Reform and Rebellion in the Turbulent Sixties, 1960 - 1969

(1) CHAPTER OUTLINE

Paul Cowan was a child of privilege who, like many Americans in the 1960s, felt that he should give something back to the less fortunate. After an elite education at Choate and Harvard, Cowan worked in the civil rights movement in Mississippi, then volunteered with the Peace Corps in Ecuador. His experiences in South America caused him to question the true motives behind his liberal agenda. Along with many other Americans, Cowan moved from enthusiastic liberalism to more tempered conservatism in the 1970s.

John F. Kennedy: The Camelot Years
   The Election of 1960
   JFK
   The New Frontier in Action
   Civil Rights and Kennedy’s Response

Lyndon B. Johnson and the Great Society
   Change of Command
   LBJ
   The Great Society in Action
   Achievements and Challenges in Civil Rights
   A Sympathetic Supreme Court
   The Great Society Under Attack

Continuing Confrontations With Communists
   The Bay of Pigs Fiasco and Its Consequences
   The Cuban Missile Face-Off
   Confrontation and Containment Under Johnson

War in Vietnam and Turmoil at Home
   Escalation in Vietnam
   Student Activism and Antiwar Protest
   The Counterculture
   An Age of Assassination
   The Chaotic Election of 1968
   Continuing Protest

Conclusion: Political and Social Upheaval
(2) SIGNIFICANT THEMES AND HIGHLIGHTS

1. Paul Cowan's individual journey from committed liberal activism to disillusioned conservatism mirrors the course of American politics during the 1960s and 1970s. Building on the foundation begun by FDR and continued under Truman and Eisenhower, the 1960s marked the height of optimistic hopes that the government could solve the nation's domestic problems. The liberal agenda of the 1960s under John Kennedy and Johnson was replaced by pessimism, doubts, and uncertainty under Republican leadership. The morality of government as well as its ineffectual role was questioned as a result of the Vietnam War.

2. The domestic programs of the 1940s and 1950s under Truman and Eisenhower and the liberal welfare assumptions of John Kennedy's New Frontier and Lyndon Johnson's Great Society represented a major assault on serious social and economic problems. That they fell far short of their goals raised questions in subsequent Republican administrations over how far government should or would go in providing for the welfare of its citizens.

3. The dominant reform movement of the era was the black struggle for equality. This chapter traces that struggle from the civil rights movement of the early 1960s under Martin Luther King, Jr., to the black power movement of the late 1960s inspired by the martyred Malcolm X.

(3) LEARNING GOALS

Familiarity with Basic Knowledge

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Define the meaning of John Kennedy's New Frontier and describe the tone, achievements, and failures of his administration.

2. Define Lyndon Johnson's Great Society and describe how well it achieved or failed to achieve its goals.

3. Explain the major changes that resulted from the civil rights movement.

4. Describe the events that led to a crisis over missiles in Cuba and how it was settled.

5. Explain the reasons for escalation of U.S. involvement in Vietnam and the growing protest against the war.

6. Identify the arguments for and against strong assertions of governmental power in the 1960s.
Practice in Historical Thinking Skills

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Explain and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the liberal state in the 1960s.

2. Analyze the goals, styles, achievements, and limitations of the presidential administrations of Kennedy and Johnson.

3. Explain and defend, with historical examples, your own position on the proper role of the federal government in domestic affairs in this changing world.

4. Explain the events that gave Nixon a victory in 1968.

(4) IMPORTANT DATES AND NAMES TO KNOW

1960   John F. Kennedy elected president
       Birth control pill becomes available
       Sit-ins begin
       Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) founded

1961   Freedom rides (for civil rights)
       Joseph Heller writes *Catch-22*
       Ken Kesey writes *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*
       Bay of Pigs invasion fails
       Khrushchev and Kennedy meet in Berlin
       Berlin Wall constructed
       JFK confronts steel companies

1962   Cuban missile crisis
       James Meredith crisis at the University of Mississippi
       SDS’s Port Huron Statement
       Rachel Carson writes *Silent Spring*

1963   Buddhist demonstrations in Vietnam
       Birmingham demonstration (Alabama)
       Civil rights march on Washington, D.C.
       Kennedy assassinated; Lyndon B. Johnson becomes president
       Betty Friedan writes *The Feminine Mystique*

1964   Economic Opportunity Act initiates War on Poverty
       Gulf of Tonkin resolution
       Johnson reelected president
       Civil Rights Act
       Free speech movement, Berkeley
1965
Department of Housing and Urban Development established
Elementary and Secondary Education Act
Medicare established
Martin Luther King, Jr., leads march from Selma to Montgomery (Alabama)
Voting Rights Act
United Farm Workers grape boycott
Malcom X assassinated
Riot in Watts section of Los Angeles
Ralph Nader writes *Unsafe at Any Speed*
Vietnam conflict escalates
Marines sent to Dominican Republic

1966
Stokely Carmichael becomes head of SNCC and calls for “black power”
Black Panthers founded
Masters and Johnson write *Human Sexual Response*

1967
Urban riots in 22 cities

1967-1968
Antiwar demonstrations

1968
Student demonstrations at Columbia University and elsewhere
Tet offensive in Vietnam
Martin Luther King, Jr., assassinated
Robert F. Kennedy assassinated
Police and protestors clash at Democratic national convention (Chicago)
Richard M. Nixon elected president

1969
Woodstock and Altamont rock festivals
Weathermen’s “Days of Rage” in Chicago

Other Names to Know

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hubert Humphrey</th>
<th>Eugene McCarthy</th>
<th>Rachel Carson</th>
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<tr>
<td>Lee Harvey Oswald</td>
<td>Barry Goldwater</td>
<td>Malcolm X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Wallace</td>
<td>Mayor Richard Daley</td>
<td>Fanny Lou Hamer</td>
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<td>Robert F. Kennedy</td>
<td>Justice Earl Warren</td>
<td>Spiro T. Agnew</td>
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<td>Muhammad Ali</td>
<td>Fidel Castro</td>
<td>Robert S. McNamara</td>
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(5) GLOSSARY OF IMPORTANT TERMS

Peace Corps: program established by Kennedy that sent volunteer Americans abroad to assist developing countries

Job Corps: program established by Johnson to provide training for unskilled young people

VISTA: Johnson's program in which volunteers addressed problems in America
1. “Recovering the Past” suggests the power of television to shape American views and responses to events. Television also conveyed the norms of the period and captured some of the confusion and anger that changing values and tastes could generate. You may be able to see some reruns of programs from the 1960s; if so, look for evidence of social values, for suggestions of gender and age norms, for signs of challenges to familiar ways of thought and action, and even for typical prime-time programming that shows another side to the 1960s than protest.

2. Interview a friend or family member about their recollections of and reactions to the civil rights or antiwar protest movement of the 1960s, the Nixon administration, as well as the change in social mood from the intense public activism of the 1960s to the inward-looking privatism of the 1970s. Would they agree with that description? If not, how do they explain it?

### (7) SAMPLE TEST AND EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

1. Kennedy won the 1960 election because
   a. he did well with black and ethnic voters
   b. he projected an effective image during the TV debates
   c. he was able to defuse the issue of his Catholicism
   d. all of the above

2. JFK, LBJ, and RMN believed
   a. that American society was fundamentally flawed
   b. that goods needed to be more widely shared
   c. that the poor need only to work hard to succeed
   d. that slogans could conceal the fact that nothing would be done about social problems

3. All of Kennedy's efforts on the domestic front failed EXCEPT
   a. efforts to cut corporate taxes
   b. grants to states for school aid
   c. securing funds for the space program
   d. a strong civil rights bill

4. Kennedy moved slowly on civil rights because
   a. he was not interested in the plight of Afro-Americans
   b. he thought that his attack on racial segregation in federally funded housing was a strong enough statement on civil rights
   c. he thought that since blacks had not voted for him in 1960, it was not politically important for him to heed them
   d. he needed southern votes in Congress on other issues
5. LBJ pressed Congress for  
   a. a poverty bill  
   b. Medicare  
   c. aid to elementary and secondary schools  
   d. all of the above  

6. Opponents criticized the Great Society programs because  
   a. the poor did not have a broad enough vision of American needs  
   b. there was no real effort to redistribute income  
   c. authority was too centralized  
   d. all of the above  

7. The Great Society suffered the final blow from  
   a. the Dixiecrats  
   b. the effort to maintain a war in Vietnam  
   c. the environmental movement  
   d. radical moves to expand programs  

8. Civil rights protests in the South in the 1960s  
   a. drew support from other parts of the U.S. because of the tactics police used  
   b. led to almost no changes in basic exercise of civil liberties  
   c. tended only to drive young African-Americans to communism  
   d. came about largely because of the widespread use of drugs  

9. One of President Johnson’s strengths was  
   a. his background as a well-educated former governor of New York  
   b. he had been a strong conservative in his political upbringing  
   c. he had been an effective Senate majority leader who knew how to get legislation passed  
   d. his background as a former secretary of state skilled in foreign affairs  

10. The crisis that came closest to a nuclear confrontation of the great powers occurred when  
    a. Johnson announced that he would use nuclear weapons to end the Vietnam conflict  
    b. During the 1967 Middle East conflict when Israel faced invasion by its neighbors  
    c. Kennedy threatened to use it because of the constructing of the Berlin Wall  
    d. U.S. and Russia faced each other during the Cuban missile crisis  

11. Which one had the most effective leadership role in the civil rights movement?  
    a. John F. Kennedy  
    b. Eldridge Cleaver  
    c. Martin Luther King, Jr.  
    d. Stokely Carmichael  

12. It was an important factor in changing American sexual practices in the 1960s  
    a. widespread publication of books such as *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*  
    b. practical and safe use of birth control pills  
    c. the widespread use of hallucinogenic drugs as part of the counterculture  
    d. more explicit sex in television programming
13. Which of the following black organizations was the most militant in carrying the struggle for civil rights into direct action and inflammatory rhetoric?
   a. SCLC
   b. SNCC
   c. NAACP
   d. CORE

14. The black power movement emerged for all of the following reasons EXCEPT
   a. disillusionment with the Democratic party over treatment of the Mississippi Freedom Democrats at the national convention
   b. the slow pace of change despite years of struggle
   c. the influence of Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael
   d. Dr. King renounced nonviolence

15. LBJ used which one to justify greater involvement in Vietnam
   a. an attack on a U.S. vessel in the Gulf of Tonkin
   b. the attempt to blow up U.S. vessels in San Diego
   c. significant increases in military supplies to North Vietnam from China
   d. clear evidence that the North Vietnamese were developing nuclear weapons

**Essays**


2. Explain and defend with historical examples your own position on the proper role of the federal government in domestic affairs.

3. Describe the aims, accomplishments, and failures of Martin Luther King, Jr as civil rights leader. What is his legacy?

4. Describe and use examples to explain the position of opponents of the Great Society.

5. Explain how the U.S. became more involved in Vietnam. Was this policy a success or failure? Why?

**Identify and Interpret: Quotation**

(that is, state who, what, where, when, and why significant)

You may well ask: 'Why direct action? Why sit-ins, marches and so forth? Isn't negotiation a better path?' You are quite right in calling for negotiation. Indeed, this is the very purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored.