



The Master of the Senate: Lyndon Baines Johnson, seen here in a 1954 photo, ran a presidential campaign in 1960 that was far more successful than previously thought. Using foreign policy as an issue and pushing an image that emphasized his experience, he delivered several blows that bloodied the effort of Senator John F. Kennedy in a race for the Democratic nomination. Later, as the vice presidential nominee of his party, Johnson used world affairs again to turn back Republican efforts in the South. *Photograph courtesy of Edward Burks, LBJ Library Collection, Austin, Texas.*

Lyndon Johnson, Foreign Policy, and the Election of 1960

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AS POLITICAL ISSUES, AMERICAN FOREIGN RELATIONS ARE OFTEN THE SUBJECT of intense national debate. Since it is a matter of national interest, foreign policy is discussed across the country often at both the state and local levels. This discussion normally takes place as part of an election for the U.S. House of Representatives or the Senate. Anyone running for one of these offices must have some positions about, and understanding of, America's place in the world. Lyndon Baines Johnson was no different. He had years of experience in foreign relations as a member of the legislative branch, and his understanding of the subject came from this background. When he ran for president of the United States, he had his own distinct vision of what course the United States should pursue in world affairs. These ideas reflected a fairly sophisticated understanding of international relations. He also understood how to use foreign policy to his political advantage, and he cleverly did so first opposite Sen. John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts in an effort to win the Democratic nomination, and then, to much greater effect, against Richard Nixon as a member of the national ticket in the general election. In short, he understood foreign affairs as both a policy and a political issue.

Previous accounts of this election have failed to give Johnson due credit. Most writers have concentrated on the Nixon-Kennedy confrontation in the general election. This focus started with Theodore White's *The Making of the President, 1960*. This work makes little mention

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of international relations.¹ Arthur M. Schlesinger and Theodore C. Sorensen, the semi-official historians of Camelot, argue that foreign policy and Kennedy's wise decision to select Lyndon Johnson for the second spot on the ticket were two major reasons he beat Vice President Richard M. Nixon in the general election.² Other than saying Johnson was a vigorous campaigner, these writers never explain how Johnson contributed to the victory. In their subsequent scholarly studies, Kent M. Beck and Robert A. Divine have challenged the idea that the Massachusetts senator handled the matter well. According to Divine, "Foreign policy, rather than contributing to Kennedy's victory, cost him votes and transformed a nearly certain triumph into a cliffhanger."³ He contends Johnson was a nonfactor in the debate on foreign policy that fall, a view others have accepted.⁴ At the national level Divine's argument is essentially correct, but the electoral college makes regional outcomes of equal, if not greater importance.

New information requires a reassessment. Regional newspapers and documents uncovered in the mass of material at the Johnson Presidential Library, including the papers of John Connally, his campaign manager, show that foreign policy played an important role in the Johnson campaigns of 1960. Other documents in the Nixon pre-presidential collection in the National Archives, and the Eisenhower and Kennedy Presidential Libraries make it clear that Johnson had a key role in the debate on foreign policy. Put together, this material helps explain the outcome of an extremely tight presidential campaign.

Since he was a domestic politician, first and foremost, it is easy to assume that Lyndon Johnson had little interest or experience in international affairs. Such was not the case. A quick examination of his background will show that he actually had a good deal of experience in this area. The idea that he knew little of foreign relations is hardly new, and the suggestion always angered him. "I suppose sitting in on all those

¹ Theodore H. White, *The Making of the President, 1960* (New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1961).

² Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *A Thousand Days* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965); Theodore C. Sorensen, *Kennedy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965).

³ Kent M. Beck, "Necessary Lies, Hidden Truths: Cuba in the 1960 Campaign," *Diplomatic History*, 8 (Winter, 1984), 37-59; Robert A. Divine, *Foreign Policy and U.S. Presidential Elections*, vol. 2, 1952-1960 (New York: New Viewpoints, 1974), 286.

⁴ Doris Kearns, *Lyndon B. Johnson and the American Dream* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976); Merle Miller, *Lyndon: An Oral Biography* (New York: Putnam, 1980); Paul K. Conkin, *Big Daddy from the Pedernales: Lyndon Baines Johnson* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986); Robert Dallek, *Lone Star Rising: Lyndon Johnson and His Times* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Packaging the Presidency: A History and Criticism of Presidential Campaign Advertising* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); Stephen E. Ambrose, *Nixon: The Education of a Politician, 1913-1962* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987); Herbert S. Parmet, *Jack: The Struggles of John F. Kennedy* (New York: Dial Press, 1980); Herbert S. Parmet, *Richard Nixon and His America* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1990).

meetings with Eisenhower and passing on foreign aid and every major foreign policy bill in the last twenty years isn't good experience," he said, annoyed. As he noted several times in 1960, he had served on committees concerned with national defense throughout his entire congressional career. These bodies ranged from the House Naval Affairs Committee, to the joint congressional investigation of Gen. Douglas MacArthur's removal from command. Johnson also did more than sit in on some hearings. On several occasions he used his influence in Washington to get results. In 1939 and 1940, he helped a large number of German and Polish Jews get out of Europe and into the United States. Although he disliked reading, his staff kept him up to date on current scholarly views about national defense policy, which he often cited in Senate debates. While Americans might have focused on his domestic record, foreigners saw otherwise. In an account of the presidential campaign in Texas, the *Times* of London noted that he had a strong interest in world events.⁵

An examination of his public statements will also show that he had a far more sophisticated understanding of the American role in world events than is generally believed. He was a strong anti-Communist, and had no reservations about American post-war foreign policy. Like many other cold war warriors he was an ardent advocate of keeping the armed services well funded and developed. Indeed, he considered it a necessity. "Communism has not been able to overpower the world because of our resolve in the areas of military strength," he told a Houston crowd in 1959.⁶

He recognized, however, that the military was an instrument that serviced a larger political purpose, and that the cold war was a manifestation of ideological and political differences between the United States and the Soviet Union. As such, any American victory in this conflict would be political in nature. "Communism must not be able to overcome the world with handshakes and smiles and campaign promises because of our lack of resolve in the areas of political affairs." The United States needed a strong military "behind which we can and indeed must, take positive steps toward a peaceful future," he told a veterans' organization in 1960. "Weapons will bring us a truce—a truce which is preferable to the destruction of our way of life, but we will meet our responsibilities only if we use that truce to build toward a world in

⁵Houston *Post*, Apr. 23, 1960; a copy of the *Times* article is in *ibid.*, Oct. 16, 1960; Louis S. Gomolak, "Prologue: LBJ's Foreign Affairs Background, 1908–1948" (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas, 1989), 35–51; *Congressional Record*, 86th Cong., 2d. sess., A1 250, 3027, 4560–4561; Philip Geyelin, *Lyndon B. Johnson and the World* (New York: Praeger, 1966), 16 (quotation).

⁶Houston *Post*, Oct. 23, 1959.

which men can live together in understanding and the weapons become merely dusty museum pieces.”⁷

The problem he had with current policy was that it offered neither resolution to, or victory in the cold war. “There is a depressing lack of vital new ideas in our foreign policy,” he stated. “What we are doing is commendable. The people who are carrying out our programs are devoted and patriotic. But I cannot find the bold steps that would reach the hearts and souls of men throughout the world.”⁸

His own response was to propose multilateral humanitarian aide projects, which would include the Soviet Union. These programs would channel and direct the confrontation between the two countries into areas of political competition. He proposed to challenge the Soviets to join the U.S. in the scientific exploration of space, and in providing medical and agricultural assistance to underdeveloped countries. “I think it is incumbent upon us, as the leader of the free world, and one of the stronger nations, to propose great programs, through the United Nations, that would stamp out killing and crippling disease,” he said from the floor of the Senate in 1960. Jim Mathis, a reporter from the *Houston Post* assigned to cover the senator, noted “co-operative international effort is gradually being developed by Johnson as his unique foreign relations policy.”⁹

Johnson had a distinctive vision of the foreign policy he wanted to pursue as president, but political factors made it difficult for him to interject them into the campaign as a candidate. He had a serious political limitation that had a major impact on campaign strategy. Unlike Kennedy he was more than just one of a hundred senators. He was the majority leader, and with that job came a number of responsibilities that were liabilities in a campaign. He had to be physically present in Washington, making it difficult for him to travel and campaign. Regular absences from the Capitol would complicate the legislative process, if not bring it to a halt. He had an additional concern, if he were an announced candidate normal legislative votes would take on more political and partisan significance than would otherwise be the case.¹⁰

Another consideration that shaped Johnson’s campaign planning was his geographically limited support. George Gallup’s public opinion polls also indicated that he had a weak national political base. Johnson con-

⁷Ibid., Mar. 13, 1960.

⁸Ibid., June 23, 1960.

⁹*Congressional Record*, 86th Cong., 2d. sess., 13708 (1st quotation); *Houston Post*, Apr. 24, 1960 (2nd quotation).

¹⁰Jan. 20, 1960 poll, Feb. 26, 1960 poll, Mar. 27, 1960 poll, Apr. 20, 1960 poll, May 27, 1960 poll, in George Gallup, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1935-1971*, vol. 3 (New York: Random House, 1972) 1651, 1656, 1660, 1663, 1669.

stantly finished third behind Kennedy and Stevenson with 11 to 15 percent in samplings of the likely Democratic candidates. According to these polls, Johnson was much stronger at the regional level. He had a strong lead in the South, and according to other studies had firm control of the Texas state Democratic delegation.¹¹

With these factors in mind, Johnson and his staff developed a strategy for an indirect campaign. Using this approach, he would not make an open campaign effort in the state primaries like Kennedy. Instead, he would work to build a solid regional voting block, which he would use at the Democratic national convention to deny his rival a first-ballot victory. He would also stay in Washington during the week and continue to work on legislation, but during the weekends he would travel across the country, making public appearances as an unannounced candidate. During these speaking trips, he developed contacts with delegates that he would need if he was to claim a victory on a later ballot.

Winning in the general election would be easier, given the critical importance of the South. Even though three Gallup polls indicated that Johnson would lose to Nixon with percentages ranging between forty-four to forty-six of the voters, Johnson and his staff dismissed these findings because of his strength in the South. His staff conducted an analysis of his strength in the electoral college against Nixon, and figured he had the solid support of twenty-four western and southern states worth 202 votes. Since a candidate needed 269 to win, Johnson had to find only sixty-seven votes in the other twenty-six states. Indeed, in mid-May an Orlando *Sentinel* editorial declared: "Sen. Lyndon Johnson is the only man who could carry the South solidly. Therefore he is the only Democrat who could beat Mr. Nixon."¹²

At the time, many contemporary political observers thought this approach was working. In February 1960, Allen Duckworth, the political editor of the Dallas *Morning News*, wrote that too much emphasis was being placed on the primaries. Yes, he admitted, Kennedy had done well

¹¹ Mar. 16, 1960 poll, Apr. 22, 1960 poll, in *ibid.*, 1659, 1664; the Texas polls can be found in *Houston Post*, July 6, 1959, Aug. 10, 1959, and May 10, 1960; for an in-depth analysis of Johnson's strength in the state see the article by the paper's Washington bureau chief in *ibid.*, Jan. 31, 1960.

¹² Mar. 30, 1960 poll, Apr. 29, 1960 poll, June 15, 1960 poll, in Gallup, *The Gallup Poll*, 1660, 1665, 1673; Memo, "Analysis of Electoral Votes," undated; and Memo, "Senator Johnson's Electoral Strength," undated, Analysis of Electoral Votes Folder, Box 2, Johnson for President Series P [B], Papers of John Connally (Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library; cited hereafter as LBJL). According to these two memos, Johnson had the votes of the following states: Alabama (11), Alaska (3), Arizona (4), Arkansas (4), Delaware (3), Florida (10), Georgia (12), Hawaii (3), Kentucky (10), Louisiana (10), Maryland (9), Mississippi (8), Missouri (13), Nevada (3), New Mexico (4), North Carolina (14), Oklahoma (8), South Carolina (8), Tennessee (11), Texas (24), Utah (3), Virginia (12), West Virginia (8) and Wyoming (3) for a total of 198; Orlando *Sentinel*, May 12, 1960 (quotation).

in the Wisconsin primary and would probably win in West Virginia, but these states had fewer combined delegates than Texas. Given Johnson's strength in the South and popularity in western states, Duckworth predicted that the senator would win a second-ballot victory after delegates had honored their preliminary commitments to vote for favorite son candidates. "So, in spite of the opinion polls and the preferential primary headlines, Johnson of Texas is still among top runners and may well be the next Democratic nominee for president of the United States," he concluded. A month later, the *Houston Post* reported that Johnson actually had the lead in delegates. The article included an acknowledgment from an anonymous Kennedy campaign source that Johnson held a slight lead, but the individual was quick to add that the Massachusetts senator had much greater potential and would quickly overcome the Texan.¹³

Clever politician that he was, Johnson turned the limiting factor of his job responsibilities into an asset. When Lady Bird Johnson visited the University of Texas in May 1960, a female reporter from the *Daily Texan*, the school paper, asked her when her husband would announce as a candidate. "My dear, I'm sure I don't know," she responded. "Someone has to keep the store. The sixty-three Democrats in the Senate have given him a sizable job. He wants to do the best he can." Two weeks later, Johnson gave a similar answer while appearing on the "Face the Nation" television program. He said his duties as majority leader of the U.S. Senate demanded that he stay in Washington: "Somebody must stay there and tend the store. And the responsibility falls upon the Leader to do this." Mathis of the *Houston Post* noted that there was no real need for Johnson to make a formal declaration; his repeated weekend jaunts were a clear expression of his intentions.¹⁴

Foreign policy was one of the most important components in Johnson's stealth strategy, and for all practical purposes he started his 1960 presidential campaign shortly after the 1958 midterm elections. Fully aware that the public considered expertise in world affairs a major requirement of any presidential candidate, he began working to build a stronger reputation in this field. He wanted to speak to the United Nations on space exploration. He sent an aide to talk with United Nations ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge about this idea. He also had his friend, Sen. Mike Mansfield, the Montana Democrat, contact the State Department about the speech. While others in the administration supported the idea, Sec. of State John Foster Dulles had reservations. "He is

¹³ *Dallas Morning News*, Feb. 5, 1960 (quotation); *Houston Post*, Mar. 28, 1960.

¹⁴ *Daily Texan*, May 5, 1960 (1st quotation); *Houston Post*, Apr. 25, 1960; "Face the Nation" transcript, May 22, 1960 (2nd quotation). Box 37. LBJ Statements, LBJ Archives (LBJL).

moving in hard and rapidly in this field," Dulles said. "This in itself is very extraordinary." After Eisenhower approved the request, Dulles warned the administration about the impact of this decision. "Let's don't fool ourselves here. They are beginning to build up for 1960." He admitted, however, that Johnson was the lesser of two evils. "If you are going to build anybody up it is better to build J[ohnson] up and his group than [Sen. Hubert] Humphrey and people like that."¹⁵

Johnson also improved his knowledge of foreign affairs. Mansfield started briefing him. Sometimes these briefings were nothing more than copies of Mansfield's Senate speeches, at other times they were detailed memos. It is unclear from the documents when this process began. While he may have started as early as February of 1959, Mansfield was clearly keeping Johnson abreast of foreign relations in 1960, and well into the latter's tenure as vice president. Johnson also sought the advice of Sen. J. William Fulbright of Arkansas, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Johnson once described their relationship: "Bill's my Secretary of State."¹⁶

These efforts were wise. George Gallup's public opinion polls found that national defense, foreign policy, and peace were the most important issues to the electorate.¹⁷ Other samplings taken in the late spring and early summer of 1960 showed that a strong plurality of the American people considered Republicans in general, and Nixon in particular, better at handling world affairs than *any* Democrat.¹⁸

Just as the Gallup took these samplings, a fortuitous national crisis suddenly bolstered Johnson's candidacy just two months before the Democratic national convention. The air defenses of the Soviet Union downed an American U-2 spy plane on a reconnaissance mission for the Central Intelligence Agency. After exposing the American cover story about a missing weather plane as a lie, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev used this violation of Soviet air space as a pretext to scuttle a planned summit meeting with Eisenhower in Paris. Johnson used the resulting national humiliation to present himself as a statesman on international affairs, and damage the Kennedy campaign.

¹⁵ Telephone call from Macomber, Nov. 8, 1958, 8:40 a.m. (1st and 2nd quotations); telephone call from Macomber, Nov. 10, 1958; telephone call to Herter and Macomber, Nov. 10, 1958, 8:59 a.m.; telephone call to Herter and Macomber, Nov. 10, 1958, 11:47 a.m. (3rd and 4th quotations); Box 9, Telephone Calls Series, Papers of John Foster Dulles (Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library; cited hereafter referred as DDEL).

¹⁶ Mansfield Memorandum, Sept. 11, 1961, Mike Mansfield Foreign Policy Briefs Folder, Box 49, Congressional File, LBJ Archives (LBJL); Haynes Johnson and Bernard M. Gwertzman, *Fulbright: The Dissenter* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1968), 164 (quotation).

¹⁷ Mar. 2, 1960 poll, Mar. 9, 1960 poll, in Gallup, *The Gallup Poll*, 1656, 1657.

¹⁸ Apr. 27, 1960 poll, May 29, 1960 poll, June 10, 1960 poll, in *ibid.*, 1665, 1660, 1672.

Americans initially rallied behind their president during the U-2 incident, and the senator from Texas was no different. On the Senate floor he said, "When our President is at the summit conference, I want him to feel the buoyancy of a united country. The President is a member of a political party with whose concepts I do not agree. But he is still our President, and he will continue to be our President until next January. He is the one who must speak for our nation; and practically all of us are Americans before we are partisans."¹⁹

As the summit broke up, Johnson tried to use his support of the president against Kennedy. He convinced Fulbright, former Democratic presidential nominee Adlai Stevenson, and Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn to join him in sending a telegram to Khrushchev via Eisenhower and the State Department. As Americans and Democrats they asked the Russian to wait until after the November election before canceling the conference. Kennedy's absence as a signatory underscored his inexperience in foreign relations. In case anyone missed the point, Johnson entered the telegram into the *Congressional Record* twice.²⁰

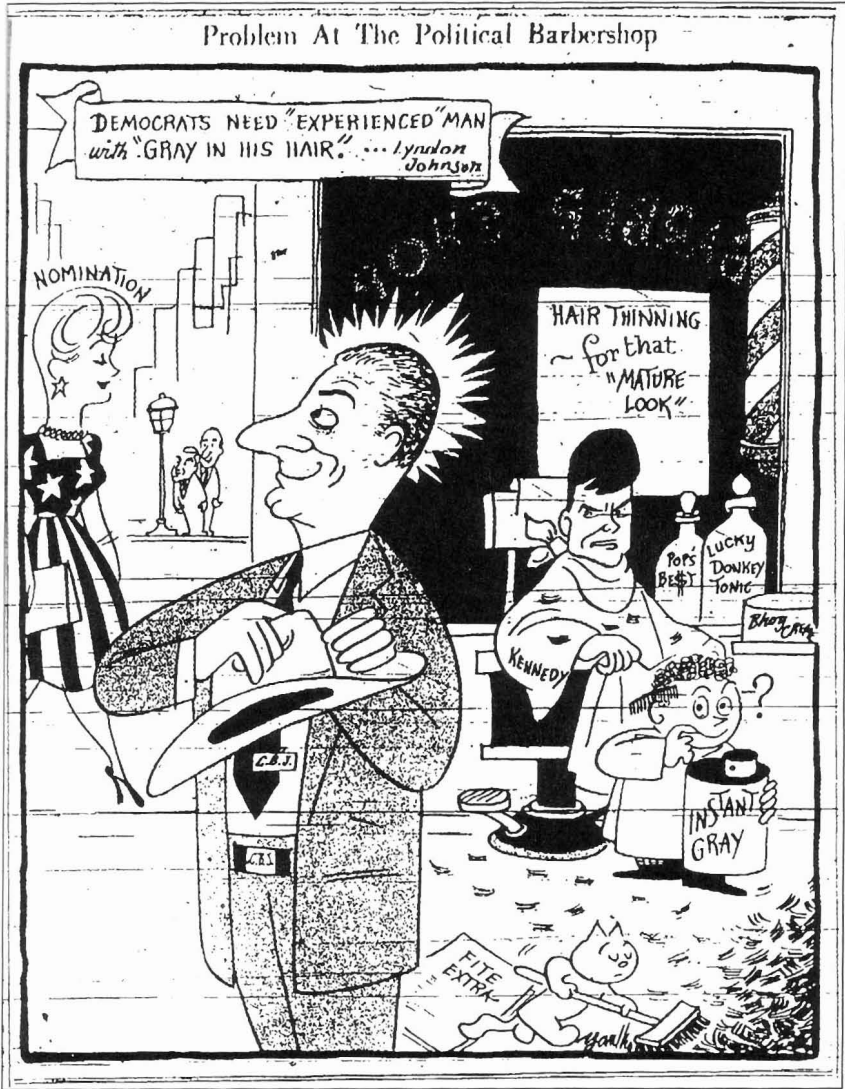
The next day, Sec. of State Christian A. Herter called Johnson. According to his notes, he found the senator "in a very irascible frame of mind." Herter's mission was to convince Johnson of "how fruitless the delivery of the telegram . . . would be." He said the request made no sense, and was clearly an attempt to make political capital out of the crisis. Johnson responded defensively. The State Department had told him the message would arrive before the end of the conference. He also said the telegram was just an attempt to show Khrushchev that the nation was united in the face of any Soviet threat, despite partisan political differences. Herter politely called him a liar. "Well, Senator," he responded. "I don't like to argue with you in regard to the wording of the thing itself, but that isn't exactly the way it reads. I wish it did."²¹

Johnson and his associates came close to disaster. Herter hung up and conferred with Eisenhower. Advised that Johnson still insisted on the delivery of his note, the president reluctantly agreed to send the message along with a cover letter explaining that it arrived in Paris after the termination of the conference. Because of this delay, Khrushchev had an opportunity to play the American political parties off one another to the disadvantage of the Democrats. If he decided to reconsider and

¹⁹ LBJ statement, May 13, 1960, Box 37, LBJ Statements, LBJ Archives (LBJL).

²⁰ Rayburn, Johnson, Stevenson, Fulbright to Eisenhower, May 17, 1960, *Congressional Record*, 86th Cong., 2d. sess., 10497, 11635-11636

²¹ Telephone call from Secretary Herter, May 18, 1960 (2nd quotation), Notes and Transcripts of LBJ Conversations, Box 1 (LBJL); Memorandum of telephone conversation with Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson, May 18, 1960 (1st quotation), 1-6/60(1) Folder, Box 10, Presidential Telephone Calls, Papers of Christian Herter (DDEL).



A Willing Suitor: In the wake of the U-2 incident, the breakup of the summit in Paris and the antitreaty riots in Tokyo, the issue of experience in government became an important topic and began to hurt the Democratic front runner. Lyndon Johnson stressed this issue in his public appearances, making himself a more competitive candidate against Kennedy. *Baltimore Sun*, June 21, 1960.

await a new administration, it would make the four Democrats quite vulnerable to charges of undercutting Eisenhower for partisan gain. Such an accusation would do grave damage to the electoral and political chances of the Democrats. Khrushchev, however, saved the four, using

his response as a forum to repeatedly denounce Eisenhower, and the United States.²²

Aware that his nonpartisan stance was winning votes, Johnson continued even as other Democrats began criticizing the president's handling of the incident. When reporters asked about his stance, he explained, "Well, I wasn't supporting any individual as such, I was supporting my country as I saw it. I'm not going to spend any of my time looking up ugly words to say about fellow Americans because that's what Mr. Khrushchev wants done, and I'm not going to do Mr. Khrushchev's job for him." Johnson did offer some mild criticisms of Eisenhower's foreign policy to avoid being seen as the president's token Democrat. He said summit conferences were nothing more than propaganda shows, and Eisenhower had set the stage for this crisis by relying on them instead of the Foreign Service and quiet diplomacy.²³

The White House and the Republican National Committee made life difficult for Johnson when they launched a public relations campaign to counter the Democratic fault finding. He wanted to refrain from criticizing Eisenhower, but had to avoid giving the Republicans bipartisan cover. If he gave the administration that shielding, he risked his own standing in the Democratic Party. On May 21, he and Fulbright talked about his problem on the telephone. He would be on the "Face the Nation" television program the next day and expected to be questioned on the U-2. A transcript of the telephone call shows that Johnson controlled the conversation. He asked Fulbright for advice, but in the end answered his own questions. The Texan declared he would simply "put the cards on the table and let everyone draw his own conclusion."²⁴

On the show he gave a controlled performance. He answered every question the way he wanted, often ignoring the main thrust of the panelists' inquiries. In one exchange, he simply refused to give an answer. The first questions focused on the U-2 incident. He dismissed Nixon's assertion that discussing the affair was irresponsible, but avoided taking an anti-administration stance. He also distanced himself from a recent Stevenson speech blasting the administration, saying they had "a differ-

²²This account of the Johnson-Herter telephone call is cobbled together from Herter's notes and a partial transcript of the conversation. Although Herter's notes put the secretary in a favorable light, when used in conjunction with Johnson's record of the conversation, they show that a delay in transmission rather than a clumsy effort on Johnson's part made him vulnerable to political charges of undercutting the president. Memorandum of telephone conversation with Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson, May 18, 1960, 4-6/60(1) Folder, Box 10, Presidential Telephone Calls, Papers of Christian Herter (DDEL); Khrushchev to Rayburn, Johnson, Stevenson, and Fulbright, May 30, 1960, *Congressional Record*, 86th Cong., 2d. sess., 11636.

²³"Between the Lines" transcript, May 18, 1960, Box 37, LBJ Statements, LBJ Archives (LBJL).

²⁴Johnson-Fulbright Conversation, May 21, 1960, Box 43, Congressional File, LBJ Archives (LBJL).

ence of emphasis." He also rejected the Democratic National Advisory Council's recommendation for national debate about this incident. "I think you can have responsible debate, and then you can just have debate." Johnson reacted well to the questions, but he also took the initiative to remove the incident from partisan politics altogether. He announced that he was endorsing an investigation into the whole affair by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. "I think this is a matter for responsible government officials and the leaders of this nation." In taking this course of action, Johnson had found the safe middle ground. He set his own course, but avoided any personal attack on the president. In case there was any doubt, he reaffirmed his support for Eisenhower. "He is the only President we have, and I am going to do everything I can to give him all of the strength that is necessary."²⁵

Johnson's stand on the U-2 incident resulted in a good deal of praise. The *Connecticut Post* of Bridgeport, Connecticut, said he had taken the most sensible position possible for a presidential candidate. Republican senators Norris Cotton of New Hampshire and Bourke Hickenlooper of Iowa praised his conduct during the crisis. He had made no effort to use the incident to his political advantage. This selflessness, they said, was true patriotism.²⁶ Journalists also began seeing the value of Johnson's arguments. Columnist James Reston of the *New York Times* joined the senator in criticizing the propaganda-heavy summit meetings that ignored the professionals in the State Department.²⁷

Johnson also derailed the Kennedy campaign with some assistance, albeit unintentional, from the candidate himself. Kennedy initially criticized Eisenhower for refusing to apologize for the flight. Senate Republicans quickly attacked him, calling him inexperienced. In an attempt to end concern about his experience, Kennedy gave a speech on foreign policy from the floor of the Senate. He called Eisenhower's tenure in office "an era of illusion, the illusion that personal good will is a substitute for hard, carefully prepared bargaining on concrete issues, the illusion that good intentions and pious principles are a substitute for strong creative leadership." In direct contrast to Johnson, Kennedy went after the president personally. "As a substitute for policy, President Eisenhower has tried smiling at the Russians; our State Department has tried frowning at them; and Mr. Nixon has tried both. None have succeeded." He then spent the second half of the speech listing twelve areas in which U.S. foreign policy needed improvement.²⁸

²⁵ "Face the Nation" transcript, May 22, 1960, Box 37, LBJ Statements, LBJ Archives (LBJL).

²⁶ *Congressional Record*, 86th Cong., 2d. sess., 9811, 12194.

²⁷ *New York Times*, May 18, 1960.

²⁸ *Congressional Record*, 86th Cong., 2d. sess., 12522–12526.

The speech blew up in Kennedy's face. Instead of answering questions about his knowledge and ability, the speech raised doubts about his judgment. His direct attacks on the popular Eisenhower in a moment of crisis made him look opportunistic and unseemly. This speech made many Americans uneasy about having a President Kennedy in the White House.²⁹

Just as the U-2 incident waned, another crisis developed that Johnson once again used to his advantage. The United States and Japan had spent a year and a half negotiating a new mutual security treaty. In June, a series of violent riots took place in Tokyo as the Diet, Japan's parliament, prepared to ratify the treaty. Huge mobs assembled outside the Diet Building in an attempt to prevent this action. The Japanese government canceled Eisenhower's planned visit for safety purposes. Although there were complex reasons for the riots and protests, Americans blamed everything on Japanese Communists.³⁰ Coming a month after the U-2 incident and the failed Paris summit, the mobs made Americans worry about their place in the world. *Newsweek* said the riots "had thrown the entire question of U.S. foreign policy up for debate." Specifically, the magazine said, "Republicans have been damaged. Though Mr. Eisenhower seems immune, the episode has given the Democrats strong campaign issues."³¹

Johnson blamed American setbacks on public diplomacy, being careful to avoid any direct criticism of the president. Eisenhower should have limited his visits to goodwill trips, leaving the serious preparatory work to the "seasoned diplomats of the State Department." These comments angered the president no end. "Lyndon Johnson is getting to be one of those smart alecks," he snapped.³²

Whatever Eisenhower thought of the majority leader, he still needed his help. The security treaty faced problems in the Senate. Richard Russell, the senior senator from Georgia and chairman of the Armed Services Committee, wanted to delay ratification. He had several reasons for waiting. In the new treaty the U.S. would relinquish its right to intervene in Japan during moments of domestic unrest, a concession that looked unwise in light of recent events. He also wondered about Japan's reliability as an ally. On June 16, Johnson warned Herter that Russell might be a problem. He also said Hubert Humphrey and some liberals might object to prompt ratification.³³

²⁹ Divine, *Foreign Policy*, 209-210.

³⁰ George R. Packard III, *Protest in Tokyo: The Security Treaty Crisis of 1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966).

³¹ *Newsweek*, June 27, 1960, 23, 30.

³² Telephone conversation, June 21, 1960. Christian A. Herter telephone calls from Mar. 28, 1960 to June 30, 1960, Box 12, Papers of Christian Herter (DDEL).

³³ Herter-Johnson telephone conversation, June 16, 1960, Box 1, Notes and Transcripts of LBJ

The day after that conversation, Carl Marcy, the chief of staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, sent a memo to Fulbright, Johnson, and Mansfield recommending that the Senate delay ratification until 1961. If the government of Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke fell after Senate ratification, Marcy predicted headlines that read "Japanese People Repudiate United States Treaty." This would be yet another "diplomatic disaster." Of greater importance, the future of Japanese democracy was uncertain. "Should the Japanese situation deteriorate to the point of requiring outside intervention, there is authority for that intervention under the existing treaty, but not the new treaty."³⁴

Lyndon Baines Johnson rejected this advice. Political and diplomatic factors demanded rapid action. If he delayed ratification, it would be a vote of no confidence in the administration and the Japanese. Such an event would bring about a break with Eisenhower, undoing all his hard work at building a statesman-like image. He also wanted to help the Japanese recover from their psychological war wounds, and develop a stronger sense of self respect. "I am one person who is not disturbed about the actions of a small minority in Japan," he told the *Mainichi Shimbun*. "It is my conviction that the great majority of the Japanese people desire good relations with our country and this, I believe, we should reciprocate." He expressed the hope that the Japanese people would "acquit themselves of their obligations nobly and that the future will bring our two nations ever closer together."³⁵

Johnson told Herter through Sen. Leverett Saltonstall of Massachusetts to expect ratification on June 20 or 21. Still worried about Russell and Humphrey, he told the two Republicans to keep the news to themselves. Confused, Herter called Johnson for clarification. Johnson told him about Marcy's suggestions and said many senators had doubts about the treaty. He asked Herter for his "considered judgment" on postponement, and then, without giving him a chance to respond, explained how he would get the treaty ratified. "You just give me your views in a letter and then I'll put it in my inside coat pocket and start telling the boys I want to bring it up pretty soon and when I run into any obstinacy I can show them what you say."³⁶

Herter agreed, and composed a letter that undoubtedly delighted

Conversations (LBJL); *Congressional Record*, 86th Cong., 2d. sess., 13551-13553.

³⁴ Marcy to Fulbright, June 17, 1960, Foreign Relations-Japan Folder, Box 770, Senate File (LBJL).

³⁵ Johnson to Uchida Genzo, June 27, 1960, *ibid*.

³⁶ Telephone conversation, June 20, 1960, Christian A. Herter telephone calls from Mar. 28, 1960 to June 30, 1960, Box 12, Papers of Christian Herter (DDEL); Herter-Johnson telephone conversation, June 20, 1960 (quotation), Box 1, Notes and Transcripts of LBJ Conversation (LBJL).

Johnson. The Senate had to ratify the treaty, Herter wrote, the future of Japan was at stake:

If we are not in a position to exchange ratifications fairly shortly, the pressures building up in Japan for a dissolution of the Diet to regularize the present abnormal political situation may force Prime Minister Kishi to resign and dissolve the Diet before the exchange takes place. In this event, the position of those in Japan who favor close ties with the United States, whom we believe to be at the present time a substantial majority of the Japanese people, would be considerably weakened during the election campaign and thereafter. If the Japanese conservatives are able to enter the election campaign without the treaty an accomplished fact, this should create conservative unity behind a policy of close cooperation with the United States and help maintain the dominance in Japan of conservative, pro-Western elements whose position has been shaken by recent events.

On the other hand, if the United States does not act promptly this could be interpreted in Japan as a lack of confidence in the future of the U.S.-Japanese partnership. It could also lead to pressures in Japan for reviewing the treaty with the goal of altering the provisions of the treaty in a manner which will satisfy certain Communist-inspired demands.⁴⁷

On June 21, the Senate debated and voted on the treaty. Fulbright acted as floor manager, answering numerous questions. Nearly every senator expressed some uneasiness about recent events in Japan. Most said they would support the treaty, but many did so with misgivings and reservations. In a vote that was closer than the final tally indicates, the treaty passed 90 to 2.⁴⁸

Treaty ratification helped Johnson politically. He recognized that although the electorate cared about foreign affairs, they cared more about leadership than any specific policy. While other Democrats distanced themselves from Eisenhower, Johnson moved closer to the president. This seemingly nonpartisan move increased his stature, making him a more viable candidate. Columnists Arthur Krock of the *New York Times* and Ernest K. Lindley of *Newsweek* said Johnson's political prospects were improving. Krock believed Kennedy had suffered a serious blow, while Lindley reported that Johnson was the only one of the Democrats that had gained from recent international events. Robert Hartman, the Washington bureau chief of the *Los Angeles Times* wrote a long article for the paper's editorial section titled "Johnson's Star Rising in Stand Against Field," which came to similar conclusions. The editorial board of the Fort Worth *Star-Telegram* praised this nonpartisan position: "Senator Lyndon B. Johnson of Texas is increasing his stature as a states-

⁴⁷ Herter to Johnson, June 20, 1960, Box 770, Senate File (LBJL).

⁴⁸ *Congressional Record*, 86th Cong., 2d. sess., 13544-13740.

man and making steady progress toward the Democratic nomination for president simply by saying the right things when they ought to be said and taking the logical and correct stand on an issue of worldwide importance." In another editorial the next day the *Star-Telegram* editors added, "The Johnson refusal to try and make a partisan issue out of these recent events is in sharp contrast to the efforts of his leading rivals for the nomination." Mathis of the *Houston Post* wrote that this country-before-politics position was really having an effect at public appearances: "Johnson's stand on not giving an inch to Soviet Premier Khrushchev even for political gain is in reality gaining ground for the Senator." On June 1, the nineteen papers of the Scripps-Howard chain endorsed Johnson as the Democratic nominee. There were a number of factors for the endorsement, including his long record of accomplishments in the Senate, his ability to work with Republicans, and the need for proven leadership in the White House during the cold war. "Some say he is not versed in foreign affairs. Yet in the hubbub over the U-2 plane incident and the collapse of the summit conference, Sen. Johnson was the only one of the Democrats who said the right thing at the right time." This behavior, the editors of the Scripps-Howard papers declared "was another test where Sen. Johnson showed his sure footedness." The chain ran another editorial three weeks later, which repeated these arguments in different verbiage. In an editorial that focused solely on foreign affairs, the editor of the *Santa Fe New Mexican* contended that Johnson was the only man with the qualifications and experience to lead the free world. The editorial board of the *Cincinnati Enquirer* also endorsed Johnson, specifically noting his independent course among the Democratic aspirants.³⁹

Johnson's weekend speaking trips were also working. He was beginning to develop a political base outside the South. Mathis reported in the *Houston Post* that the Senator was "looking stronger and stronger these days." The expansion of political support also had a tangible result—an increase in his delegate total. In Idaho, he gained six additional delegates, giving him control of the state delegation. In California, his call for national unity in an after-dinner speech earned him a standing ovation and solidified a thirty-vote bloc in the eighty-one person California delegation, which his staff believed could turn the entire delegation in his favor on a second or third ballot. In North Dakota, the

³⁹ *Time*, May 30, 1960, p. 10; June 13, 1960, p. 25; *Newsweek*, June 6, 1960; June 20, 1960, p. 42; *Los Angeles Times*, June 5, 1960; *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, June 4 (1st quotation), 5 (2nd quotation), 1960; *Houston Post*, Apr. 23, 24, 25, May 31 (3rd quotation), June 1, 1960. Some of the more significant of the Scripps-Howard papers at the time included *San Francisco News-Call Bulletin*, *Washington Daily News*, *Rocky Mountain News*, *Fort Worth Press*, *Houston Press*, *Memphis Commercial-Appal*, and *Cincinnati Post*. The same two editorials ran in all Scripps-Howard papers on June 1 (4th quotation) and 27 (2nd quotation), 1960. *Santa Fe New Mexican*, June 3, 1960; *Cincinnati Enquirer*, June 5, 1960.

chairman of the state Democratic Party said the eleven-man delegation that once favored Kennedy belonged to Johnson now. "A lot of people have changed since the summit," he remarked. About half of the South Dakota delegation threw their lot in with Johnson after he spoke to them. The governor of Washington was also leaning towards Johnson in part as a reaction against heavy-handed Kennedy campaign efforts to get him to join their bandwagon.⁴⁰

In addition to improving his own standing, Johnson damaged Kennedy's. Leading Nixon in early May with 54 percent, the Massachusetts senator fell behind in mid-June with only 49 percent. Anti-Kennedy delegates in New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey rallied under Johnson's banner, finding him a viable alternative candidate. Support for Kennedy evaporated in Indiana. The Indianapolis *Star* reported that state-wide polls showed that Johnson's support went from statistically nonexistent to 15 percent in a month's time. The state delegation had already committed itself to vote for Kennedy and a unit rule required that the group vote as a whole on the first ballot, but the delegates were free to vote individually on later ballots. The editorial board of the *Star* argued that Kennedy would have no support in Indiana after the first ballot. Out on the campaign trail, Johnson would remark that his rival was a "nice young man." This comment implied that Kennedy lacked the necessary experience. "The effect on the crowd is telling," Mathis observed.⁴¹

Johnson formally announced for president on July 5 to a crowd of four hundred in a Senate auditorium and a national radio-television audience. His announcement dominated news and editorial coverage for the next day. He took an indirect swipe at Kennedy, noting that his duties had limited the amount of campaigning he had been able to do. "Now, as of this moment, I am a candidate for the Democratic nomination for the office of President of the United States." A loud roar of approval from the assembled crowd greeted this statement. He said he

⁴⁰ *Time*, May 30, 1960, p. 10; June 13, 1960, p. 25; *Newsweek*, June 6, 1960; June 20, 1960, p. 42; *Houston Post*, Apr. 23, 24, 25, May 31 (2nd quotation), June 1, 1960 (1st quotation); all but one California Democrat serving in Congress backed the Johnson campaign, but Gov. Pat Brown was leaning towards Kennedy. Since Brown appointed the delegates except for those that were members of Congress, Johnson's staff assumed that Kennedy had but a temporary hold on the state. Brown, however, had to get the approval of all congressional delegates before appointing another delegate from their district. Johnson's staff figured this would give these congressmen the influence to sway the delegation on later ballots, and bring California around to the Johnson camp. Memo, Larry Jones to Larry Blackmon, Apr. 6, 1960, D-G Folder, Box 1, Johnson for President Series P [B], Papers of John Connally (LB[L]).

⁴¹ May 4, 1960 poll, June 12, 1960 poll, in Gallup, *The Gallup Poll, 1665-1666*, 1672; Indianapolis *Star*, May 22, 1960 (1st quotation); unsigned memorandum, June 16, 1960, Clippings and Press Releases [1 of 2] Folder, Box 2, Johnson for President Series P [B], Papers of John Connally (LB[L]); *Houston Post*, May 31, 1960 (2nd quotation).

expected to be competitive at the convention with a good number of delegates. "My friends tell me I will have in excess of 500 and my leading opponent will have less than 600." Johnson and his supporters predicted a third-ballot victory. Oscar L. Chapman, co-chair of Citizens for Johnson, told a reporter for the Dallas *Times Herald*, "The break in Kennedy's strength will begin to take place on the third ballot."⁴²

Despite it all, Johnson knew the odds were against him. There were limits to this success. Although he was getting results and slowing down the forward progress of the Kennedy campaign, he could not stop his rival from inching forward, and garnering the last few votes he needed. He understood the limits of his success, and accidentally admitted as much at the press conference. A reporter asked if he failed in that bid would he accept a spot on the ticket as vice president. He avoided answering, saying that he was only a candidate for president. Pressed, he said, "I would never reject something that hasn't been offered to me. I have been prepared throughout my adult life to serve my country in any capacity where my country thought my services were essential."⁴³ His actions were even more telling. In June he sent his trusted aide Bobby Baker to see Theodore Sorensen, Kennedy's right-hand man and alter ego. Baker's message: Johnson would accept the second spot on the ticket.⁴⁴

Knowing he had lost, and understanding why were two different matters. "It was the goddamndest thing," he told Doris Kearns Goodwin years afterwards, "here was a young whippersnapper, malaria-ridden and yallah, sickly, sickly. He never said a word of importance in the Senate and he never did a thing. But somehow with his books and his Pulitzer Prizes he managed to create the image of himself as a shining intellectual, a youthful leader who would change the face of the country. Now, I will admit that he had a good sense of humor and that he looked awfully good on the goddamn television screen and through it all he was a pretty decent fellow, but his growing hold on the American people was simply a mystery to me."⁴⁵

When Johnson accepted Kennedy's offer, he had a simple job—win Texas, and as much of the South as possible. Traditionally a stronghold of Democratic strength, the state and the region were suspect in 1960. Many southerners resented the agitation of northern elements in the

⁴²Dallas *Times Herald*, July 6, 1960 (2nd and 3rd quotations); Houston *Post*, July 6, 1960 (1st quotation); a summary of national press coverage from media outlets such as the New York *Times*, the New York *Herald Tribune*, the Atlanta *Constitution*, the Chicago *Tribune* and the *Rocky Mountain News* as well as many Texas publications are in the Dallas *Morning News*, July 8, 1960.

⁴³Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, *Lyndon B. Johnson: The Exercise of Power* (New York: New American Library, 1966), 266.

⁴⁴Sorensen, *Kennedy*, 105.

⁴⁵Doris Kearns Goodwin, *The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 780.

party on the issue of civil rights. An editorial that appeared in the *Texarkana Gazette* when Johnson made his formal announcement is a good expression of the strong resentment towards these outside forces. The editorial board of the paper hoped that Johnson would fail to get the nomination. If he did it he would have to make concessions to labor, and civil rights groups. "If they were for him, we would have to be against him, because we would know that there was something wrong with him." Johnson knew he had a difficult task in front of him. Sometime after he accepted Kennedy's offer, he called Jack Valenti, a Texas supporter and advertising executive, and told him he was in charge of Kennedy-Johnson media and publicity efforts in Texas. Then, in a hard and stern voice, he said, "I aim to carry Texas for this ticket. We are not going to lose Texas. A lot will depend on how well you do your job. Is that clear?" Valenti said it was.⁴⁶

The Democrats had good reason to worry. Texas was heavy in electoral college votes, delivering them to Republicans instead of Democrats in the last two national elections. A private Nixon campaign poll in August had the vice president winning the state with 52 percent of the vote. Nixon's approval rating in the state was higher than those of either Kennedy or Johnson. Even Nixon's running mate Henry Cabot Lodge had a rating higher than Kennedy:

Nixon	54%
Johnson	51%
Lodge	49%
Kennedy	44% ⁴⁷

"Nixon-Lodge have a good chance to carry Texas, despite Johnson's native son candidacy, and this state should be put high on the list for effort," a study accompanying the poll concluded.⁴⁸ In this close race, electoral rich Texas promised to be an important battlefield.

The Republicans had high hopes for the rest of the South as well. Campaign advisor and Harvard government professor William Y. Elliot wrote Nixon reminding him of the electoral possibilities in the South. "It is now open ground for you and very much inclined to be brought into the Republican column for the Presidency, as I have been telling you for a long time." There was danger, however. Nixon could very well lose the South, Elliot cautioned, if he tried to campaign in an Eisenhower-

⁴⁶ Editorial opinions of a number of Texas newspapers are summarized in *Dallas Morning News*, July 8, 1960 (1st quotation); Jack Valenti, *A Very Human President*. (New York: Norton, 1975), 16-17 (2nd quotation).

⁴⁷ Robinson to Nixon, Hall, Finch, Sept. 10, 1960, File 1, Box 1, 1960 Election, Presidential Papers of Richard M. Nixon (National Archives—Los Angeles Branch).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

KEEP YOUR EYE ON LYNDON.



—Knox in Nashville Banner.

On the Road to Los Angeles: This editorial cartoon from the Nashville *Banner* was indicative of much of the thinking in late June. Despite the strong Kennedy lead in delegate votes, the race for the Democratic nomination was far from over and Lyndon Johnson was a major obstacle standing in the way of the Massachusetts senator. *Reprinted in the Kansas City Times, June 23, 1960.*

like fashion. The foundations of their popularity were different; he had to be his own man.⁴⁹

Nixon ignored this counsel. In her study of presidential campaign advertising, Kathleen Hall Jamieson found that in both major and minor matters, his campaign was a copy of Eisenhower's successful efforts in 1952 and 1956. Like Eisenhower, he promised to campaign in every state. He greeted crowds in a similar fashion—flashing the victory sign with arms up in the air. Even the ads looked alike. That year Nixon preferred to go with tried and true methods.⁵⁰

While Nixon attempted to duplicate the effort and success of the Republican incumbent, Johnson turned to the example of the last Democratic president. On the advice of Harry S. Truman, he decided to travel through the South on a whistle-stop train tour. This suggestion made sense. Johnson's job—the reason he was on the ticket—was to roundup votes in the states of the old Confederacy. Although he made appearances outside the South, and Kennedy visited the region, he was the one in the campaign responsible for winning voters back to the Democratic Party. His train, the *LBJ Victory Special*—journalists began calling it the "Cornpone Special"—covered eight states that October.⁵¹ Almost every biographical study of Johnson mentions this trip, but most focus just on the inaugural stop in Culpepper, Virginia. This emphasis is a reflection of Culpepper's proximity to Washington, D.C. None of these studies makes mention of the other numerous stops Johnson made, or what he said out in the southern hinterlands.⁵²

This trip was important and caused an instant shift in the political landscape. The number of journalists covering Johnson campaign appearances increased tenfold. Until he took the train, a small handful usually ranging between two and four reported on his efforts, but at any one time on the rail trip, the number fluctuated between thirty and forty. As the train rolled through the South, local politicians and civic leaders were invited on board to meet the candidate and his wife. Whenever possible, Johnson tried to have a local dignitary introduce him to the crowd.⁵³

Johnson stuck to national issues, particularly foreign policy, in stump speeches. He continued with this approach in his televised remarks and

⁴⁹ Elliot to Nixon, Sept. 24, 1960, File 2, Box 1, 1960 Election, Pre-Presidential Papers of Richard M. Nixon (National Archives—Los Angeles Branch).

⁵⁰ Jamieson, *Packaging*, 122, 150–151.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 156; Dallek, *Lone Star*, 586.

⁵² Dallek, *Lone Star*, 586; Evans and Novak, *Johnson*, 303; Miller, *Lyndon*, 325–327; Kearns, *Johnson*, 160–161.

⁵³ *Washington Post*, Oct. 12, 14, 1960; at a stop in Anderson, South Carolina, nine local politicians spoke before Johnson. *Columbia State*, Oct. 12, 1960.

ads aired in the South, avoiding appeals to regional pride and racial hatred. He did this for two reasons. First, throughout his political career, Johnson had worked to end the South's political isolation. More importantly, if he was going to help Kennedy win the South, Johnson had to find an issue that transcended regional differences. According to a Kennedy campaign poll of the South, seventy-one percent of the public thought foreign policy was the most important issue in the election. This fact gave the Democratic ticket some possibilities in the region. A study analyzing the poll stated: "The high rating given to foreign policy in the South (coupled with the apparent low salience of states rights as a national campaign issue) offers Kennedy a channel for appeal to the South. Kennedy may have little to offer the South directly, but the South also cares about broad issues of foreign policy, peace and war. When foreign policy . . . is to be a topic of Kennedy speeches, the South might be the place to deliver them." This was particularly important in the Lone Star State, where the issue favored Nixon. "To carry Texas, Senator Kennedy must be able to blunt this advantage, at least to a degree."⁵⁴

Johnson needed little convincing on this matter of strategy. He started attacking Nixon on the issue of world affairs long before the train trip. Shortly after the Democratic convention he gave a speech in Nashville, Tennessee, and departed several times from his prepared text with what a reporter called "bitter attacks" on foreign policy. At a press conference in Texas in September, he said the basic election issue was what type of leadership would restore American prestige and "give the country confidence and freedom."⁵⁵

Throughout the trip Johnson assailed Nixon on foreign policy. He turned to Mansfield for help in this endeavor. As a loyal Democrat, the Montana senator was more than willing, but he also had a personal stake in the election. If Johnson became vice president, Mansfield as the majority whip would become the new majority leader. In the two months before the election, he wrote fourteen foreign policy addresses for Johnson to use in the South. Mansfield tailored the speeches to conform to stands Johnson had taken earlier on foreign affairs. There were three major themes in these statements. First, in a blatantly partisan appeal to southerners' primary identification as Democrats, Johnson blamed all disasters on the "Republican ticket" and the "Republican administration." Not everything had gone wrong with American foreign policy over the past eight years. When the administration had heeded the warnings

⁵⁴"Kennedy, Nixon and Foreign Affairs," Aug. 25, 1960 (1st quotation); "Issues of Concern in Texas," n.d. (2nd quotation), Box 212, Democratic National Committee Records, 1960 Campaign, Archibald Cox Papers (John F. Kennedy Presidential Library; cited hereafter as JFKL).

⁵⁵Houston *Post*, July 31 (1st quotation), Sept. 9, 1960 (2nd quotation).

of Democrats in Congress events had gone fairly well. "The party best able to give the lie to Khrushchev's claim that Communism is the future of mankind, is the party best able to marshal the strength of this nation and to channel it into a better future for all the people of America. Now, is that party the Democratic or the Republican party?" The reply was so obvious, Johnson never provide an answer.⁵⁶

Competence was a second theme. In Jacksonville, Florida, he sarcastically mocked Nixon's claim of expertise comparing him to a character in an old nursery rhyme: "Pussycat, pussycat where have you been? I've been to London to see the queen," Johnson said with sarcasm that was blatant. "He went to London to see the queen, so what?" Not only did Johnson question the quality of the vice president's experience, he also ridiculed the results of the entire administration. "The truth of the matter is that the Republicans have neither stood firm nor made peace during the past four years. Do you see any reason for believing that they are going to be any better at it during the next four?" After mocking Nixon's kitchen debate against Khrushchev, he said, "If we are to succeed in our foreign policy we must put our house in order here at home." Not only were Nixon and Lodge incompetent, but they had dangerous ideas about tampering with the Constitution. A Republican suggestion to give the vice president more influence in foreign policy was an attempt to cover for Nixon's failure to perform the Constitutional duties already assigned to the vice president, he said. The Constitution worked fine; there was no reason to tamper with what had worked for 175 years.⁵⁷

The miserable results of Republican incompetence was the last topic Johnson stressed. Republican foreign policy was uncoordinated and wasted precious American resources. "What has happened to the proud claim of just eight years ago that a Republican victory would speed up the liberation of the nations of Eastern Europe," he pointedly asked a Tallahassee gathering. Cuba and Berlin were disasters—a point he repeatedly made in Alabama, Georgia, and Florida. He reminded an Atlanta crowd that one of the results of Republican-managed foreign policy was "a dictator ninety miles from our shoreline standing there thumbing his nose at us." Cuba was just one example of how America's prestige abroad had faltered over the last eight years. Only ten years ago

⁵⁶"What's Right about Foreign Policy," Oct. 25, 1960, Mike Mansfield Foreign Policy Briefs Folder, Box 49, Congressional File, LBJ Archives (LBJL); "The Third Man Theme," Oct. 6, 1960 (quotations), *ibid.*

⁵⁷"The U.S. and the UN," Sept. 26, 1960, *ibid.*; "Role of the Vice-President," Sept. 29, 1960, *ibid.*; *Florida Times-Union*, Oct. 13, 1960 (2nd quotation); *Jacksonville Journal*, Oct. 12, 1960 (1st quotation); *Atlanta Constitution*, Oct. 12, 1960; *Miami Herald*, Oct. 13, 1960; *Tampa Times*, Oct. 13, 1960; *Macon Telegraph*, Oct. 15, 1960.

the U.S. "enjoyed a position of unchallenged world leadership," he told a gathering at Mercer University in Macon, Georgia. "It matched and thwarted the twin threats of Communist economic and military aggression wherever they appeared. It had inspired a faltering world to new heights of strength, confidence and hope. In taking stock of where we are as against where we were—we today find ourselves face-to-face with the stark reality that every one of those advantages has been lost or compromised. Today, the foreign policy is one of total negative reaction." The president's canceled trip to Japan and Nixon's infamous trip to Latin America in 1958 were good examples. "Does that tell you the nation's business is being well taken care of by this Republican Administration? Does it tell you that our prestige was never higher," he asked rhetorically. The only solution to all these problems, he suggested, was to elect Democrats in November.⁵⁸

It is also important to note what Johnson did not say. Absent from these attacks on Republican mismanagement of foreign policy was any mention of Eisenhower. The president's personal popularity transcended partisan identification. Attacks on him were likely to be counterproductive, and Johnson avoided them.

There were, to be sure, other reasons for southerners to flock to the Kennedy-Johnson banner. In Mississippi, Senators James Eastland and John Stennis called on the voters to support the ticket because Johnson was on it, which was certainly better than the alternative—a Nixon-Lodge administration. Sen. Thomas Wofford of South Carolina made a similar point at one appearance: "If you can't get the foreman of the jury, for God's sake get one member of the jury so you won't be hurt too much." John Patterson, governor of Alabama, was honest when he told reporters that he was "disappointed" about the civil rights plank in the party platform, but he said the overall document was quite good, including the sections on farm policy. Traditional loyalty to the Democratic Party was another factor in Johnson's tour. His attacks on "Republican foreign policy" was an indirect appeal to this tradition. He also made more direct appeals. At a well-attended park rally in Jacksonville, he noted that since every member of Congress from the state was a Democrat, it would make little sense for Florida voters to put a Republican in the White House. "That's like asking the Army quarterback to serve on

⁵⁸ "The Suppressed Report," Oct. 10, 1960, Mansfield Foreign Policy Briefs; "Laos: Case History in Foreign Aid," Sept. 28, 1960, *ibid.*; "A Matter of Prestige," Oct. 25, 1960 (5th quotation), *ibid.*; "China and Cuba," Sept. 29, 1960, *ibid.*; "[illegible] and Summits," Sept., 1960, *ibid.*; "Berlin Blow Up," Sept. 19, 1960, *ibid.*; *Florida Times-Union*, Oct. 13, 1960; *Jacksonville Journal*, Oct. 12, 1960; *Atlanta Constitution*, Oct. 12 (2nd through 4th quotations), 13, 1960; *Miami Herald*, Oct. 13, 1960; *Tampa Tribune*, Oct. 13, 1960 (1st quotation); *Macon Telegraph*, Oct. 15, 1960; *Birmingham News*, Oct. 14, 1960. Johnson was making similar comments before the train trip. See the coverage of a Texas press conference in *Houston Post*, Sept. 9, 1960.

Navy's football team." He also called for party loyalty when the *Victory Special* pulled out of stations, yelling, "Vote Democratic!" Party officials and office holders responded; in part because they realized there was a danger if they ignored the Kennedy-Johnson ticket. If the Democratic national ticket won, those who failed to support the campaign would lose appointments to those that did. If the Republicans won, the Democrats who supported Nixon would still face a Congress controlled in the Senate by Johnson and in the House of Representatives by his close friend Sam Rayburn.⁵⁹

As with any political campaign there were picketers and small crowds at some appearances, but the biggest problem was that the whirlwind effort overtaxed Johnson. A reporter for the Macon *Telegraph* observed: "Johnson was at his best when speaking off the cuff. Reading from a prepared text, he tended to drone on." Another reporter from the paper agreed: "In all honesty, it cannot be reported that Johnson was a dynamo on the platform. He read the speech, and it sounded like he was reading it." He made nine appearances in one day in South Carolina and was sunburned and tired at the end. The next day in Miami, he collapsed after giving eleven speeches in five different Florida cities in only four hours. He arrived half an hour late to give a speech at a dinner for the local chapter of Sigma Delta Chi, the professional journalism fraternity. He delivered a five-minute speech on Cuba and the failure of Republican foreign policy in Latin America in a "dull, hoarse," and "monotone" voice. His shoulders sagged as he talked, and he left without taking any questions from the audience. The president of the organization called the speech "highly disappointing." A columnist for the Miami *Herald* was more direct, calling Johnson's performance "dismal."⁶⁰

Despite these shortcomings, the trip was a major success. At the end of the trip, 1,247 local officials and dignitaries had signed the train's guest book and a campaign staff member guessed that only half the number that came on board had enough time to make an entry. Johnson had his photo taken with 1,047. He gave fifty-seven speeches at forty-nine different stops, which 182 reporters covered. "People tell us it is the most successful tour we have ever had by train," Johnson told the Macon *News*. Correspondents for the Washington *Post* and the Dallas *Morning News* reported that the two lounge cars on the train were so crowded that they had to shove their way through the carriages. In the

⁵⁹Tampa *Tribune*, Oct. 12, 1960 (1st quotation); Miami *Herald*, Oct. 12, 1960; *Florida Times-Union*, Oct. 13, 1960 (2nd quotation); Dallas *Morning News*, Oct. 30, 1960 (3rd quotation); Houston *Post*, July 31, 1960; Birmingham *News*, Oct. 13, 1960.

⁶⁰Macon *Telegraph*, Oct. 15, 1960 (1st and 2nd quotations); Miami *Herald*, Oct. 13 (5th quotation), 16 (3rd, 4th, and 6th quotations), 1960; Columbia *State*, Oct. 11, 12, 1960.

middle of the rail expedition the Washington correspondent for the Birmingham *News* reported "a number of "under-the-surface signs that the Democratic ticket has gained measureable strength in Dixie the past month." The biggest of these indicators was the abrupt rerouting of the train to go through and stop in Atlanta. Syndicated columnist Joseph Alsop attributed the organizational strength and unity of the Democratic Party in the South to Johnson. A Dallas *Morning News* reporter commented: "The Johnson train was . . . the best organized event of the current campaign." Robert J. Donovan, Washington bureau chief for the New York *Herald Tribune*, was on the train and reported that southern politicians were rallying to the Democratic standard. "The mere fact that they are flocking to the Johnson train and to Sen. Kennedy's appearances is taken as evidence that they have made up their minds how the election is going."⁶¹

The effort was well appreciated in the region. "Senator Johnson's trip obviously has been a huge success. He knows how to talk to Southerners and most of them have liked what he said," an editorial in the Atlanta *Constitution* noted. "The decision to have Senator Johnson whistle stop through the South was a wise one for the Democrats. It could mean the difference between victory and defeat in several doubtful states. And the region feels better that it is not being taken for granted." The Democratic state chairman of South Carolina told a Washington *Post* reporter: "It's picking up, it's picking up." A Florida county commissioner remarked, "I think Kennedy is going to win. This fellow Johnson is going to help him a lot." A Florida state senator agreed: "this tour solidified all elements in the party behind the ticket." Another local official explained why, "Johnson's exactly what we need. They never asked us for our votes before." One journalist observed: "He was likable. He was folksy. He had some of the earthy Truman charm. And it was clear what his job is—to speak to the people in their own tongue." Even the form the opposition to the Kennedy-Johnson ticket took in the region after the trip is indicative of the impact the Texas senator had in the region. The editors of the Birmingham *News* favored Nixon and in an editorial that appeared in the paper after Johnson's tour of Alabama they said the two issues in the campaign were foreign policy and the growth of the federal government. The rest of the essay focused not on foreign policy, Nixon's supposed strength, but on domestic programs.⁶²

⁶¹ Macon *News*, Oct. 14, 1960 (1st quotation); Washington *Post*, Oct. 14, 15, 1960; Houston *Post*, Oct. 19, 1960; Dallas *Morning News*, Oct. 30, 1960 (3rd quotation); Birmingham *News*, Oct. 11, 1964 (2nd quotation); the Donovan report appears in *ibid.*, Oct. 13, 1964 (4th quotation).

⁶² Washington *Post*, Oct. 12 (3rd quotation), 14 (4th and 6th quotations), 1960; Atlanta *Constitution*, Oct. 13 (7th quotation), 15 (1st and 2nd quotations), 1960; Tallahassee *Democrat*, Oct. 13, 1960 (5th quotation); Birmingham *News*, Oct. 14, 1960.

Private Kennedy campaign studies support this anecdotal evidence, recording gains throughout the South. In Florida the Democrats owned the subject of foreign policy. "The issue is not only blunted; it is turned," a campaign report declared. In Texas, Nixon's lead began to shrink. "At this rate of growth the Senator can turn this issue," another Kennedy study proclaimed.⁶³

Nixon and his workers received similar messages, but they often conflicted with other sources of information. At a national level, they discovered Kennedy was gaining in foreign policy approval. Regionally, the situation was a bit more confusing. In late September, press secretary Herb Klein contacted the editors of southern newspapers that had endorsed Nixon. The Texans told Klein that Nixon had no lead. The state could go either way. But a month later pollster Elmo Roper told the Nixon campaign that the vice president was "well ahead" in Texas.⁶⁴ Only on election day did the Nixon team learn for certain. Nixon won only four states from the old Confederacy, losing Texas by the slimmest of margins. Johnson had done his job.

Decades later the election of 1960 continues to fascinate. There are a variety of explanations for this interest, but two reasons stand out from all the rest. First, the election was extremely close. A few thousand votes cast in the other direction, and Richard M. Nixon would have won the contest. Second, three of the four national candidates ended up becoming the president of the United States. Lyndon Johnson played a role in this election, which was far more important than previously thought. His actions were particularly in the area of foreign affairs. He had a solid grounding in the subject, and his own distinctive ideas about the proper role of the United States in world affairs. He also understood foreign affairs as a political issue, and used it to his political advantage against Kennedy and then Nixon. His actions took place at both the national and local levels, because foreign policy is an issue in which society expresses interest at all stations.

⁶³"Issues of Concern in Florida," n.d. (1st quotation), and "Issues of Concern in Texas," n.d. (2nd quotation), Box 212, Democratic National Committee Records, 1960 Campaign, Papers of Archibald Cox (JFKL).

⁶⁴Study of Third Debate, Oct. 19, 1960, p. 3, 1960 Election, File 1, Box 1, Pre-Presidential Papers of Richard M. Nixon (National Archives—Los Angeles Branch); Klein to Nixon, Sept. 22, 1960, File 3, *ibid.*; Hauge to Nixon, Oct. 21, 1960 (quotation), File 3, *ibid.*