://ux1.eiu.edu/nekey/syllabi/british/kipling1899.pdf>

¹⁴⁶John Green, *American Imperialism: Crash Course US History #28*, US History Crash Course, 2013. Accessed May 12, 2020. <https://thecrashcourse.com/courses/ushistory>

For more information about Anti-Imperialism, see Mark Twain, "To the Person Sitting in Darkness", *North American Review* No. DXXXI, 1901

Fred H. Harrington, "The Anti-Imperialist Movement in the United States 1898-1900", *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Volume 22, No. 2, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935. 211-230

¹⁴⁷Lydia Saad, "Gallup Vault: Cuba Embargo Popular after Bay of Pigs Fiasco", *Gallup website*, April 14, 2020. <https://news.gallup.com/vault/190772/gallup-vault-cuba-embargo-popular-bay-pigs-fiasco.aspx>

¹⁴⁸Saad, "Gallup Vault".

Thus, the Bay of Pigs incident did not decrease Kennedy's reputation because people believed in his *mea culpa*. On the contrary, it strengthened his popularity, as surprisingly as it sounds. His positions on domestic and foreign issues at the same time might have played a role in his popularity.¹⁴⁹ One can also mention his positions on the space conquest and his promise that the US would go to the moon before the end of the decade.¹⁵⁰ All these elements contributed to the US public's indulgence towards him.

The Bay of Pigs is still remembered as Cuban exiles' attempt to free their country from Castro's dictatorship. Their bravery has been commemorated since April 2010 in Little Havana, Miami, with a memorial for the 16 aviators killed during the event.¹⁵¹ Even if some people in the US were fascinated by Castro, they saw him from then on as a threat and recognized any attempt to overthrow him. Regarding the Cuban exiles, they remained remarkably faithful to the US, despite the debacle they had lived through because of the government and the CIA. The repeated strategies of Kennedy in his speeches convinced them that they were not forgotten and probably helped these exiles to forgive the US.

III.2. The Bay of Pigs event as a major tool of Cuban propaganda

The Cuban regime was, and still is, a dictatorship. Despite its ideals of equality, the fight between poor and rich people is rife and Cuban people never had the elections that Castro had promised. Moreover, dissenters were sent to jail or executed if they were not fast enough to go into exile.¹⁵² In addition, the government used propaganda in a massive way. According to the *Cambridge Dictionary*, propaganda means "information, ideas, opinions, or images, often only giving one part of an argument that are broadcast, published, or in some other way spread with the intention of influencing people's opinions". This definition can also be applied to the strategy of the United States when using psychological warfare with the CIA, however, this part

¹⁴⁹Frederick Taylor, *The Berlin Wall 13 August 1961-9 November 1989*, London: Bloomsbury, 2009. The President dealt with the construction of the Berlin Wall in August 1961 by the USSR to prevent people living in German Democratic Republic (GDR) from going to Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) through Berlin West. John F. Kennedy, "Ich Bin Ein Berliner", West Berlin, June 26, 1963, AmericanRhetoric.com. Accessed May 13, 2020. <https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/PDFFiles/John%20F.%20Kennedy%20-%20Ich%20bin%20ein%20Berliner.pdf> In 1963, Kennedy visited Berlin West and in front of the wall, pronounced his famous speech "Ich Bin Ein Berliner" which again reinforced his image of a progressist President. This speech was made to commemorate the fifteenth anniversary of the Berlin blockade.

¹⁵⁰John F. Kennedy, "Address at Rice University in Houston on the Nation's Space Effort", *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, September 12, 1962. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-rice-university-houston-the-nations-space-effort>

¹⁵¹Trip Advisor, Bay of Pigs Monument https://www.tripadvisor.fr/Attraction_Review-g34438-d19101402-Reviews-Bay_of_Pigs_Monument-Miami_Florida.html

¹⁵²Emmanuel Amara, *The Cuba Libre Story*, Netflix, 2016.

of the thesis aims to focus on the Cuban use of propaganda, especially after the Bay of Pigs invasion.

Cuban propaganda used many tools: music, literature, films, slogans, paintings etc. In all of these, the central figure was Castro, especially his appearance. His personality cult can be equaled to Joseph Stalin's or Vladimir Lenin's. Posters were everywhere in Havana and in the countryside, as explained in "I am the Revolution": Fidel Castro's tools of personality cult and propaganda" in *The Guardian*. With his "bushy beard, long cigar and green fatigues", the leader of the Revolution was very recognizable.¹⁵³ His face was painted and drawn by numerous artists without, apparently, any specific request on his part. However, he knew the power of visual propaganda and did not hesitate to use it from the beginning of the Revolution, when he invited foreign journalists and photographers to meet him in the mountains of the Sierra Maestra in 1957.¹⁵⁴ His face was often accompanied by slogans such as "*Socialismo o muerte*" (Socialism or death), "*Yo soy la revolucion*" (I am the Revolution), or "*Venceremos*" (We will conquer).¹⁵⁵ Castro's face was central in the beginning of his regime and this personality cult did not change. Today, the use of propaganda is still absolutely central in Cuba.

The same conclusion can be drawn about Ernesto Che Guevara: one of the most famous photographs of the revolutionary, the *Guerillero Heroico* by Alberto Korda, became so popular that it was used on many other accessories for commercial purposes (ie tee-shirts, posters, cups, bags).¹⁵⁶ Especially after his death, Che Guevara was raised to the status of martyr by the Cuban government. His face can be seen nowadays in many places, for example on the facade of the Ministry of Interior and Plaza de la Revolucion.¹⁵⁷

The Bay of Pigs landing was a key element of Cuban propaganda. With the defeat of the US, the Cuban government could boast its first great victory against imperialism. Indeed, Cubans had lived in frustration under the influence of foreign powers, Spain and then the US, for too long and could not tolerate such an insult. On May 2, 1961, Castro gave a speech to the Cuban people about the invasion.¹⁵⁸ The leader of the Revolution uses references to

¹⁵³Vanessa Thorpe, "I am the Revolution": Fidel Castro's tools of personality cult and propaganda", *The Guardian*, November 27, 2016.

¹⁵⁴Vanessa Thorpe, "I am the Revolution".

¹⁵⁵Cf. annexes.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. annexes.

¹⁵⁷Cf. annexes.

¹⁵⁸Fidel Castro, speech at Havana's May Day celebrations, *National Geographic Education*, May 2, 1961. https://media.nationalgeographic.org/assets/file/castro_and_the_bay_of_pigs.pdf

famous Cuban figures who played a part in reinforcing patriotism, such as José Martí, poet and political figure, hero of the island's independence: "a motherland which will be now and forever -as Martí wanted it- for the well-being of everyone and not the motherland for few". This sentence is an attack on the Brigade, called "mercenaries" by Castro: "those who sell their soul for the gold of a powerful empire". They are in opposition with the honest, brave "militiamen who voluntarily came to defend the Revolution".

Moreover, Castro insists on the US's self-sufficiency, comparing the values of the country to fascism and Nazi Germany: "Who had those notions before Kennedy? Hitler and Mussolini!". Finally, Castro highlights the contrast between Kennedy's aggressive policy and Cuba's, which is about numerous achievements such as sending doctors and teachers all around the island.¹⁵⁹ This speech in the wake of the Bay of Pigs invasion, demonstrates the opportunity given by the US to highlight Cuban policies. Notably, the US lost their right to criticize the Cuban regime because it could be said that they acted as an imperialistic power trying to impose their system on other countries.

Television was also a means to showcase the Cuban success. The *Institut National de l'Audiovisuel* (INA) gave access to a large amount of Cuban reports from the sixties which appeared on the news. Some of them depict the Bay of Pigs invasion from a Cuban point of view. In one of these reports dating back to April 30, 1961, Fidel Castro is displayed as a decision maker.¹⁶⁰ His heroic stature cannot be questioned because he always appears superior to other men. The Bay of Pigs is not portrayed as a simple landing but as a real war. Fighter music accompanies half of the documentary along with gruesome images of dying people and corpses. The strategy here is to shock the public and to show Castro resolving the conflict. Furthermore, the Brigade 2506 remains the favourite scapegoat: they are depicted as "ex Batista soldiers", or "soldiers of the Yankee imperialism".¹⁶¹

For the leader Maximo, there is no middle ground: the population needs to be either for, or against him. The report explains that the reason why Cuban exiles were defeated is because "they did not have enough mindset to resist", which again reduces the Brigade to mere cowards.

¹⁵⁹Castro, "Speech at Havana's May Day celebrations".

¹⁶⁰Instituto cubano del arte e industria cinematograficos, "Extra: Desembarco en Baïha de Cochinos", *Noticiero ICAIC Latinoamericano*, Institut national audiovisuel, April 30, 1961. <https://www.ina.fr/video/VDD13007491>

¹⁶¹Indeed, the Spanish-American War contributed to this vision spread by Castro's regime of an imperialistic country. Moreover, US policies towards Latin-America and Europe might have been perceived as Imperialistic by Cubans and other nations. The US wanted to contain and fight communism and never hesitated to ignore people's liberty to be free.

At the end, the music becomes joyful to celebrate the victory. The zoom lens on the crowd comes with the words “Cuba, free American land”.¹⁶² This report is a tangible example of how propaganda worked after the invasion, the Cuban people’s bravery is in opposition with the Brigade’s cowardice. Justice prevails over corruption.

The Bay of Pigs victory is celebrated every year on April 17. The ceremony is transmitted on television channels. There is a battery shot from Havana bay, followed by a military parade accompanied by victorious music.¹⁶³ This celebration is an occasion to remind Cubans and the world how the little island of Cuba, with its courageous men and women, defeated the greatest Capitalist country. Moreover, in April 1981, for the fiftieth anniversary of the Bay of Pigs battle, the *Museo Girón* opened on the site of the landing. This museum explains in detail, through its three rooms, the history of this event. Outside, one can find tanks and planes from the era.¹⁶⁴ The ceremony and the museum are two examples of how the Bay of Pigs memory remains in Cuba, a true work of commemoration to ensure that this Cuban victory is remembered in the long term.

Castro used propaganda even before becoming the leader of Cuba. This weapon remained one of his favorites, often used to influence the masses through slogans, posters and idealism. The Bay of Pigs landing gave him an incredible opportunity to use the US defeat to his own advantage. He created a substantial machinery to feed the memory of this victory.

III.3. Perception of the Bay of Pigs by the Cuban population

The work of propaganda was supposed to communicate a certain version of the Bay of Pigs invasion. Did this version achieve success with the Cuban population? Indeed, everything was done in order to teach Cubans about the invasion with the elements given by the government: celebration, museum, and reports contributed to this collective memory. This kind of remembrance is quite similar to the one concerning the French Resistance, put in place by Charles de Gaulle after the Second World War: France was considered as a resistant nation that fought until its last breath while the reality was somewhat different. France surrendered in 1941

¹⁶²Instituto Cubano del arte, “Extra: Desembarco en Bahía de Cochinos”.

¹⁶³Telesur tv, « Cuba celebra 50 aniversario de la Victoria de Playa Girón », *Youtube*, April 16, 2011.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L4Ow9_zCXvY

¹⁶⁴Museo Girón, Attraction reviews, *TripAdvisor*, January 2020.

and most of the French population cooperated with the Vichy government.¹⁶⁵ In the Bay of Pigs' case, it is true that the Cuban people won against the United States and Cuban exiles. However, the government uses this event in order to promote itself, by romanticizing it. Every means is employed to convince the population of the demarcation between Good and Evil, Cuba and the United States during this landing.

One of the most effective ways to indoctrinate the population is through education. An extract of a textbook demonstrates the subject matter given to young Cubans when they are learning about the events at the Bay of Pigs.¹⁶⁶ The text mentions several missions perpetrated by the US to prepare the ground for their landing: fires and destructions of schools and factories for example, which portrays the cruelty of the Americans. The personality cult around Castro is still eminently present: a dying young Cuban soldier, Eduardo Garcia Delgado, is said to have written "Fidel" on a piece of wood with his blood before passing away.

Moreover, despite the organization of the Brigade, it is explained that "the Yankee government and the mercenaries did not take on board two factors: the inseparable bond between Cuban people and their Revolution, and the strategical and tactical capacity of Fidel and the Revolutionary management". Finally, thanks to Castro's mercy, only five Cuban exiles were sentenced to death while 1197 were imprisoned.¹⁶⁷ Thus, Fidel Castro is considered as the mastermind of the victory and a lenient leader. His people are ready to die for him because he is the personification of the Revolution. The US underestimated the Cuban population's backing and Castro's army, as previously mentioned. The facts are verified and serve Cuban interests. However, Fidel Castro was not the key element of the victory: he mostly delegated to his generals.¹⁶⁸

Nevertheless, several elements could have tarnished this story such as the series of arrests carried out in Cuba before the invasion gone unmentioned. Actually, thousands of people were arrested and put in jail or executed as soon as the rumors of a landing were confirmed. The purpose was to avoid at all costs the island's inhabitants support to Cuban exiles.

¹⁶⁵Etude de cas : Les mémoires de la Résistance en France, entre mythe et réalité, *Pimido*, 2013.

<https://www.pimido.com/histoire-et-geographie/histoire-contemporaine/etude-de-cas/memoires-resistance-france-mythe-realite-302939.html>

¹⁶⁶Cantón Navarro, José and Duarte Hurtado, Martín, *Cuba, 42 años de Revolución, Cronología histórica 1959-1982, Tomo I*, Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, La Habana, 2006. ISBN 959-06-0906-6.

¹⁶⁷Navarro, Hurtado, Hurtado, *Cuba, 42 años de Revolución*.

¹⁶⁸Howard Jones, *The Bay of Pigs*.

Unsurprisingly, the textbook presents the invasion as an attempt to return to the pre-revolutionary status quo and Batista's dictatorship. To achieve this, the Brigade is considered as the armed branch of the US. The latter is exceedingly criticized by the extract and depicted as being composed of numerous former Batista's soldiers, plantation owners, landowners, businessmen or industrial magnates.¹⁶⁹ However, this composition is skewed. The Cuban exiles had extremely diversified backgrounds and if 194 were former Batista supporters, a great majority had followed Castro's Revolution at its beginnings.¹⁷⁰ The Cuban soldiers, on the contrary, are still depicted as "Eternal heroes of the nation" and their bravery is hailed.

Jessie Madrazo Bacallao is a Cuban engineer who works in Geneva, Switzerland. She basically gave the same version of the Bay of Pigs as the textbook.¹⁷¹ She argues that the Bay of Pigs invasion is for every Cuban a significant event. She often calls it "the invasion of Playa Gíron", an interesting choice of words used by most Cubans. Indeed, the word "invasion" is at the center while Americans privilege the use of "Bay of Pigs landing", where the less pejorative word "landing" recalls glorious events during the Second World War landings. So, the event led to the first victory of the island against American imperialism and this is when Castro chose to become closer to the USSR.¹⁷² Jessie astoundingly learned that Cuba was not communist before the invasion, an element which can be discussed because of the many nationalizations and decrease of wealthy owners. Castro also started a relationship with the USSR since 1960.

Neither Jessie nor the extract mentioned the CIA's role during the Bay of Pigs operation and the numerous divergences between the agency and the Kennedy administration. A first hypothesis can be the fact that the Cuban government preferred including only the two main characters: the US and Cuba, the CIA being part of the US machinery and simply executing orders. Imperialism must be represented by the US government, which took the initiative and the CIA is only a weapon for the US to achieve its aims. Castro did not wish to linger over the tension between Kennedy and the agency.

Considering all these elements, Jessie shares the textbook vision of the events. Nevertheless, an element does intrigue her: why would the rich people who made up the Brigade, and who had a comfortable situation in the US, invade Cuba? For her, this element is probably the hardest

¹⁶⁹Navarro, Hurtado, Hurtado, *Cuba, 42 años de Revolución*.

¹⁷⁰Johnson, *The Bay of Pigs*.

¹⁷¹Jessie Madrazo Bacallao, phone call conversation, November 14, 2019.

¹⁷²Ibid.

to believe. She is also convinced that most Cuban people find this element among others very unclear. She thinks that the younger generation has more questions and doubts towards the version of a country who has a major use of propaganda and no plurality of information.

Miguel Angel Frometa Rojas is a twenty-three-year-old fifth-year history student in Havana.¹⁷³ Miguel has much more knowledge of the event than his friend Jessie because it is part of his studies. His version of the Bay of Pigs events is clear and historically proven.¹⁷⁴

The student explains that this event is part of the school curriculum, every Cubans learned it. At the same time, Miguel thinks that the Bay of Pigs event is not very detailed at school. For example, the early stages of the operation and the US organization is not extensive. However, Miguel knows the operation better because of his courses at university. One can see from the textbook that the syllabus only deals with the events on the battlefield and the Cuban victory. Thus, Miguel and Jessie are both aware of the propaganda. Miguel even argues that the Bay of Pigs is not the first Latin American victory against Imperialism. He gives the example of General Augusto Sandino in Nicaragua: this guerilla leader fought against the legal government which was helped by the US Navy between 1927 and 1934.¹⁷⁵

Can these testimonies be considered a reflection of what most Cubans know and believe? Miguel and Jessie only represent a small fraction of Cuban society. They represent the younger generation, which is more critical of Fidel Castro's myth. However, plenty of older people would never question the invasion as it has been portrayed through schoolbooks. In a CBC News report, a journalist questions Augustín who lived in the Zapata zone when the Brigade landed.¹⁷⁶ He was enthusiastic to fight these men whom he calls "mercenaries". For older people, the issue is different: Castro's Revolution brought most of them out of their misery.

One concrete example is that in 1961 and even up to this day, Cuban people do not have to pay for medical care or medication.¹⁷⁷ These sorts of social advances increased the Castroist regime's popularity. The lack of democracy and excessive usage of propaganda are current

¹⁷³Miguel Angel Frometas, Exchange of messages on WhatsApp, February 6, 2020.

¹⁷⁴He explains that this event occurred at a very tense period between Cuba and the US and the CIA helped the Kennedy administration to plan an invasion. The aim was for the Brigade to instore a provincial government around Playa Girón, supported by the US. What Miguel retains on Cuban response was the rapidity of the government's reaction and of the military strength.

¹⁷⁵Neil Macaulay, *The Sandino Affair*, Duke University Press, 1985.

¹⁷⁶CBC News: The National, "Fidel Castro: Remembering the Bay of Pigs", YouTube Video, 8:04, March 22, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iT6msx5nVgk>

¹⁷⁷CBC News: The National, "Fidel Castro: Remembering the Bay of Pigs".

themes in the twenty-first century because the majority of the population did not live through the Revolution and is conscious of the countless dictatorship elements of this regime.¹⁷⁸

Thus, the Cuban population has mixed feelings regarding the Bay of Pigs mystification. Miguel and Jessie's testimonies demonstrate that propaganda is tenacious in the image Cubans have about the Bay of Pigs landing. Some of them, mostly younger people, tend to be more skeptical and do not trust every element they are given. However, a large majority, still deluded by 1959's illusions agree on the fact that the Brigade was composed of the richest people on the island and that Castro was the leader of the counterattack.

¹⁷⁸For more information about Castroist regime, see Reference 141.

Conclusion

This thesis aimed to understand why the Bay of Pigs landing failed and what the consequences of this defeat were. Moreover, this work analyzed the repercussions of this event on the Cuban and US populations as well as on a personal level for Castro and Kennedy.

The CIA organized and led the operation from the inside. Indeed, the agency was created and evolved in order to be in charge of foreign operations. The CIA had already dealt with cases in Guatemala and Iran under Eisenhower's administration so, the director Allen Dulles and his team were convinced that their approach was effective. As explained by historian Jacobo Machover, the Brigade was solely composed of Cuban exiles and no US soldier went onto the battlefield.¹⁷⁹ However, the agency trained, equipped, and financed the group. The CIA even tried to lay the groundwork by coordinating the assassination attempts carried out on Castro.

The CIA had the go-ahead from President Kennedy. The assertiveness of the Agency's rulers and their experience gave hope of success to the President. It was because of his credulity that an operation with numerous flaws could be conducted in Cuba. Moreover, the CIA's alacrity and carelessness did send the Cuban exiles towards inevitable defeat.

On the other hand, the operation was a godsend for Cuba. It was an opportunity to reaffirm the regime's power and strength against its enemies. Che Guevara even thanked Richard Goodwin, American writer and Presidential advisor, for the invasion, arguing that it had been a great political victory for the Revolution.¹⁸⁰ Indeed, the Bay of Pigs did consolidate the regime and Castro's popularity in his island. However, the numerous arrests before the invasion demonstrates that Castro did not win unanimous support and dealt with his opponents in a violent way.

Concerning Kennedy, the President accepted his responsibilities immediately after the disaster. He never accused publicly the CIA or any member of his administration. This image of a truthful and honorable man favored the rise of his popularity amongst US people. Kennedy often drew a parallel between this disastrous event and the Suez Canal crisis. Indeed, the British and the French had experienced the same shame when they unsuccessfully tried to get control of the canal back from Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser.¹⁸¹ Kennedy also compared the

¹⁷⁹Machover, *Anatomie d'un désastre*.

¹⁸⁰Richard Goodwin, "Memorandum on Conversation between Richard Goodwin and Che Guevara" *The American Century*, accessed April 15, 2020, <https://americancentury.omeka.wlu.edu/items/show/268>.

¹⁸¹Barry Turner, *Suez 1956: The Inside Story of the First Oil War*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2006.

Bay of Pigs landing to the Algerian War, which occurred at that same time. Starting in 1954, the French Government was fighting Algerian movements of independence. By 1961, a terrible defeat for the French became apparent.¹⁸² Both these examples were for Kennedy proof that despite hurt economic interests and prides, his reputation could be saved. Nations only needed to learn lessons from their past mistakes.

The US never gave up on the fight against Cuba. The Operation Mongoose was created in November 1961 and started in May to continue the work started with the Bay of Pigs landing to overthrow Castro.¹⁸³ The operation Northwoods, planned in 1962 by the CIA, aimed to “stage false flag terrorist attacks inside the US and abroad to provoke military intervention in Cuba”.¹⁸⁴ This strategy aimed to convince the public opinion to be in favor of an intervention against Castro’s regime. The operation planning was signed by the Chairman of the Joint Chief Staff, Lyman Lemnitzer. Then, the Secretary of State Robert McNamara had to validate the plan. However, he did not approve it. Kennedy also immediately rejected this plan because of the numerous risks and losses it contained.

President Kennedy showed more wisdom than with the Bay of Pigs during the Missile Crisis from October 14 to 28, 1962. In order to protect Cuba from any US aggression like the Bay of Pigs landing, Castro asked Khrushchev’s help. Their relationship was cordial and for the USSR, it was the opportunity to show their hazardous nature to the US.

While facing the presence of missiles brought to Cuba by the USSR, the world had never been closer to the possibility of a nuclearized Third World War. Tensions were extremely high between the Soviet and the Americans. However, Kennedy established a naval “quarantine” around Cuba to prevent further Soviet weapons being sent. Kennedy also threatened Nikita Khrushchev, of nuclear retaliation if he continued to deliver missiles.¹⁸⁵ However, Khrushchev

¹⁸²Schlesinger, *a Thousand Days*, 267.

¹⁸³Jacinto Valdés-Dapena, *Operation Mongoose: Prelude of a Direct Invasion on Cuba*, translated by Ornán José Batista Peña, Havana: Editorial Capitán San Luis, 2012.

Aiyaz Husain, “Covert Action and US Cold War Strategy in Cuba, 1961-62, *Cold War History, Volume 5, Issue 1*, 2005. 23-53

¹⁸⁴Public intelligence, Joint Chief of Staff, *Operation Northwoods*, March 9, 2010.

<https://publicintelligence.net/operation-northwoods/>

¹⁸⁵ “Brinkmanship”, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Accessed May 9, 2020. This practice is called brinkmanship and is a strategy “in which one or both parties force the interaction between them to the threshold of confrontation in order to gain an advantageous negotiation position over the other”. Brinkmanship is very risky and can lead to tragedy.

finally capitulated on October 26 after threats escalated.¹⁸⁶ Negotiations were at the center of this success. Khrushchev dismantled the launch pad built on the island while the US promised they would not attack Cuba again and removed their missiles deployed in Turkey.

This event was directly a consequence from the Bay of Pigs landing because Castro feared a new invasion attempt perpetrated by the US and often asked the help of the USSR.¹⁸⁷ It also demonstrates that the President did not make the same mistakes he made during the Bay of Pigs operation. The stakes were much higher, the enemy was not just Cuba but the Soviet Union with its huge arsenal. Kennedy did not hesitate about the decisions that needed to be made: he directly used nuclear deterrence and diplomacy to reach an agreement.¹⁸⁸ Despite Cuba's disappointment, the USSR did withdraw their missiles just as the US made concessions and a potential nuclear holocaust was avoided. The Missile Crisis led to the signature of the Test Ban Treaty of 1963, just as the Non-proliferation Treaty five years later.¹⁸⁹ This event also launched the "détente" period when tensions stabilized between both countries.¹⁹⁰ The USSR and the US put in place a Moscow-Washington hotline to enable direct contact. Kennedy's image was again reinforced thanks to this event, even if the presence of a Communist regime so close to the US still had to be accepted.¹⁹¹

The repercussions of this event are still perceptible nowadays in Cuban US relationships. However, the end of Castro brothers' leadership might have started a new period in the history of Cuban US relationships. Analyzing the evolution of these relations since the Missile crisis could bring some elements about the importance of the Castro brothers, their impact on the American geopolitics and what is left of Cuban US relationships now that they are not in power anymore.

¹⁸⁶ "Cuban Missile Crisis", *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Accessed April 15, 2020

<https://www.britannica.com/event/Cuban-missile-crisis>

¹⁸⁷Bescherelle, *Chronologie de l'histoire du monde contemporain de 1914 à nos jours*, supervised by Marielle Chevallier, agrégation holder in History, Hatier, Paris, 2015. 218-219

¹⁸⁸Bescherelle, *Chronologie de l'histoire du monde contemporain*.

¹⁸⁹The Department of State's website, "Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and Under Water, done at Moscow August 5, 1963, Depository, Treaty Affairs. Accessed May 8, 2020 <https://www.state.gov/limited-test-ban-treaty>

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¹⁹⁰Jussi M. Hanhimäki, *The Rise and Fall of Détente, American Foreign Policy and the Transformation of the Cold War*, Potomac Books, Washington D.C, 2013.

¹⁹¹Bescherelle, *Chronologie de l'histoire du monde contemporain*.

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Annexes

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Appendix 1. Map

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Figure 1: Cuba and the United States locations.

Both countries are less than ninety miles away from each other. The Bay of Pigs is situated in the South-West of Cuba.

Source: Blogspot.com

Appendix 2. Miguel's testimony translated from Spanish to English

Miguel gave his testimony by WhatsApp conversation in February 2020.

- Could you give your version of the Bay of Pigs invasion?

(Miguel) – Well, I think that the invasion took place in a tense context. US Aggression against Cuba was reaching a higher level. The CIA was involved in the invasion and this plan was created by the Eisenhower administration. The principal plan was the one everyone here in Cuba knows: Taking Playa Girón and creating a provincial government. This landing was an idea of the US to take back the control of the island. What we must remember from the Cuban response was the quick reaction of the government and military forces.

Personally, I do not think that the Bay of Pigs landing is the first victory against Imperialism in Latin America as told by the government. For example, the victory of the General Sandino in Nicaragua is a precedent. But well, it is also a problem of propaganda.

- How do you call it in Cuba? *Bahía de Cochinos* or *Playa Girón*?

(Miguel) – Here, we give this event two names, but it is best-known as invasion de *Playa Girón*. In more academic terms we can call it invasion a *bahía de Cochinos*.

- How do Cuban pupils learn the Bay of Pigs landing at school?

(Miguel) – Well, Cuban pupils are studying the event, it is part of Cuban history. However, it is a basic teaching. But for example, in April we are celebrating this victory during the “Week of the Victory”.

Appendix 3. Jessie's testimony

Jessie gave her testimony by phone call interview on November 23, 2020. The elements below come from the notes I took during this interview.

- Could you give your version of the Bay of Pigs landing?

(Jessie) – This is a key event for Cuba. Cuban people won. I see the Bay of Pigs landing as the representation of Cuban victory. I actually learnt at school that from this moment of April 1961, the Revolution became Communist. Mercenaries came and it was a trigger. Moreover, several embarrassing events took place before the Bay of Pigs landing: in 1960, schools were destroyed and burnt under the command of the US so it can explain the quick reaction of Cuban military forces. They knew something was up to. Castro started to imprison many people this same year to avoid any back-up in case of an invasion.

- What do you think about the CIA's role in this event?

(Jessie) – I do not remember having heard about the CIA's role. I think that for Castro, it was important to show that US imperialism was the head of the operation. The aim is maybe to show that the CIA is only a tool for Kennedy's administration.

- Who were the "mercenaries" for you?

(Jessie) – I learnt that they were mostly ancient Cuban owners who lost their lands with the Revolution. They were more than 1500 and were rich. I do not know if it is true, but this is what I learnt.

- How do you think Cuban people consider the Bay of Pigs landing?

(Jessie) – I think most Cubans do not have a very clear vision of the Bay of Pigs landing. However, everyone understands that this was the fault of the US, they helped Cuban exiles and intended to control the island. At the same time, I find hard to believe that very rich people, who started back their lives in the US, would come to invade Cuba and I think this consideration is shared by other Cubans.

Appendix 4. Images of Cuban propaganda

Image removed due to copyright

Figure 2: Alberto Korda, *Guerillero Heroico*, Havana: Cuba, March 5, 1960.

Image removed due to copyright

Figure 3: Cuban Parliament, Havana.

Source: TripAdvisor, Photoguy66degrees, Iconic Symbol of Cuba's Post Revolution History,
Photo: *The Iconic Che Guevara Face That Is Seen Just About Everywhere In Post Revolution
Cuba*, 2012.

Image removed due to copyright

Figure 4: Socialismo o muerte

Source: Miriam Leiva, reconciliacioncubana.wordpress.com, August 10, 2016.

Image removed due to copyright

Figure 5 : Patria o muerte : venceremos.

Source : antonuriarte.blogspot.com

Kennedy, Castro, et la CIA: Signification historique et politique de l'opération manquée de la Baie des Cochons

Ce mémoire analyse les causes et les conséquences du débarquement manqué de la baie des Cochons. Il s'attache à prouver que le mode opératoire de cette opération est propre à celui utilisé par la CIA sous Eisenhower au travers des exemples iraniens et guatémaltèques. Les divergences entre Kennedy et la CIA sont notamment développées et analysées comme l'un des facteurs d'échec de cette opération. La mise en exergue du manque de professionnalisme de l'agence de renseignement et de l'indécision du président Kennedy démontre que cette opération était vouée à l'échec dès sa conception. Ce mémoire analyse, au travers de la perception qu'ont eu les Américains de cet événement, les répercussions néanmoins positives sur la popularité de Kennedy. Enfin, une description minutieuse des impacts bénéfiques de l'évènement pour le régime cubain représenté par Fidel Castro sera effectuée. Au travers de témoignages, ce mémoire tentera également de comprendre la vision multiple, en fonction des générations, que la population cubaine a eu de cette invasion.

Mots-clés : Baie des Cochons, Brigade 2506, CIA, Cuba, Castro, Kennedy, Etats-Unis

Kennedy, Castro, and the CIA: the historical and political significance of the Bay of Pigs failed operation

This thesis analyses the causes and consequences of the Bay of Pigs failed landing. It aims to prove that the operational mode is the one used by the CIA under Eisenhower with the Iranian and Guatemalan examples. Divergences between Kennedy and the CIA are developed and treated as one of the numerous factors which led to this failure. The Agency's lack of professionalism and Kennedy's indecisiveness demonstrates that this operation was meant to fail since its conception. This thesis analyses, throughout US perception, the somehow positive consequences on Kennedy's popularity. Finally, a meticulous description of the event's positive impacts for Cuban regime represented by Fidel Castro is done. Throughout testimonies, this thesis also intends to understand the multiple Cuban people's vision of the invasion, depending on generations.

Keywords: Bay of Pigs, Brigade 2506, CIA, Cuba, Castro, Kennedy, United-States

