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Major Political Events from the 1960s to the 2020s: An Analytical Perspective

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SEPTEMBER 1, 2024

RESEARCH REPORT

MAJOR POLITICAL EVENTS FROM THE 1960S TO THE 2020S: AN
ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVE

SONG, YUN
SUMMER INTERN OF THE MUTILCATURE CENTER
Bentley University



Major Political Events from the 1960s to the 2020s: An Analytical Perspective

Prepared for

Claudette Blot

Director of the Multicultural Center

Bentley University

By

Yun Song

Summer Intern of the Multicultural Center

Bentley University

Research Report

September 1, 2024

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Abstract





This research paper provides a comprehensive analysis of major political events in the United States from the 1960s to the 2020s. It examines key presidential elections and significant political incidents, exploring their impact on the political landscape and their contributions to the evolution of American governance and society. The study delves into the interplay between media, social movements, economic conditions, and political strategies, highlighting how these factors have shaped electoral outcomes and policy decisions over the decades.

U.S. Political Landscape

Major Events 1960s-2020s



1960s

- The first televised presidential debate
- The Civil Rights Act of 1964
- The Vietnam War
- The assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr.



1970s

- The Watergate scandal
- Pardon of Richard Nixon


1980s

- The Iran hostage crisis
- Economic recession
- Reaganomics




1990s

- Welfare Reform Act





2000s

- 9/11
- Iraq War
- The 2007–2008 financial crisis














2010s







- Affordable Care Act
- Hillary Clinton email controversy

2020s

- COVID-19 pandemic
- Migrant Surge
- Overturn Roe vs Wade
- Project 2025
- Donald Trump's conviction
- The first 2024 presidential debate
- Trump assassination attempt
- Biden drops out of 2024 race and endorses Harris
- Inflation crisis
- The Biden-Harris Administration's Student Debt Relief Plan
- Climate change
- Gun control
- Israel-Hamas war
- Student protests
- Russian invasion of Ukraine

The list of major events from the 1960s to 2020s

Introduction

The political history of the United States is marked by a series of transformative events that have shaped the nation's governance and societal norms. This paper analyzes major political events from the 1960s to the 2020s, focusing on key presidential elections and pivotal incidents that influenced the political climate. By examining these events, we gain insights into the dynamics of American politics and the factors that drive change within the political system.

1960s

The first televised presidential debate

Link: [Scholarly Analysis of the Kennedy-Nixon Debates](#)

Summary: The Kennedy-Nixon debate in 1960 was a pivotal moment in political history. It was the first televised presidential debate, drawing over 65 million viewers. In it, Kennedy's poised appearance contrasted sharply with Nixon's fatigued and less polished image, highlighting the growing importance of television in politics. The debates not only influenced the election's outcome but also set a precedent for future campaigns, emphasizing the role of media in shaping public perception.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964

Link: [The Civil Rights Act of 1964](#)

Summary: The Civil Rights Act of 1964, signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson, was a landmark piece of legislation that prohibited discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. It outlawed segregation in public places, provided for the integration of schools and other public facilities, and made employment discrimination illegal. This act was a crucial step in the fight for civil rights, overcoming significant opposition in Congress and setting the stage for further progress in equality.

The Vietnam War

Link: [The Vietnam War](#)

Summary: The Vietnam War (Nov 1, 1955 – Apr 30, 1975) was a conflict that pitted North Vietnam, supported by its communist allies, against South Vietnam and its principal ally,

the United States. It was heavily influenced by the Cold War tensions between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. The war resulted in over 3 million deaths, widespread protests in the U.S., and significant political and social turmoil. The war ended with the fall of Saigon in 1975, leading to the unification of Vietnam under communist control.

The assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr.

Link: [Martin Luther King Jr. Assassination](#)

Summary: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated on April 4, 1968, in Memphis, Tennessee, while supporting a sanitation workers' strike. His death led to widespread riots and a national mourning period. The assassination accelerated the passage of the Fair Housing Act, a significant civil rights law. James Earl Ray was convicted of the murder, though controversies and conspiracy theories persisted. King's assassination deepened the divide between Black and white Americans and fueled the growth of the Black Power movement.

- Events: The assassinations of Robert F. Kennedy (Link: [The Assassination of Robert F. Kennedy](#))

Summary: On June 5, 1968, Senator Robert F. Kennedy was fatally shot at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles shortly after winning the California Democratic primary. The assassin, Sirhan Sirhan, a 24-year-old Palestinian, fired multiple shots at Kennedy, who died the following day. Kennedy's death came during a tumultuous period in American history. Sirhan was sentenced to life in prison.

1970s

The Watergate scandal

Link: [Watergate scandal](#)

Summary: The Watergate scandal was a major political scandal in the U.S. during President Richard Nixon's administration. It began with a break-in at the Democratic National Committee headquarters in the Watergate complex on June 17, 1972, followed by a cover-up by Nixon and his associates. The scandal led to Nixon's resignation on August 9, 1974, making him

the only U.S. president to resign from office. The event had a lasting impact on American politics and trust in government.

Pardon of Richard Nixon

Link: [Ford pardons Nixon](#)

Summary: On September 8, 1974, President Gerald Ford pardoned Richard Nixon for any crimes he might have committed against the United States while in office. This controversial decision aimed to help the nation heal after the Watergate scandal but sparked significant public and political backlash, with many believing it allowed Nixon to evade justice. The pardon is considered one of the most significant and debated moments in U.S. presidential history.

1980s

The Iran hostage crisis

Link: [Iran hostage crisis](#)

Summary: The Iran Hostage Crisis began on November 4, 1979, when 66 American diplomats and citizens were taken hostage by Iranian militants at the U.S. Embassy in Tehran. The crisis lasted 444 days, profoundly impacting U.S.-Iran relations. It occurred after the Iranian Revolution, which saw the overthrow of the Shah, a close U.S. ally. The hostages were released on January 20, 1981, just minutes after Ronald Reagan's presidential inauguration.

Economic recession

Link: [Recession of 1981–82](#)

Summary: The recession lasted from July 1981 to November 1982 was the worst economic downturn in the United States since the Great Depression. Triggered by the Federal Reserve's tight monetary policy to fight inflation, the recession caused the loss of 2.9 million jobs, which was the largest percentage decline since the 1957–1958 recession. By the end of 1982, unemployment had reached nearly 11%, the highest rate in the post-World War II era. The recession also led to a sharp decline in manufacturing and housing and a record number of underemployed workers. However, the Federal Reserve's policies eventually succeeded in reducing inflation, setting the stage for economic recovery.

Reaganomics

Link: [Reaganomics: Economic Policy and the Reagan Revolution](#)

Summary: Reaganomics, or Reaganism, were the neoliberal economic policies promoted by U.S. President Ronald Reagan during the 1980s. These policies focused on reducing government spending, cutting taxes, deregulating the economy, and tightening the money supply to reduce inflation. These policies aimed to stimulate economic growth, reduce unemployment, and control inflation. While the approach led to an economic boom in the 1980s, it also resulted in increased deficits and a greater income gap. While Reagan and his advocates preferred to call the policies free-market economics, their opponents call the policies as "voodoo economics."

1990s

Welfare Reform Act

Link: [The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996](#)

Summary: The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996, also known as the Welfare Reform Act, significantly changed the US welfare system. The law's main goal was to encourage individuals to become self-sufficient by introducing work requirements, imposing time limits on benefits, and devolving welfare responsibilities to states. The law also promoted work and marriage and to discourage out-of-wedlock births. The act replaced the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

2000s

9/11

Link: [September 11 attacks](#)

Summary: The September 11 attacks, also known as 9/11, were four coordinated Islamist terrorist suicide attacks carried out by al-Qaeda against the United States on September 11, 2001. On that morning, 19 terrorists hijacked four commercial airliners scheduled to travel from the East Coast to California, crashing two into the World Trade Center in New York City and one into the Pentagon near Washington, D.C. The fourth plane, intended for another target, crashed in Pennsylvania after passengers

intervened. The attacks killed nearly 3,000 people and led to significant global political and security changes.

Iraq War

Link: [Iraq War](#)

Summary: The Iraq War (2003-2011) was a conflict initiated by the United States and its allies to overthrow Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. The war led to significant loss of life, including some 4,500 American service members killed and some 32,000 others wounded, instability in the region, and a prolonged U.S. military presence in Iraq.

The 2007–2008 financial crisis

Link: [Financial crisis of 2007–08](#)

Summary: The Financial Crisis of 2007-2008, or the global financial crisis, was the most severe worldwide economic crisis since the Great Depression. Triggered by the collapse of the housing market in the United States, the crisis led to the failure of major financial institutions, massive government interventions, and a deep global recession. In America, more than 8.7 million jobs were lost. The unemployment rate doubled to over 10% by October 2009. Home prices fell by an average of 40%. Eight million homes were foreclosed on. \$7.4 trillion in stock wealth was lost between 2008 and 2009. American households lost an estimated \$16–19 trillion in net worth, with one quarter losing at least 75% and more than half losing at least 25%. Real median household income didn't return to pre-recession levels until 2016. The global economy lost more than \$2 trillion in growth, or almost 4%, between the second quarter of 2008 and the first quarter of 2009.

2010s

Affordable Care Act

Link: [Affordable Care Act \(ACA\)](#)

Summary: The Affordable Care Act (ACA), often known as "Obamacare," is a landmark U.S. federal statute signed into law by President Barak Obama on March 23, 2010. Together with the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010 amendment, the ACA represents the

U.S. healthcare system's most significant regulatory overhaul and expansion of coverage since the enactment of Medicare and Medicaid in 1965.

Hillary Clinton email controversy

Link: [A Guide to Clinton's Emails](#)

Summary: During her tenure as Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton used a private email server for official public communications rather than using official State Department email accounts maintained on federal servers. FBI found 100 emails contained information that should have been deemed classified at the time they were sent, including 65 emails deemed "Secret" and 22 deemed "Top Secret". An addition, 2,093 emails were designated confidential by the State Department.

2020s

COVID-19 pandemic

Link: [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) pandemic](#)

Summary: The COVID-19 pandemic began in December 2019. It spread from China to other areas of Asia, and then worldwide in early 2020. The pandemic caused the largest global recession since the Great Depression, widespread supply shortages (including food shortages), and reduced human activity. Schools and public areas were closed, and many events were cancelled or postponed. Remote work became much more common for white-collar workers. The pandemic raised issues of racial and geographic discrimination, health equity, and the balance between public health imperatives and individual rights (Wikipdeia).

Migrant Surge

Link: [Rising Border Encounters in 2021: An Overview and Analysis](#)

Summary: In 2021, U.S. Border Patrol saw 1.7 million encounters with illegal immigrants, the highest on record, according to attorney general of Texas. And the Patrol had nearly 250,000 encounters with migrants crossing into the United States from Mexico in December 2023, according to government statistics. Immigration remains a hot-button issue, with policies from the Biden administration and the proposed changes by the candidates

impacting public opinion. The ongoing migrant crisis continues to be a pressing issue, with immigration policies and border security being critical topics for voters (Wola, 2024).

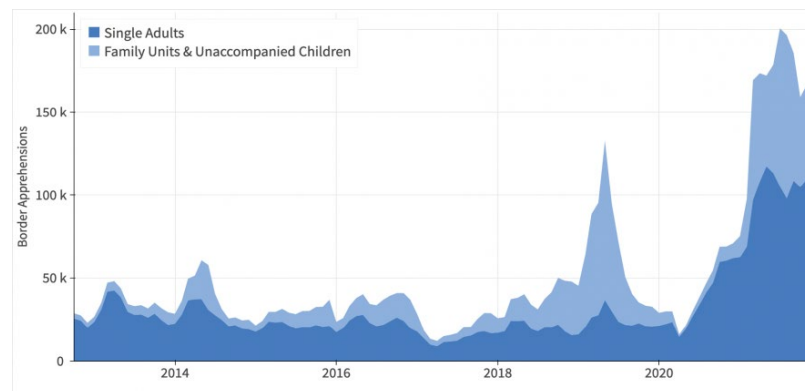


Chart: Border Patrol Apprehensions, October 2012 to December 2021, Single Adults vs. Families and Children

Source: U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

Overtune Roe vs Wade

Link: [Roe v Wade Overturned: What It Means, What's Next](#)

Summary: On June 24, 2022, the Supreme Court's announced its decision to overturn Roe v. Wade. This landmark ruling ended nearly 50 years of federally protected abortion rights in the United States, allowing individual states to regulate or ban abortions. The event has deeply polarized the electorate, with significant debates on reproductive rights influencing the campaigns.

Project 2025

Link: [Project 2025](#)

Summary: Established in April 2022 by The Heritage Foundation with \$22 million budget, Project 2025 aims to reshape the U.S. federal government to support the agenda of Donald Trump and other conservative leaders. The project includes recruiting and training loyalists, developing policy proposals, and drafting executive orders to implement if conservatives regain control of the government. Key areas of focus include education, immigration reforms, law enforcement, and expanding presidential powers.

Donald Trump's conviction

Link: [Guilty: Trump becomes first former US president convicted of felony crimes](#)

Summary: On March 30, 2023, the Manhattan grand jury handed down an indictment against Donald Trump, making him the first former president to be indicted. The conviction on 34 felony counts includes allegations of falsifying business records, which are tied to hush-money payments made during the 2016 presidential campaign. The cases also include financial crimes, misuse of campaign funds, and other charges that could have significant implications for his political career and personal freedom.

The first 2024 presidential debate

Link: [Presidential debate highlights from Trump and Biden's first showdown of 2024](#)

Summary: On June 27, 2024, the first general 2024 United States presidential election debate between President Biden and Donald Trump took 90 minutes. The two candidates discussed topics such as economic policies, foreign relations, and social issues. Biden withdrew from the race in July, and was replaced by Kamala Harris, while Trump became the official Republican nominee that same month.

Trump assassination attempt

Link: [What's Known About the Trump Assassination Attempt One Month Later](#)

Summary: On July 13, 2024, Donald Trump was shot and wounded in his upper right ear by Thomas Matthew Crooks while speaking at an open-air campaign rally near Butler, Pennsylvania. Crooks, a 20-year-old man from Bethel Park, Pennsylvania, fired eight rounds from an AR-15–style rifle from the roof of a nearby building to Trump. Crooks was subsequently shot and killed by the United States Secret Service's Counter Sniper Team. Trump survived an assassination attempt.

Biden drops out of 2024 race and endorses Harris

Link: [Biden drops out of 2024 race and endorses Harris](#)

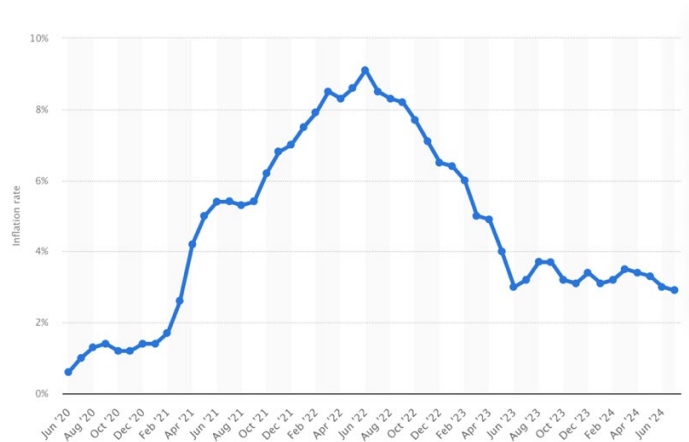
Summary: on July 21, 2024, President Joe Biden announced that he will not seek re-election in 2024. His decision marks a significant shift in the political landscape, leading to Donald Trump be the oldest person in the contest.

Inflation crisis

Link: [Monthly 12-month inflation rate in the United States from July 2020 to July 2024](#)

Summary: As of August 2024, the annual inflation rate in the United States is 2.9%, which is the lowest it's been since March 2021. However, prices are still 20.9% higher than they were in February 2020. Only 6% of the nearly 400 items tracked by the Bureau of Labor Statistics are cheaper today. The inflation rate has changed since 2020:

- 2020: 1.23%, a 0.58% decrease from 2019
- 2021: 4.70%, a 3.46% increase from 2020
- 2022: 8.00%, a 3.3% increase from 2021
- 2023: 4.1%



Monthly 12-month inflation rate in the United States from July 2020 to July 2024

Source: www.statista.com

The Biden-Harris Administration's Student Debt Relief Plan

Link: [The Biden-Harris Administration's Student Debt Relief Plan Explained](#)

Summary: The Biden-Harris Administration's one-time student debt relief plan is to provide borrowers with a smooth transition back to repayment and help them at highest risk of delinquency or default once payments resume. To be eligible, borrowers' annual income must have fallen below \$125,000 (for individuals) or \$250,000 (for married couples or heads of households). If they received a Pell Grant in college and meet the income threshold, they will be eligible for up to \$20,000 in debt relief. If they did not receive a Pell Grant in college and meet the income threshold, you will be eligible for up to \$10,000 in debt relief.

Climate change

Link: [What is Climate Change?](#)

Summary: Since the Industrial Revolution around 1880, Earth's average surface air temperature has risen by nearly 1.5 °C (about 2.5 °F). By the end of this century, the increase in annual global average temperatures compared to preindustrial levels could exceed 5°C. While natural forces contribute to some variability, the primary driver of this change is human activity, particularly greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

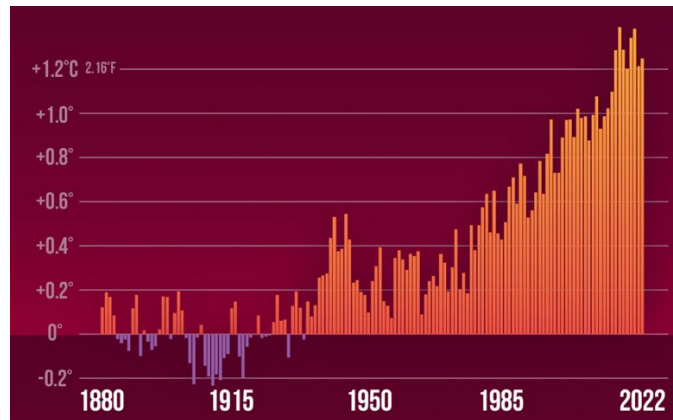


Figure 1. Global Average Temperature Anomalies, departure from 1881-1910.
Source: The World Bank

Gun control

Link: [Gun Control in the U.S.](#)

Summary: Gun control remains one of the most divisive issues in the U.S. The 2008 Supreme Court case *District of Columbia v. Heller* (5–4) confirmed that the Second Amendment protects an individual's right to possess firearms for lawful purposes, such as self-defense at home. While gun possession is constitutionally protected, debates focus on whether regulations infringe upon individual liberties and the relationship between gun ownership and crime.

Israel– Hamas war

Link: [Israel-Hamas War](#)

Summary: The Israel-Hamas War, which began on October 7, 2023, is an ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas-led Palestinian militant groups in the Gaza Strip and Israel. It is the fifth major war in the Gaza–Israel conflict since 2008 and the deadliest for Palestinians in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. The conflict is also the most significant military engagement in the region since the Yom Kippur War in 1973. The war started with a surprise attack by Hamas-led militants, including a rocket barrage and assaults on Israeli civilian areas and military bases, resulting in the deaths of 1,139 Israelis and foreign nationals, including 815 civilians, and the capture of 251 individuals by Hamas. In response, Israel launched a major bombing campaign

and a ground invasion of Gaza on October 27, 2023, aiming to destroy Hamas and rescue the hostages. The conflict has resulted in over 40,000 Palestinian deaths in Gaza, with 52% of the casualties being women and children.

Student protests

Link: [A look at the protests of the war in Gaza that have emerged at US colleges](#)

Summary: Since April 17, 2024, a wave of pro-Palestinian protests has erupted across U.S. university campuses, starting with the occupation of Columbia University. As of May 6, these protests have spread to 45 states and the District of Columbia. Nearly 140 campuses had experienced encampments, occupations, walkouts, or sit-ins. The demonstrations intensified on April 22 on the East Coast, where students from New York University, Yale University, Emerson College, MIT, and Tufts University began occupying their campuses, leading to mass arrests in New York and Yale.

On April 25, mass arrests occurred at Emerson College, the University of Southern California, and the University of Texas at Austin. By April 27, approximately 275 people were arrested at Washington, Northeastern, Arizona State, and Indiana University Bloomington. Faculty and staff were also detained, including professors at Emory University and employees at Washington University in St. Louis. On April 30, many protesters were arrested at Columbia University and City College of New York. Pro-Israel counter-protesters also attacked the occupation at UCLA, leading to more than 200 arrests the following day. On May 20, the first academic workers' strike occurred at UC Santa Cruz, followed by similar actions at UC Davis and UCLA on May 28.

Russian invasion of Ukraine

Link: [The Russian invasion of Ukraine](#)

Summary: On February 24, 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the largest military conflict in Europe since World War II. The invasion led to millions of Ukrainians being displaced internally and fleeing the country, resulting in Europe's largest refugee crisis since World War II. The international community widely condemned the invasion, imposing severe economic sanctions on Russia and providing Ukraine with extensive military and humanitarian aid. According to the United Nations Human Rights, by 2024, the conflict had

resulted in the UN-documented deaths of between 11,000 and an estimated 40,000 civilians. As of 2024, Russian forces continue to occupy approximately 20% of Ukraine, with no clear resolution in sight.

Conclusion

From the 1960s to the 2020s, the United States has experienced a series of pivotal political events that have significantly shaped its history and governance. Key milestones, including the Civil Rights Act, the Vietnam War, the Watergate scandal, the COVID-19 pandemic, the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, Project 2025, Biden's decision to withdraw from the 2024 race and endorse Harris, and Israel-Hamas war have all played crucial roles in influencing voter behavior and policy directions. These events highlight the ever-evolving nature of American politics and the continual transformation of its political landscape.

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