

Kennedy and nixon regime

[Politics](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Both JFK and Richard Nixon were elected to Congress in 1946 i. e. both started their political in the same era. This was an era marked with the notions of ' New Deal'. This affected both these statesmen showed a progressive and vigorous approach during their regimes. This paper aims at exploring their domestic and foreign policies and to analyze the differences and similarities in the approach and activities. President John. F. Kennedy, who entered the office in 1960, was the youngest and the first Roman Catholic to enter the Presidential office.

He was a Harvard graduate who served heroically in the war. He entered the Congress in 1946 and became a member of the American Senate in 1952 as a Massachusetts' senator. In view of the extraordinary ability in vote getting displayed by Kennedy in his native state, he was nominated by the Democrats as its candidate for the Presidency in 1960. It must be noted that Kennedy secured the nomination at the first ballot. In the election, Kennedy was opposed by Richard Nixon, The Republican candidate.

Although he was comparatively less known than the rival Nixon But he received much publicity and created a favorable impression in the televised debates between the two contestants. In the elections, Kennedy bitterly criticized the unhealthy economy and the decline of the American prestige abroad since 1952. As a result of all this, Kennedy was able to secure victory over Nixon, though by a narrow margin . As it can be extracted by the above paragraph that Richard Nixon, who became President of the United States in 1969, was not a novice to the Federal politics.

He has already served two-terms as Vice-president under President Eisenhower from 1953-61. In 1961, he lost to Kennedy by a narrow margin.

<https://assignbuster.com/kennedy-and-nixon-regime/>

Then he contested the Governorship of California but failed to get elected. After these defeats, he settled down at New York to carry on his practice of law. It was generally believed that his political career has come to an end. However he displayed a remarkable comeback in 1969, when he not only secured Republican nomination but also defeated the Democrats nominee Hubert H. Humphrey, a Vice-president of Johnson administration.

Commenting on the election of Kennedy, Prof. Blum says; With Kennedy's election, the first of the established states of the world was turning into a new generation of political leadership...The generation which was born during the First World War, grew up during the depression, fought in the second World War, and began its political career in the atomic age had at last arrived at the seats of power. (Blum. 786) During his election campaigns, John F. Kennedy has talked of 'New Frontiers' and impressed on the need for the nation to move forward.

When Kennedy was inaugurated as President, the Democrats also had majority in both the houses of the Congress. Under the circumstances, it could reasonably expect that a new wave of reform and progressivism would sweep the country. However, nothing of the sort happened and there only a slight shift to the left of 'moderate Republicanism'. No doubt, President Kennedy presented the Congress with a legislative program which was quite different from the one carried through the Congress.

Some of his proposals that were enacted into laws by the Congress were so much modified that they reached the statute book in a watered down form. Some of his key achievements are as under; In 1962, Kennedy requested Congress to pass a law authorizing the Executive to negotiate trade

agreements in which American duties could be reduced on the categories of goods and to eliminate tariffs altogether on certain items. To protect the American industries from foreign competition, he proposed that the Federal government should aid the companies to modernize and diversify their production.

Numerous modifications and amendments were suggested to the bill, however it was passed by the Congress but administration was denied the right to accord most-favored nation's treatment to any communist country. It impeded the relationship with revisionist communist states like Poland and Yugoslavia and they were driven away from the West and were encouraged to develop close relations with Soviet Russia. With a view to stimulate the sluggish economy, Kennedy sought tax revision. He proposed a 7% tax credit to the business firms for investments in new equipment.

The loss so suffered was to be covered up by collecting income-tax on dividend and interest. This program was harshly criticized in the Congress and only a much modified version was accepted. To fight the growing recession, President Kennedy sought authority from Congress to make personal income-tax cuts for upto six months by five percentage points. Presidents argued that this would provide \$ 5 Billion in the form of additional purchasing power. This proposal was not given serious consideration. He further worked on the unemployment, social security, agricultural problem, and increased federal aid to education and Medicare.

Steel battle was one the most dramatic incident of the Kennedy's administration. In April 1962, Kennedy's was informed about a price hike by United States Steel by \$6 a ton. The other five steel companies raised their

<https://assignbuster.com/kennedy-and-nixon-regime/>

prices. Kennedy took strong action against this and even threatened Defence Department boycott of these steel companies. He further announced that a jury would be instituted to investigate the increases. As a result of this within 72 hours, United States Steels and other steel firms that had raised their prices capitulated.

Kennedy further sought to protect the civil rights through executive rather than legislative actions. Kennedy not only offered responsible federal appointments to a number of Negroes but also took steps to end segregation. He also secured peaceful desegregation of schools and restaurants in Southern cities of Atlanta, Memphis and Dallas. Although in the field of domestic policy, the record of Kennedy was not encouraging, but in the field of foreign policy his administration's contributions was more positive and eventful.

He faced a major problem in Latin America. The crisis was precipitated when armed forces of 14000 Cuban exiles armed and trained by the United States, launched an attack on Cuba in the Bay of Pigs. Eleven hundred invaders were taken as prisoners to Castro. The invasion not only brought discredit to the Americans but also strengthened the communist hold of Cuba. The Cuban incident also awakened United States to the problems of Latin America and new plans for aids and developments were taken in this region.

In 1963, missile crisis was surfaced but was diffused by the efforts of Kennedy. Nixon's era is known as an era of vigor and vitality. American historical land on the moon set an impetus for this vigor and introduction of 26th Amendments further augmented this vigor. The twenty-sixth amendment that was ratified by June 30, 1971 extended the right of voting

to the younger generation of American population (between eighteen and twenty one years of age). Encyclopedia Britannica has comprehensively summed up the domestic policies of Nixon in this way;

Despite expectations from some observers that Nixon would be a “do-nothing” president, his administration undertook a number of important reforms in welfare policy, civil rights, law enforcement, the environment, and other areas. Nixon's proposed Family Assistance Program (FAP), intended to replace the service-oriented Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), would have provided working and nonworking poor families with a guaranteed annual income—though Nixon preferred to call it a “negative income tax.

Although the measure was defeated in the Senate, its failure helped to generate support for incremental legislation incorporating similar ideas—such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI), which provided a guaranteed income to the elderly, the blind, and the disabled; and automatic cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) for Social Security recipients—and it also prompted the expansion and improvement of existing programs, such as food stamps and health insurance for low-income families.

In the area of civil rights, Nixon's administration instituted so-called “set aside” policies to reserve a certain percentage of jobs for minorities on federally funded construction projects—the first “affirmative action” program. (p. 5) On the international horizon, Nixon opened new chapter by establishing relationships with China and thereby established contacts between the most populous and most powerful country of the world. To pave

the way for smoother relations, Nixon administration took a number of steps to relax travel and trade restrictions.

There are many similarities in the domestic and foreign policies of both Kennedy and Nixon. Both aspired for a new era of development and progress for the Americans and took a number of steps in this regard. Both worked toward a national reconciliations and desegregations. Although Kennedy worked toward civil rights and affirmative action but credit goes to Nixon that in his era, first affirmative actions was carried out. Both Nixon and Kennedy's foreign policies were based on the basic premise of containment of communism.

Both worked to strengthen the Latin America and the development of Inter-American system. During the Kennedy's era as well in Nixon's era, America has extended enormous aid in the western hemisphere. The major difference between the Kennedy's era and Nixon's era is in the foreign policy domain. However Nixon's domestic policy was also different from Kennedy's in terms of pace and momentum. Kennedy's domestic policy was a little conservative and did not introduced sweeping reforms. Nixon revitalized the American spirit by inculcating vigor and vitality into it.

Kennedy's foreign policy shows that his goals and methods were substantially the same that were followed by Truman and Eisenhower viz. avoidance of war but checking the expansion of communism, strengthening the armed forces, support for United Nations and encouragement of American foreign trade. Nixon's policy differed in many respects. He improved relations with Soviet Union and China. It goes to the credit of Nixon that he not only developed commercial relations with Russia but also

<https://assignbuster.com/kennedy-and-nixon-regime/>

succeeded in signing the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty. This marked the beginning of steadier and constructive relations between the two super powers.

The above discussion clearly manifest the both these leaders contributed toward the domestic developments of the United States in addition to playing a positive part in the international arena. During their presidential campaign of 1960, “ Kennedy and Nixon amazingly presented similar agendas. Both spoke of progress and change”(The Road to Camelot). Although both planned and executed policies in the domestic sphere but both presidents gave secondary importance to the domestic issues and entangled themselves in the foreign policies and international issues.