

Politics and social change in the 1960s essay sample



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What were the goals of Kennedy's New Frontier and Johnson's Great Society programs? ■ What were the achievements of the civil rights movement and the ensuing splinter movements? ■ Why did the United States increasingly involve itself in Vietnam, and why was there risking opposition to the war? ■ How did Kennedy try to combat communism in Cuba? The 1960s were full of social turbulence and innovation in public affairs Socials ills force their way to the national agenda Assumptions of cold war ideology led US to war

The New Frontier

Kennedy Versus Nixon Nixon was better known since he was vice president o Nixon was tricky, hid behind series of masks Nixon was shrewd, intelligent, love politics, combative o Nixon was Republican Senator o Grew up in working-class Quaker family Nixon was eager to reverse the tide of New Deal liberalism o Unleashed personal attacks, spread lies o Manipulated communist fear o Nixon was a popular and respected Republican John F. Kennedy was inexperienced compared to Nixon o Rich, powerful family, movie-star charisma, Harvard education o Did not distinguish himself in House or Senate o Political rise was attributed to public relations campaign, not accomplishments Kennedy had Addison's disease, but ailments were masked from public Kennedy travelled, gave speeches, accepted Democratic nomination in 1960 o Established frontier metaphor—opportunities and perils awaited in the future o Frontier metaphor reflected domestic program o Kennedy would use administration to get the country “ moving again” Three events shaped the presidential campaign Kennedy was the first Catholic to run for presidency since 1928 o Kennedy's candor neutralized attention to religion Nixon violated one of the cardinal rules of politics when he agreed to

debate on TV o Differences were not apparent in the debate, decisions were made based on style Ishmam Ahmed; Ishmam. com

Nixon was obviously uncomfortable, looked ill o Kennedy was cool, poised Debates weren't enough to ensure Kennedy victory Martin Luther King Jr and 50 demonstrators were arrested in Atlanta for trespassing in an all-white restaurant o Kennedy's brother Robert called judge and insisted release of King o Kennedy campaign took advantage, pamphlets in African-American neighborhoods Kennedy and Johnson won the closest presidential election since 1888 o Nixon actually carried more states than Kennedy, but Kennedy's majority was based in southern New England and Atlantic states o Democratic south voted for Harry Byrd, segregationist

The New Administration Kennedy was youngest to ever be elected president o Determined to attract the best and brightest minds o Dean Rusk as Secretary of State o Stevenson as ambassador to UN o Robert McNamara as manager in Department of Defense o C. Douglas Dillon as Secretary of Treasury o Robert Kennedy (brother) as attorney general—criticized o McGeorge Bundy as assistant for national security affairs Inaugural ceremonies set tone of elegance and youthful vigor called Kennedy Style o Dazzled listeners o Uplifting The Kennedy Record Kennedy called himself realist or “ idealist without illusions” o Congress was controlled by conservative southern coalition that blocked efforts to increase federal aid to education, provide health insurance for the old, and create Department of Urban Affairs o Congress blocked many efforts Congress did approve Alliance for Progress programs to help Latin America and the Peace Corps o

Kennedy's greatest legislative accomplishment was Trade Expansion Act of <https://assignbuster.com/politics-and-social-change-in-the-1960s-essay-sample/>

1962: led to tariff cuts on goods between US and European Common Market
Kennedy administration had victories in domestic social legislation.

Housing Act: \$5 million for urban renewal o Area Redevelopment Act:
provided loans, grants to disserted areas, increase in Social Security o

Roosevelt also got credited for announcing the space race The Warren Court

Under Chief Warren the Supreme Court continued to be influential in

domestic life o Ruled that school prayer violated constitution o Gideon v.

Wainwright: every defendant provided a lawyer, regardless of ability to pay o

Escobedo v Illinois: accused person must be allowed to consult lawyer before

interrogation by police o Miranda v Arizona: Court ordered that an accused

person in custody be informed of basic rights: to remain silent, to know

anything may be used against them, to have defense attorney present

during interrogation. Ishmam Ahmed; Ishmam. com

Expansion of the Civil Rights Movement

Most important development occurred in civil rights o Kennedy was reluctant
to challenge southern Democrats on race issues o Never committed to cause

of civil rights, few dramatic gestures toward African-American leaders o

Kennedy celebrated equality but did little to promote it Sit-Ins and Freedom

Rides Students activists, black and white, formed Student Nonviolence

Coordinating Committee (SNCC) o Worked with Dr. King o Sit-ins became

kneel-ins at churches and wade-ins at pools Most activists focused on

nonviolent protest During the year after the Greensboro sit-ins, 3, 600 black

and white activists spent time in jail o Subject to abuse in many communities

Congress of Racial Equality sent a group of black and white “ freedom riders”

on buses to test a federal court ruling that had banned segregation on buses

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and trains and in terminals o Mobs in Alabama, violence, government observers were attacked o Demonstrators drew national attention o Kennedy was not inspired by the freedom riders—preoccupied with Berlin crisis.

Attorney General Robert Kennedy used federal marshals to protect freedom riders Federal Intervention Governor Ross Barnett of Mississippi defied a court order in refusing James Meredith, an African American student, to be admitted to University of Mississippi o Attorney General Kennedy intervened with federal marshals—marshals were assaulted by white mob o federal troops had to intervene o Meredith was allowed to enroll eventually Martin Luther King launched series of demonstration in Birmingham, Alabama o Police commissioner Eugene Connor served as foil for King's tactic of nonviolence o Connor used dogs, gas, electric prods, fire hoses o People were enraged to watch confrontations on TV King wrote letter from jail, a defense of nonviolent strategy.

Emphasized need to educate southern whites o Focused on getting federal enforcement of the law and new legislation by provoking racists to display violent behavior o J. Edgar Hoover, head of FBI, was extremely antagonistic toward King; bugged his telephone, agents pursued him, etc. Courage helped mobilize national support for integrationists o King got Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 o Kennedy finally decided that enforcement of existing statues was not enough; new legislation was needed o Endorsed bill intended to end discrimination in public facilities, desegregate schools, protect voters o Bill was blocked southern conservatives in Congress Traditionalists defied efforts at racial integration Ishmam Ahmed; Ishmam. com

George Wallace blocked enrollment of African Americans at University of Alabama—stepped aside when federal marshals arrived o Kennedy addressed moral issue of the US High point of integrationist phase occurred in August 28, 1963 o 200, 000 blacks and white marched on Washington DC Mall o March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom o King's I have a Dream speech Racial harmony never arrived. Bomb killed 4 black girls two weeks later. King's dream survived. o Corporations in the south encouraged civil rights because not doing so would threaten economic development o Atlanta: the city is too busy to hate From Civil Rights to Black Power

Civil Rights Legislation Federal judge allowed March in Selma, Alabama, a drive led by King to enroll African American voters Johnson encouraged Voting Rights Act of 1965: ensured all citizens the right vote, African Americans registered Black Power Civil rights movement began to fragment o Black communities exploded into frenzy and looting o Chicago and Cleveland Civil rights movement shifted focus to urban blacks o Most lived in urban areas o Ghettos o Nonviolence may not work in the cities as they had in the south o Urban upheavals were initiated by blacks themselves Black power had become the new rallying cry by 1966 o Stokely Carmichael became head of SNCC, made separatist philosophy of black power o Wanted to oust whites.

H. Rap Brown succeeded Carmichael, urged blacks to kill the honkies o Black Panther party: urban revolutionaries in Oakland, California, headed by Huey Newton and Elbridge Cleaver Most articulate spokesman for black power was Malcolm X o Risen from ghettos, extremist o Followed Black Muslim, Elijah Muhammad o Founded organization committed to establishment of alliances <https://assignbuster.com/politics-and-social-change-in-the-1960s-essay-sample/>

between African Americans and the nonwhite peoples of the world
o Killed in Harlem by rival faction of Black Muslims
o Began to preach biracial message
Black power movement attracted only small minority of African Americans
o Predominant philosophy was nonviolence
o King dismissed black separatism
Ishmam Ahmed; Ishmam. com

Black power had two positive effects
Helped African Americans take greater pride in their racial heritage
Forced King and other mainstream black leaders to launch a new stage in the civil rights movement to focus attention to the plight of inner-city blacks

Foreign Frontiers

Early Setbacks Kennedy's record in foreign relations was mixed
o Made missile gap a part of his campaign
o CIA training of anti-Castro Cubans
The Castro rebellion scheme had little chance of succeeding
o Invasion force landed in Bay of Pigs but was subdued in two days
o Kennedy called it colossal mistake
o Planners underestimated Castro's popularity
o Poor communication, inaccurate maps, faulty equipment, ineffective leadership
o Kennedy fired CIA director and officer in charge
Kennedy met with Khrushchev in Vienna
o Khrushchev bullied inexperienced Kennedy
o Aggressive Soviet stand: threatened to limit Western access
o Kennedy drew up national guard and army reserve, Soviets constructed Berlin Wall
The Cuban Missile Crisis
Kennedy's unwillingness to commit the forces necessary to overthrow Castro at Bay of Pigs seemed to signify a failure of will, and Soviets reasoned that they could install their ballistic missiles in Cuba without opposition
o Motives were to protect Cuba
o Redress strategic imbalance caused by US missiles in Turkey
US officials feared real threat to
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American security o Kennedy was worried that American credibility would decrease.

Anti-Castro elements would be demoralized US intelligence analysts discovered Soviet missile sites under construction in Cuba o Options to remove missiles: surgical air strike or blockade o Kennedy opted for blockade (quarantine) o No official action of war declared, but threat had to be removed o Blockade advantage: would force Soviets to shoot first Soviet ships with missiles stopped at the quarantine line o Soviets demanded that US not invade Cuba or missiles would be fired o Secretary of State Dean Rusk recognized that Soviets were first to act Khrushchev demanded removal of missiles from Turkey and offered to remove missiles from Cuba if US promised not to invade o Khrushchev agreed to remove soviet missiles from Cuba Tensions between US and USSR subsided o Agreement to sell USSR surplus wheat Ishmam Ahmed; Ishmam. com

Telephone line between Moscow and Washington Removal of US missiles from Turkey, Italy, Britain New treaty to end nuclear war

Kennedy and Vietnam Southeast Asia issues dominated international diplomatic debates Laos had fallen into struggle for power between Communist Pathet Lao and inept Laotian Army o Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff favored combat against Pathet Lao o Kennedy decided to promote neutral coalition government o Soviets were ready to negotiate, talks began in Geneva in 1961 o All parties agreed to neutral coalition Situation of South Vietnam worsened under leadership of Ngo Dinh Diem o Diem's failure to deliver promised and social and economic reforms o Repressive tactics o

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Walt Rostow and Maxwell Taylor proposed increase in US military presence o Kennedy refused but continued to dispatch more military “ advisers” in hope of stabilizing situation Kennedy received divergent reports from South Vietnamese countryside o American military advisers expressed confidence in Army of the Republic of Vietnam o However, onsite reporters predicted civil turmoil o Buddhist demonstrations ignited in the south, against government tyranny o Kennedy decided that Diem was a lost cause o Generals proposed coup d'état o Diem was murdered o No improvement in government Kennedy's Assassination Kennedy gave up on involvement in Vietnam Kennedy shot by Lee Harvey Oswald Seen as a martyr

Lyndon Johnson and the Great Society

Johnson had none of Kennedy's elegance; we wanted dominance and authority Admired FDR, concerned for the poor, committed to civil rights o A novice in foreign affairs o Wanted to be the best president o Made more promises than he could keep

Politics and Poverty Domestic policy was Johnson's first priority o Passed Kennedy's legislative program Congress approved foreign-aid bill and plan to sell wheat to the USSR o Many Americans suffered from poverty o Johnson addressed poverty in State of the Union message o Prioritized measures for tax reductions and civil rights Ishmam Ahmed; Ishmam. com

o Congressional Republicans opposed tax cuts to stimulate economy because it would increase deficit o Public opinion was also skeptical of tax reductions o Johnson finally passed tax reductions: The Revenue Act of 1964 Civil Rights Act was passed with Johnson's leadership o Prohibited racial

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segregation in public facilities o Outlawed discrimination of voters and hiring employees o Southern legislators in Senate filibustered Johnson launched an ambitious legislative program of his own, in addition those of Kennedy o In 1964 State of the Union address, he initiated war against poverty Michael Harrington in *The Other America*: 40 million people in poverty o Money for Johnson's program would come from taxes Economic opportunity bill incorporated wide range of programs: Job Corps for inner city youths, Head Start program for disadvantaged preschoolers, work study programs for college students, grants to farmers and rural business, loans to employers willing to hire the unemployed, Volunteers in Service to America, Community Action Program which would provide "maximum feasible protection" of the poor. o Johnson also called for a "Great Society" resting on "abundance and liberty for all."

The Election of 1964 Johnson's war on poverty spurred Republican counterattack o "me too" candidates merely promised to run more efficiently the programs that Democrats designed Barry Goldwater wrote *The Conscience of the Conservative* and proposed abolition of income tax, sale of Tennessee Valley Authority, drastic overhaul of Social Security o Goldwater's forces controlled Republican Convention Goldwater had gift for scaring voters o Urged wholesale bombing of North Vietnam o Foolishly candid o Questioned the value of Social Security o Opposed nuclear test ban and Civil Rights Act Johnson portrayed himself as a responsible centrist o Chose Hubert Humphrey as his running mate o Opposed sending troops to Vietnam Johnson won by landslide.

Goldwater only carried Arizona and Deep South o Vermont went Democratic for the first time ever o Democrats increased majority in Senate and House
Landmark Legislation Johnson flooded Great Society legislation o Scope was unparalleled Priority went to federal health insurance and aid to education o Initial opposition of the American Medical Association o AMA proposed a program for the payment of doctors' bills and drug costs o Bill finally emerged with Medicare program, doubled with Medicaid for federal grants to states to help cover medical payments for the indigent Ishmam Ahmed; Ishmam. com

Johnson sent a massive program of federal aid to elementary and secondary education o First issue had been laid to rest by Civil Rights Act o Congress devised means to aid "poverty-impacted" districts New record set in Congressional activity and passage of legislation o Appalachian Regional Development Act: provided \$1 billion for programs in remote mountain areas that had experienced poverty o Housing and Urban Development Act provided construction of houses o Department of Housing and Urban Development appeared, headed by Robert Weaver—first African American cabinet member

The Immigration Act Originated in Kennedy White House; Johnson signed Immigration and Nationality Services Act in a ceremony held on Liberty Island o Abolished discriminatory quotas o Treated all races as equal o Allowed entry of immediate family members of American residents without limit o Visas given on first come first serve o Asians and Latin Americans were the largest contingent Assessing the Great Society Included several successes o Highway Safety Act and Traffic Safety Act o Higher Education
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Act o Aimed at improving health, nutrition, education o Efforts to clean up air and water pollution o Some programs were badly managed or misunderstood

- ⊖ Medicare removed incentives for hospitals to control costs, medical bills skyrocketed
- ⊖ People in poverty were reduced, but at the expense of government through welfare, not by productive jobs
- ⊖ Some funds never made it through bureaucracy
- ⊖ Welfare fraud
- ⊖ Middle class resentment

Conservative backlash

The Tragedy of Vietnam

When John Kennedy was assassinated, there were 16000 American military advisers in South Vietnam o Johnson sought to apply enough force to avoiding losing Vietnam to Communism o He feared that any other course of action would undermine his political influence o Johnson didn't think military involvement was worth it Johnson fear of appearing weak was stronger than his reluctance o By 1965, 184000 troops in Vietnam o 1969 was the height of American presence o War cost taxpayers \$150 billion and toppled Johnson's administration Ishmam Ahmed; Ishmam. com

Escalation The official sanction for military escalation was the Tonkin Gulf resolution o Johnson told national television audience that the USS Maddox and C. Turner Joy had been attacked by North Vietnamese vessels in the Gulf of Tonkin o Portrayed as unprovoked, but was actually not o Authorized president to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack o Johnson interpreted Congressional vote as equivalent to declaration of war Johnson ordered Operation Rolling Thunder, first sustained bombing of North Vietnam o Intended to stop flow of soldiers to the south o Later studies showed that this was not effective US commander in Vietnam, General <https://assignbuster.com/politics-and-social-change-in-the-1960s-essay-sample/>

William Westmoreland, greeted the first installment of combat troops o Americans forces were engaged in “ search-and-destroy” operations throughout South Vietnam o “ Westy’s war:” fought with helicopters, chemicals, napalm, trench warfare The Context for Policy Johnson’s decisions to Americanize the Vietnam War was consistent with foreign-policy principles pursued by all presidents after WWII o US opposition to Communism everywhere o Rest of Southeast Asia would fall to Communism if American forces withdrew.

Military intervention was a logical culmination o Both political parties agreed Johnson and his advisers presumed that military involvement in Vietnam must not reach levels that would cause Chinese or Soviet intervention o Complete military victory was never possible o Goal was not to win but to prevent Public support for war eroded faster than the will of the North Vietnamese leaders to tolerate casualties and destruction o Opposition on college campuses—“ teach ins” at University of Michigan o Senator William Fulbright began investigations into American policy o George Kennan, author of containment policy, told Fulbright’s committee that doctrine was appropriate for Europe but not Asia o Another source testified that Westmoreland’s strategies would not work o Anti-war demonstrations attracted massive support

Vietnam war was first to get extended TV coverage In political will, North Vietnam had the advantage o North Vietnamese were tenacious o US fought for limited objectives The Turning Point Viet Cong defied holiday truce (Tet, Vietnamese New Years’) to launce assault on American and South

Vietnamese forces o Capital city of Hue fell to communists o Viet Cong
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occupied grounds of US embassy in Saigon, capital of South Vietnam o
Attack contrasted with newspapers and magazines that said war was going
well Ishmam Ahmed; Ishmam. com

o Anti-war editorials urged withdrawal o Johnson's popularity declined o Civil
rights leaders felt betrayed—federal funds went to war efforts Johnson grew
bitter and isolated o Depression and paranoia o Became evident that
Vietnam War was a stalemate o War was undermining Great Society
programs o Clark Clifford, Secretary of Defense, reported that there was no
hope of victory o Robert Kennedy considered running for president o Eugene
McCarthy already intended to oppose Johnson in Democratic primaries o
Johnson announced that ceasefire would be negotiated and that he would
not run for a second term

Sixties Crescendo

A Traumatic Year 1968 was the most traumatic year of all o Martin Luther
King Jr. was assassinated by James Earl Ray o Ignited riots Robert Kennedy
was assassinated by Sirhan Sirhan, who resented Kennedy's support of Israel
Chicago and Miami Democrats nominated Hubert Humphrey, Johnson vice
president o Chicago mayor Richard Daley had given shoot-to-kill orders to
police during April riots protesting King's assassination o Riots broke out
anyway and were televised Democratic party's liberal tradition was in
disarray o Republicans gathered in Miami to nominate Richard Nixon o
Became spokesman for values of Middle America.

Offered vision of stability, appealed to most Americans, the silent majority
George Wallace was Democratic governor of Alabama who made his

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reputation as an outspoken defender of segregation o Ran as third candidate on American Independent ticket o Appealed more candidly than Nixon to voters' concerns o Wallace's reactionary candidacy generated appeal in the South, especially working class o Wallace did pose the possibility of denying Humphrey or Nixon an electoral majority Nixon Again Nixon enjoyed enormous lead in the polls o Wallace's campaign was hurt by outspoken running mate, Curtis LeMay Nixon chose Spiro Agnew as his running mate o George Wallace showed best third party showing since Robert La Follette Nixon promised peace with honor in Vietnam