

North Korea and JFK vs. Nixon

What Happens Next – 04.10.2022

Larry Bernstein:

Welcome to What Happens Next. My name is Larry Bernstein.

What Happens Next is a podcast where the speaker gets to present his argument in just Six Minutes and that is followed by a question-and-answer period for deeper engagement.

Today's discussion will be on two topics: North Korea and the 1960 Presidential Campaign between Nixon and JFK.

Our first speaker will be Nicholas Eberstadt who is the Henry Wendt Chair of Political Economy at AEI. Nick is an expert on North Korea and he is very concerned that North Korea will attack South Korea. Kim and his cronies have articulated their vision for a united Korea and Nick thinks they mean what they say. The plan as ludicrous as it may sound as Putin invading Ukraine is that South Korea is an illegitimate American supported puppet regime that must be toppled and by force if necessary.

Our second speaker will be Irv Gellman who is a popular historian who has a new book entitled Campaign of the Century: Kennedy, Nixon and the Election of 1960. Irv disagrees with the historical narrative about this incredibly close presidential race. There is so much to discuss including election fraud, JFK's mistresses, and the first television debates.

Buckle-up

You can find transcripts for this program and all of our previous episodes on our website whathappensnextin6minutes.com, and you can listen on Podbean, Apple Podcasts and Spotify.

Let's begin with our first speaker Nick Eberstadt.

Nicholas Eberstadt:

Point one: North Korean leadership is not crazy—we condescend and misunderstand when we say that it is.

The DPRK couldn't have outlasted the Soviet Empire by all these decades if it were irrational. Call North Korea a rogue state if you want—ouch!—but that epithet doesn't help us understand its ideology, internal logic, or objectives.

North Korea is a classic revisionist state. It is fundamentally dissatisfied with the geopolitical realities it faces—and wholly committed to changing the offending facts on the ground.

The Kim regime regards the South Korean state as an illegitimate monstrosity that must be destroyed and swept off the Peninsula—full stop. Since Washington guarantees Seoul's security, the US-ROK military alliance must be also destroyed, and American troops must be

forced out of Korea, so that Pyongyang can proceed with unconditional reunification on its own terms. Pyongyang spells all this out, again and again, for anyone willing to take their words seriously.

Pyongyang didn't just come up with these ideas. They have informed and animated the North Korea state throughout three generations of Kim family rule. The rationale is integral to the state's basic doctrine, as laid out in *Juche* thought and the "Ten Principles of Monolithic Ideology". Racial reunification is in effect the sacred historical mission of the Kim regime—forswearing that mission would undermine its very claim to authority.

Second: The North Korean state is methodically preparing to fight and win a limited nuclear war against America on the Korean Peninsula. Those preparations have been underway for decades. This is what the never-ending "North Korean nuclear crisis" is all about.

North Korea almost unified the Peninsula unconditionally back in June 1950, remember—but that attempt failed, and the Kim regime has never given up the quest.

For a while, in the late 1950s and 1960s, it actually seemed like the North might be able to overpower the South through economic competition, amazing as that sounds today. But Pyongyang lost the economic race badly, as central planning systems typically do against free markets, even before the end of the Cold War, meaning that success in a conventional military contest—a reprise of 1950—was no longer viable.

Nukes and WMD are the regime's Plan B. There is an entirely logical design to the North's race to become a nuclear weapons state and a manufacturer of ICBMs. These are its key to consummating a Korean unification on its own terms.

By amassing a credible nuclear arsenal and the long-range missiles to train them on the US, the North hopes—I believe—to get Uncle Sam to blink in a future showdown, at a time and place of the Kims' own choosing. If Washington blinks in a nuclear faceoff against the DPRK, the US-South Korean alliance loses its credibility, and collapses. Then the North gets to go *mano a mano* with the South.

Yes: if push really does come to shove—thinking the unthinkable—the Kim regime would be annihilated. But the Kim regime seems confident it can outplay the Americans in this high-stakes game. They believe they are better at brinkmanship than Americans. One might even be tempted to say they have the nukes to prove it, this despite three decades of seemingly forceful US opposition to their nuclear quest.

Finally: notwithstanding the perennial calls for diplomatic engagement with the North, there can be no negotiated settlement, no splitting the difference, no win-win solution to the North Korean nuclear issue.

The reason is as simple as it is unpleasant. Like all Ur-Revisionists, the North will not be satisfied with some meet-in-the-middle compromise over an intolerable grievance—the intolerable grievance in this case being the continuing existence of a separate state on the Southern half of the Korean peninsula—a prosperous flourishing democracy, no less!

To most of us, the notion that tiny impoverished North Korea could beat and eat the South after driving out Uncle Sam (assuming they could) sounds utterly laughable. But not to the North's leadership. They regard South Koreans as defiled, corrupted, pampered and gutless. They think the South has no will to fight on its own. And as long as the Kim regime is in power, they are going to try to prove that they are right.

In sum: expect the North Korean nuclear crisis to continue until Pyongyang gets a better class of dictator.

Larry Bernstein:

Why did North Korea invade South Korea in 1950 and what does that have to do with your thesis?

Nicholas Eberstadt:

That's the start of the whole drama. The North Korean leadership under the Kim family has held from the beginning that they are the repositior of the destiny of the Korean Minjung, which I'd translate as race, sometimes nationality. And the opportunity seemed to arise in 1950, after Dean Acheson's famous speech that omitted the Republic of Korea from our security perimeter.

Larry Bernstein:

At the time of the 1950 invasion, North Korea was wealthier, more technically advanced and had substantial commodity reserves. Despite a very good opening gambit, it ended in a stalemate. Today, South Korea is 100 times wealthier per capita than North Korea, it's mind boggling. Now the North couldn't win when it was bigger, stronger, and wealthier, why does it think it can win when it is substantially weaker and poorer. Does this explain the nuclear option?

Nicholas Eberstadt:

All of the other options have fallen along the wayside in this three generation quest. North Korea's GDP is approximately zero as a first approximation. They're not going to be able to overpower the South on the basis of their economic might. Before South Korea was a democracy, it was a military dictatorship that the North made the argument that they were a more appealing state than the South. In the late '50s and early '60s, 100,000 Koreans in Japan voted with their feet and went to the North. But Kim Jong-il and Kim Jong-un aren't attractive poster children in our modern era.

Larry Bernstein:

Seoul is close to the North Korean border. In the North Korean mountains, artillery is pointed directly at Seoul. It would be impossible for the South Koreans to take out the artillery prior to

the destruction of Seoul and that's with conventional let alone nuclear weapons. Americans have soldiers on the ground, which indicates that we're willing to sacrifice troops and we'll defend South Korea. How do you think about American ground troops in a future Korean conflict?

Nicholas Eberstadt:

The US troops are a trip wire. An attack on US forces would precipitate our full response to defend the ROK. And this is one of the main reasons that the North Korean strategy seems to be focused upon ending the US-ROK alliance, the exit of American troops from the South and the removal of the American nuclear umbrella.

Larry Bernstein:

What do North Koreans think of the Ukrainian experience?

Nicholas Eberstadt:

The North Korean government has been making the point for years that nuclear weapons are absolutely essential to their security. They point to the Libyan example as what happens when a state does not have nuclear weapons. Ukraine gave up its nuclear weapons back in the 1994 agreement.

The North Koreans would never relinquish nuclear weapons.

Larry Bernstein:

If you were advising the South Korean government, would you suggest going nuclear to achieve deterrence and remove the uncertainty of the American nuclear umbrella?

Nicholas Eberstadt:

The South Korean population is strongly in favor of going nuclear according to current public opinion polls. The vagaries of public opinion will depend upon how credible the South Korean population believes the US commitment to be. The less credible America's commitment, the more likely they're going to go nuke.

It's very easy to imagine a chain reaction where a lot of countries including, the ROK, Japan, Australia, Taiwan might be tempted to go nuclear if one more country in the region does. United States policy has attempted to preclude that by assuring its allies that it is absolutely reliable. But these are democracies and their populations have a say in this too.

Larry Bernstein:

Core to your argument is to listen to what your enemies are saying. Putin laid out his arguments for the invasion of Ukraine in a public speech, a rational argument to justify Russia's attack. Here, North Korea has a reasoned argument to invade South Korea. Your position is to listen to what your enemies say.

Nicholas Eberstadt:

We have this condescending, Olympian view that we know best. And they can't possibly mean what they're saying because it doesn't make any sense to us. There was this ridiculous little man from Austria with the mustache, saying filthy things about Jews and Mein Kampf is just ridiculous. We look at people whose point of view are radically different from our own and say, it's impossible, it isn't sensible. It's only not sensible in the world as we'd like it to be.

Larry Bernstein:

The elephant in the region is China. Xi says he loves North Korea and that their friendship is forever. What do the Chinese want?

Nicholas Eberstadt:

From what evidence I see, they detest each other. But they understand power politics. As long as the North Korean state causes more difficulty for the US alliance in Asia than it does for the PRC, they're prepared to live with that.

You've got a divided peninsula, Beijing gets to play them off against each other. I'm not sure that China has had such a favorable position in Northeast Asia since the Qing Dynasty at the time of the Taiping Rebellion. It may serve China to manage this relationship until it stops working.

Larry Bernstein:

Why didn't China discourage North Korea from going nuclear?

Nicholas Eberstadt:

It's not clear that the Chinese government ever thought it was in its overriding interest to prevent the emergence of a nuclear North Korea, as long as it could be relatively confident that the missiles would be trained in one direction.

Larry Bernstein:

During one of my previous book clubs, former Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz told us that in negotiations with the Chinese, the United States offered to remove all U.S. troops from the peninsula after a Korean unification, but that did not satisfy the Chinese.

Nicholas Eberstadt:

The alternative to a North Korean state would be a unified, market-oriented state run out of Seoul in alliance with the United States. The last time that China had a foreign power on its border was when Korea was occupied by Japan, and that was the staging ground for the invasion in the 1930s. Much better to have strategic depth even if you've got a troublesome frenemy.

Larry Bernstein:

South Korea's economy has grown by a factor of 100 since 1950. China has grown enormously as well. Why can't China's strategic interests change instead of looking through the lens of the Qing dynasty? Why can't economic opportunity justify a new strategy?

Nicholas Eberstadt:

Oh, yeah. In theory, there's no reason they couldn't. Over the past couple of decades, I've tried to probe that very question, Larry. I've tried to talk with Chinese interlocutors about how much money they'd save, if they had a better dictator in North Korea, it'd be a lot easier to develop the Manchuria area in Northeast China.

Larry Bernstein:

The North Korean government sometimes acts in bizarre ways that is inconsistent with international norms. In the early 1950s, the North Koreans sent a military submarine to kidnap Japanese lovers on the beach and then took them to North Korea to train North Korean troops about Japanese culture and language for a future invasion of Japan.

In the late 1990s, the Japanese found out about the kidnappings and were outraged, and demanded a North Korean apology and return of the Japanese kidnapped victims. But the North Koreans refused to let them return with their wives and families. The Chinese observed this situation, how it angered and frustrated the Japanese but did not intervene. What do the Chinese think of North Koreans violations of international norms?

Nicholas Eberstadt:

All's fair in love and war. And this is a war. There's no love lost with Japan. And any means that were necessary for purposes to advance reunification on their own terms were fine. And if people in the outside world saw these as heinous violations of norms, the response would be, "It's a heinous violation of norms to have this abhorrent state in the South of our peninsula propped up by imperialists across the ocean."

From the standpoint of Beijing to see why the government that still does the reprises of the rape of Nanjing at the drop of a hat, would all of a sudden say, "I'm shocked, shocked by what these naughty North Koreans are doing to your poor beachgoers." That's a business and pleasure situation from the Chinese standpoint.

Larry Bernstein:

A few years ago, a miniature North Korean submarine attacked a South Korean boat for no apparent reason. People died. What do you make of these isolated raids?

Nicholas Eberstadt:

The North Korean approach is to embrace radical goals, change the map. And to approach them in a way that's cautious and incremental. You keep on moving forward to normalize new behavior and realities. And if you get some serious pushback, you step back and consolidate.

So having miniature subs sink the Cheonan, a South Korean vessel. It's a probe. And if nothing happens, then you probe a little further. And if there's a big blow back, you deal with that, but you establish a new norm. All along the history of the North's confrontation with the US and South Korea, we see episodes that to us would seem bizarre and outrageous but are logical outcomes.

Larry Bernstein:

Let's go back to 1950 before the North's invasion of South Korea. The current dictator Kim's grandfather visited Stalin to discuss the invasion of the South. And Stalin gave his blessing. You mentioned in your six-minute opening remarks that Dean Acheson had not included South Korea as part of the US security guarantee, suggesting that if he had that there would have been no attack.

Nicholas Eberstadt:

If we go back to 1950, the fateful speech omitting South Korea from the security perimeter. But there was plenty of other evidence. Congress had voted down aid for it. If you were a betting man, you probably would've bet that the United States was not terribly interested in this place. And even the Americans didn't learn how interested they were in the place until it was attacked. And all of a sudden those unpredictable Americans are at it once again.

If there were a successful reunification effort led by North Korea, it would look like a moon launch. They'd have to get lucky and have no margin for error. One hypothetical would be after the exit of US troops and the US nuclear umbrella, some domestic turmoil in the South, would somehow paralyze the society to allow, opportunistically, North Korean elements to walk in and claim a dominion.

I'm not making this entirely up. Back in 1983, the Rangoon bombing, when the then dictator of South Korea was visiting a shrine outside of Rangoon in Myanmar, Burma, North Korean agents missed him but blew up most of his cabinet.

Larry Bernstein:

North Korea is a side show in the region, away from their nukes, I don't think many people in the region even think of them. The elephant in the room is Chinese power. And after Obama pivoted, Americans created a coalition to contain Chinese aggression. The Quad: India, Australia, Japan and the US will likely take the lead, but I suspect that South Korea and Taiwan will join the group.

If the coalition solidifies, this will unite South Korea with its democratic neighbors that will likely help them defend against North Korea, especially Japan. What do you make of the growing coalition against China also undermining North Korea's invasion plans?

Nicholas Eberstadt:

That's a really interesting question, Larry. The North Korean approach has been to focus upon the United States and the ROK, to a much lesser degree Japan. Trying to break the US alliance

and move forward on this quixotic quest of unconditional unification has been conditioned by the security architecture of the Pacific. We've got a hub and spoke set of bilateral relationships with the United States because the Japanese question.

If the Japan question is answered to the satisfaction of the neighbors then, as you intimate, a much deeper and perhaps more resilient security network will be possible, and would multiply the complexity of unconditional reunification for the North Koreans.

Larry Bernstein:

American and Western diplomats find North Korean behavior non-sensical. Don't they understand that communism has failed and that their country is an unmitigated disaster. Please come and join the American international order like everybody else. We'll offer help from the IMF and technical assistance. One day you can be as rich as the South Koreans. The Chinese reformed and look at them. No big deal, all is forgiven. And the Americans were shocked when they were not met with open arms but insults and rejection.

Nicholas Eberstadt:

We were confused and puzzled by the response because we've got such a self-referential, ahistorical perspective on human affairs. If you'd gone to the Spartans and say "We're gonna dangle this gold in front of you, can you please just throw away the stupid swords and shields and make nice with the Athenians," They'd have cut your head off because it's not just preposterous but it's a grave insult to their honor.

There are a lot of things that motivate human beings, and not even the most important ones are pecuniary. People have died for honor, for the defense of their own. North Korean ideology is based upon racial socialism. People sacrifice on claims of nationality and honor and patriotism. And if we don't understand that, it's bad on us.

Larry Bernstein:

Thanks Nick. I'd like to go to our second speaker, who is Irv Gellman.

Irv, why did you write your book Campaign of the Century which explores the 1960's presidential race between JFK and Richard Nixon?

Irv Gellman:

Because it's been told wrong for six decades.

Theodore White's The Making of the President 1960 was excellent, but that was mis-told was Theodore White's idea that Kennedy was a hero and Nixon was a villain. Neither were heroes and neither were a villain. They were ambitious politicians that wanted to win the highest election of the United States.

Larry Bernstein:

Dwight Eisenhower was the President during the 1960 campaign, and Nixon was his vice president. Eisenhower was hugely popular and had won in a landslide in his previous elections in 1952 and 1956, why didn't Nixon benefit from Eisenhower's coattails?

Irv Gellman:

Eisenhower wanted to be loved by everyone and tried his hardest not to be a "partisan politician", even though he was. He was a bureaucratic politician who was able to manage people as he did in World War II. But Eisenhower's popularity did not rub off on Nixon. The Democrats had approximately 10 to 15 million more registrants than Republicans. Kennedy had a far better base than Nixon had.

When Eisenhower ran in 1956, he was running against a man he already defeated. Stevenson ran a very poor campaign. And as his campaign tanked, the Russians invaded Hungary and there was this rallying around the president to stop aggression.

Larry Bernstein:

Both Kennedy and Nixon were both in their 40s when they ran for President. It is such a contrast to the 2020 Trump vs. Biden when both were in their mid-70s.

Irv Gellman:

Kennedy was a great campaigner. He was charismatic, he had a young wife, a little child. He dressed nicely, smiled, and the press was seduced by him. They overwhelmingly favored him as a candidate.

Nixon took on Alger Hiss, and that became a cost celeb for liberals because there's no way that an Ivy Leaguer like Alger Hiss could be a communist spy. When Nixon ran for the vice presidency, he became the attack dog for Dwight Eisenhower. And all of these things made him the bête noire for Democrats.

Larry Bernstein:

The Press has favored Democrats in every election since 1960, why does the press matter given that the Republicans have won their fair share of presidential elections.

Irv Gellman:

Not quite. The nature of Republican victories come in the midst of a very unpopular war, assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Bobby Kennedy. Republicans turn the South into a Republican solid South. Elections after 1968 become national elections, where before 1968, they were regional where Democrats had the South locked up.

Larry Bernstein:

Reading your book, I was shocked at how inconsequential the issues that were debated during the presidential campaign. They seem trivial given what the country was facing in the 1960s.

As an example, Nixon focused on Kennedy's demand that Eisenhower apologize to Russia for the U2 flights.

Irv Gellman:

These two people were clones. If you substituted what Nixon said for what Kennedy said, they wouldn't have been materially different. The only difference was the personality contest. What I find remarkable about the election is the popular vote was a wash. The election was so close, the partisans on either side made this incredible distinction, when in fact they were very similar. And they were friends.

Larry Bernstein:

Why does Eisenhower think that Kennedy was going to be a poor executive?

Irv Gellman:

Eisenhower after he meets with Kennedy a couple of times, "Well, he won't be that bad." And then when Kennedy becomes President, Eisenhower goes back to saying, "This guy is just awful."

Larry Bernstein:

JFK had not been a strong advocate for civil rights when he was a US senator, in contrast Eisenhower had sent the 101st Airborne to Little Rock to integrate the schools. Why did JFK outperform Nixon in the 1960 election among black voters?

Irv Gellman:

Since 1936, Democrats have won two-thirds of the Black. That didn't change.

Larry Bernstein:

Martin Luther King was arrested during the height of the campaign and JFK gave King support. Was this important with Black voters?

Irv Gellman:

No. It was make believe. All Jack Kennedy did was call Coretta King and offer condolences. Kennedy got 68% of the black vote. Nixon got 32% of the vote. The numbers didn't change.

Larry Bernstein:

1960 had the first televised presidential debates. Over 100 million Americans watched all four debates! People make a big deal about Nixon's make-up melting under the hot lamps, while JFK looked cool and in control.

Irv Gellman:

The story is so badly exaggerated it almost rises to fable. Nixon did not look well. His shirt didn't fit.

Nixon told Eisenhower the day before the debate, he was gonna show him how nice a guy he was. And he was gonna use a debating technique where he agreed with Kennedy. And every time he agreed with Kennedy on that debate, his supporters went, "Uh!" Nixon wasn't Nixon in the first debate. If you listen to the second, third, and fourth debate, he's far more confrontational. Kennedy gets irritated.

You don't hear anything after the first debate where, "Oh, Nixon looks sick." You hear, "Go get 'em, Dick!"

Larry Bernstein:

I heard that radio listeners thought that Nixon won the first debate while TV listeners believed JFK won. Is that accurate.

Irv Gellman:

That's a fable. The results came from one small poll.

Larry Bernstein:

Hubert Humphrey was JFK's opponent in the primaries, why did Humphrey fade early?

Irv Gellman:

Hubert Humphrey, a very nice man had principles. He didn't have the killer instinct. LBJ looked upon Humphrey as a weak candidate to succeed him. And in (laughs) 1968 pretty much abandoned him for Nixon. His was a career of principle, and principle doesn't win elections.

Larry Bernstein:

The popular vote in the 1960 election was incredibly close. The electoral election depends on JFK's winning Illinois and Texas. There have been allegations of voter fraud that has been asserted won the election for JFK. Do you believe the voter fraud narrative?

Irv Gellman:

Yes, I believe the fraud in Texas and Illinois could have gone to Nixon. You can't prove it now, because it's 60 years after the fact. Deniers believe there was no such thing as frauds in national elections, which is an absurdity.

The mayor of Chicago, Richard Daley, tells Kennedy that he won by fraud. I interviewed Ben Bradlee who talked to Jack Kennedy at dinner the day after the election. And Kennedy told Bradlee about the conversation he had with Daley.

Texas is a whole different story. Johnson was running as vice president. And he was running in the Senate. Johnson had never won a statewide election without using fraud. And without exception, every author who writes Johnson's biography talks about the massive fraud in 1941 and 1948. And yet, his principal biographers, in 1960, don't mention it. I mean, not even a sentence.

Larry Bernstein:

How can we evaluate voter fraud in 1960?

Irv Gellman:

Well, you can't. The only way you can stop fraud is before an election, not after an election. The amount of people convicted of fraud (laughs) in Chicago were three. That's ridiculous. Every politician, judges were Democrats. Nobody was going to prove fraud. Nixon knew it would cause a constitutional crisis.

Nixon knew there was no way to challenge an election in Texas. When the state Republican Party in Texas challenged the election, they went up against Leon Jaworski, who went in front of a federal judge and said, "There were no civil rights violation, throw this out of court." And the judge, who went to high school with Jaworski, threw it out of court. Nixon knew there wasn't a snowball's chance in hell of changing the election in Texas. And if you couldn't change it in Texas, it was irrelevant changing it anywhere else.

Nixon wasn't going there. And deserves a great deal of credit for the way he handled it.

Larry Bernstein:

What lessons can be learned from the 1960 presidential campaign?

Irv Gellman:

Write good history rather than bad history. I was flabbergasted. There was no research on Kennedy's Catholicism, on the fraud in the election. If you're just counting numbers between the charisma of Kennedy and Nixon, they both received the same votes. How can one can be more charismatic than the other when it was a tie?

The one lesson that you talked about earlier, you don't stop fraud after an election. It's not possible. You can't bring all these people to trial. You can't say you committed fraud, we're going to do a do over.

Larry Bernstein:

What were JFK's legislative successes after winning the election?

Irv Gellman:

Other than the change in income tax, the major piece of legislation passed under JFK was the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act of 1962.

Kennedy said with a stroke of a pen, he would change black housing, segregation. It never happened. The change in the income tax laws did happen, because he was able to get bipartisan support. The problem that Jack Kennedy had as president is he had no connection with Congress. In his 14 years in Congress, in the House and the Senate, he had no legislation with his name on it. None.

Winning elections was his claim to fame.

Larry Bernstein:

JFK includes Republicans as members of his cabinet and senior executive roles. Here are three examples. JFK uses Dillon as Secretary of Treasury, Allen Dulles remains as CIA Director, and Nixon's VP candidate Henry Cabot Lodge is made Ambassador to Viet Nam that turned out to be a critically important position.

Irv Gellman:

Allen Dulles was already there and was a fixture. Dillon accepted his appointment as Secretary of Treasury and Eisenhower was angry that Dillon was going with the opposition.

Lodge could work with both Democrats and Republicans. Kennedy was trying to bring in the loyal opposition into his administration.

Larry Bernstein:

How did the JFK Camelot myth get started?

Irv Gellman:

(Laughs). The way he died was so awful that it brings sympathy from everyone. When I was walking on campus and somebody told me that he had been assassinated, I was shocked. It was a terrible day for the vast majority of Americans.

Camelot was a fabrication. Jackie Kennedy got ahold of Theodore White made this up for a Look Magazine article. Kennedy would've been appalled that he was compared to Camelot.

Larry Bernstein:

What do you think has been under reported about JFK?

Irv Gellman:

His sexual affairs, his health, and corruption.

Larry Bernstein:

Why wasn't JFK's sexual behavior covered by the press during the campaign or during his presidency?

Irv Gellman:

1960 and earlier, your sexual conduct, was not mentioned. Now we have the memoirs of Mimi Alford, Once Upon a Secret. We have memoirs of Judith Exner, and a whole series of people who had affairs with Kennedy.

The raw data from these FBI files are now available and show him in the worst possible light.

Larry Bernstein:

Why didn't Nixon attack JFK for his sexual infidelities?

Irv Gellman:

Nixon was straight laced and he wasn't going to use sex in the campaign.

Larry Bernstein:

JFK did not disclose that he had a severe case of Addison's Disease. Did he have a duty to disclose it?

Irv Gellman:

There was no law that forced candidates for the presidency to disclose their health. And there's no law today.

Eisenhower, when he had his heart attack, it was heavily covered. When his colon was operated on, it was national news. When he had a mild stroke in 1957, it was nationally disclosed. Robert Dallek, who wrote a book on John F. Kennedy says that if he had disclosed his Addison's disease, he probably would not have been nominated for president. Theodore Sorenson, who was Kennedy's alter ego, says, "Yes, he would." But the real issue is, should they disclose or not?

Late in the campaign, there were requests for both candidates to get physicals. Nixon was more than willing. Kennedy said, "It already has happened."

Larry Bernstein:

Sounds like JFK's Aaron Rodgers moment.

Next topic is press conferences. Eisenhower had 200 press conferences in his two terms. This is a stark contrast with Biden who had six in his first 15 months. Why did Eisenhower have so many press conferences?

Irv Gellman:

Eisenhower had a weekly press conference because he wanted to go directly to the American public. He felt that the press was partisan, and that the best way to communicate with the American public was through a press conference. Richard Nixon thought that the press was not giving him a fair shake and the best way for him to communicate with the public was through his own speaking.

Larry Bernstein:

My dad told me that JFK's press conference performance was incredible.

Irv Gellman:

Kennedy really was charming with vigor and energy, and the way he used his Boston accent.

Larry Bernstein:

When you look at the election results from the 1960 election, the regional partisan results are so different than today. Kennedy won the South but lost California. Most of the individual states were extremely close like California, Texas, Illinois, Wisconsin and others. What happened in the cities and the growing suburbs?

Irv Gellman:

Of the 149 major cities, 20 or 30 went for Nixon and all the rest went for Kennedy. The urban split starts under FDR and accelerated. Nixon did very well in the suburbs.

Larry Bernstein:

JFK was the first Catholic president, what was the role of religion in the 1960 campaign?

Irv Gellman:

In 1960 Kennedy used his Catholic religion to win the election. The only percentage that changed radically in the 1960 election was that 78% Catholics voted for Kennedy. In 1956 about 50% voted for Stevenson. That's a 29% jump, that's huge.

The Republican National Committee thought that four to six million more Catholics voted in 1960 than in 1956.

Larry Bernstein:

Joe Biden's Catholic but he lost the Catholic vote, what happened?

Irv Gellman:

Biden did not appeal to various Catholic archbishops and priests for his stance on issues like abortion.

Larry Bernstein:

Today more men vote Republican and females vote Democratic, what happened in 1960?

Irv Gellman:

Kennedy was loved by women. They screamed, they found him so attractive. In 1960, more women voted for Nixon than voted for Kennedy. It was close, 51 to 49, but Nixon won the female vote.

Larry Bernstein:

I end each episode on a note of optimism. Irv, what are you optimistic about?

Irv Gellman:

I'm hopeful, more than optimistic. I'd like to think that my book brings more of a reality into how elections should be thought of. Not in terms of villains and heroes, but in terms of people that are doing the best that they can do. Both Kennedy and Nixon, and those people around them, truly believed that, they were on a righteous crusade, that their person was best for the nation. I find today so much cynicism in campaigning and elections, and- and marketing, and

not thinking of what really is best, but what the polls are saying. And Campaign of the Century shows what really happened in the best sense of the word.

Larry Bernstein:

Thanks to Nick and Irv for joining us today. That ends today's session. I want to make a plug for next week's show.

Our first speaker will be Angela Stent who is Professor Emerita at Georgetown and Director of the Center for Eurasian, Russian, and East European Studies. She is also the author of Putin's World. I am excited to hear Angela's reaction to Putin's decision to attack Ukraine and what it means for his continued hold on power. Angela is an expert on all aspects of Russian leadership and Putin in particular so this should be a terrific.

Our second speaker will be Anthony King is the Professor of War Studies at the University of Warwick in the UK. Anthony's latest book is Urban Warfare in the 21st Century which is incredibly informative as to what street fighting will look like in Ukraine. There is much to learn from Chechnya and Iraq about urban war and what is necessary to win or achieve a stalemate.

If you missed last week's program check it out. We had Barry Latzer who discussed his book The Roots of Violent Crime in America as well as Howard Husock chat about his new book The Poor Side of Town and why market-based solutions are far superior to public supported housing.

If you are interested in listening to a replay of today's What Happens Next program or any of our previous episodes or if you wish to read a transcript, you can find them on our website Whathappensnextin6minutes.com. Replays are also available on Apple Podcasts, Podbean and Spotify.

Thanks to our audience for your continued engagement with these important issues, good-bye.