


Supreme Court Cases and Presidential Actions Helped Define the Major Issues for 2016 Presidential Election

Timeline of Events Affecting the 2016 Election

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- June 2015 ○ **(King v. Burwell) Decision**
The Supreme Court ruled to uphold federal subsidies for all eligible Americans under the Affordable Care Act. This effectively upheld the ACA's constitutionality making its repeal a major rallying cry for Republican presidential candidates. For Democratic candidates, especially Hillary Clinton, preserving and championing the ACA took on added significance.
- June 2015 ○ **(Obergefell v. Hodges) Decision**
The Supreme Court ruled the 14th amendment required all states to grant and honor same-sex marriage licenses. The decision brought the issue to the fore within the Republican primary causing social issues to become a major criteria when vetting candidates.
- June 2015 ○ **Congress Approved and Obama Signed Trade Promotion Authority for Trans-Pacific Partnership**
Congress granted Obama authority to negotiate the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) without Congressional amendment. Democratic candidates denounced TPP as undermining U.S. labor with Republicans split over the issue. Establishment candidates largely favored the deal while outsider candidates like Trump and Cruz considered it bad for the economy.
- July 2015 ○ **The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was Announced**
The JCPOA or the "Iran Deal", was announced and Republicans quickly lambasted it. For Republicans, it provided a contrast on how they would be a stronger commander-in-chief than Democrats. For Democrats, the deal was seen as evidence of their prudence and measured leadership contrasted with the Republican's hot-headedness.
- Aug 2015 ○ **Obama Announced Finalized Clean Power Plan**
President Obama announced the Clean Power Plan, which empowered the EPA to regulate carbon emissions. Democrat candidates largely supported the measure seeing it as a critical step to combating climate change. Republican candidates viewed the plan as imposing burdensome regulations upon states, which would adversely impact the economy.

Source: InfoPlease, February 2016; BBC, "Russia Joins War in Syria: Five Points," October 1, 2015; Allie Maloy, "Obama Unveils Major Climate Change Proposal," CNN, August 3, 2015.

National Security Became One of the Top Issues Towards the End of 2015 Due to Syria and Terrorism

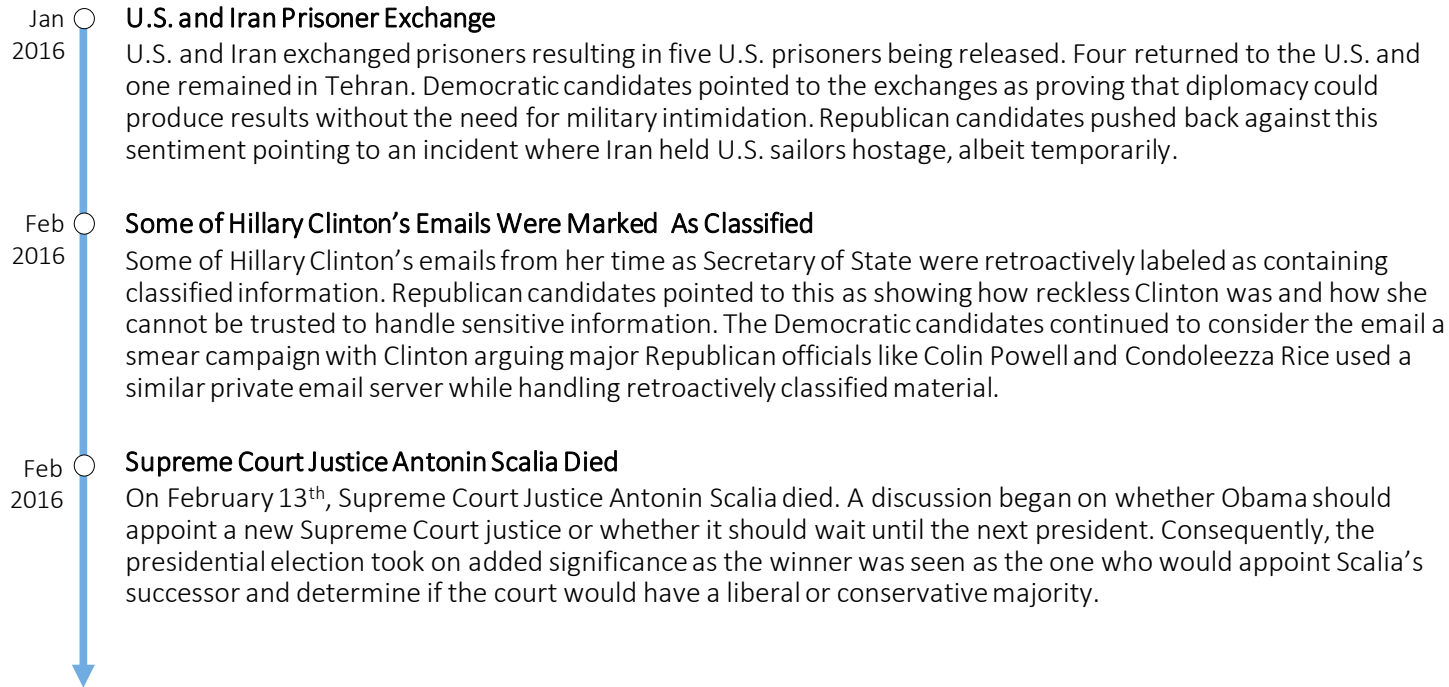
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- Sep 2015 ○ **Russia Entered Syria and Began Air Campaign to Support Syrian Dictator Bashar al-Assad**
Russian airplanes and ground troops entered Syria to support Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad. Further questions about U.S. Middle Eastern strategy were discussed in the presidential debate, especially on the Republican side. Republicans used Russian presence as an example of continued U.S. weakness under Obama.
- Oct 2015 ○ **Obama Announced U.S. Ground Troops in Syria**
A rift began to appear between Democratic candidates on national security with Hillary Clinton largely supportive of Obama's Syria strategy while Bernie Sanders wanted all U.S. troop withdrawn from Syria. A similar rift emerged in the Republican campaign with most Republicans calling for a more "muscular" strategy with an increased troop presence, while others called for the U.S. to embrace a less "interventionist" foreign policy in the Middle East.
- Nov 2015 ○ **Paris Terrorist Attack**
ISIL operatives killed 130 people and caused widespread panic across France. National security became a top concern amongst voters, especially Republicans. Republican candidates called into question the vetting process for Syrians and Iraqis entering the U.S. causing a major discussion about whether the U.S. should be letting in Syrians or Iraqis at all. Democrats tried to differentiate themselves as the more welcoming party and painted Republicans as fear-mongering.
- Dec 2015 ○ **San Bernardino Terrorist Attack**
Two gunmen, who were a couple, attacked a social services clinic killing 14 and injuring 22 people. One of the perpetrators, Tashfeen Malik, was a Pakistani immigrant and a permanent legal resident. Her immigrant status made fears over Middle Eastern immigrants more acutely felt and made terrorism the dominant topic in the national conversation.

Source: InfoPlease, February 2016; BBC "Russia Joins War in Syria: Five Points," October 1, 2015; Allie Maloy, "Obama Unveils Major Climate Change Proposal," CNN, August 3, 2015.

Justice Antonin Scalia's Unexpected Death Has Put Added Significance onto the 2016 Presidential Election

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