

4-28-2015

President Kennedy and the Escalation of the Vietnam War

Kenneth L. Sterner

Cedarville University, ksterner@cedarville.eduFollow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/history_capstonesPart of the [History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Sterner, Kenneth L., "President Kennedy and the Escalation of the Vietnam War" (2015). *History Capstone Research Papers*. 1.
http://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/history_capstones/1

This Capstone Project is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@Cedarville, a service of the Centennial Library. It has been accepted for inclusion in History Capstone Research Papers by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Cedarville. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@cedarville.edu.

Kennedy Responsible: Vietnam

By: Kenneth Sterner

Senior Thesis

4/23/2015

Table of Contents

- 1) Introduction
 - A) Literature Review
 - B) Thesis
- 2) Historical Context
 - A) President Truman's Role
 - B) President Eisenhower's Role
 - C) President Kennedy's Role
 - D) President Johnson's Role
 - E) The Impact of President Eisenhower
- 3) Main Argument
 - A) Kennedy's Removal of President Diem
 - B) Diem and the Political Stability of South Vietnam.
1954-1963
 - C) The Political Instability of South Vietnam after Diem.
1963-1965
 - D) Kennedy, Diem, and the Success of the Vietnam War.
1960-1963
 - E) The War in South Vietnam after Diem. 1963-1965.
 - F) President Diem and the Economics of South Vietnam.
1954-1968.
- 4) Hesitation, or Personality?
- 5) Conclusion

Map of Vietnam



Map of North and South Vietnam



Ngo Dinh Diem



Section 1: Introduction

In nearly 250 years of existence, the United States has rarely faced an opponent that was able to match, let alone defeat, its superior military capabilities. The conflict in Vietnam is one of the rare instances in time where a significantly weaker faction was able to resist the strength of America's political, military, and economic superiority. When American disdain for the war reached its peak in the late 1960's, many people blamed President Lyndon B. Johnson's 'Great Escalation' for involving the U.S in a protracted, unwinnable war. As several government documents became declassified in the 1990's many historians became convinced that President Eisenhower's "Hidden Hand" presidency placed America on the path toward involvement in Vietnam. David L. Anderson, author of *Trapped by Success, The Eisenhower Administration and Vietnam*, represents those historians showing President Eisenhower's path to Vietnam. Anderson does this by arguing Eisenhower supported a flailing South Vietnamese government with economic and military programs. Economic programs, such as the Commercial Import Program, supported a South Vietnamese economy that otherwise would have collapsed.¹ The Military Assistance Group (MAAG) and Temporary Equipment Recovery Mission (TERM) supported a South Vietnamese army that was weak and ineffective. Finally, David Anderson argues that President Eisenhower's decision to create and sign the South East Asia Treaty Organization, SEATO, would force future presidents into the Vietnam conflict and act as a basis for U.S escalation.²

While many historians place the burden of guilt on President Eisenhower or Johnson, some claim that President John F. Kennedy should be held responsible. William J. Rust, author

¹ David Anderson, *Trapped by Success: The Eisenhower Administration and Vietnam 1953-1961*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 49-50

² Anderson, 117

of *Kennedy in Vietnam, American Foreign Policy from 1960-1963*, argues that President Kennedy's policies drew America into the Vietnam War. William Rust argues that the Counter Insurgency and Strategic Hamlet plan were programs that attempted to take power and decision making out of the hands of the South Vietnamese government, ultimately creating a government that was reliant on United States support.³ Rust also argues that President Kennedy's introduction of four hundred Green Berets, authorization of several joint U.S-Vietnamese missions, growth of the South Vietnamese army, and escalation of military advisers to over sixteen thousand placed America in a position where it could not withdraw from Vietnam, ultimately forcing Johnson into the conflict.⁴

Finally, some historians continue to claim that President Lyndon Johnson remains the primary reason America entered the Vietnam conflict. Michael H. Hunt, author of *Lyndon Johnson's War, America's Cold War Crusade in Vietnam, 1945-1968*, argues that even though Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy's use of aid to South Vietnam placed Johnson in a difficult position, Johnson made three steps of his own to escalate the war. First, Johnson used tough rhetoric and more American aid to try and halt North Vietnam from escalating the war. Hunt quotes several of President Johnson's speeches and escalation of advisers in 1964 as a 'soft' escalation.⁵ With this type of escalation not working, President Johnson moved onto bombing campaigns in order to win the conflict. Michael Hunt argues that Operation "Rolling Thunder," an extensive bombing campaign authorized on March 8th, was designed to bomb North Vietnam into submission.⁶ With Operation Rolling Thunder dealing substantial damage, but not ending

³ William Rust, *Kennedy in Vietnam: American Foreign Policy from 1960 to 1963*, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1985), page 50-51

⁴ Rust, 181

⁵ Michael Hunt, *Lyndon Johnson's War: America's Cold War Crusade in Vietnam, 1945-1968*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996), 80-85

⁶ Hunt, 92

the conflict, Johnson made the last decision available to him. After failing to end the war through threats and bombing, Johnson committed American troops into South Vietnam in what fully committed the U.S to the Vietnam Conflict.⁷

While the previous historians make valid points in their examination of responsibility for the Vietnam War, no single author is correct. Author David Anderson rightly places a large portion of blame on President Eisenhower for starting the war, but does not acknowledge the impact of President Kennedy. Rust's arguments correctly place a large portion of blame on President Kennedy, but are unconvincing when viewing the antagonism between the U.S and South Vietnam. Hunt does a fair job explaining that Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy laid a foundation for President Johnson, but writes as if President Johnson had a choose to escalate the war. This paper will show that President Kennedy's decision to remove Ngo Dinh Diem as President of South Vietnam placed him as the decisive President that forced the U.S into the Vietnam conflict.

Section 2: Historical Context

In order to properly examine President Kennedy's intervention in the Vietnam conflict, it is important to establish historical context for America's involvement. U.S intervention in Vietnam can be traced back to President Harry Truman's support for the French during the early 1950's. Although Vietnam did not exist as a sovereign state during this time, since France regarded the entire Indochina region as a single colony, the people in Vietnam fervently believed they were a unique nationality. The U.S.S.R, wanting to create a bastion of Communism in Asia, supported revolutionary groups seeking to free themselves from French Colonialism, such as the

⁷ Hunt, 98

Viet Minh. With the U.S and U.S.S.R struggling for dominance in the early years of the cold war, the U.S supported its ally France in the region. Truman believed the French forces in the region were acting as a substitute for American troops; his commitment of more than twenty three and a half million dollars to the French war effort withheld the need for American troops in the region. As 1950's progressed, and despite Truman's economic aid, the French had spent more than one trillion Francs and been unable to win the war.⁸ After years of fighting to maintain its colonial empire, France surrendered its right to govern Southeast Asia when it signed the Geneva Agreements on July 20th, 1954. These agreements created several nations in the Indochina region, ranging from Laos, to Cambodia, to North and South Vietnam. The Viet-Minh, who were unhappy with the creation of a North and South Vietnam, agreed to the accords because France assured unifying elections in 1956 if the Viet Minh halted hostilities against South Vietnam.⁹

President Eisenhower refused to acknowledge the Geneva Agreements because of continued Viet Minh attacks against South Vietnam, as well as the absence of a plan to implement U.N oversight of the unifying elections. Because the Viet Minh attacks originated from North Vietnam, and South Vietnam being attacked for being democratic, President Eisenhower started to supply South Vietnam with a small amount of economic and military aid.¹⁰ As justification for the aid, President Eisenhower introduced the Domino theory. The Domino Theory, first mentioned on April 7th, 1954, argued that if one country in Southeast Asia fell to

⁸ "The Tangled Web: America, France and Indochina 1947-50," *HistoryToday*, last modified January 1, 2012, accessed April 2, 2015, <http://www.historytoday.com/sami-abouzahr/tangled-web-america-france-and-indochina-1947-50>

⁹ "Indochina - Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Viet-Nam, July 20, 1954," *Lillian Goldman Law Library*, last modified January 1' 2008, accessed January 18th, 2015, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/inch001.asp#1

¹⁰ "Vietnam War, Part I – The Geneva Accords," *History Half*, last modified October 3, 2010, accessed January 24, 2015, <http://historyhalf.com/vietnam-war-part-i-the-geneva-accords/>

Communism, all nearby countries would as well. In 1955 Ngo Dinh Diem, a staunch critic of Communism, gained power in South Vietnam and promised to combat the Viet Minh, who were continuing their terror attacks on South Vietnam in order to scare the population into accepting Communism. President Diem visited the U.S in 1957 and was heavily lauded by both the President and population for being a critical leader in the region, although Eisenhower and Kennedy would later criticize him for not establishing democratic reforms.¹¹ For the remainder of Eisenhower's term the U.S slowly increased its economic and military aid in proportion to the Viet Minh's escalation of terror attacks in South Vietnam.

When President Kennedy assumed office on January 20th, 1961, he received a report from General Edward D. Lansdale, a top CIA official and Staff Member for the Presidential Committee on Military Assistance until late 1961, on the state of affairs in South Vietnam. Kennedy was distraught by the findings of the report, which claimed that the Viet Minh, now named Viet Cong, were gaining ground and could defeat the government of Vietnam, now referred to as the GVN, within three months.¹² In order to counter the Viet Cong threat President Kennedy authorized the Counter Insurgency Plan, known as the CIP, which acted as a basis for expanding U.S economic and military aid to South Vietnam. In terms of economic aid, the CIP granted South Vietnam forty-two million dollars to expand its army by fifty-two thousand men, a steep amount of assistance when considering U.S aid to this point two hundred twenty million dollars.¹³ In terms of military aid, the CIP allowed President Kennedy to dispatch over four hundred Green Berets, strengthen the Temporary Equipment Recovery Mission, change the

¹¹ "Battlefield Vietnam – A Brief History," *PBS News*, last modified January 1, 2008, accessed January 21, 2015, <http://www.pbs.org/battlefieldvietnam/history/index.html>

¹² "Visit of General Edward G. Lansdale to Vietnam January 2-14, 1961," *Office of the Historian*, last modified January 20, 2009, accessed January 22, 2015, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v01/ch1>

¹³ "America Commits, 1961-1964," *TheHistoryPlace*, last modified February 2, 2001, accessed January 17, 2015, <http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/vietnam/index-1961.html>

MAAG organization to Military Assistance Command in Vietnam (MACV), and authorize certain U.S personnel to partake in combat missions in non-offensive ways if South Vietnamese troops were present.¹⁴ In 1962, as a result of growing fears within the administration about the Viet Cong's ability to control the South Vietnamese countryside, Kennedy authorized the Strategic Hamlet Plan. The Strategic Hamlet Plan, also known as Operation Sunrise, was designed to encourage civilians of South Vietnam to re-locate into more defensible areas within South Vietnam. In 1963 President Kennedy appointed Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. as the ambassador for the U.S to Vietnam. Lodge continuously told President Kennedy that South Vietnam would be unable to win the war as long as President Diem remained in office, and that several generals had contacted him seeking support for a coup.¹⁵ President Kennedy, critical of Diem's harsh repression against religious groups, went back and forth between the idea of supporting a coup during the fall of 1963. Despite Kennedy's continued misgivings, Diem was assassinated in a coup on November 2nd, 1963, and replaced by a military junta led by General Duong Van Minh. By the years end, South Vietnam had received more than five hundred million dollars of U.S aid that year alone, and over 16,730 U.S military advisers were training the Army of South Vietnam, also known as ARVN.¹⁶

After Kennedy's assassination on November 22nd, 1963, President Lyndon Baines Johnson took the oath of office and pledged his commitment to continuing his predecessor's policies. In the summer of 1964, North Vietnam, seeking to create a unified, communist state

¹⁴ "Chapter I, 'The Kennedy Commitments and Programs, 1961,' pp. 1-39," *Mt. Holyoke College*, last modified February 1, 2010, accessed January 26, 2015, <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon2/pent1.htm>

¹⁵ Patrick Sloyan, *The Politics of Deception: JFK's Secret Decisions on Vietnam, Civil Rights, and Cuba*, (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2015), 216-19, accessed February 15, 2015, <https://books.google.com/books?id=q01ABAAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Politics+of+Deception:+JFK%27s+Secret+Decisions+on+Vietnam,+Civil+Rights+and+Cuba>

¹⁶ "Memorandum From the Director of the Vietnam Working Group (Kattenburg) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs," *Mary Ferrell Foundation*, last modified December 1, 2008, accessed January 30, 2015, <https://www.maryferrell.org/mffweb/archive/viewer/showDoc.do?docId=945&relPageId=434>

with South Vietnam, moved combat troops into South Vietnam in order to support Viet Cong operations. During the same season, Johnson authorized Operation 34A, which was a special-forces mission where U.S and South Vietnamese commandos raided North Vietnamese ports along the Gulf of Tonkin. The *U.S.S. Maddox* was stationed in the Gulf of Tonkin to support these raids. President Johnson also appointed General Maxwell D. Taylor to the position of Ambassador to Vietnam, who dealt with numerous different governments in the span of a single year. On August 2nd and 3rd, the *U.S.S Maddox* reported that it came under torpedo fire multiple times from unidentified, but assumed North Vietnamese, gunships. While the authenticity of these reports are still called into question today, the American press quickly published the reports and dubbed the attacks as the “Gulf of Tonkin Incident.”¹⁷ Four days after the August 3rd attack the U.S Congress approved the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which authorized President Johnson to take any and all actions he saw as appropriate to retaliate against North Vietnam. Widely seen as a symbol of America’s involvement in Vietnam, the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution stated President Johnson had the unilateral power to take “all steps necessary to ending (the conflict)” without the consent of Congress.¹⁸ President Johnson would do exactly this, authorizing Operation “Rolling Thunder” and committing the first combat specific troops to Vietnam on March 8th, 1965. Finally, in what is seen largely as the final step of American escalation, President Johnson authorized the deployment of one hundred twenty five thousand American soldiers on July 28th, 1965 in an effort to destroy the Viet Cong and stabilize South Vietnam.¹⁹

President Eisenhower’s Importance

¹⁷ “Congress Backs President on Southeast Asia Moves; Khanh sets Stage of Siege,” *NYT Newspaper Online*, last modified January 1 2010, accessed February 15, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/big/0807.html>

¹⁸ “Tonkin Gulf Resolution (1964),” *OurDocuments*, http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc_large_image.php?flash=true&doc=98

¹⁹ “Johnson announces more troops to Vietnam,” *History*, last modified January 1, 2015, accessed January 18, 2015, <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/johnson-announces-more-troops-to-vietnam?catId=15>

President Eisenhower laid the groundwork for American involvement in the Vietnam conflict through two key policies. First, his creation of the Domino Theory was cited by every concurrent President as a reason for escalating American involvement in Vietnam. When asked during an interview with news station NBC in 1963 if he had “any reason to doubt this so-called ‘domino theory,’” President Kennedy replied

“No, I believe it. I believe it. I think that the struggle is close enough. China is so large, looms so high just beyond the frontiers, that if South Viet-Nam went, it would not only give them an improved geographic position for a guerrilla assault on Malaya, but would also give the impression that the wave of the future in southeast Asia was China and the Communists. So I believe it.”²⁰

President Johnson also confirmed his belief in the Domino Theory on March 14th, 1964, when he stated during a T.V interview that

“I think it would be a very dangerous thing, and I share President Kennedy's view, and I think the whole of Southeast Asia would be involved and that would involve hundreds of millions of people, and I think it's-it cannot be ignored, we must do everything that we can, we must be responsible, we must stay there and help them, and that is what we are going to do.”²¹

President Nixon, the U.S leader that oversaw the end of the Vietnam conflict, had argued his support of it as early as December 1953 when he stated that

“If Indochina falls, Thailand is put in an almost impossible position. The same is true of Malaya with its rubber and tin. The same is true of Indonesia. If this whole part of South East Asia goes under Communist domination or Communist influence, Japan, who trades and must trade with this area in order to exist must inevitably be oriented towards the Communist regime.”²²

Eisenhower’s creation of the Domino theory convinced future Presidents into committing U.S resources into South Vietnam. President Eisenhower’s second impact was his decision to not

²⁰ “Transcript of Broadcast on NBC's ‘Huntley-Brinkley Report’,” *Public Papers of the Presidency*, date not given, accessed March 6, 2015, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9397>

²¹ “Transcript of Television and Radio Interview Conducted by Representatives of Major Broadcast Services,” *Public Papers of the Presidency*, date not given, accessed February 11, 2015, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=26108&st=>

²² “US involvement in Vietnam,” *AlphaHistory*, last modified January 1, 2014, accessed February 22, 2015, <http://alphahistory.com/vietnam/us-involvement-in-vietnam/>

endorse the Geneva Agreement of 1954, which allowed President Diem to neglect the implementation of Vietnamese reunification elections in 1956. Secretary of State from 1953 to 1959, John Foster Dulles best described the U.S's role by stating

“If elections constitute one of the bases of true democracy, they will be meaningful only on the condition that they be absolutely free. Now, faced with a regime of oppression as practiced by the Viet Minh, we remain skeptical concerning the possibility of fulfilling the conditions of free elections in the North.”²³

The Pentagon Papers explain the consequences of President Eisenhower's decision by stating he “created two antagonistic Vietnamese nations,” and that “(Eisenhower's) rejection of elections meant reunification could be achieved in the foreseeable future only by resort to force.”²⁴

President Eisenhower would drive the United States to the precipice of involvement in Vietnam, which ultimately placed difficult decisions on the shoulders of the Kennedy administration.

Section 3: Kennedy's Decision

President Kennedy's Removal of President Diem

While Eisenhower's administration created the scenario of U.S involvement in Vietnam, President Kennedy's removal of Ngo Diem deepened, and was the cause of, America's commitment. As the Vietnam conflict was progressing into the early 1960's, President Diem's insistence on placing the sovereignty of South Vietnam over the need for U.S aid led to a deterioration of relations between his administration and Kennedy's in three major areas. First, President Diem rejected the proposal of a stronger political cooperation with the United States. On November 3rd, 1961, General Maxwell D. Taylor, then-military adviser to President Kennedy, proposed the idea of a 'Limited Partnership' with South Vietnam that would give the

²³ Mt. Holyoke College, “Pentagon Papers: Origins of the Insurgency in South Vietnam”

²⁴ Mt. Holyoke College, “Pentagon Papers: Origins of the Insurgency in South Vietnam”

U.S decision making power in Diem's government. This partnership aimed to implement democratic reforms that created democratic elections, in return for an increased, limited amount of U.S military aid.²⁵ Diem responded by saying that the U.S was making too many concessions from South Vietnam, that the possibility of removing Diem from power played into Communist hands, and that they failed to prioritize the security of the South Vietnamese people.²⁶ Second, President Diem continuously told American leaders that he required political support and economic aid instead of combat troops. In a visit to Vietnam in 1961, then Vice President Johnson stated that "Asian Leaders – at this time – do not want American troops involved in Southeast Asia other than on training missions. American combat troops (are) not only not required, (they are) not desirable."²⁷ In a letter to President Kennedy on June 9th, 1961, President Diem distinguished between the need for economic aid to fund a one hundred thousand man increase in the South Vietnamese army, and additional MACV officers to train these men, instead of U.S combat troops.²⁸ Third, as Kennedy continued to mull the idea of committing U.S combat troops, Diem reacted in increasingly antagonistic ways. For example, Diem lauded his brother Nhu when he stated in an interview with Warren Unna of the Washington Post that "At least 50% of the (American) troops in Vietnam were absolutely unnecessary."²⁹

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, a key issue of division between President's Diem and Kennedy was the importance of democratic reforms. The debate over democratic

²⁵ "America Commits: 1961 – 1964," *American Civil War*, last modified January 2008, accessed February 1, 2015, <http://americancivilwar.50megs.com/DisplacedInTime/TodayInHistory/Vietnam/Nam02.htm>

²⁶ "Full text of Pentagon Papers," *Archive*, last modified January 2011, accessed February 2, 2015, https://archive.org/stream/thepentagonpapers/Pentagon-Papers-Part-IV-B-2_djvu.txt

²⁷ William Gibbins, *The U.S. Government and the Vietnam War: Executive and Legislative Roles and Relationships, Part I: 1945-1960*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986), 45, accessed February 2, 2015, https://books.google.com/books?id=hO__AwAAQBAJ&pg=PA45&lpg=PA45&dq=#v=onepage&q&f=false

²⁸ Gibbins, 50, accessed February 2, 2015, https://books.google.com/books?id=hO__AwAAQBAJ&pg=PA45&lpg=PA45&dq=#v=onepage&q&f=false

²⁹ Rust, 92

reforms dates back to the Eisenhower administration, which sought to withhold U.S aid in order to force Diem to implement these changes. During his first year in office, President Kennedy sought to change this tactic by creating a positive repertoire between the two nations which would coax Diem into reform.³⁰ One symbol of this change in policy was Kennedy's replacement of Ambassador Elbridge Durbrow, U.S ambassador to Vietnam from March 1957 to April 1961, with Frederick Nolting, a personal friend of President Diem.³¹ As the war progressed and Diem continued to refuse American encouraged reforms, two different ideologies in the Kennedy administration developed. One ideology, best represented by General Edward D. Lansdale, argued that the administration should continue to support Diem by stating that the U.S should be "(making efforts to) attract the loyalty of the population to... the Diem regime," to "counteract the people within the (South Vietnamese military) spreading propaganda denigrating the Diem Regime," and to "foster a spirit of national unity."³² The other ideology, best represented by Henry Cabot Lodge Jr., ambassador to South Vietnam from August 12th, 1963 until July 13th, 1964, argued that the Diem administration was corrupt and "the next government would not bungle and stumble as much as the present one has" and that "(a coup) is the only way in which the people in Vietnam can possibly get a change of government."³³ President Kennedy would hear advice from these two sides throughout much of his Presidency, (Lodge's ideology endorsed by John C. Galbraith before 1963), and would eventually be forced by future events in South Vietnam to decide which ideology to follow.

³⁰ Mt. Holyoke, "The Kennedy Commitments and Programs, 1961"

³¹ Rust, 54

³² "Basic Counter-Insurgency Plan for Viet-Nam," *Office of the Historian*, last modified January, 2015, accessed February 2, 2015, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v01/d1>

³³ "Telegram From the Ambassador in Vietnam (Lodge) to the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy)" *Office of the Historian*, last modified January, 2015, accessed February 2, 2015, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v04/d216>

President Ngo Diem's actions during the Buddhist crises of 1963 pushed Kennedy into supporting his removal. President Diem authorized the use of force by the South Vietnamese police against Buddhist followers on May 8th, 1963, during a celebration of Buddha's 2,527th birthday. President Diem, a Catholic, fervently opposed the Buddhist celebrations, passing several laws the day before outlawing the use of flags for religious celebrations.³⁴ After the massacre, Buddhist monks organized protests that lasted for several weeks, which consisted of self-immolation, demands for representation in the Diem government, and reparations to families affected by the tragedy. Although President Diem initially promised to review these demands and possibly enact a few, continued demonstrations on June 16th made him change his mind. The demonstrations on June 16th, consisting of more than 250 demonstrators, were forcibly put down by President Diem's brother Nhu, who authorized the use of tear gas, fire hoses, and police clubs against protestors, resulting in the death of another Buddhist follower.³⁵ While protests and demonstrations would continue well into September, President Kennedy was outraged by these two events and demanded that President Diem remove Dinh Nhu from the government.³⁶ When Diem refused his demand, Kennedy started to seriously discuss the removal of Ngo Diem from South Vietnamese politics.

President Kennedy authorized Diem's removal by sending Cable 243 on August 24th, 1963 to Ambassador Lodge, which stated

³⁴ "South Vietnamese Buddhists initiate fall of dictator Diem, 1963," Non-Violent action Database, last modified April 19, 2010, accessed January 30, 2015, <http://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/south-vietnamese-buddhists-initiate-fall-dictator-diem-1963>

³⁵ "Beginning of the Buddhist Crisis, May 9-June 16, 1963," Office of the Historian, last modified January, 2015, accessed February 2, 2015, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v03/ch3>

³⁶ "Vietnam Turning Points: The Buddhist Crisis," *Education Portal*, last modified January, 2015, accessed February 2, 2015, <http://education-portal.com/academy/lesson/vietnam-turning-points-the-buddhist-crisis-kennedy-assassination-more.html>

“If, (Diem does not remove Nhu), we must face the possibility Diem himself cannot be preserved,” that Kennedy was “prepared to accept the obvious implication that we can no longer support Diem,” that Ambassador Lodge should “tell the appropriate military commanders we will give them direct support in any interim period of breakdown of the central government mechanism,” and finally that the “Ambassador... should urgently examine all possible alternative leadership and make detailed plans how we might bring about Diem’s replacement.”³⁷

Ambassador Lodge immediately reacted to this cable by having Lieutenant Colonel Conein,

Ambassador Lodge’s liaison to the coup plotters, meet with General Tran Thien Khiem and

General Duong Van Minh to discuss the possibility of enacting the coup the very next week.³⁸

As the month of August progressed, Kennedy grew concerned about the effect Cable 243 might

have, and changed his order to “no initiative should be taken to encourage actively a change in

government. However, our policy should be to seek urgently to identify and build contacts with

an alternative leadership if and when it appears.”³⁹ Kennedy continued to display hesitation on

the encouragement of a coup later that same month, when he stated on October 29th that U.S

support for a coup depended on Ambassador Lodge’s belief in the coups ability to succeed.⁴⁰

Despite President Kennedy’s change of heart in October, his actions in August were too decisive

to reverse by any change of mind. On August 26th Conein had met with the coup leaders and

presented seven points that the U.S government desired in a coup, which at least shows tacit

approval, if not outright encouragement. The success of this meeting, and the coup plotters’

plans, led to Lodge stating in a memo to the State Department that “We are launched on a course

³⁷ “Cable 243,” *JFK Library*, last modified January 1, 2009, accessed February 10, 2015,

<http://www.jfklibrary.org/JFK/JFK-in-History/~media/EE2438DA4C064164ACABA420F64630D9.pdf>

³⁸ “Telegram From the Central Intelligence Agency Station in Saigon to the Agency” *Office of the Historian*, last modified January, 2015, accessed February 2, 2015, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v03/d299>

³⁹ “Memorandum From the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Taylor) and the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) to the President,” *Office of the Historian*, last modified January, 2015, accessed February 5, 2015, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v04/d167>

⁴⁰ “Memorandum of Conference with President on October 29th, 1963,” *GWU*, date not given, accessed February 18, 2015, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB101/vn19.pdf>

from which there is no... turning back. The overthrow of the Diem government.”⁴¹ Several years after the events in 1963 Conein was asked if preventing a coup after Cable 243 was possible. Conein responded indecisively, but stated “I have no indication (if Minh would have stopped a coup)... (but) at the time, Big Minh announced to the commanders that they were going to have a coup. In fact, the coup was on.”⁴² The August 24th cable also created several CIA documents that established a type of ‘check-list’ for American actions during the process of a coup, which even offered ‘inducements,’ such as financial aid, to coup plotters.⁴³ Conein eventually did supply Minh with these inducements, which totaled more than forty two thousand dollars by the morning of the coup on November 1st, 1963.⁴⁴ As the coup began Diem immediately called Lodge to discuss the U.S position on the coup, to which Lodge replied “It is 4:30 a.m... the United States Government cannot possibly have an official view at this time.”⁴⁵ Ambassador Lodge’s statements in this telephone call have been widely criticized as abandoning Diem to the coup plotters, as Kennedy had stated in his private journals that the U.S had been discussing for months a response to a coup.⁴⁶ On November 2nd, 1963, Diem was overthrown by General Minh in a coup attempt, and shot dead by rebel soldiers. Saigon would soon fall into chaos.

President Diem and the Political Stability of South Vietnam from 1954-1963

⁴¹ “CIA Judgments on President Johnson's Decision To "Go Big" in Vietnam,” *Digital History*, last modified January, 2013, accessed February 10, 2015,

http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/active_learning/explorations/vietnam/escalate05.cfm

⁴² “Interview With Lucien Conein,” *Open Vault*, last modified April 30, 2015, accessed March 2, 2015, <http://openvault.wgbh.org/catalog/vietnam-3abc7d-interview-with-lucien-conein-1981>

⁴³ “Check-List of Possible U.S Actions in Case of Coup,” *GWU*, date not given, accessed March 1, 2015, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB101/vn17.pdf>

⁴⁴ “JFK and the Diem Coup,” *GWU*, last modified January 1, 2011, accessed February 15, 2015, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB101/#doc17>

⁴⁵ *GWU*, “Check-List of Possible U.S Actions in Case of Coup”

⁴⁶ John F. Kennedy, “Memoir Dictation on the Assassination of Diem,” recorded November 4, 1963, Miller Center Audio, accessed February 27, 2015, <http://millercenter.org/presidentialclassroom/exhibits/jfks-memoir-dictation-on-the-assassination-of-diem>

President Diem was the only leader in South Vietnam that was able to secure power, maintain that power, and receive support from the United States. Diem was born on January 3rd, 1901, as the third son in a Catholic family of nine. Following his father's career path as a public servant, Diem quickly rose through government ranks and became Province Chief of the Phan-Thiet province at the young age of twenty-five. Ngo Diem quickly excelled at his new position, as popular land reforms for peasants and rhetoric against Communism won him popularity among his citizens, superiors, and French Colonialists.⁴⁷ As Diem's popularity continued to grow the emperor of Vietnam, Bao Dai, recognized his achievements and offered him the position of Interior Minister for the Commission of Administrative Reforms. Mr. Diem accepted this position, but quickly resigned after realizing the position was powerless.⁴⁸ For the next ten years Ngo lived a life of solitude, contemplating life and his role in it. When deciding to re-emerge in the public sphere, Diem attacked French Colonialism as strongly as he did Communism, which led to the French exiling him from the nation. After being briefly captured by the Viet Cong, and even offered a position with the organization by Ho-Chi-Minh, Diem sought help abroad for protecting his country from communism and French Colonialism.⁴⁹ Ngo Diem would find support in the unlikely country of America, where American Secretary of State Dean Acheson, and later John Foster Dulles, believed Diem's ability to speak English, relate with the Catholics in Vietnam, and attitude toward communism made him a prime candidate for leadership in South Vietnam.⁵⁰ As a result of U.S encouragement, the Geneva Agreements placed Ngo Diem as

⁴⁷ "Ngo Dinh Diem," *Encyclopedia*, last modified January 1, 2015, accessed March 1, 2015, http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Ngo_Dinh_Diem.aspx

⁴⁸ Rust, 15

⁴⁹ Patrick Lloyd Hatcher, *The Suicide of an Elite: American Internationalists and Vietnam*, (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 1990), 126-28

⁵⁰ Seth Jacobs, *America's Miracle Man in Vietnam: Ngo Dinh Diem, Religion, Race, and U.S. Intervention in Southeast Asia*, (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2005), 26, accessed March 1, 2015, <https://books.google.com/books?id=KtT9FHbcZmEC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>

Prime Minister of South Vietnam. Prime Minister Diem quickly grew unhappy with the amount of power his office possessed, and called for a referendum that would place himself or Bao Dai as the President of South Vietnam. PM Diem won the referendum vote with heavy voter fraud; he gained 98.2% of the total vote and more than six hundred thousand votes in a region that contained only four hundred thousand people.⁵¹

The first test against Diem's leadership came during his tenure as Prime Minister in 1955, when General Le Van Vien demanded on March 8th that PM Diem organize a new government "representing the will of the people".⁵² General Vien was a unique general in South Vietnam's military, he was appointed by Emperor Bao Dai with the purpose of supporting the Emperor's claim to the throne in the event of an uprising. In order to do this General Vien created two organizations, the Binh Xuyen cartel, which gained funds through sex trafficking, narcotic sales, and gambling, and the National Front, which consisted of a corrupt police force and political party designed to remove PM Diem from power.⁵³ General Vien had planned for months on the overthrow of PM Diem's rule, placing loyal troops inside several government buildings in an attempt to strengthen the National Front's control on the seat of government in South Vietnam. PM Diem refused General Vien's demand to step down, and the two sides clashed in what is now known as the 'Battle of Saigon 1955.'⁵⁴ PM Diem, skillfully maneuvering the South Vietnamese military, was able to successfully defeat General Vien and the Binh Xuyen, ultimately quelling the demand for a new government and stabilizing his rule for the next five years. An important

⁵¹ Maurice Isserman and John Stewart Bowman, *Vietnam War (America at War)*, (New York: Chelsea House Publications, 2010), 24-26

⁵² "Ngo Dinh Diem Defeats Binh Xuyen," *Facts and Details*, last modified December 2013, accessed February 3, 2015, http://factsanddetails.com/southeast-asia/Vietnam/sub5_9f/entry-3449.html#chapter-10

⁵³ "The Binh Xuyen: Order and Opium in Saigon," *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*, No Date Given, accessed February 13, 2015, <http://www.akha.org/content/drugwar/mccooy/28.htm>

⁵⁴ "Gangsters of Old Saigon: Binh Xuyen," *Saigoneer*, last modified May 18, 2013, accessed February 14, 2015, <http://saigoneer.com/saigon-people/637-gangsters-of-old-saigon-binh-xuyen>

aspect of General Vien's coup attempt was the amount of French aid he received.⁵⁵ Diem, critical of French Colonialism, would forever oppose any nation's attempt to influence South Vietnamese domestic policy, an attitude that would bring him into conflict with the Kennedy administration. The next challenge to then-President Diem's leadership would not occur until November 11th, 1960, when twenty-eight year old Lieutenant Colonel Vuong Van Dong organized several disgruntled military officers into rebellion against the Diem administration. LTC Vuong Van Dong had mostly protested Diem's policy of promoting military officers based on personal loyalty to Diem compared to military competence, and believed he could wage a better war against the Viet Cong.⁵⁶ The coup caught President Diem completely off guard, with LTC Dong being able to maneuver several airborne infantry battalions into a position surrounding Saigon's Royal Palace. Many of these Battalions actually opened fire on President Diem's bedroom, where he managed to escape death only because he had felt the need to have a soft drink a few moments before.⁵⁷ Diem, trapped in the royal Palace, shrewdly promised to endorse several of LTC Dong's reforms while also calling several loyalist brigades for assistance. While executed swiftly and secretly, LTC Dong's coup had very poor communication between the rebel forces, and many the airborne battalions that had surrounded the palace believed incoming loyalist brigades were reinforcements coming to support their position.⁵⁸ Able

⁵⁵ "Gangsters Switch Sides and Help the French Against the Viet Minh," *Facts and Details*, last modified December 2014, accessed February 3, 2015, http://factsanddetails.com/southeast-asia/Vietnam/sub5_9f/entry-3449.html#chapter-7

⁵⁶ "Origins of the Insurgency in South Vietnam, 1954-1960," *Mt. Holyoke College*, last modified February 1, 2009, accessed January 18, 2015, <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon/pent11.htm>

⁵⁷ Rust, 4

⁵⁸ Rust, 8

to gain the initiative, Diem's loyalist forces pushed the rebel coup out of Saigon, killing nearly four hundred Vietnamese in the process, several hundred being civilians.⁵⁹

President Diem received U.S support from President Eisenhower through two critical contributions. First, Eisenhower financed Diem's control of the South Vietnamese government by stating in a letter to Diem that "I am... instructing the American Ambassador to Viet-Nam to examine with you in your capacity as Chief of Government, (and) how an intelligent program of American aid given directly to your Government can serve to assist Viet-Nam in its present hour of trial."⁶⁰ This promise of aid started a trend of U.S policy for the next nine years, where American aid would flow to President Diem consistently. President Diem would use this aid to not only fund the war effort, but also to maintain his position in the government.⁶¹ The second critical contribution was President Eisenhower's invitation for President Diem to visit America on May 8th, 1957. While President Diem's visit accomplished very little in terms of strategy for fighting Communism, it more importantly demonstrated and tied U.S support for Diem in two key ways. First, the American population and media lavished Diem with praise. Over fifty thousand civilians attended President Diem's arrival into the United States, and more than 250,000 supporters attended a parade held in his honor several days later in New York.⁶² The American Friends of Vietnam organization, which had several important members such as Senator John F. Kennedy in 1957, successfully lobbied newspaper outlets to publish articles praising President Diem. Media praise toward Diem during his visit ranged from describing him

⁵⁹ "A failed coup in South Vietnam," The Archive, last modified November 11, 2010, accessed February 11, 2015, <http://www.historytoday.com/richard-cavendish/failed-coup-south-vietnam>

⁶⁰ "President Eisenhower: Letter to Ngo Dinh Diem, October 23, 1954," *Fordham College*, last modified July 2008, accessed January 30, 2015, <http://legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1954-eisenhower-vietnam1.html>

⁶¹ "President Ngo Dinh Diem (1901-1963)," *Global Security*, last modified September 7, 2011, accessed February 11, 2015, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/vietnam/rvn-ngo-dinh-diem.htm>

⁶² "Ngo Dinh Diem," *Alpha History*, last modified January 1, 2010, accessed February 2nd, 2015, <http://alphahistory.com/vietnam/ngo-dinh-diem>

as “Vietnam’s man of Iron,” to being a “Valiant and Effective Fighter Against Communism,” and finally a “Symbol of a new Free Asia.”⁶³ Second, President Diem received heavy support from the U.S political figures during his visit. Senator Mansfield, a Democratic senator, praised Diem as “The chief credit for holding back the communist aggression not only in Vietnam,” while Senator Jacob Javits, a Republican, dubbed Diem “one of the real heroes of the free world.”⁶⁴ Finally, President Eisenhower would dub Mr. Diem as the “miracle man in Asia” because of his ability to fight communism in Asia. These words would continue a trend among American leaders of praise toward Diem, such as then Vice President Johnson’s comparison of Diem as “Winston Churchill of Asia” in 1961.⁶⁵

The Political Instability of South Vietnam after Diem, 1963-1965

President Kennedy, and many of his advisers, failed to predict the eruption of political tension that Diem had nurtured during his presidency. General Minh seized power in Saigon on November 6th, 1963, and held a tenuous position for a mere ninety four days.⁶⁶ Although initially seen by the U.S as a leader who would implement democratic reforms, top U.S officials soon became wary of General Minh’s new government. Robert McNamara claimed that Minh was “an indolent and inept leader”, and that the “Situation (in South Vietnam) was very disturbing... Current trends unless reversed in the next two to three months, will lead to neutralization at best and more likely a communist controlled state.”⁶⁷ To the satisfaction of American leaders, General Khánh enacted a bloodless coup on January 30th, 1964, where he seized the office of

⁶³ Jacobs, 254, <https://books.google.com/books?id=KtT9FHbcZmEC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>

⁶⁴ Mark Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954-1965*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 75-77

⁶⁵ “Lyndon Baines Johnson, 37th Vice President (1961-1963),” *Senate History*, last modified December 2014, accessed February 2, 2015,

https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/VP_Lyndon_Johnson.htm

⁶⁶ *History*, “General Minh takes over leadership of South Vietnam”

⁶⁷ Hunt, 80

Premier and demoted General Minh to Chief of State. Despite the initial, positive outlook by Washington when Khanh took power, his failure to introduce democratic reforms made him no better than his predecessor. For the next six months General Khánh squabbled with numerous political factions in an effort to retain control of the government, which culminated with the Vungtau charter. The Vungtau charter, which granted General Khánh complete control of the government by abolishing General Minh from his position, was rebuked by the residents of Saigon and led to mass protests.⁶⁸ These protestors disagreed with the charter so much that they dragged General Khánh out of his home, forced him to self-denunciate by saying “Down with military power, down with dictatorships, down with the army!,” and made him resign his position hours after this shameful act.⁶⁹ In the long run these protests accomplished little, as General Khánh was re-appointed to government leadership just two days after this incident by the Military Revolutionary Council, an organization of military leaders dedicated to creating a government in South Vietnam. Although reinstated in office General Khánh was forced to share his power with his political rival, General Minh, and fellow General Khiem, a longtime supporter of Khánh. Another coup attempt, led by Generals Lam Van Phat and Duong Van Du, attempted to force this ‘troika’ out of power, but was successfully defeated by Khanh and his following of young officers, called ‘young Turks.’⁷⁰ In response to many generals, civilians, and U.S officials denouncing his attempts to monopolize power, General Khánh established the High National Council, HNC, on September 26th. The HNC was a civilian government that contained a parliament of three hundred members, the former mayor of Saigon Tran Van Huong as Premier,

⁶⁸ “Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State,” *State History*, last modified January 1, 2009, accessed February 14, 2015, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v01/d379>

⁶⁹ Brian VanDeMark, *Into the Quagmire, Lyndon Johnson and the Escalation of the Vietnam War*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 20

⁷⁰ “US-GVN Relations, 1964-1967,” *Mt. Holyoke College*, last modified February 2, 2009, accessed January 28, 2015, <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon2/pent8.htm>

and Phan Kac Suu as Chief of State. These men were largely unexcited about the task of uniting a country so politically divided, with Premier Huong stating “I’m not sure whether I should be congratulated or offered condolences.”⁷¹ General Taylor, now the ambassador for the U.S to South Vietnam, expressed his skepticism of this new civilian government by stating that “Under favorable conditions... (it would take) three to four months... to get it functioning well. (Once Huong’s government appears to falter)... Khánh may be expected to make a new grasp for power.”⁷² Ambassador Taylor’s words proved to be prophetic, as on December 19th General Khánh led the young Turks to arrest the three hundred members of the HNC and appointed himself to power alongside Premier Huong and Chief of State Kac Suu.⁷³ General Khánh signed a document on January 9th that affirmed his commitment to a civilian rule, but secretly organized Buddhist rallies against the Huong government. These rallies degraded into mass protests threatening the stability of South Vietnam, and General Khánh dissolved the civilian government on January 20th, 1965 on the basis of Premier Huong’s “Inability to cope with the present critical situation”.⁷⁴ General Khanh would retain his power for a few short months during 1965, eventually replaced by other generals who would continue the series of coups. While the political turmoil in South Vietnam would continue until General Thieu’s rise to power, this paper examined this specific time period because it was the product of the removal of Diem which Kennedy is responsible for, which played the largest factor in President Johnson’s troop commitments on March 8th, 1965.

⁷¹ “Saigon’s Mayor Now Premier,” *NYT Online*, last modified January, 2015, accessed March 3, 2015, http://iht-retrospective.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/10/30/1964-saigons-mayor-now-premier/?_r=0

⁷² VanDeMark, 21

⁷³ “Another bloodless coup topples the government in Saigon,” *History*, last modified January 2015, accessed February 22, 2015, <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/another-bloodless-coup-topples-the-government-in-saigon?catId=15>

⁷⁴ VanDeMark, 43-48

From his inauguration until March 8th, 1965, President Johnson and his advisers constantly discussed the political turmoil in South Vietnam. For most of this time period President Johnson believed that South Vietnam needed to be politically stable *before* he committed combat troops, claiming he wanted “South Vietnam to get well first... (so) we can take North Vietnam’s slap back.”⁷⁵ President Johnson hunted for material that encouraged a delay in escalation until a stable government rose, and was delighted when he found Bill Hosokawa’s writing in the *Denver Post*. According Hosokawa, the South Vietnamese conflict up to this point was largely a civil war comprised of South Vietnamese farmers, who joined with the Viet Cong, acting against the government in Saigon. Any further U.S intervention, Mr. Hosokawa warned, should be delayed until South Vietnam had a stable government and could resolve these problems. President Johnson hurriedly forwarded the article to National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy, saying that “I very much agree with Hosokawa... Put your good mind to work along this line and let’s get something else moving on this front.”⁷⁶ However, as the political turmoil in South Vietnam came to no end throughout 1964, and even escalated well into 1965 beyond what was described earlier, several advisers believed escalation was necessary. President Johnson changed his views because of two different arguments his advisers presented. First, several advisers claimed that the political chaos would never end. Ambassador Taylor, able to witness the political divide in South Vietnam first hand during his tenure, stated that

In view of factionalism existing in Saigon and elsewhere throughout the country, it is impossible to foresee a stable and effective government... the new government is the greatest source of concern... it is indecisive and drifting.”⁷⁷ McGeorge Bundy claimed that “The basic point, of course, is that we have never thought we could defend a

⁷⁵ Robert Dalleck, *Flawed Giant: Lyndon Johnson and His Times, 1961-1973*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 241-243, accessed February 2, 2015,

https://books.google.com/books?id=G_J3PEegwdYC&pg=PA242&lpg=PA242&dq=#v=onepage&q&f=false

⁷⁶ VanDeMark, 49

⁷⁷ VanDeMark, 34

government or a people that had ceased to care strongly about defending themselves, or that were unable to maintain the fundamentals of government. And the overwhelming world impression is that these are lacking elements in South Viet-Nam, and that its loss will be due, if it comes, to their lack.”⁷⁸

The other group of U.S officials explained that escalation of the conflict would actually unite the factions in Saigon against the real enemy, the Viet Cong. Secretary of State Dean Rusk wrote in a memo

Political confusion in Saigon (a) diverts military leaders away from their main job of fighting the Viet Cong, (b) undermines the capacity of administration throughout the country to take effective action in pacification and the non-military measures required to organize the countryside, (c) undermines the morale and sense of purpose of the American people, (d) frustrates our effort to obtain increasing help for other free world countries of South Viet Nam, (e) mostly important of all, convinces Hanoi and its communist allies that if they persist in their present course of action, they have every prospect of victory, and, (f) finally,... makes it almost impossible to activate political processes which have the prospect of resulting in the security of South Viet Nam.⁷⁹

The American public agreed with the advice of many of these advisers, with several polls showing that more than 68% of Americans believed military operations against North Vietnam were needed in order to unite, and create stability in, the South Vietnamese government.⁸⁰ With President Johnson consistently hearing hawkish advice because of the dismal South Vietnamese government, he slowly became convinced of the need for U.S escalation in Vietnam.

As 1964 progressed, and no government in Saigon showed a hint of stability, many of President Johnson’s meetings started to seriously discuss the possibility of a sustained military campaign. In December of 1964 President Johnson met consistently with Secretary of Defense McNamara, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, and former President Eisenhower to discuss the possibility of sustained bombing campaigns against North Vietnam, later to be named

⁷⁸ “Memorandum for the Chairman, NSC Working Group on Southeast Asia, from L.M. Mustin, JCS Staff with Comments on the draft for Part II,” *Mt. Holyoke College*, last modified February 1, 2009, accessed February 22, 2015, <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon3/doc228.htm>

⁷⁹ “Paper Prepared by Secretary of State Rusk,” *Public Papers of the Presidency*, date not given, accessed March 2, 2015, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/vietnam/showdoc.php?docid=70>

⁸⁰ VanDeMark, 76

“Operation Rolling Thunder.”⁸¹ In February of 1965, as Viet Cong attacks escalated and no government in South Vietnam achieved stability, President Johnson stated in a meeting with McNamara and Rusk that “I don’t object to (bombing operations)... I’m just hoping out of hope they’ll draw people in Saigon closer together.”⁸² President Johnson would later send a message to Ambassador Taylor stating “I am ready to look with great favor on that kind of increased American effort, directed at the guerillas and aimed to (unite South Vietnam and) stiffen the aggressiveness of Vietnamese military units up and down the line.”⁸³ President Johnson’s decision to escalate the conflict, in order to unite South Vietnamese political factions, culminated with Operation “Rolling Thunder” on March 2nd and 8th, which committed the U.S Air Force to bombing targets in North Vietnam and the U.S Marines to defend the air bases.

In the wake of the political chaos left by President Diem after his death, many politicians lamented the loss of a man able to maintain power for an extended period of time. A close friend of President Johnson, Democratic Senator Mike Mansfield, told Johnson that “When Diem was in power there was at least a government with some claim to legitimacy and some tangible roots in its own people... We are now in the process of putting together makeshift regimes.”⁸⁴ Walter Robertson, the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, had mentioned Diem’s importance as early as 1956 when he stated “The free world owes (Diem) a debt of gratitude for his ability to keep South Viet-Nam together.”⁸⁵ President Diem was able to maintain power for

⁸¹ President Johnson and Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Johnson Conversation with Dwight Eisenhower on Dec 28, 1964,” recorded on December 28, 1964, Miller Center Audio, accessed February 22, 2015,

<http://millercenter.org/presidentialrecordings/lbj-wh6412.02-6616>

⁸² Gibbins, 106, accessed March 3, 2015, accessed February 2, 2015,

https://books.google.com/books?id=hO__AwAAQBAJ&pg=PA45&lpg=PA45&dq=#v=onepage&q&f=false

⁸³ VanDeMark, 50

⁸⁴ VanDeMark, 41

⁸⁵ “Address by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, Walter S. Robertson, Washington, June 1, 1956,” *Temple College*, last modified January 1, 2010, accessed February 17, 2015, http://astro.temple.edu/~rimmerma/united_states_policy_with_respec.htm

several years because of his election through a democratic method, a referendum. Although Diem fixed the referendum with the set outcome for his victory, his symbolic use of a democratic method for gaining power proved more effective than the coup attempts by the generals throughout 1964 to 1965. Although published to deal with countries in Africa, several articles published by think-tanks and scholars of the United Nations discuss the success of governments democratically elected compared to those that seize power in a coup.⁸⁶

Kennedy, Diem, and the Success of the Vietnam War

Kennedy's decision to remove Diem from office adversely affected the conflict in Vietnam. When Kennedy assumed office in 1961 he inherited a South Vietnam that was constantly besieged by Viet Cong forces. In 1961 there was between 4,400 to 22,000 Viet Cong soldiers, a difficult figure to track because of their reliance on guerilla tactics compared to conventional warfare.⁸⁷ In order to combat these numbers, which had grown significantly since 1959, General Lansdale published a report that claimed "A minimum force increase of 20,000 is required to correct these present weaknesses and to furnish the offensive potential required to defeat the Viet Cong." When presenting his report, Lansdale spoke on the urgency of the situation, stating "The U.S. should recognize that Vietnam is in a critical condition and should treat it as a combat area of the cold war, as an area requiring emergency treatment."⁸⁸ While President Kennedy did not agree to the request of twenty thousand soldiers, he did authorize the economic aid, military assistance, and political support that was also suggested. This assistance did little to setback the growth of the Viet Cong, which had been able to increase the number of

⁸⁶ "Stability is based on democracy," *Africa Renewal Online*, last modified April 1, 2010, accessed March 5, 2015, <http://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/april-2010/%E2%80%98stability-based-democracy%E2%80%99>

⁸⁷ History Place, "America Commits, 1961-1964"

⁸⁸ "Visit of General Edward G. Lansdale to Vietnam, January 2-14, 1961," *Mt. Holyoke College*, last modified February 1, 2010, accessed February 1, 2015, <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/lansdale.htm>

attacks from September to October by more than 300%, including a heinous raid on the Phuoc Thanh Province, fifty miles from Saigon, where a Province Chief was publicly executed.⁸⁹ In November the situation had deteriorated so quickly that General Taylor recommended the deployment of six to eight thousand troops under the guise of assisting with a flood in the Mekong Delta.⁹⁰ The Viet Cong attacks continued into 1962, when their numbers grew to an estimated twenty-five thousand.

In response to continued Viet Cong success, President Kennedy authorized the Strategic Hamlet program in early May, which re-located the South Vietnamese population into more defensible areas for the ARVN to defend. While there has been much debate about the actual success of the plan, it is important to view the activities of the Viet Cong, the outlook of the administration, and the plans for U.S adviser withdraws after it was passed. In terms of Viet Cong activity, attacks on the rural population decreased from a high of six hundred a month in March 1962 to a low of one hundred ninety in February of 1963. Defections from the Viet Cong increased exponentially, with an average of one hundred people a month leaving the organization in 1962 to a high of four hundred deserting in March of 1963. Finally, while the South Vietnamese government controlled only forty-nine percent of its own countryside in July of 1962, it was estimated that it gained seven percent more by April of 1963.⁹¹ High level cabinet members also reported the increasing success of South Vietnam's war against the Viet Cong after the plan passed, such as when Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara told reporters he was "very encouraged" by the South Vietnamese war effort after visiting the strategic hamlet of Ben

⁸⁹ "Chapter I, 'The Kennedy Commitments and Programs, 1961,' pp. 1-39," *Mt. Holyoke College*, last modified February 1, 2010, accessed January 26, 2015, <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon2/pent1.htm>

⁹⁰ "1961," *Vietnam War Chronology*, last modified January 2015, accessed February 2, 2015, <http://vietnamfulldisclosure.org/index.php/1961-2/>

⁹¹ "The Strategic Hamlet Program, 1961-1963," *Mt. Holyoke College*, last modified February 1, 2010, accessed January 29, 2015, <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon2/pent4.htm>

Tuong.⁹² A joint report by General Maxwell D. Taylor and McNamara in 1963 continued to praise the improvement in South Vietnam, stating that

“The military campaign has made great progress and continues to progress,” that “barring greatly increased resupply and reinforcement of the Viet Cong by infiltration, the military phase of the war can be virtually won in 1963,” and that “Up to now, the battle against the Viet Cong has seemed endless... After talking to scores of officers... I am convinced that the Viet Cong insurgency in the north and center can be reduced to little more than sporadic incidents by the end of 1964.”⁹³

Upon viewing the success of the Strategic Hamlet program, or at least the decrease in Viet Cong activity, President Kennedy authorized National Security Action Memorandum 263, which was a phased withdraw of more than one thousand American advisers starting in 1963.⁹⁴ Although Viet Cong forces in 1961 and 1962 were actively subverting the government, several statistics and administration officials indicated that the war was coming to an end in 1963. Despite the positive outlook on the war displayed by Kennedy’s administration, there were still problems facing the South Vietnamese. The Battle of Ap Bac in 1963 best represents this claim, which was when 2,500 ARVN soldiers lost to three hundred Viet Cong soldiers, even though they had the advantage of American weapons and helicopters. With reports of Viet Cong activity decreasing, but continued losses by the ARVN, the war could be described as “positive but uncertain.”⁹⁵ Diem and Kennedy’s leadership in the war, while not ending it, seemed to be pushing it toward a positive end.

The War in South Vietnam after President Diem

⁹² “South Vietnam, May, 1962,” *Stars and Stripes*, last modified January 15, 2015, accessed February 13, 2015, <http://www.stripes.com/blogs/archive-photo-of-the-day/archive-photo-of-the-day-1.9717/robert-mcnamara-in-vietnam-1962-1.218838>

⁹³ “Memorandum From the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Taylor) and the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) to the President,” *Office of the Historian*, last modified January 20, 2009, accessed February 12, 2015, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v04/d167>

⁹⁴ “National Security Action Memorandum 263,” *JFK Library*, last modified January, 2015, accessed February 23, 2015, <http://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/w6LJoSnW4UehkaH9Ip5IAA.aspx>

⁹⁵ “1963,” *Vietnam Full Disclosure*, last modified January, 2015, accessed February 13, 2015, <http://vietnamfulldisclosure.org/index.php/1963-2/>

After Kennedy removed Diem from office Viet Cong strength grew exponentially. While the estimated strength of their numbers was believed to be thirty thousand by November of 1963, the figure rose to more than 212,000 by July of 1965.⁹⁶ This number would be bolstered by North Vietnamese soldiers on September 18th, 1964, when the first combat regulars crossed the border into South Vietnam.⁹⁷ In a memorandum from Robert McNamara to President Johnson, McNamara showed the dramatic increase in communist numbers by writing

The dramatic recent changes in the situation are on the military side. They are the increased infiltration from the North... The Communists appear to have decided to increase their forces in South Vietnam both by heavy recruitment in the South (especially in the Delta) and by infiltration of regular North Vietnamese forces from the North. We believe that nine regular North Vietnamese regiments (27 infantry battalions) have been infiltrated in the past year, joining the estimated 83 VC battalions in the South. The rate of infiltration has increased from three battalion equivalents a month in late 1964 to a high of 9 or 12 during one month this past fall. General Westmoreland estimates that through 1966 North Vietnam will have the capability to expand its armed forces in order to infiltrate three regiments (9 battalion equivalents, or 4500 men) a month, and that the VC in South Vietnam can recruit and train 7 new battalion equivalents a month—together adding 16 battalion equivalents a month to the enemy forces.⁹⁸

The Pentagon Papers, a series of documents written by U.S officials describing the Vietnam Conflict in detail, stated that the Viet Cong took advantage of the chaos in South Vietnam after President Diem's death to grow their numbers and attacks. President Johnson's most immediate concern would be the Viet Cong's ability to rapidly seize swathes of rural land in South Vietnam, where the civilian population was quickly becoming hostile to the South Vietnamese government's inability to protect or subsidize them.⁹⁹ As the Viet Cong regained the initiative,

⁹⁶ "Viet Cong," *Global Security*, last modified January 1, 2015, accessed February 12, 2015, (<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/vietnam/viet-cong.htm>)

⁹⁷ "North Vietnamese Army begins infiltration," *History*, last modified January 1, 2015, accessed January 27, 2015, <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/north-vietnamese-army-begins-infiltration>

⁹⁸ "Memorandum From Secretary of Defense McNamara to President Johnson," *Office of the Historian*, last modified January 20, 2009, accessed February 27, 2015, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v03/d222#fn1>

⁹⁹ VanDeMark, 16

they regained majority control of countryside in South Vietnam, controlling more than fifty percent by the end of 1965.¹⁰⁰

As the Viet Cong numbers grew, and their control of the countryside increased, the rate of terror attacks did as well. In a memorandum to President Johnson McNamara stated “(There is) increased willingness of the Communist forces to stand and fight, even in large-scale engagements.”¹⁰¹ In a meeting between top U.S officials, Ambassador Lodge noted that Viet Cong attacks had increased by three hundred to four hundred percent after the coup against Diem.¹⁰² The attacks at Pleiku and Bien Hoa demonstrate the increased capabilities, rate, and severity of terror attacks against South Vietnam and U.S personnel. At Pleiku on February 6th, 1965 more than eight Americans were killed and twenty-four wounded, with ten aircraft being destroyed and fifteen damaged.¹⁰³ At Bien Hoa, on November 1st 1964, four U.S servicemen were killed and over seventy six wounded, with two B-57 bombers being destroyed and over twenty U.S aircraft damaged.¹⁰⁴ All the progress made by President Kennedy’s policies in 1963 had been undone, and the war could no longer be considered “positive but unsure.” Instead, it was only a matter of time until South Vietnam fell to the re-energized Viet Cong forces.

As a result of the increase in Viet Cong forces and attacks, President Johnson was forced to authorize several military operations in order to stabilize South Vietnam. At the onset of the war Johnson would be frustrated by the ARVN’s attempts to combat the Viet Cong, which were

¹⁰⁰ “The Jungle War, 1965-1968,” *TheHistoryPlace*, last modified February 2, 2001, accessed January 17, 2015, <http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/vietnam/index-1965.html>

¹⁰¹ *U.S Department of State*, “Memorandum From Secretary of Defense McNamara to President Johnson”

¹⁰² “Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State,” *State Department Archive*, last modified January 20, 2009, accessed March 1, 2015, <http://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/kennedyjf/iv/12672.htm>

¹⁰³ “Viet Cong Attacks on U.S Base of Pleiku,” *NBC Learn*, last modified January 1, 2014, accessed March 3, 2015, <https://archives.nbclearn.com/portal/site/k-12/browse/?cuecard=1013>

¹⁰⁴ “Attack on Bien Hoa Air Base,” *Schiele*, last modified January 1, 2012, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.schiele.us/battleDetail.asp?n=119>

largely unsuccessful. With the generals of South Vietnam focused on gaining political power rather than fighting the Viet Cong, the ARVN were unable to prevent the Viet Cong from gaining control of the countryside. President Johnson seemed exacerbated with the ARVN's capabilities, asking his advisers "How (can) 34,000 (Viet Cong) lick 200,000 (South Vietnamese soldiers)?"¹⁰⁵ On December 21st McNamara published a memorandum to Johnson explaining the concern U.S officials had for South Vietnam in light of the increased attacks, which stated "The situation is very disturbing. Current trends, unless reversed in the next 2-3 months, will lead to neutralization at best and more likely to a communist-controlled state."¹⁰⁶ Recognizing that he had to respond to the threat soon, President Johnson requested an additional 125,000,000 dollars from Congress, in addition to the 3.4 billion dollar aid package already requested, stating that "This increased terrorism requires an increased response." Out of this request more than seventy million would fund the economic sustainment of South Vietnam, while fifty five million would go toward training of the ARVN and operations against the Viet Cong.¹⁰⁷ President Johnson would use these funds to authorize Operation 34A, where U.S and South Vietnamese Special forces would conduct raids on Viet Cong supply centers along the North Vietnamese coast.¹⁰⁸ The U.S would support these raids with naval destroyers, in the nearby Gulf of Tonkin, such as the U.S.S *Maddox*. The Gulf of Tonkin was a disputed body of water at the time, as North

¹⁰⁵ "Notes on a Meeting, White House, Washington, December 1, 1964, 11:30 a.m.," *Public Papers of the Presidency*, date not given, accessed March 3, 2015,

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/vietnam/showdoc.php?docid=29>

¹⁰⁶ "Memorandum From the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) to President Johnson," *Office of the Historian*, last modified January 20, 2009, accessed February 21, 2015, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v04/d374>

¹⁰⁷ "Johnson asks added aid to step up Viet Nam War," *Newspapers Online*, last modified January 1, 2015, accessed March 3, 2015, <http://www.newspapers.com/newspage/1022355/>

¹⁰⁸ "Operation Plan 34A," *History Wars Weapons*, last modified February 1, 2013, accessed March 1, 2015, <http://historywarsweapons.com/operation-plan-34a/>

Vietnam believed it was sovereign territory and the U.S as an international body of water.¹⁰⁹ The Viet Cong, and North Vietnam, eventually launched torpedo boat attacks against the *Maddox* on August 2nd and 3rd, prompting the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which was largely seen as the symbolic document for U.S involvement at the time. If President Johnson had not felt the need to authorize Operation 34A in order to push back Viet Cong gains after President Diem's death, the Gulf of Tonkin incident may not have happened. However, as the Viet Cong continued to escalate their numbers, terror attacks, and intrusion into South Vietnam, U.S response resulted in an increased American war effort. This would culminate on July 28th, 1965, when Johnson announced more one hundred twenty five thousand U.S soldiers would be sent to South Vietnam.¹¹⁰

Diem and the Economics of South Vietnam

Kennedy's decision to remove Diem from office damaged the economics of South Vietnam. The US Economic Assistance in Vietnam, written in 1964 by the RAND Corporation at the request of the Agency for International Development, focused on the economic problems South Vietnam faced in the aftermath of Diem's death. In urban environments unemployment and lack of housing had become critical issues, unemployment stood between twenty-five to forty percent and more than ten thousand people were homeless.¹¹¹ In rural areas peasants were consistently raided by the Viet Cong, who would take a portion of their crops or stop them from

¹⁰⁹ "The Vietnam War," *Boys Who Said No*, last modified January 2, 2014, accessed February 25, 2015, <http://www.boyswhosaidno.com/the-war/the-vietnam-war/>

¹¹⁰ "Lyndon B. Johnson News Conference July 28, 1965," *Public Papers of the Presidency*, date not given, accessed March 5, 2015, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=27116>

¹¹¹ "U.S Economic Assistance in Vietnam: A Proposed Reorientation," *RAND Organization*, date not given, accessed February 10, 2015, <http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/reports/2006/R430.pdf>, page 23

farming entirely. Worse yet, several of these peasant farmers had actually joined the Viet Cong because they bore the government ill will for not being able to protect or subsidize them.¹¹² The inability of South Vietnam to empower or protect its economy, which was largely dependent on agricultural production of rice, led to a downturn in the GDP per capita. During the Diem administration, from 1960 to 1963, the economy of South Vietnam maintained a GDP that ranged from 223 million to 154 million. However, during 1964 and 1965, when political instability rocked South Vietnam from Diem's death, the GDP dropped to 103 million and 117 million, respectively.¹¹³ President Kennedy stated in a speech on February 21st, 1962 that "It is a fact that the gross national product, agricultural production, health, education, all these things materially increased in the last 6 years (during Diem's Presidency)."¹¹⁴ There are also some reports that claim President Diem was able to improve the economy from several land ordinances. One report claims that ordinance 57, a government policy redistributing land, raised the income of rice farmers by 30-50%.¹¹⁵

After Diem was removed in 1963 Johnson was forced to take an active role in the economy of South Vietnam. There are two main ways to view the U.S role. First, the U.S economic aid from 1963 to 1966 increased by more than three hundred percent. While economic aid to South Vietnam would decrease from 1963 to 1964, 500,000,000 to 450,000,000, aid in 1965 jumped to 650,000,000 and in 1966 exploded to 1,700,000,000.¹¹⁶ The reason for the escalation of American aid was Johnson's desire to protect the agricultural output of South

¹¹² *RAND Organization*, "U.S Economic Assistance in Vietnam: A Proposed Reorientation," page 48

¹¹³ "GDP per capita (current US\$)," World Bank GDP by State, last modified January 15, 2015, accessed February 2, 2015, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD>

¹¹⁴ "John F. Kennedy News Conference February 21, 1962," Public Papers of the Presidents, date not given, accessed March 2, 2015, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=9070&st=Vietnam&st1=>

¹¹⁵ Kim Youngman, "The South Vietnamese Economy During the Vietnam War, 1954-1975," (BA, Korean Minjok Leadership Academy, 2007), all pages, accessed March 1, 2015, <http://www.zum.de/whkmla/sp/0708/ym/ym1.html>

¹¹⁶ Youngman, "The South Vietnamese Economy During the Vietnam War"

Vietnamese farmers, who contributed the most to the GDP of South Vietnam but were at the mercy of the Viet Cong. In order to “meet the mounting military requirements” of protecting South Vietnamese farmers, President Johnson requested seven hundred million dollars from Congress on May 4th, 1965. More importantly, however, President Johnson left himself open to additional requests by stating that “I (cannot) guarantee this will be my last request.”¹¹⁷ As U.S. troop commitments were required to fight the Viet Cong and protect the South Vietnamese economy from incursions, President Johnson would indeed make another request. On August 4th, 1965 President Johnson asked Congress for \$1.7 billion to fund the war in 1966.¹¹⁸ Not only does President Johnson’s explosion of economic aid show heavy U.S involvement, but several recommendations by Robert McNamara do as well. According to a report McNamara sent to President Johnson, McNamara stated that “additional U.S. economic aid (is needed) to support the increased GVN budget,” “30 to 40 million is needed for MAP (Military and Personnel) costs, a one-time additional cost of \$20 million for military equipment and \$1,500,000 to enlarge the Civilian Cadre.” McNamara also wrote on the need for U.S aid to South Vietnamese farmers, stating

A Fertilizer Program should be particularly stressed and expanded and publicly announced. Its target of 85,000 tons for the present planting season (April–June) should probably be doubled for the next season and trebled the following season, both to provide immediate and direct benefits to peasants in secure areas and to improve the rice crops and export earnings. Estimates are that an additional ton of fertilizer costing around \$70 can, if properly applied, produce additional yield of an equivalent two tons of rice, which

¹¹⁷ “Special Message to the Congress Requesting Additional Appropriations for Military Needs in Viet-Nam,” *Public Papers of the Presidency*, date not given, accessed March 2, 2015, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=26940>

¹¹⁸ “Johnson seeks more war funds,” *Newspapers Online*, last modified January 1, 2015, accessed March 1, 2015, <http://www.newspapers.com/newspage/3486891/>

might be sold for \$110 per ton. Thus, the potential export improvement alone could be on the order of \$20 million from this year's 85,000 ton input.¹¹⁹

McNamara also posted twelve separate recommendations that U.S aid should accomplish in light of Diems overthrow, such as the recruitment of fifty thousand more men for the ARVN and enlargement of the Civil Administrative Corps for work at the province, district, and hamlet levels.¹²⁰ While the total costs of a fertilizer program, support to MAP, and approval of McNamara's twelve points may not have amounted to much money for the U.S economy, their implementation expertly shows the belief of U.S officials in the need for the U.S to take an active role in South Vietnam.

Section 4: Hesitation, or Personality?

Despite President Kennedy being decisive to America's escalation in Vietnam, several of his associates and policies may indicate that he was more interested in diminishing America's involvement. This section aims to show that these decisions and policies were not Kennedy's intended course, but rather a result of his personality and previous foreign policy decisions. The Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961 was President Kennedy's first foreign policy decision, and a major disaster. After its failure many advisers claimed that President Kennedy was the type of leader to authorize missions quickly, but desire to retain the ability to stop them if they proceeded poorly.¹²¹ Several authors, such as David Kaiser in *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Origins of the Vietnam War*, have acknowledged that the Bay of Pigs fiasco caused Kennedy to remain hesitant when committing to any future foreign policy decisions. In several of his memoirs Kennedy

¹¹⁹ "Memorandum From the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) to President Johnson," *Office of the Historian*, last modified January 20, 2009, accessed February 11, 2015, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v01/d84>

¹²⁰ "U.S. Programs in South Vietnam, Nov. 1963-Apr. 1965," *Mt. Holyoke College*, last modified January 2, 2010, accessed February 8, 2015, <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon3/pent1.htm>

¹²¹ Rust, 159

described his desire to be a President that was remembered throughout time, so in order to make sure another misstep in foreign policy did not occur, he believed in micromanaging his advisers to ensure that a positive outcome was always possible. While Kennedy clearly approved of a coup, that does not mean he intended the death of Diem. Several government documents discuss the “removal of Diem with minimal bloodshed,” indicating that President Kennedy merely wanted a new government in place.¹²² In addition, when President Diem was killed, several eye witnesses stated that “(President Kennedy’s) faced turned ghost white and he left the room.”¹²³

However, there are some people that believe Kennedy’s hesitation was not a product of his personality, but rather an indication that he did not want American escalation. Ambassador Lodge, despite his role and support of the coup in 1963, is one such person who stated later in life that Kennedy was not critical to the overthrow of Diem or escalation of the war. In 1979 Lodge stated in an interview that “I don’t think we (Kennedy and the U.S Government) were committed. I really don’t. Committing is a very specific sharp focused word. The thing was more nebulous than that.” Mr. Lodge’s statements are not only an attempt to exonerate himself from any wrongdoing during a critical phase of the Vietnam conflict, but also a complete lie. President Kennedy’s brother, Robert Kennedy, who was a close confidant of the President and heavily involved in White House decisions, stated in a meeting on October 29th that “I mean, (a coup in South Vietnam) is different from a coup in the Iraq or South American country; we are so intimately involved in this....”¹²⁴ Ambassador Lodge conveniently forgets his own statements on November 6th, 1963, when he wrote in a cable to President Kennedy that “the coup would not

¹²² “Reassessment in Washington and Inaction in Saigon, August 28-September 7, 1963,” *State Department Archive*, last modified January 1, 2009, accessed February 25, 2015, <http://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/kennedyjif/iv/8202.htm>

¹²³ *History Place*, “America Commits 1961-1964”

¹²⁴ *GWU*, “JFK and the Diem Coup”

have happened [as] it did without our permission.”¹²⁵ Lodge’s claim that the U.S had a nebulous role in the coup are largely disproven by his role in them, especially when viewing the financial inducements of more than forty-two thousand dollars. Kennedy himself acknowledged the role the U.S played in removing President Diem from office, stating in his memoirs that “we share some of the blame (For Diem’s removal).¹²⁶

Throughout his term President Kennedy consistently stated the need for America to provide economic and military aid to South Vietnam. In several speeches, one on February 2nd, 1962, Kennedy stated “The United States... (needs to) and has been assisting economically... We are out there on training and on transportation,” and April 2nd, 1963 “History records that our military and economic assistance to nations on the frontiers of the communist world, such as... Vietnam, (it) has enabled threatened peoples to stay free and independent.” However, despite Kennedy’s rhetoric showing the need for involvement, many people in online blogs argue that NSAM 263, signed by Kennedy himself, shows his intent to diminish U.S presence in Vietnam. Dated on October 1963, the Pentagon Papers provide a detailed account of the meeting where Kennedy authorized NSAM 263, which states

At a meeting on October 5, 1963, the President considered the recommendations contained in the report of Secretary McNamara and General Taylor on their mission to South Vietnam. The President approved the military recommendations contained in Section I B (1 -3) (NSAM 263) of the report, but directed that no formal announcement be made of the implementation of plans to withdraw 1,000 U.S. military personnel by the end of 1963.

¹²⁵ “General Minh takes over leadership of South Vietnam,” *History*, last modified January 1, 2015, accessed January 30, 2015, <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/general-minh-takes-over-leadership-of-south-vietnam>

¹²⁶ “John F. Kennedy, “Memoir Dictation on the Assassination of Diem,” recorded November 4, 1963, Miller Center Audio, accessed February 27, 2015, <http://millercenter.org/presidentialclassroom/exhibits/jfks-memoir-dictation-on-the-assassination-of-diem>

There are three major aspects that highlight NSAM 263's insignificance and show President Kennedy would have been unable to withdraw U.S. advisers. From 1961 to 1963 President Kennedy had added 13,100 troops; 8,100 in 1962 and 5,000 in 1963.¹²⁷ President Kennedy's decision to remove one thousand troops seems inconsequential when realizing he added five times that number in the same year. Second, some sources claim that NSAM 263's decision was unimportant because it did not impact the natural cycle of advisers. The Pentagon Papers state that "Technically, more than a thousand U.S. personnel did leave, but many of these were part of the normal turnover cycle, inasmuch as rotation policy alone, not to mention medical evacuation or administrative reasons, resulted in an average rate of well over a thousand returnees per month."¹²⁸ Third, Robert McNamara's statements to Congress in 1964 reveals the purpose of these advisers, which is important to consider with the war effort. In this report McNamara stated

We did, of course, bring back 1,000 men toward the latter part of last year... I don't believe we can take on (the) combat task for them. I do believe we can carry out training. We can provide advice and logistical assistance... We will have started this expanded training and carried it out for a period of 4 years, by the end of next year. We started at the end of 1961. The end of next year will have been 4 years later and certainly we should have completed the majority of the training task by that time.¹²⁹

If President Kennedy had survived his assassination on November 22nd, 1963, he would have faced the same problems this paper argues President Johnson faced. One of the main problems, a rise in Viet Cong activity, showed that the ARVN was unable to halt the gains made by the Viet Cong in 1963 and 1964. As President Johnson stated best, the ability of 34,000 Viet Cong to "lick" 200,000 ARVN soldiers showed a lack of training. With ARVN troops unsuccessful in the Vietnam Conflict, Kennedy would have been forced to rescind NSAM 263 and implement

¹²⁷ "The Vietnam War: Military Statistics," *Gilderlehrman*, last modified January 1, 2015, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/seventies/resources/vietnam-war-military-statistics>

¹²⁸ "Phased Withdrawal of U.S. Forces, 1962-1964," Vietnam Era Pentagon Papers, Last modified February 1, 2009, accessed January 29, 2015, <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon2/pent5.htm>

¹²⁹ "Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara Congressional Presentations," *Paperless Archives*, last modified January 1, 2015, accessed February 12, 2015, http://www.paperlessarchives.com/vw_mcnamara_testimony.html

additional advisers in order to re-train the ARVN. Despite some claims that Kennedy's decisions and policies make him appear uninterested in continuing the conflict, they are largely inconsequential when viewing the war effort up to 1964.

Section 5: Conclusion

In conclusion, President Eisenhower brought America to the precipice of the Vietnam War through the Domino Theory and by rejecting the Geneva Accords. Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon stated their approval of the Domino theory and how it influenced their decision to commit American resources to the conflict. By rejecting the Geneva Accords, most importantly the re-unification elections, Eisenhower gave strength to the conflict by causing the Viet Cong to escalate their efforts and deepen the North Vietnam-South Vietnam divide.

Towards the end of the year in 1963, President Kennedy actively sought to remove President Diem from office. After Diem's harsh repression of Buddhist monks, and refusal to implement democratic reforms, Kennedy agreed with Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. that Diem needed to be removed. After authorizing Cable 243, which ordered Lodge to find a replacement for Diem, Kennedy appeared hesitant for the next few months on whether or not he would endorse a coup. Despite his reservations, coup leaders took advantage of U.S incentives, rhetoric against Diem, and resources to enact a coup on November 2nd, 1963. This coup resulted in the death of Diem and a military junta in Saigon, South Vietnam, that would change the course of the war.

Kennedy did not anticipate the political fallout that would result from Diem's removal. Whereas Diem was able to maintain power for nearly a decade, despite coup attempts in 1955 and 1960, the military junta from 1963 to 1965 changed leadership nearly a dozen times. While

Diem had his administration bolstered by support from Eisenhower and the American public, the military junta was not looked favorably upon by Johnson because of its inability to improve the war effort. While Johnson had previously wanted the South Vietnamese government to 'get better so they can take North Vietnam's punch back', continued political chaos forced him to change 'hope out of hope' that military action would unite the leaders of South Vietnam. Because of Kennedy's removal of Diem, Johnson was forced to use military action, such as Operation Rolling Thunder, to stabilize the political situation in South Vietnam.

The removal of Diem from the Vietnam War caused several setbacks, and increased the Viet Cong success. When entering office, Kennedy quickly authorized several programs that granted economic and military aid to Diem. Kennedy decisions to increase the number of military advisers to more than sixteen thousand, authorize several hundred Green Beret Special Forces, and implement the Strategic Hamlet Program placed the initiative in the war back to South Vietnam. While battles like Ap Bac proved the war was far from over, the war effort was 'positive but uncertain.' When Kennedy removed Diem, all the progress gained was lost. Viet Cong forces jumped from thirty thousand in 1963 to more than two hundred twelve thousand in 1965. The Viet Cong were able to secure the South Vietnamese countryside, and were reinforced by North Vietnamese regulars. Viet Cong terror attacks at Bien Hoa and Pleiku demonstrated an increased effort by Communist forces to attack, kill, and damage U.S and South Vietnamese forces. In order to counter the communist gains, Johnson authorized Operation 34A. This operation placed the U.S.S *Maddox* in the Gulf of Tonkin, which when fired upon resulted in the Gulf of Tonkin Incident and Resolution, giving Johnson the need, and reason, for escalating the War.

The economy of South Vietnam suffered after Diem's removal. The RAND report, written about the economy after Diem's removal, noted that unemployment and lack of production plagued South Vietnam because the military junta did not understand how to run an economy. Whereas the GDP of South Vietnam under Diem ranged between two hundred and one hundred fifty million, it dropped as low as one hundred million under the military junta seized power. In an effort to stabilize the flailing South Vietnamese economy, Johnson was forced to increase aid by more than one billion dollars. Johnson was also forced to take an active role in their economy, introducing several fertilizer programs that took control of the South Vietnamese economy out of the hands of the military junta and into U.S responsibility.

Even to this day, there remains a great deal of confusion over whether or not Kennedy intended America to be involved in the Vietnam Conflict. Some people, like Mr. Lodge, claim the U.S did not have a large role in Diem's removal, and by extent the escalation of the Vietnam War. Other people, like online bloggers, claim Kennedy policies like NSAM 263 provided a withdraw for American forces, showing his intention to de-escalate American involvement. These critics fail to take into account Kennedy's personality, which desired to retain the ability to quickly cancel any military operation by having alternatives, such as NSAM 263, available. Critics like Lodge forget the specific aid of the U.S to coup plotters, and bloggers ignore the minor impact NSAM 263 actually had.

Despite having only three years in his Presidency, Kennedy contributed the most to the Vietnam Conflict. His decision to remove Diem caused the United States to intervene politically, militarily, and economically. There is no telling what would have happened had Kennedy decided to not remove Diem, but the war would have undoubtedly played out differently. If

someone is critical or in favor of the Vietnam War, it is President Kennedy that must be held responsible.

Bibliography

Primary

“Address by the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, Walter S. Robertson, Washington, June 1, 1956.” *Temple College*. Last modified January 1, 2010. Accessed February 17, 2015. http://astro.temple.edu/~rimmerma/united_states_policy_with_respec.htm

“Cable 243.” John F. Kennedy Library. Last modified January 1, 2009. Accessed February 10, 2015. <http://www.jfklibrary.org/JFK/JFK-in-History/~media/EE2438DA4C064164ACABA420F64630D9.pdf>

“Chapter I, ‘The Kennedy Commitments and Programs, 1961,’ pp. 1-39.” *Mt. Holyoke College*. Last modified February 1, 2010. Accessed January 26, 2015. <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon2/pent1.htm>

- “Check-List of Possible U.S Actions in Case of Coup.” *George Washington University*. Date not given. Accessed March 1, 2015. <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB101/vn17.pdf>
- “Congress Backs President on Southeast Asia Moves; Khanh sets Stage of Siege.” August 9th, 1964, *NYT Online*. Last modified January 1 2010. Accessed February 15, 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/big/0807.html>
- “Full text of Pentagon Papers.” *Archive*. Last modified January 2011. Accessed February 2, 2015. https://archive.org/stream/thepentagonpapers/Pentagon-Papers-Part-IV-B-2_djvu.txt
- “GDP per capita (current US\$).” *World Bank Indicator*. Last modified January 15, 2015. Accessed February 2, 2015. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD>
- “JOHNSON ASKS ADDED AID TO STEP UP VIETNAM WAR.” *Redlands Daily Facts Newspapers Online*. Last modified January 1, 2015, Accessed March 3, 2015. <http://www.newspapers.com/newspage/1022355/>
- “Indochina - Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Viet-Nam, July 20, 1954.” *Lillian Goldman Law Library*. Last modified January 1, 2008. Accessed January 18, 2015. http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/inch001.asp#1
- “Interview With Lucien Conein.” *Open Vault*. Last modified April 30, 2015. Accessed March 2, 2015. <http://openvault.wgbh.org/catalog/vietnam-3abc7d-interview-with-lucien-conein-1981>
- “Interview with Walter Cronkite.” *John F. Kennedy Library*. Last modified February 2, 2014. Accessed February 25, 2015. <http://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/Archives/JFKWHA-212-002.aspx>
- John F. Kennedy. “Memoir Dictation on the Assassination of Diem.” Recorded November 4, 1963. Miller Center Audio. Accessed February 27, 2015. <http://millercenter.org/presidentialclassroom/exhibits/jfks-memoir-dictation-on-the-assassination-of-diem>
- “John F. Kennedy News Conference February 21, 1962.” *Public Papers of the Presidency*. Date not given. Accessed March 2, 2015. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=9070&st=Vietnam&st1=>
- “John F. Kennedy The Presidents News Conference.” *Public Papers of the Presidency*. Date not given. Accessed February 16, 2015. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=8892&st=Vietnam&st1>
- “Johnson seeks more war funds.” *Newspapers Online*. Last modified January 1, 2015. Accessed March 1, 2015. <http://www.newspapers.com/newspage/3486891/>
- “Lyndon B. Johnson News Conference July 28, 1965.” *Public Papers of the Presidency*. Date not given. Accessed March 5, 2015. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=27116>
- “Lyndon Baines Johnson, 37th Vice President (1961-1963).” *Senate Historical Office*. Last modified December 2014. Accessed February 2, 2015. https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/VP_Lyndon_Johnson.htm

- “Memorandum for the Chairman, NSC Working Group on Southeast Asia, from L.M. Mustin, JCS Staff with Comments on the draft for Part II.” *Mt. Holyoke College*. Last modified February 1, 2009. Accessed February 22, 2015. <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon3/doc228.htm>
- “Memorandum From the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Taylor) and the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) to the President.” *Office of the Historian*. Last modified January, 2015. Accessed February 5, 2015. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v04/d167>
- “Memorandum From Secretary of Defense McNamara to President Johnson.” *Office of the Historian*. Last modified January 20, 2009. Accessed February 27, 2015 <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v03/d222#fn1>
- “Memorandum From the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) to President Johnson.” *Office of the Historian*. Last modified January 20, 2009. Accessed February 21, 2015. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v04/d374>
- “Memorandum From the Secretary of Defense (McNamara) to President Johnson in 1964.” *Office of the Historian*. Last modified January 20, 2009. Accessed February 11, 2015. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v01/d84>
- “Memorandum of Conference with President on October 29th, 1963.” *George Washington University*. Date not given. Accessed February 18, 2015. <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB101/vn19.pdf>
- “National Security Action Memorandum 263.” *John. F Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum*. Last modified January, 2015. Accessed February 23, 2015. <http://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/w6LJoSnW4UehkaH9Ip5IAA.aspx>
- “National Security Action Memorandum No. 263.” *Federation Association of Scientists*. Date Not Given. Accessed March 4, 2015. <http://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsam-jfk/nsam-263.htm>
- “Notes on a Meeting, White House, Washington, December 1, 1964, 11:30 a.m..” *Public Papers of the Presidency*. Date not given. Accessed March 3, 2015. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/vietnam/showdoc.php?docid=29>
- “Origins of the Insurgency in South Vietnam, 1954-1960.” *Mt Holyoke College*. Last modified February 1, 2009. Accessed January 18, 2015. <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon/pent11.htm>
- “Paper Prepared by Secretary of State Rusk.” *Public Papers of the Presidency*. Date not given. Accessed March 2, 2015, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/vietnam/showdoc.php?docid=70> “President Eisenhower: Letter to Ngo Dinh Diem, October 23, 1954.” *Fordham University*. Last modified July 2008. Accessed January 30, 2015. <http://legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1954-eisenhower-vietnam1.html>
- “Phased Withdrawal of U.S. Forces, 1962-1964.” *Mt. Holyoke College*. Last modified February 1, 2009. Accessed January 29, 2015. <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon2/pent5.htm>

- President Johnson and Dwight D. Eisenhower. "Johnson Conversation with Dwight Eisenhower on Dec 28, 1964." Recorded on December 28, 1964. Miller Center Audio. Accessed February 22, 2015. <http://millercenter.org/presidentialrecordings/lbj-wh6412.02-6616>
- "Reassessment in Washington and Inaction in Saigon, August 28-September 7, 1963." *State Department Archive*. Last modified January 1, 2009. Accessed February 25, 2015. <http://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/kennedyjf/iv/8202.htm>
- "Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara Congressional Presentations." *Paperless Archives*. Last modified January 1, 2015. Accessed February 12, 2015. http://www.paperlessarchives.com/vw_mcnamara_testimony.html
- "Special Message to the Congress Requesting Additional Appropriations for Military Needs in Vietnam." *Public Papers of the Presidency*. Date not given. Accessed March 2, 2015. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=26940>
- "Transcript of Broadcast on NBC's 'Huntley-Brinkley Report'." *Public Papers of the Presidency*. Date not given. Accessed March 6, 2015. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9397>
- "Transcript of Television and Radio Interview Conducted by Representatives of Major Broadcast Services." *Public Papers of the Presidency*. Date not given. Accessed February 11, 2015. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=26108&st=>
- "Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State." *State Department Archive*. Last modified January 20, 2009. Accessed March 1, 2015. <http://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/kennedyjf/iv/12672.htm>
- "The Strategic Hamlet Program, 1961-1963." *Mt. Holyoke College*. Last modified February 1, 2010. Accessed January 29, 2015. <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon2/pent4.htm>
- "U.S Economic Assistance in Vietnam: A Proposed Reorientation." Research and Development Organization. Date not given. Accessed February 10, 2015. <http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/reports/2006/R430.pdf>
- U.S. Programs in South Vietnam, Nov. 1963-Apr. 1965." *Mt. Holyoke College*. Last modified January 2, 2010. Accessed February 8, 2015. <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon3/pent1.htm>
- "Visit of General Edward G. Lansdale to Vietnam January 2-14, 1961." *Office of the Historian*. Last modified January 20, 2009. Accessed January 22, 2015. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v01/ch1>
- "Visit of General Edward G. Lansdale to Vietnam, January 2-14, 1961." *Mt. Holyoke College*. Last modified February 1, 2010. Accessed February 1, 2015. <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/lansdale.htm>

Secondary

- "A failed coup in South Vietnam." *History Today*. Last modified November 11, 2010. Accessed February 11, 2015. <http://www.historytoday.com/richard-cavendish/failed-coup-south-vietnam>

“America Commits, 1961-1964.” *TheHistoryPlace*. Last modified February 2, 2001. Accessed January 17, 2015. <http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/vietnam/index-1961.html>

Anderson, David. *Trapped by Success: The Eisenhower Administration and Vietnam 1953-1961*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press. 1991

“ANOTHER BLOODLESS COUP TOPPLES GOVERNMENT IN SAIGON.” *History*. Last modified January 2015. Accessed February 22, 2015. <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/another-bloodless-coup-topples-the-government-in-saigon?catId=15>

“Attack on Bien Hoa Air Base.” *Schiele*. Last modified January 1, 2012. Accessed February 20, 2015. <http://www.schiele.us/battleDetail.asp?n=119>

“Battlefield Vietnam – A Brief History.” *Public Broadcasting Service News*. Last modified January 1, 2008. Accessed January 21, 2015. <http://www.pbs.org/battlefieldvietnam/history/index.html>

Bowman, John, and Isserman, Maurice. 2010. *Vietnam War (America at War)*. New York, NY; Chelsea House Publications

“Binh Xuyen: Order and Opium in Saigon.” *Al Akhawayn University*. No Date Given. Accessed February 13, 2015. <http://www.akha.org/content/drugwar/mccoy/28.htm>

“CIA Judgments on President Johnson's Decision To "Go Big" in Vietnam.” *Digital History*. Last modified January, 2013. Accessed February 10, 2015. http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/active_learning/explorations/vietnam/escalate05.cfm

Dalleck, Robert. 1999. *Flawed Giant: Lyndon Johnson and His Times, 1961-1973*. Oxford, UK; Oxford University Press. Accessed February 2, 2015. https://books.google.com/books?id=G_J3PEegwdYC&pg=PA242&lpg=PA242&dq=#v=onepage&q&f=false

“Gangsters of Old Saigon: Binh Xuyen.” *Saigoneer*. Last modified May 18, 2013. Accessed February 14, 2015. <http://saigoneer.com/saigon-people/637-gangsters-of-old-saigon-binh-xuyen>

“Gangsters Switch Sides and Help the French Against the Viet Minh.” *Facts and Details*. Last modified December 2014. Accessed February 3, 2015. http://factsanddetails.com/southeast-asia/Vietnam/sub5_9f/entry-3449.html#chapter-7

“General Minh takes over leadership of South Vietnam.” *History*. Last modified January 1, 2015. Accessed January 30, 2015. <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/general-minh-takes-over-leadership-of-south-vietnam>

Gibbins, William. 1986. *The U.S. Government and the Vietnam War: Executive and Legislative Roles and Relationships, Part I: 1945-1960*. Jersey City, NJ; Princeton University Press. Accessed February 2, 2015. https://books.google.com/books?id=hO__AwAAQBAJ&pg=PA45&lpg=PA45&dq=#v=onepage&q&f=false

- Hatcher, Patrick Lloyd. 1990. *The Suicide of an Elite: American Internationalists and Vietnam*. Redwood City, CA; Stanford University Press.
- Hunt, Michael. 1996. *Lyndon Johnson's War: America's Cold War Crusade in Vietnam, 1945-1968*. New York, NY; Hill and Wang.
- Jacobs, Seth. 2005. *America's Miracle Man in Vietnam: Ngo Dinh Diem, Religion, Race, and U.S. Intervention in Southeast Asia*. Durham, NC; Duke University Press Books. Accessed March 1, 2015.
<https://books.google.com/books?id=KtT9FHbcZmEC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>
- Youngmand, Kim. "The South Vietnamese Economy During the Vietnam War, 1954-1975." (BA, Korean Minjok Leadership Academy, 2007). Accessed March 1, 2015.
<http://www.zum.de/whkmla/sp/0708/ym/ym1.html>
- "Memorandum From the Director of the Vietnam Working Group (Kattenburg) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs." *Mary Ferrell Foundation*. Last modified December 1, 2008. Accessed January 30, 2015.
<https://www.maryferrell.org/mffweb/archive/viewer/showDoc.do?docId=945&relPageId=434>
- "North Vietnamese Army begins infiltration." *History*. Last modified January 1, 2015. Accessed January 27, 2015. <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/north-vietnamese-army-begins-infiltration>
- "JFK and the Diem Coup." *George Washington University National Security Archive*. Last modified January 1, 2011. Accessed February 15, 2015.
<http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB101/#doc17>
- "Johnson announces more troops to Vietnam." *History*. Last modified January 1, 2015. Accessed January 18, 2015. <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/johnson-announces-more-troops-to-vietnam?catId=15>
- Moyar, Mark. 2006. *Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954-1965*. New York, NY; Cambridge University Press
- "Ngo Dinh Diem." *Alpha History*. Last modified January 1, 2010. Accessed February 2nd, 2015.
<http://alphahistory.com/vietnam/ngo-dinh-diem>
- "Ngo Dinh Diem." *Encyclopedia*. Last modified January 1, 2015. Accessed March 1, 2015.
http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Ngo_Dinh_Diem.aspx
- "Ngo Dinh Diem Defeats Binh Xuyen." *Facts and Details*. Last modified December 2013. Accessed February 3, 2015. http://factsanddetails.com/southeast-asia/Vietnam/sub5_9f/entry-3449.html#chapter-10
- "Operation Plan 34A." *History Wars Weapons*. Last modified February 1, 2013. Accessed March 1, 2015. <http://historywarsweapons.com/operation-plan-34a/>

- “President Ngo Dinh Diem (1901-1963).” *Global Security*. Last modified September 7, 2011. Accessed February 11, 2015. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/vietnam/rvn-ngo-dinh-diem.htm>
- “Quotes on Responsibility.” *Leadership Now*. Last modified January, 2012. Accessed February 2, 2012. <http://www.leadershipnow.com/responsibilityquotes.html>
- Rust, William. 1985. *Kennedy in Vietnam: American Foreign Policy from 1960 to 1963*. New York, NY; Da Capo Press.
- “Saigon’s Mayor Now Premier.” *New York Times Online*. Last modified January 2015. Accessed March 3, 2015. http://iht-retrospective.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/10/30/1964-saigons-mayor-now-premier/?_r=0
- Sloyan, Patrick. 2015. *The Politics of Deception: JFK's Secret Decisions on Vietnam, Civil Rights, and Cuba*. New York, NY; Thomas Dunne Books. Accessed February 15, 2015. <https://books.google.com/books?id=q01ABAAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Politics+of+Deception:+JFK%27s+Secret+Decisions+on+Vietnam,+Civil+Rights+and+Cuba>
- “South Vietnam, May, 1962.” *Stars and Stripes*. Last modified January 15, 2015. Accessed February 13, 2015. <http://www.stripes.com/blogs/archive-photo-of-the-day/archive-photo-of-the-day-1.9717/robert-mcnamara-in-vietnam-1962-1.218838>
- “Stability is based on democracy.” *Africa Renewal Online*. Last modified April 1, 2010. Accessed March 5, 2015. <http://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/april-2010/%E2%80%98stability-based-democracy%E2%80%99>
- “Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State.” *State Department Archive*. Last modified January 1, 2009. Accessed February 14, 2015. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v01/d379>
- “Tonkin Gulf Resolution (1964).” *OurDocuments*. Last modified January 1, 2008. Accessed February 1, 2015. http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc_large_image.php?flash=true&doc=98
- “The Jungle War, 1965-1968,” *TheHistoryPlace*. Last modified February 2, 2001. Accessed January 17, 2015. <http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/vietnam/index-1965.html>
- “The Vietnam War.” *BoysWhoSaidNo*. Last modified January 2, 2014. Accessed February 25, 2015. <http://www.boyswhosaidno.com/the-war/the-vietnam-war/>
- “The Vietnam War: Military Statistics.” *GilderLehrman*. Last modified January 1, 2015. Accessed February 20, 2015. <http://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/seventies/resources/vietnam-war-military-statistics>
- VanDeMark, Brian. 1995. *Into the Quagmire, Lyndon Johnson and the Escalation of the Vietnam War*. New York, NY; Oxford University Press.
- “US-GVN Relations, 1964-1967.” *Mt. Holyoke College*. Last modified February 2, 2009. Accessed January 28, 2015. <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon2/pent8.htm>

“US involvement in Vietnam.” *AlphaHistory*. Last modified January 1, 2014. Accessed February 22, 2015. <http://alphahistory.com/vietnam/us-involvement-in-vietnam/>

“Viet Cong.” *Global Security*. Last modified January 1, 2015. Accessed February 12, 2015. (<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/vietnam/viet-cong.htm>)

“Viet Cong Attacks on U.S Base of Pleiku.” *National Broadcast Company Learn*. Last modified January 1, 2014. Accessed March 3, 2015. <https://archives.nbclearn.com/portal/site/k-12/browse/?cuecard=1013>

“Vietnam War, Part I – The Geneva Accords.” *History Half*. Last modified October 3, 2010. Accessed January 24, 2015. <http://historyhalf.com/vietnam-war-part-i-the-geneva-accords/>

“1961.” *Vietnam Full Disclosure*. Last modified January 2015. Accessed February 2, 2015. <http://vietnamfulldisclosure.org/index.php/1961-2/>

“1963.” *Vietnam Full Disclosure*. Last modified January 2015. Accessed February 13, 2015. <http://vietnamfulldisclosure.org/index.php/1963-2/>