

Lecture 54: American Politics 1963-1973

Summary

American during the 60s and 70s politics began with the Johnson Administration.

Johnson, an old-school politician from Texas, had a rough personality and cared little about his image. Coming out of the 1964 election, he lived in former President John F. Kennedy's shadow. With Hubert Humphrey as a running mate, Johnson somehow won the election by a landslide, shocking critics and instilling yet another Democrat in the White House. Johnson was credited for his use of ticket balancing, which boosted his number of votes.

During his administration, Johnson planned to create a series of programs dubbed the Great Society. The Great Society called for more attention on education and medicinal needs of the people. It also eliminated immigration quotas and created the Voting Rights Act. However, in the 1966 midterm Congressional election, Republicans were able to win back some seats, holding nearly 50.

This new force prevented many of Johnson's reforms from being passed. Johnson also escalated the Vietnam War, massively increasing government spending (balance between "guns and butter"). His simultaneous wars on poverty and the war in Vietnam were both met with defeat as he made unreasonable promises. After the Tet Offensive dealt a sharp psychological blow to the US, Johnson announced his intentions of "not seeking another term."

In the 1968 election, the Democratic split anti-war Democrats and creation of the American Independent party ensured an easy win for the Republicans. Representing the Republicans was Nixon, who had appealed highly to the south with his promises to appoint conservative whites and oppose civil rights acts. As President, Nixon created New Federalism, and with this platform Nixon taxed the middle class and redistributed it back to the states. He advocated the growth of the common state as opposed to that of the federal government. Nixon's foreign policy called for a smaller part in the Vietnam War. However, to make sure the previous work would not go to waste, Nixon initiated Vietnamization, in which the US army would train South Vietnamese troops to fight.

In the Watergate scandal of 1972, CRP officials attempted to gain an edge on their Democratic opponent by stealing information and bugging phones, but were caught. Nixon, in his attempts to prove his innocence, declared he had no part in the scandal. While Congress was debated whether to impeach Nixon or not, the FBI uncovered personal tapes of Nixon talking to his officials about covering up the events. Soon after, Nixon's vice president resigned on charges of tax evasion, and Nixon himself resigned before he could be impeached.

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Terms: Coattail effect, ticket balancing, CRP

Coattail Effect: This is the tendency for a popular leader to bring in others “on their coattails.” Johnson took advantage of this to win a landslide election against Goldwater. However, the effect did not carry over to Congress, where the mostly Republican Do-Nothing Congress kept Johnson from passing many of his Great Society reforms.

Ticket Balancing: The practicing of taking a member of the opposite side to ‘balance’ the ballot and receive more votes. Nixon, a Republican, took Agnew as a Vice President (Agnew was Republican, but was considered more Moderate) to help win Northern states while he concentrated on Southern states, or Johnson and Humphrey.

CRP: The Committee to Re-Elect the President was a fundraising organization whose goal was to reelect Nixon. They were actually unneeded, as Nixon won 49 states. However, the break-in at Watergate gradually led to talk of impeachment and the resignation of Nixon.

People

Spiro Agnew – Nixon’s Vice President, he resigned when he was charged with tax evasion.

Barry Goldwater – A Republican candidate who ran against Johnson in the 1964 election. He was extremely conservative, advocating a “back-to-roots” movement, and alienated many voters.

Hubert Humphrey – Johnson’s Vice President, he served to attract conservative votes.

Lyndon B. Johnson: Had an image of a old-time politician and was the Senate majority leader and very successful in Congress. He always made his presence known and was well liked. After the 1964 election, he lived in the shadow of JFK, limiting his ability to do well. He pioneered the “Great Society,” using the “Xerox Congress” to increase federal aid to education and medical programs. However, he oversold and made too many promises in fighting two wars: poverty and Vietnam.

Eugene McCarthy – McCarthy was an anti-war Democrat. His anti-war stance gained nearly half of the Democratic party, splitting it but ultimately failing to receive the presidency. He eventually supported Reagan.

Richard M. Nixon – Nixon used his “Southern strategy” to win Southern votes on a platform of law and order and opposition to new civil rights, while Agnew would win votes in the North. He followed through with his promises, cutting middle-class taxes and giving money back to states. He was later forced to resign following Watergate.

George Wallace – Wallace was a Democrat who competed with Wallace. He was extremely racist, playing off the backlash against Civil Rights and eventually splitting off to form the American Independent Party.

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Multiple Choice Questions

1. President Johnson was limited by which of the following factors?
 - a. A supportive Congress
 - b. Vietnam War
 - c. The 1966 Midterm Congressional Elections
 - d. Spiro Agnew's ticket balancing
 - e. JFK's lingering influence

2. How did the Republican candidates in the 1964 election help Johnson?
 - a. Barry Goldwater was too extreme for voters, earning votes for Johnson
 - b. Robert Kennedy was assassinated, leaving no competition
 - c. The victory at Khe San meant Eugene McCarthy no longer had support
 - d. All of the above
 - e. None of the above

3. Which of the following is NOT a part of Johnson's Great Society?
 - a. Federal aid to education
 - b. Voting Rights Act
 - c. Elimination of immigration quote
 - d. MEOW
 - e. None of the above; all are part of the Great Society

4. What was the main cause for the Democratic split?
 - a. Violent protests in Chicago
 - b. Conflicts between anti-war and pro-war Democrats
 - c. George Wallace's rise to power and consequence split
 - d. Nixon and Agnew's ticket balancing
 - e. None of the above

5. Which of the following are true about Nixon's "Southern Strategy"?
 - a. He used it to win the 1964 election
 - b. He gained African American votes by pushing Civil Rights Acts
 - c. Increased taxes on the middle class gained rich plantation owners' support
 - d. He promised to appoint conservative whites
 - e. CRP would be used to gain support in Montgomery, Alabama

6. Watergate became a 'scandal' once it was revealed that
 - a. CRP was a government organization
 - b. Nixon had lied about involvement
 - c. It was discovered that the White House tapes had been destroyed
 - d. Both A and B
 - e. All of the above

7. Johnson dropped out of the 1968 election when

- a. He realized Nixon was too powerful
 - b. The Tet offensive began
 - c. Russia moved missiles into Cuba
 - d. Eisenhower joined the elections
 - e. None of the above
8. In what ways was the CRP unnecessary?
- a. Nixon only lost one state
 - b. Montgomery, Alabama already supported Nixon
 - c. The Democrats were disorganized enough
 - d. Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated
 - e. None of the above
9. Which is NOT an example of ticket balancing?
- a. Nixon/Agnew
 - b. Johnson/Humphrey
 - c. Johnson/McCarthy
 - d. B and C
 - e. A and B
10. Nixon was impeached for:
- a. Sleeping with an intern
 - b. Treason
 - c. Lying to government officials
 - d. Tax evasion
 - e. Nixon was not impeached

Answers

1-E, 2-E, 3-D, 4-B, 5-D, 6-D, 7-E, 8-A, 9-E, 10-E

1. who does johnson pick as his running mate?
a) ford b) Hubert Humpfrey c) JFK d) Nixon
2. The great society was most concerned with and pertained most to which group of people
a) US citizens b) politicians c) Foreign Alliances d) Foreign Enemies
3. HOw many seats did the Republicans have by the 1966 congressional election?
a) 40 b) 42 c) 44 d) 46
4. Why does Johnson not seek another term?
a) failure to rid of poverty b) downfall in war c) communist spread
d) all of the above
5. the democratics split into what two factions in the 1968 elections?
a) anti war, warhawks b) anti prohibiton, prohibition
c) anti abolition, abolition d) rich, poor
6. what party was createdby George wallace in the 1968 election?
a) green back party b) american indepedit party c) New federalists
d) Pro-war democratic party
7. nixon advocated what policy during his term?
a) free silver platform b) radical stance platform c) new federalism
d) great society
8. what was used to convict nixon in the watergate scandal?
a) watergate tapes b) Nixon confession c) photo evidence
d) Nixon's official's confession
9. After nixon VP resigns, who takes his place?
a) Johnson b) JFK c) ford d) none of the above
10. nixon appealed most to what group?
a) radical north b) slaves c) immigrants d) conservative whites

key- 1. b

2. a

3.c

4.d

5.a

6.b

7.c

8.a

9.c

10. d