IT’S POLITICS AND IT’S PERSONAL: LBJ & TRUMAN
Objective

Examine the relationship between Harry Truman and Lyndon Johnson throughout their political careers.

Focus

Presidential Relationships
Truman headed the Senate Special Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program

LBJ served on the Armed Services Committee and was the youngest elected Minority Whip (1953)
Truman was selected to be FDR’s running mate in 1944.

Truman seemed to ‘come out of nowhere’ (nevermind the 9+ years serving as a Senator).

We know his time in the executive branch was minimal upon taking over the Presidency.

LBJ had politiked his way to being FDR’s “Texas Man.” Not only did LBJ align himself with New Deal initiatives, but he provided FDR with “insight” on Texas politics.

LBJ was a frequent face in the Roosevelt White House.
LBJ’s reputation for being a skilled politician and a master manipulator was seen first-hand by Truman when they served in Congress and when Truman was Vice President.

Truman did not have the same perspective of LBJ that FDR had.

When Truman became President, LBJ no longer had the same access or impact on the Oval Office as he did before.

But, the two got along well.
LBJ WAS NOT A FAIR DEAL SUPPORTER

While being a big advocate for the New Deal, LBJ did not have the same support for Truman’s Fair Deal.

The main motivation for this was not so much the policies as it was LBJ separating himself from the description of being a “New Dealer” to gain more support from his Texas constituents.

LBJ was vocally against Truman’s

- National anti-lynching & poll tax laws
- Extension of the Fair Employment Practices Committee
- Condemnation of the filibuster
- Civil Rights legislation

We of the South speech, 1949
1948 WAS A PIVOTAL YEAR

LBJ was trying to secure the Democratic nomination and Truman was running for the Presidency.

Truman’s Remarks in Bonham, Texas on September 27, 1948

Speaker Rayburn—I say that advisedly—Governor Jester, Governor Turner of Oklahoma, and distinguished guests:

I have a warm spot in my heart for Texas. Texas has given me some of the best friends a man ever had, and a great many of them are on this platform with me tonight. There’s John Myer, and Wright Patman, and Lyndon Johnson—candidates for Congress in the great State of Texas, who are real men, and who have always been for the people first. And then you have nominated a man for the Senate, my good friend, and the friend of the people of Texas, Lyndon Johnson.

The people of Oklahoma have nominated my good friend, Bob Kerr, for the Senate in Oklahoma, and if Lyndon Johnson and Bob Kerr get to the Senate, we’ll make those Republicans dance in the next session.

I am more than happy to be here today in the hometown of one of the finest and best friends of them all—Sam Rayburn.

I understand that Sam asked you folks to come out here today so we could talk a little politics. I’m glad so many of you came, because it shows that you’re interested in your Government—and interested in the kind of government you’re going to have after the election next November.

The country will make a fundamental decision on election day—a decision which will affect you every year and every day for the rest of your lives.

The people will have to decide between the Democratic and the Republican Parties; and that is really a decision between two different kinds of government…
President Adolfo Lopez Mateos of Mexico visit to the LBJ Ranch: Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson, President Truman, and guests pose for cameras at the head table. October 18, 1959

Harry Truman, Lyndon Johnson, and Mrs. Fred Vinson at a Democratic fund-raising dinner, April 30, 1960
That’s not to say they didn’t work together!
LBJ WOULD NEED TRUMAN MORE THAN TRUMAN WOULD NEED LBJ
LBJ’S FIRST FEW ACTIONS

He called Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower and Allan Hoover.
BIRDS OF A FEATHER?

Transitioned from Vice President to President

Overcame tragedy to take office

Both took office when international conflict was growing/occurring

Few living (former) Presidents

Southerners

Democratic Southerners
THE TRUMAN-JOHNSON RELATIONSHIP

- President’s Club
- Party Leaders
- Legislators
- Commanders in Chief
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Truman & LBJ
MENTOR & GUIDE

Both assumed the Presidency after great trauma

☆ And after charismatic, beloved predecessors

Few living Presidents for LBJ to draw on

☆ He did call on Eisenhower often when it came to foreign policy counsel
LBJ asked Truman & Bess to attend the funeral of King Paul (Greece) along with Lady Bird in his stead.

Lady Bird’s Daily Diary from departure to Greece (March 10, 1964)
PRESIDENTIAL DUTIES

TRUMAN LIBRARY VISITS

1965 INAUGURATION
THE TRUMAN-JOHNSON RELATIONSHIP

Truman & LBJ

Presidents Club
Legislators
Party Leaders
Commanders in Chief
PARTY LEADERS

★ Party Harmony
★ Platform
★ Elections & Success of Party
CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Truman had Korea, LBJ had Vietnam

☆ LBJ learned from Truman’s involvement in Korea & wanted to ensure more support for the conflict in Vietnam by securing Congress’s authorization

Strength against communism

☆ The Cold War, China, & McCarthyism
☆ LBJ saw what the GOP did to Truman
THE TRUMAN-JOHNSON RELATIONSHIP

President’s Club

Party Leaders

Legislators

Commanders in Chief

Truman & LBJ
“liberalism’s unfinished agenda”

Medicare
- 1945 Attempt & 1965 Law

Civil Rights
- 1948 Executive Order & 1965 Law

Housing
- 1949 Law & 1968 Law

Education
- 1949 Speech & 1965 Laws
Classroom Applications

Are we talking BFFs in class??
Continuity & Change Over Time

- Policy
- Public Opinion
- Resistance
- Progress
- Regression
- Can trace back into history
- Can bring into modern times

FDR
Truman
Eisenhower
Kennedy
LBJ
In summary:

Was it political? Yes
Was it politically beneficial? Yes
Was it genuine? Yes
Were they the best of friends? No
Was it adorale? Absolutely