

Framing Failure: The Bay of Pigs Invasion Fifty Years Apart

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Abstract: “Framing Failure: The Bay of Pigs Fifty Years Apart” examines the memory of the failed 1961 invasion of the Bay of Pigs, and then fifty years on, in the 2000s. It analyses how the memory has been framed in three key perspectives to handle the consequences of a prominent failure on a domestic and foreign stage. This paper argues that despite the time span, each perspective frames the failure differently without addressing the event, to ultimately demonstrate an inability or unwillingness to deal with loss directly. The presidential perspective hides behind public half-truths to avoid blame but needs to address the event directly to change present policies. The Cuban community’s perspectives do not view the event in terms of failure, but instead pushes heroic ideals and justifications. And the popular culture perspective is far more openly critical, using creative liberties to explore themes of fear and failure on a broader scale.

Cuba has been a sore spot in US relations for over half a century following the solidification of communism during the Cold War. The resulting policy of isolation towards Cuba on the foreign stage arose not simply due to conflicting ideologies, but from severe oversights and close calls. The catastrophic consequences of 1961, quickly followed by the Cuban Missile Crisis a year later, triggered the severance of ties and icy relations. Although the Bay of Pigs is a prominent failure in American foreign affairs, examining the memory through three critical perspectives, fifty years apart, serves as a case study in framing failure to exemplify the need for change, heroic ideals, and the broader consequences of political action without addressing the event itself.

The Bay of Pigs Invasion

After World War II, American morale rose with the victory in the Pacific. The initial stages of the Cold War, although worrisome, had not yet been marked with significant defeat against the Soviets. The United States' policy of containment served to hold back the tide of communism in other parts of the world, but by 1959 the threat was in America’s backyard.¹ In January of that year, Fidel Castro led a revolt in Cuba against US-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista to seize power, initiating a drastic change in US policy. Initially wary of Castro and his regime, the United States quickly took action to limit the influence of communism. The logical way to do this involved the removal of Castro and the re-implementation of a friendly government.² Under the Eisenhower administration in 1960, the CIA trained Cuban exiles in Guatemala for an invasion plan which required guerilla warfare. This quickly morphed into a larger amphibious attack which aimed to gain revolutionary support on the island. President John F. Kennedy authorized the continuation of the plan on January 28, 1961, when he rose to office.³ The plan’s success

¹ The Truman Doctrine documents America’s policy towards preventing the spread of communism. “Truman Doctrine (1947),” National Archives, accessed February 28, 2023. <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/truman-doctrine>

² Rebecca R. Friedman, “Crisis Management at the Dead Center: The 1960-1961 Presidential Transition and the Bay of Pigs Fiasco,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (2011): 310–11, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23884834>.

³ Piero Gleijeses, “Ships in the Night: The CIA, the White House and the Bay of Pigs,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 27, no. 1 (1995): 10–11, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/158201>.

hinged on internal uprisings against the Castro regime once the Cuban exiles landed so that the revolutionaries could utilize the unrest to implement a provisional government.⁴

In the two months that followed, President Kennedy received a slew of briefings on the situation from the CIA and Department of Defense, with both conceding that “at worst [...] the invaders would get into the mountains, and at best they think they might get a full-fledged civil war.”⁵ This preferred outcome meant that the US could openly back the forces within the country without revealing prior clandestine involvement. Some within the administration held concerns over this plan, but due to the staff’s newness and the lack of honest communication, these opinions did not get voiced until too late.

The US needed plausible deniability about their involvement in the invasion to avoid potentially harmful political and international ramifications, so Kennedy initiated a series of changes. The landing site for the invasion got moved from Trinidad to the Bay of Pigs, which allowed for US deniability, but meant that the guerilla fighters could not retreat into the mountains should the plan fail.⁶ Kennedy also changed aspects of the aerial plan, which significantly impacted the outcome of the attack. On April 15, two days prior to the landing, the CIA used old WWII B-26 bombers, painted to look like Cuban airplanes, to attempt to destroy Castro’s airfields. Kennedy limited the size of the force from sixteen planes down to eight, not realizing their crucial place within the plan.⁷ The air assault proved unsuccessful in destroying a significant portion of the targets and revealed American support due to images of the planes landing in Miami appearing in the press. Kennedy subsequently cancelled an additional planned airstrike and cautiously used American aircraft after the invasion, all of which did little to aid the outcome.⁸

By the time the scheduled night invasion happened on April 17, Castro had received ample warning of activity, and a large portion of his forces remained intact. As a result, Brigade 2506, consisting of over 1,400 American-sponsored Cuban exiles, faced a grueling two-day fight with heavy gunfire and air attacks. The beach formed a remote swampy area, which made combat difficult and prevented access to supplies and support from any revolutionaries in the local community. The brigade had nowhere to retreat, and within days of the landing, Castro’s forces killed over 100 members and captured the remaining 1,200.⁹

Regardless of the specific causes of the failure, the consequences of the Bay of Pigs remained ever-present over the course of the next two years. Castro made numerous televised appearances with the captured prisoners as a means of propaganda and issued sentences to them following questioning. The surviving brigade members remained in captivity in Cuba for twenty months whilst non-governmental US groups and Castro struck a deal. The prisoner exchange came at the cost of \$53,000,000 of food and

⁴ Gleijeses, *Ships in the night*, 23-24.

⁵ Peter Kornbluh, *Bay of Pigs Declassified: The Secret CIA Report on the Invasion of Cuba* (New York: The New Press, 1998), 288.

⁶ Friedman, *Crisis Management*, 322.

⁷ Kornbluh, 303.

⁸ JFK Library, *Bay of Pigs*.

⁹ “The Bay of Pigs,” John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, accessed February 9, 2023, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/jfk-in-history/the-bay-of-pigs>.

medicine delivered by the Red Cross.¹⁰ The failure impacted those involved and dealt a considerable blow to the public faith in the Kennedy administration, which became further involved in Cuban operations as a means of redemption.¹¹

Presidential Perspective

Speaking before the American Society of Newspaper Editors on April 20, 1961, with the previous day's defeat fresh in President Kennedy's mind, he reinforced that "this was a struggle of Cuban patriots against a Cuban dictator," without acknowledging his role in the crisis. Although history has shown President Kennedy as a key player in the decisions that resulted in the failure at the Bay of Pigs, he rarely publicly admitted to the event. In the same speech, Kennedy states, "from this sobering episode [there are] useful lessons for all to learn." Instead of accepting fault, Kennedy chose to switch the focus to the threat of communism itself and doubled down on its "insidious nature."¹² This unwillingness to accept fault surfaced again in a press conference the following day in which Kennedy stated, "there's an old saying that victory has a hundred fathers and defeat is an orphan" before claiming himself as the "responsible officer of government." However, even this loose admittance became wrapped up in other issues and statements enough to blur the true meaning.¹³ A week later, on April 27, 1961, Kennedy's tactic of shifting focus came into practice once again when he stated, "this administration intends to be candid about its errors" but proceeded to criticize the press for leaking information on covert operations "to every newspaper reader, friend and foe alike."¹⁴ Kennedy consistently attempted to save face and not have the foreign policy blunder define his whole presidential career.

Just over a year later, Kennedy once again found himself standing before the press, and a crowd of 10,000 people in Miami's Orange Bowl Stadium, addressing the event to relieved family members and friends. On December 29, 1962, Kennedy received Brigade 2506's Flag and continued his tactic of shifting the focus of failure with a speech to the returning prisoners emphasizing not only their courage but also that their efforts symbolized a "reaffirmation that the human desire for freedom and independence is essentially unconquerable."¹⁵ These words reiterate the previous choice to drive home the view that the Bay of Pigs was an act of the Cuban people, in the role of heroic freedom fighters standing up to the common enemy of Communism.

¹⁰ Lillian Goldman Law Library, "Cuban Missile Crisis Circular Telegram to All Latin American Posts, 255" *Avalon Project – Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy*. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/msc_cuba255.asp

¹¹ JFK Library, *Bay of Pigs*.

¹² John F. Kennedy, "Address to American Society of Newspaper Editors, 20 April 1961." Presidential Papers, President's Office Files, Speech Files, 41-43. *John F. Kennedy Library and Museum*. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKPOF/034/JFKPOF-034-018>

¹³ Kennedy, John F. "News Conference 10, April 21, 1961" *John F. Kennedy Library and Museum*. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/archives/other-resources/john-f-kennedy-press-conferences/news-conference-10>

¹⁴ John F. Kennedy, "Press copy of The President and the Press, 27 April 1961," Presidential Papers, President's Office Files, Speech Files, 1-5. *National Archives Catalog*. <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/193866>

¹⁵ John F. Kennedy, "Remarks in Miami at the Presentation of the Flag of the Cuban Invasion Brigade," *The American Presidency Project*, December 29, 1962. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-miami-the-presentation-the-flag-the-cuban-invasion-brigade>

Privately, Kennedy acknowledged responsibility for the events and sought to deal with the consequences. When recounting his experiences on the Cuban prisoner release efforts in 1964, Deputy Attorney General Joseph Dolan recalled the President's brother, Robert Kennedy, "saying that the President assumed the complete responsibility for getting those men in there and the President thought we ought to get those men out."¹⁶ This private conversation emphasized Kennedy's own personal acknowledgement of the failure and the efforts made on his part to rectify the situation. The prisoners captured after the invasion, and the efforts to get them released, became a way for Kennedy to do just that without discussing Cuba more than necessary.

Whereas Kennedy wished to keep the isolation policy in place, from the beginning of Senator Obama's 2008 presidential campaign, policy change regarding Cuba formed a recurring topic of debate. The opening of Obama's speech to the Cuban American National Foundation in Miami in 2008 refers to those "who have stood up with courage and conviction for Cuban liberty." The "who" in this statement is in reference to the veterans of the 2506 Brigade, amongst other rebel forces, over the years. Obama demonstrates a glorified view of the events, focusing more on the ideals and the people involved than the scandal itself. Within the same campaign speech, he pledged to use "direct diplomacy" with "careful preparation" to change the course of isolation policies and allow family travel and limited monetary amounts into Cuba while still maintaining the embargo.¹⁷

For Obama, the Bay of Pigs symbolized a genuine need for change in policy and attitude towards Cuba, and his previous claims became more than just a bid to win the vote in Florida. On December 17, 2014, both President Obama and President Castro announced a change in relations that precipitated the reopening of embassies in 2015.¹⁸ The thaw in Cuban relations reached a new milestone when Obama visited Cuba the following year. In a speech given in Havana on March 22, 2016, President Obama used the Bay of Pigs, which coincided with his birth year, as a marker to emphasize how long the isolation policy remained in place. His trip aimed to create "open debate and dialogue" to aid both the Cuban and American people.¹⁹ Overall, the memory served Obama as a tool for promoting ideals and facilitating change in the early 2000s.

Kennedy's memory of the event is one of public avoidance and private responsibility, which may partly be due to the time frame within which the invasion occurred. Kennedy had not served six months in office before the Bay of Pigs took place, with the newness of his staff contributing to the failure. The public avoidance of the failure not only serves to avoid international backlash but also to aid in his administration's image until the president redeemed himself with other events. This is true of the Cuban Missile Crisis,

¹⁶ Dolan, Joseph F. "Cuban Prisoner Release Project Joseph Dolan Interview July 8, 1964." John F. Kennedy Oral Histories, 1-16. *National Archives Catalog*. <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/193653>

¹⁷ Barack Obama, "Remarks to the Cuban American National Foundation in Miami, Florida," The American Presidency Project, May 23, 2008, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-cuban-american-national-foundation-miami-florida>

¹⁸ "Charting a New Course on Cuba: The Progress We've Made Since 2014," Obama White House Archives, accessed March 7, 2023, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/issues/foreign-policy/cuba>

¹⁹ Barack Obama, "Remarks by President Obama to the People of Cuba," Obama White House Archives, March 22, 2016, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/03/22/remarks-president-obama-people-Cuba>

which ultimately overshadowed the Bay of Pigs, and many of the points of failure in the invasion acted as learning opportunities in the following event. The tactic of shifting focus formed more than just an avoidance strategy, as both US and foreign papers reported much of the invasion planning well before any action took place. Therefore, this strategy served a dual purpose, and the failure opened the government's eyes to the need for better information security.

Obama similarly avoided an explicit acceptance of US responsibility in the outcome of the failure and used the Cuban spirit and heroism as a push for change. Unlike Kennedy, however, Obama does not shift away from the tense nature of the topic and, instead, chooses to directly address and alleviate the tension that has resided between the two countries over the decades. This is a product of the times, and not a possibility fifty years prior. The end of the Cold War allowed for a more open critique of past actions and policies without the fear of extensive repercussions. The opening of borders and discussion, regardless of how small to begin with, demonstrated a willingness to adapt and learn. For some, especially the younger generations, these actions began a new era. Not everyone held this viewpoint, with many seeing Obama's use of Cuban resilience as a political chip. The idea of negotiating with communist dictators offended more conservative individuals, and the sight of Obama next to President Raul Castro further served the belief that past sacrifice and actions had been futile.²⁰

Cuban Community Perspective

The prisoners of Brigade 2506 formed a central focus for the Cuban community in the 1960s. Several letters written from within the walls of the Castillo Del Principe in Cuba detail the feelings of pride felt by the brigade members for their involvement in the invasion. One young soldier wrote to his family, stating, "I have something that is worth more than liberty. I have the satisfaction of having done something against communism – and for Cuba." Interestingly, in several of the letters, the hardship of battle and the lack of resources during the invasion are mentioned, but there is no resentment over the loss. Instead, there is a focus on patriotic ideals and the liberty of Cuba from oppression. In their letters home, other brigade members shared a similar outlook before the military trials began, with one man claiming, "we have done our duty as Cubans [...] and as members of the great democratic world." The sentiments expressed within these letters all share a similar tone and sense of comradeship between the brigade members, who convince themselves and their families that their actions are not to be looked at with shame, but with pride as part of a larger action against communism.²¹

The Cuban Families Committee for the Liberation of Prisoners of War also formed a point of focus within the community. All the committee members had a familial connection to an incarcerated fighter from the Bay of Pigs, and they negotiated directly with Castro for the prisoners' release with the help of

²⁰ Barack Obama, "Remarks by President Obama to the People of Cuba," Obama White House Archives, March 22, 2016, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/03/22/remarks-president-obama-people-Cuba>

²¹ John F. Kennedy Presidential Library Staff "6-5: Cuba: Cuban Crisis, 1962: Cuban Prisoner Exchange (James B. Donovan)" Papers of Robert F. Kennedy. Attorney General Papers. Attorney General's Confidential File. 142. <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/RFKAG/217/RFKAG-217-002>

New York lawyer James B. Donovan. Castro's demands ranged from tractors to monetary fines before he agreed to trade the prisoner's freedom for much-needed baby food and pharmaceuticals. A brief statement of purpose by the Committee for the Cuban Prisoners Freedom Fund hailed the brigade members for their "dedication to their homeland and freedom" as well as for their "splendid morale" as they "stood mute" against the questioning of US involvement even under threat of a possible death penalty.²² The men are viewed as heroes for their actions even if the result was a failure; their strength in the face of hardship, and willingness to fight for freedom outweighed the result.

For the Cuban communities living in Miami, 2000 onwards marked a series of milestones for both veterans and their families. The fiftieth anniversary of the release and return of Cuban exiles imprisoned after the Bay of Pigs took place in December 2012. The Cuban Families Committee as well as individuals like Virginia Betancourt still hold an important place in the community and are remembered for their efforts along with those who fought.²³ The surviving members of the 2506 Brigade arrived in Miami in 1962, where a crowd of 10,000 people received them as heroes. To this day, they are still primarily seen as heroes despite the invasion's overall outcome. Almost sixty years on, Johnny Lopez de la Cruz, a member of the 2506 Brigade, reflected on his release, stating that he "did not feel humiliated. Because of our release, Cuba received a lot of clothing, food, and medicine."²⁴ For Lopez de la Cruz and other veterans, they chose to remember the invasion and imprisonment as eventually benefitting Cuba.

The death of Fidel Castro in November 2016 united the Cuban community in Miami, not only those immediately impacted by the Bay of Pigs. Hundreds of people flooded the streets at the news, regardless of age, occupation, or experience. For some, this formed a bittersweet moment as they had lost loved ones at the Bay of Pigs or to Castro's regime. For many, Castro "embodied the revolution" and became synonymous with the events in Cuba and the conditions that tore families from their homes and heritage. As such, his death signified a new sense of freedom with a weakening for the need of America's hardline policy, something reflected in Obama's efforts. The celebrations highlighted a generational gap within the community. Young people like 15-year-old Julie Peñate saw it as an opportunity to "do something greater." By contrast, 83-year-old Hugo Ravelo hoped for a change in Cuba but did not foresee how, clearly referring to Castro's brother when he stated, "the other one is still there."²⁵ Overall, his death signified the "beginning of the end" for the community, even though an oppressive regime still resided in Cuba. This hope for change existed in the memory as a desire for something better.²⁶

²² Donovan Papers, 134-149.

²³ Luisa Yanez, "On Saturday, Bay of Pigs invasion veterans mark 50 years since their release," *Miami Herald*, December 20, 2012, <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/special-reports/bay-of-pigs/article1945659.html>

²⁴ Jose Carlos Cueto, "How the Bay of Pigs invasion began - and failed - 60 years on," *BBC*, April 23, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-56808455>

²⁵ Francisco Alvarado, Nicole Martinez, "Miami's Cubans celebrate Castro's death, hopeful for fresh start," Reuters, November 26, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/cuba-castro-miami/miamis-cubans-celebrate-castros-death-hopeful-for-fresh-start-idINKBN13L0MK>

²⁶ Lizette Alvarez, "Miami's Cuban Exiles Celebrate Castro's Death," *The New York Times*, November 26, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/26/us/miami-cubans-fidel-castro.html>

Both the 1960s and the 2000s hold a similar perspective on the Bay of Pigs, with the wider Cuban community focused heavily on the gallant fighters of freedom rather than the failure. Regarding the earlier time period, the community's concerns for their loved ones rather than for the broader political consequences of the event are easily understandable, given that the event occurred within the decade itself and remained fresh in their minds. Many not involved in the invasion themselves, chose to focus on release efforts rather than placing blame as a means of dealing with the cost of the failure. For the members of the Brigade, the general opinion is not one of failure but of pride in their actions, whether this is out of a need to justify the cost and consequences, or out of a sense of national pride.

Fifty years later, the emphasis on the Bay of Pigs and its consequences as aiding rather than hurting Cuba are still firmly held. The heroism of the brigade remained a pillar for the community, with those who helped secure their release and get supplies into Cuba celebrated as heroes alongside them. The difference with this later time period is that there is significant emphasis on the future of relations with Cuba, and in a time riddled with uncertainty and promises of change, there is significant hope for Cuban liberty that the brigade fought for initially. There are individuals who see this change and the associated political promises as empty due to decades of inaction, but there are far more who see it as a beginning.

Popular Culture Perspective

Popular culture of the 1960s focuses heavily on the implications of failure in a nuclear age, something inherent in the Bay of Pigs invasion. Sidney Lumet's 1964 movie *Fail Safe* deals with the idea of an unstoppable nuclear war due to a mechanical failure within rapidly advancing technological systems. The film looks at the event from a governmental and military perspective, following the disaster that unfolds as bombers receive a false go-ahead from a fail-safe point, with all attempts to shoot them down or contact them failing. The result is a stray, unreachable nuclear bomber which forces the US and Soviet Union to cooperate and trust one another to negate total mutually assured destruction by destroying equivalent cities. The film's dialogue brings up various interesting questions: when asked about who holds responsibility for the checks, balances, and circumstances of nuclear war, a group of military men provide an overlapped response of the "president" and "no-one." *Fail-Safe* picks up on not only the failure at the Bay of Pigs and fears from the Cuban Missile Crisis, but also who is responsible and what actions can prevent the destruction seen at the movie's end.²⁷

Released in the same year as *Fail Safe*, Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* approaches a similar scenario through a satirical lens. The same fears of failure and nuclear destruction exist in this movie but look at when the "human element failed." In this instance, a rogue General Ripper forces the hand of both the US and the Soviets by giving the nuclear order to B-52 bombers without providing a code to rescind the action. The stakes here are not simply that retaliation would ensue but that a Soviet doomsday device would automatically trigger if the flights proved successful in their mission. The film asks crucial questions within its satirical plot about how vital

²⁷ *Fail Safe*, directed by Sidney Lumet (Columbia Pictures, 1964) 1hr., 52 min.

information would reach the relevant authorities and how certain information reaches their enemies. There is a particularly comical line from the Russian Ambassador when asked how he obtained certain information, to which he replied, “our source was *The New York Times*.” This subtle nod picks up on fears Kennedy held following the Bay of Pigs and the release of information as a threat to national security. Ultimately, the movie ends in mutually assured destruction as the American airmen's training proves too effective to stop.²⁸

Regarding the early 2000s, the overall themes shown in the movie *The Good Shepherd* deal with a different aspect of the Bay of Pigs invasion in relation to the CIA and information. The film begins with the event itself and immediately picks up on its failure from a lack of air support and resources, stating that “our chances of success” depended on those planes. The tale contains fictitious characters and events, including a traitor as the reason for the invasion's failure. Interestingly, this is from a CIA perspective and uses the future event of the Bay of Pigs as the backdrop for the agency's founding. Trust, or lack thereof, is a constant theme throughout, with the movie heavily inferring that the failure to keep information confidential resulted in the Bay of Pigs loss.²⁹

Another film that handles the Bay of Pigs is the 2001 movie *Thirteen Days*, which focuses on the Cuban Missile Crisis within the White House administration. This movie takes a more biographical focus, centering on Kenneth O’Donnell and his relationship with the Kennedy brothers. Frequent references to the Bay of Pigs emerge throughout the movie, with its portrayal as a failure coming from multiple groups, including the Joint Chiefs, CIA, and the President himself. The Cuban Missile Crisis, therefore, acts as a redemption event for the administration and becomes a “foreign policy trophy,” the exact opposite of the Bay of Pigs. Many of the causes of the Bay of Pigs resurface as concerns in the movie, such as fear over rash decisions and disfunction between different government branches. The overall memory then is of a failure due to poor decision-making and a lack of communication, which permeates the atmosphere but ultimately acts as a learning tool.³⁰

The popular culture aspect of the 1960s reflects a view concerned with the consequences of failure without directly dealing with the events, considering both human and mechanical errors. The movies grapple with the meaning of this issue in the nuclear age and what the new consequence of failure means. Both films examined are likely to have been equally impacted by the events of the Cuban Missile Crisis regarding how close the world came to nuclear war. However, as mentioned before, the results of Kennedy’s actions in Cuba a second time held a far different outcome due to the learning curve that the Bay of Pigs formed. The criticisms of the military and administrative divide brought up by both movies, as well as the need to slow or stop the rapid escalation of the arms race, also form entirely valid points. The difference between the films lies not in their outcomes, of which they are scarily similar, but in their portrayal and

²⁸ *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, directed by Stanley Kubrick (Hawk Films, 1964) 1hr., 34 min.

²⁹ *The Good Shepherd*, directed by Robert De Niro, (Universal, 2006). 2hr., 47 min.
https://www.amazon.com/gp/video/detail/B00D5UGNRG/ref=atv_hm_hom_1_c_lZOsi7_2_1

³⁰ *Thirteen Days*, Directed by Roger Donaldson, (Beacon Pictures, 2001) 2hr., 25 min.
https://www.amazon.com/gp/video/detail/B072VYN95T/ref=atv_hm_hom_c_lZOsi7_2_1

tone, which convey different attitudes to the end of time. *Dr Strangelove* portrays nuclear failure as inevitable, whereas *Fail Safe* views it as an unimaginable horror that was never truly destined to happen.

The perspective from 2000 popular culture also takes a very different view, not shying away from highlighting the invasion itself as a failure. This open admission of defeat only happens within this perspective regardless of the time period, and it is perhaps due to the protection of creative liberties and the end of the Cold War that they can do so. The passage of time between the event and the release of such movies has allowed many closely held aspects of the failure to be released, and this form of media explores each avenue thoroughly. The two films each place the blame for the failure within the upper levels of government organizations, *The Good Shepherd* within the CIA, and *Thirteen Days* primarily with inaction and the presidency. The films in this time period specifically are less concerned with the nuclear fear that permeated the 1960s, instead looking at explaining failure and using it as a learning experience.

Despite the decades that have passed since the Bay of Pigs, the failure remains a thorny topic of conversation. From a Presidential perspective, hiding behind public half-truths has worked to avoid admitting fault, but present policies cannot change without addressing the past. From a Cuban perspective, the focus is on the individual, not the failure, as a means to justify their actions and to present a heroic image. Popular culture is a more critical perspective, using the shield of creative liberties to explore the consequences of fear and failure, but again it does not address the issue of the event itself. Instead, each perspective frames the failure differently, with the memory of the event ultimately reflecting the inability or unwillingness to deal with loss directly.

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