• Others tell him to declare war.
• Kennedy declines desire for war—will increase aid (military advisors and green beret units in Vietnam)
• Middle Course with Diem Regime
  o Won’t let Vietnam collapse but won’t send US troops.
  o Number of military personnel: 900 when Kennedy took office
    ▪ By end of 1962, it rises to 12,000 advisors in Vietnam.
  o Despite this support, the situation continues to deteriorate.
    ▪ Diem truly was corrupt and a thug/inefficient.
      ▪ Alienated peasants and keep all aid for himself.
  o Summer 1963—Buddhists in the South demanded religious freedom
    ▪ Diem was destroying Buddhist temples and trying to eliminate this.
    ▪ Buddhist monks initiated protests.
    ▪ One set himself on fire to protest the Diem regime.
  o Relationship between Kennedy administration and Diem was rocky and got worse.
    ▪ Diem failed to reform.
  o Should Diem be overthrown, US would do nothing—hate them.
    ▪ US tacitly green lights a coup against Diem, but the coup goes further and kills him and his family—November 1.
• What if Kennedy lived?
  o There’s talk of withdrawal, but in a limited context.
    ▪ Kennedy wouldn’t be retreating anytime soon due to increase of aid militarily and economically.
    ▪ USA was committed.

III. LBJ and “That Bitch of a War” (33:00-42:00)
• Feminized things.
• Called the Great Society the woman he loved
• That Bitch was interfering with the development of the Society
  o It’s becoming something of great importance to the US foreign office.
  o Vietcong went on an offensive in the winter of 1963-1964.
    ▪ Military group put in place of Diem was taken out.
• Johnson was insecure in foreign policy
  o Saw Vietnam as a test of strength for his own prestige and America’s authority as head of the free world.
  o Johnson feels the need to act tough—must respond.
• 1964—When US ships are fired on, the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution was passed.
• Action is taken—the Gulf of Tonkin
  • The Incident
    o US had a battleship in international waters conducting espionage.
      ▪ South Vietnamese had a series of torpedo boats rapidly going up & down the Vietnamese coast firing on land.
      ▪ Vietnamese fire a warning shot at the ship—USS Maddox
        ◦ Don’t target it directly, but they fire a torpedo at it.
        ◦ Johnson orders it back in.
    o Johnson orders the USS Maddox and asks it to be joined by another ship—C. Turner Joy
      ▪ North Vietnamese assume that it was in preparation of an assault
      ▪ August 4—Ships reported being attacked, but Captain reported it later as a false alarm—may not have been attacked.
      ▪ There is a lot of doubt.
  • Gulf of Tonkin Resolution—LBJ.
    o President could take any necessary measures against Vietnamese attacks and to prevent further aggression.
    o Johnson never mentions the doubt of the second attack.
    o House votes for it.
  • By November 1964, most officials in the Johnson administration wished to escalate their efforts in Vietnam, plan a bombing campaign against North Vietnam and certain spots in the South
• The Trigger
  o February 8, 1965—Attack on Plaiceu Base.
    ▪ 8 Military advisors are killed.
  o Johnson responds by initiating Operation Rolling Thunder
    ▪ Massive bombing campaign (targeting Strongholds of the National Liberation Front—November 1964)
    ▪ Escalation of an air war led to escalation in the ground—US troops will be sent to defend air bases.
    ▪ Number of troops goes up.
• Reasoning for Escalation
  o Every president had made a firm commitment in defending Vietnam—America had made a promise through 3 presidents