

# US History

YCHS

Instructional Packet

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## Richard Nixon as President

Learn about Nixon's presidency, including his strategy to get the United States out of the Vietnam War, his foreign policy maneuvers with China and the Soviet Union, and his fall from grace due to the Watergate scandal.

### Overview

Richard M. Nixon served as president of the United States from 1969 to 1974.

Nixon attempted to extricate the United States from the ongoing war in Vietnam with limited success. Although his administration negotiated a cease-fire in 1973, in 1975 North Vietnam overran the South and united the country under a communist government.

Nixon's chief victories were in the arena of foreign policy, as he reopened American relations with China and relaxed tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Nixon resigned in disgrace in 1974 after revelations that he had directed the FBI to cover up an investigation of his supporters' illegal activities at the Watergate office complex.

### Richard Nixon, the politician's politician

Richard M. Nixon was a career politician, whose all-consuming passion was getting and holding onto power. As one historian put it, "Political maneuvering was the great game of Richard Nixon's life. He played it grimly and with pride in his expertise at it. He had no other hobbies."

A native Californian, Nixon had been vice president to Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower from 1952-1960, but he had lost his first crack at winning the presidency in 1960 to the youthful and charming John F. Kennedy.

Eight years later, with the Democratic Party in disarray amidst the quagmire of Vietnam, Nixon had a second chance at the highest office in the land. He won the election of 1968 against the uninspiring Democratic challenger Hubert Humphrey, but Democrats still controlled both houses of Congress. Although Nixon was no fan of the Democratic social programs that had taken root during Johnson's presidency, he initially did little to roll them back, choosing to spend what political capital he had on achieving his vision for US foreign policy.

Thus, Nixon focused his attentions mainly outside of the United States, promising that he would bring "peace with honor" after years of bloodshed in Vietnam.

### Nixon and Vietnam

During the election of 1968, Nixon had promised he had a "secret plan" to get the United States out of Vietnam. His plan turned out to be twofold: first, the United States would undertake a plan of Vietnamization, slowly replacing the more than 500,000 American soldiers on the ground with South Vietnamese soldiers. Second, the United States would carry the war into the neighboring country of Cambodia, which was officially neutral but had served as a conduit for North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops.

The American people were hardly enthusiastic about either of these plans; by that time, the war in Vietnam was so unpopular that any course of action other than an immediate end to the conflict was greeted with hostility. Although Vietnamization did reduce the number of American troops in Vietnam to just 50,000 by 1973, it brought morale among the remaining soldiers to the lowest point yet as their reason for fighting became even more uncertain. The incursion into Cambodia set off a wave of protests around the nation and on university campuses in particular. In Ohio, the governor called out the National Guard to put down riots at Kent State University. The guards shot and killed four young people and wounded nine others on May 4, 1970, in an incident that sparked rage across the nation.

Nixon's administration negotiated a ceasefire in Vietnam in 1973, but gained few key concessions. In 1975, the North Vietnamese succeeded in conquering the southern capital, achieving their war aims of uniting Vietnam under a communist government. The cause for which so many Americans had fought and lost their lives was lost.

A group of South Vietnamese citizens, including children, adults, and the elderly, carries their meager belongings on the deck of a US carrier. An American man in military uniform and a helicopter are in the background.

A group of South Vietnamese citizens, including children, adults, and the elderly, carries their meager belongings on the deck of a US carrier. An American man in military uniform and a helicopter are in the background.

## Nixon's Foreign Policy

Despite the debacle in Vietnam, Nixon did achieve a few key foreign policy victories during his time in office. Notably, Nixon reopened the American diplomatic relationship with the People's Republic of China, which the United States had refused to recognize since its communist revolution in 1949. The president and first lady Pat Nixon took a two-week-long public relations trip to China in 1972.

Astutely judging that a closer US relationship with China would make the Soviet Union very anxious, Nixon took a trip to the USSR shortly thereafter. He and Soviet Premier Leonid Brezhnev agreed to a policy of détente (relaxed tensions between the two nations) and signed the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT), reducing the number of nuclear missiles in their arsenals.

## Domestic Policy Under Nixon

With Democrats dominating both the House and the Senate, legislation in the early 1970s looked a lot like legislation in the 1960s. Spending for social programs actually increased in the first years of Nixon's presidency, with expansions to Social Security, increases in food stamps and Medicaid benefits, and new funding for the arts and for cancer research. During these years, Congress established the Environmental Protection Agency to combat pollution, as well as protections for female university students in Title IX.

Although Nixon hoped that appointing right-leaning Supreme Court Justices like Warren Burger and William Rehnquist would counteract the liberal rulings of the 1950s and 1960s, the increasing conservative court largely upheld earlier decisions and even ruled that abortion was a private matter between a woman and her doctor in the landmark *Roe v. Wade* case. The Burger court had a mixed record on racial issues, however, extending affirmative action protections but ruling against busing students to combat de facto segregation.<sup>9</sup>

Economically, Nixon tried and failed to cope with the growing issue of stagflation, an unprecedented combination of wage stagnation and price inflation. In 1971, Nixon announced a ninety day wage and price freeze, and in a bid to increase American exports he took the dollar off the gold standard. Neither of these solutions did much to resuscitate the struggling American economy.

## Nixon's fall from grace

A secretive and paranoid man, Nixon believed everyone was plotting against him. In reality, he was his own worst enemy. In 1972, allegations emerged that Nixon loyalists had wiretapped the Democratic National Committee office in Washington's Watergate building in order to spy on Democratic nominee George McGovern. Tapes of Nixon's conversations in the Oval Office revealed that he had forbidden the FBI from investigating the incident, a clear obstruction of justice. Facing impeachment, Nixon resigned in 1974. He was succeeded by Vice President Gerald Ford, who immediately pardoned Nixon on all charges.

## Watergate

### Overview

- In June 1972 a group of spies with ties to President Richard Nixon was caught while attempting to place listening devices in the office of the Democratic National Committee in Washington's Watergate building.
- After a lengthy investigation, which Nixon attempted to undermine by refusing to turn over tapes of his conversations in the Oval Office, Congress determined to impeach Nixon for obstruction of justice and abuse of power.
- Nixon resigned in August 1974, succeeded by Vice President Gerald Ford.
- Watergate, as the scandal came to be known, added to a general sense that the golden age of the postwar era in the United States had ended.

## Nixon

Richard Nixon had not clawed his way up to the presidency without scratching a few people along the way. From early in his career, Nixon had made an art of employing "dirty tricks" to win elections, and by the time he made it into the White House he had many enemies. After a military analyst leaked the **Pentagon Papers**—documents that revealed that the US government had lied to Congress and the American people about the scope of the Vietnam War—Nixon became

obsessed with maintaining secrecy in his administration. He employed a group of aides that he called "plumbers" in order to plug any further leaks.

The plumbers helped Nixon's fundraising organization, the **Committee to Re-elect the President (CREEP)**, with a series of illegal activities aimed at maintaining the president's power and harassing individuals on an internally-circulated "enemy list." CREEP and the plumbers undertook a variety of dirty tricks during the election of 1972, including but not limited to forging documents that might incriminate or embarrass Democratic opponents, conducting illegal surveillance, breaking into a psychiatrist's office in order to steal information to discredit a political enemy, placing spies undercover in Democratic campaigns and press corps, and renting facilities and ordering campaign supplies in the name of Democratic challengers and sticking them with the bill.

### **The Watergate break-in**

CREEP eventually made a fatal blunder. On June 17, 1972, a security guard caught a group of five "burglars" in Washington, DC's **Watergate** office complex, home of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) headquarters. The incident seemed fairly innocuous until the FBI discovered that the burglars had ties with the CIA. Over time, it became clear that the burglary was in fact a botched attempt at wiretapping the phones at the DNC headquarters in order to spy on the presidential campaign of **George McGovern**.

During the election of 1972, McGovern accused Nixon and the Republicans of breaking in to his office, but at that time there was little solid information tying the men involved with the break-in to the president. Nixon won the election handily, with 520 electoral votes compared to McGovern's 17.

By early 1973, however, the truth was beginning to trickle out. Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, reporters for the *Washington Post*, had reported on the Watergate story since the break-in. They received tips from a highly-placed anonymous source known only as **Deep Throat** (revealed in 2005 to have been FBI Deputy Director Mark Felt) and kept the story alive by publishing their research into the break-in and alleged cover-up.<sup>44</sup>

Although several of the Watergate burglars cracked and pointed fingers at Nixon in their testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee, there was no hard evidence connecting the president to any wrongdoing on the part of his subordinates. Perhaps the investigation would have ground to a halt had the existence of a voice-recording device in the Oval Office not emerged: all of Nixon's conversations had been taped. The Senate Judiciary Committee subpoenaed the tapes.

### **Denial and "executive privilege"**

Nixon refused to hand over the tapes, citing "executive privilege," or the right of the president not to respond to certain subpoenas or reveal confidential White House information. After the revelations from the Pentagon Papers that the president secretly had carried the Vietnam War into the neighboring countries of Cambodia and Laos, it began to seem as though Nixon believed he was above the law. His administration was further compromised when Vice President Spiro Agnew was forced to resign after federal prosecutors charged him with taking bribes. Nixon appointed **Gerald Ford** as Agnew's successor.

In July 1974, the House Judiciary Committee recommended that the House of Representatives impeach Nixon for obstruction of justice and abuse of power. Nixon finally handed over the tapes after a Supreme Court order in August 1974.

### **Revelations and resignation**

The tapes confirmed that Nixon had been involved in covering up the Watergate affair; in what has been called the "**smoking gun**" tape, Nixon ordered the FBI not to investigate the break-in any further, a clear obstruction of justice.

[What does 'smoking gun' mean?]

On August 8, 1974 Nixon resigned rather than face impeachment. His successor, Gerald Ford, immediately pardoned Nixon for all crimes, discovered and undiscovered. Ford became the first and only person to have served as both vice president and president of the United States without having been elected to either office. Ford's connection with the disgraced Nixon ensured that he would not be elected to a second term.

The Pentagon Papers, the Watergate scandal and Nixon's subsequent fall from grace contributed to a growing sense in the United States that the government was unprincipled and untrustworthy. The power of the executive branch had grown steadily over the course of the 1960s and early 1970s, but Nixon stretched it too far. By impeaching Nixon, Congress demonstrated that the system of checks and balances between the branches of the government still performed its function.

Nevertheless, Watergate was yet another grim chapter in a grim era of US history. Between 1968 and 1975, the United States had witnessed the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy, learned that US soldiers had murdered innocent women and children in Vietnam during the My Lai Massacre, endured rising oil prices and a stagnating economy, watched as their president was exposed as a liar and a criminal, and lost the cause they had fought for in Vietnam. Little wonder that the suffix *-gate* has remained in the American vernacular to indicate scandal and conspiracy.

## **Stagflation and the oil crisis**

### **Overview**

- In the early 1970s, the post-World War II economic boom began to wane, due to increased international competition, the expense of the Vietnam War, and the decline of manufacturing jobs.
- Unemployment rates rose, while a combination of price increases and wage stagnation led to a period of economic doldrums known as **stagflation**. President Nixon tried to alleviate these problems by devaluing the dollar and declaring wage- and price-freezes.
- The crisis was compounded when oil-rich nations in the Middle East declared an embargo against the United States in retaliation for its support of Israel. The oil embargo had a lasting effect on energy prices.
- **Economic woes of the 1970s**

During the twenty-five years after World War II, the economic power of the United States was unparalleled. Indeed, contemporary observers commented that the postwar United States was in the midst of "the greatest prosperity the world has ever known."<sup>11</sup> The American gross national product (GNP), a measure of all goods and services produced by a country's citizens, increased from \$200,000-million in 1940 to more than \$500,000-million in 1960 to nearly a trillion dollars by 1970. Thanks to increases in productivity, the American standard of living had doubled between 1945 and 1970. With just six percent of the world's population, the United States enjoyed 40% of the world's wealth.

But troubling signs began to emerge in the late 1960s. Unemployment rose by 33% between 1968 and 1970, while the consumer price index went up by 11%. At the same time, real wages began to stagnate. Simultaneous inflation and stagnation, nicknamed **stagflation**, puzzled economic analysts: usually, when wages fell, prices fell, and when wages increased, prices increased. But not in the 1970s. As a result, Americans had less purchasing power, and increasingly expensive American exports were at a disadvantage in the international market. In 1971, the United States experienced its first unfavorable international trade balance since 1893.

What caused this slump? The massive cost of the war in Vietnam and the expansion of social programs at home without commensurate tax increases helped to drive inflation (the price of goods and services). Meanwhile, US manufacturing (especially automotive manufacturing) had become less competitive over time compared to efficient overseas rivals, particularly in Germany and Japan. More and more American jobs were in the service sector, which had lower wages and fewer benefits than manufacturing jobs. Individuals born on the tail end of the baby boom found themselves competing in a very crowded labor market, especially as more women and immigrants entered the workforce.

### **The oil embargo**

In 1971, Richard Nixon attempted to remedy inflation by imposing a 90-day wage and price freeze. At the same time, he attempted to boost American exports by taking the dollar off the gold standard, devaluing the currency. These measures resulted in a short-term improvement (just long enough to get Nixon reelected in 1972) but did nothing to address the tangled roots of the problem.

Then the energy crisis hit. In October 1973, the United States supported Israel after a surprise attack by Egypt and Syria in the **Yom Kippur War**. The oil-rich nations of the Middle East, already angry with the United States for devaluing the dollar (the currency used to purchase oil) determined to exact their revenge with an oil embargo. Led by Saudi Arabia, the **Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)** announced an oil shipping embargo against the United States as well as Israel's European allies.

The effects were immediate and dire. The price of oil shot up to \$11.65 per barrel, an increase of 387%. Lines miles-long formed at gas stations. The United States consumed one third of the world's oil, and its citizens quickly discovered just how much of daily life depended on cheap oil. Families living in far-flung suburbs depended on automobiles to get everywhere. Even after the embargo ended in March 1974, prices for oil remained about 33% higher than they had been before the crisis.

### **The end of the postwar economic boom**

Stagflation and the oil embargo both seemed to suggest that the American golden age that had followed on the heels of World War II was at an end. First Vietnam and then the Middle East had revealed the limits of US power abroad.

The complex forces which led to the downturn of the 1970s have continued to shape the American economy, particularly **globalization** (international interdependence of business and culture), which has accelerated as information technology has made communication and coordination easier. For example, many companies have moved manufacturing jobs out of the United States in order to save on labor costs. Today, 80% of all American jobs are in the service industry.

Since the oil embargo, the United States also has worked to reduce its dependence on foreign oil through a variety of means, including reducing energy usage, improving vehicle fuel-efficiency, investing in renewable energy, and increasing domestic oil production.

The quarter century after World War II was a time of incredible growth in the United States which produced the richest nation in human history, as well as a sense of unbridled optimism about the future. By the early 1970s, that chapter of the American adventure had ended. A new, altogether more uncertain era had begun.

### **Liberation movements of the 1970s**

#### **Key points**

- In the late 1960s and 1970s, Native Americans, gay men, lesbians, and women organized to change discriminatory laws and pursue government support for their interests, a strategy known as **identity politics**.
- These groups, whose aims and tactics posed a challenge to the existing state of affairs, often met with hostility from individuals, local officials, and the US government.
- **Identity politics** are political movements or actions intended to further the interests of a particular group, based on culture, race, ethnicity, religion, sex, gender, or sexual orientation.
- **Identity politics in a fractured society**

The political divisions that plagued the United States in the 1960s were reflected in the rise of **identity politics** in the 1970s. As people lost hope of reuniting as a society with common interests and goals, many focused on issues of significance to the subgroups to which they belonged, based on culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, and religion.

#### **American Indian protest**

During this period, many Native Americans were seeking to maintain their culture or retrieve cultural elements that had been lost. In 1968, a group of Native American activists, including Dennis Banks, George Mitchell, and Clyde Bellecourt, convened a gathering of two hundred people in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and formed the **American Indian Movement**, or **AIM**.

The organizers were urban dwellers frustrated by decades of poverty and discrimination. In 1970, the average life expectancy for a Native American person was 46 years compared to the national average of 69. The Native American suicide rate was twice that of the general population, and the infant mortality rate was the highest in the country. Half of

all Native Americans lived on reservations, where unemployment reached 50 percent. Of Native Americans living in cities, 20 percent lived below the poverty line.

On November 20, 1969, a small group of Native American activists landed on Alcatraz Island—the former site of a notorious federal prison—in San Francisco Bay. They announced plans to build an American Indian cultural center, including a history museum, an ecology center, and a spiritual sanctuary. People on the mainland provided supplies by boat, and celebrities visited Alcatraz to publicize the cause. More people joined the occupiers until, at one point, they numbered about four hundred.

### "Indians Welcome" and "Indian Land."

From the beginning, the federal government negotiated with them to persuade them to leave. They were reluctant to give in, but over time, the occupiers began to drift away of their own accord. Government forces removed the final holdouts on June 11, 1971, 19 months after the occupation began.

[Read the proclamation issued by Native Americans occupying Alcatraz Island]

#### **Proclamation to the Great White Father and All His People**

By occupying Alcatraz Island, Native American activists sought to call attention to their grievances and expectations about what sort of country the United States should be. At the beginning of the 19-month occupation, Mohawk Richard Oakes delivered the following proclamation:

"We, the native Americans, re-claim the land known as Alcatraz Island in the name of all American Indians by right of discovery.

We wish to be fair and honorable in our dealings with the Caucasian inhabitants of this land, and hereby offer the following treaty:

We will purchase said Alcatraz Island for twenty-four dollars (\$24) in glass beads and red cloth, a precedent set by the white man's purchase of a similar island about 300 years ago. . . .

We feel that this so-called Alcatraz Island is more than suitable for an Indian Reservation, as determined by the white man's own standards. By this we mean that this place resembles most Indian reservations in that:

1. It is isolated from modern facilities, and without adequate means of transportation.
2. It has no fresh running water.
3. It has inadequate sanitation facilities.
4. There are no oil or mineral rights.
5. There is no industry and so unemployment is very great.
6. There are no health care facilities.
7. The soil is rocky and non-productive; and the land does not support game.
8. There are no educational facilities.
9. The population has always exceeded the land base.
10. The population has always been held as prisoners and kept dependent upon others.

Further, it would be fitting and symbolic that ships from all over the world, entering the Golden Gate, would first see Indian land, and thus be reminded of the true history of this nation. This tiny island would be a symbol of the great lands once ruled by free and noble Indians."

The next major demonstration came in 1972 when AIM members and others marched on Washington, DC—a journey they called the Trail of Broken Treaties—and occupied the offices of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). The group presented a list of demands, which included improved housing, education, and economic opportunities in Native American

communities; the drafting of new treaties; the return of Native American lands; and protections for native religions and culture.

The most dramatic event staged by AIM was the occupation of the Native American community of Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in February 1973. Wounded Knee, on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, had historical significance: it was the site of an 1890 massacre of members of the Lakota tribe by the US Army. The federal government surrounded the area with US marshals, FBI agents, and other law enforcement forces. A siege ensued that lasted 71 days. There was frequent gunfire from both sides; two Native Americans were killed and a US marshal as well as an FBI agent were wounded.

The government did very little to meet the protesters' demands. Two AIM leaders, Dennis Banks and Russell Means, were arrested, but charges were later dismissed. The Nixon administration had already halted the federal policy of termination and restored millions of acres to tribes. Increased funding for Native American education, healthcare, legal services, housing, and economic development followed, along with the hiring of more Native American employees in the BIA.

## Gay rights

During this era, the struggle for gay and lesbian rights intensified as well. Many gay rights groups were founded in Los Angeles and San Francisco. The first postwar organization for gay civil rights, the **Mattachine Society**, was launched in Los Angeles in 1950. The first national organization for lesbians, the **Daughters of Bilitis**, was founded in San Francisco five years later. In 1966, the city became home to the National Transsexual Counseling Unit, the world's first organization for transgender people (transsexual is an older term that was used by doctors and psychologists to describe transgender people). In 1967, the Sexual Freedom League of San Francisco was born.

Through these organizations and others, gay, lesbian and transgender activists fought against the criminalization of and discrimination against their sexual and gender identities on a number of occasions throughout the 1960s. They employed strategies of both protests and litigation.

The most famous event in the **gay rights movement**, however, took place not in San Francisco but in New York City. Early in the morning of June 28, 1969, police raided a Greenwich Village gay bar called the **Stonewall Inn**. Although such raids were common, the response of the Stonewall patrons was anything but. As the police prepared to arrest many of the customers, especially transgender people and cross-dressers—who were particular targets for police harassment—a crowd began to gather. Angered by the brutal treatment of the prisoners, the crowd attacked. Beer bottles and bricks were thrown. The police barricaded themselves inside the bar and waited for reinforcements. The riot continued for several hours and resumed the following night. Shortly thereafter, the Gay Liberation Front and Gay Activists' Alliance were formed; these organizations began to protest discrimination, homophobia, and violence against gay people, and promoted gay liberation and gay pride.

As advocacy organizations called for gay men and lesbians to come out—reveal their sexual orientation—gay and lesbian communities moved from the urban underground into the political sphere. Gay rights activists protested strongly against the official position of the American Psychiatric Association, which categorized homosexuality as a mental illness. This classification often resulted in job loss, loss of custody, and other serious personal consequences for people in the LGBT—lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender—community. By 1974, the APA had ceased to classify homosexuality as a form of mental illness but continued to consider it a "sexual orientation disturbance."

Nevertheless, in 1974, Kathy Kozachenko became the first openly lesbian woman voted into office in Ann Arbor, Michigan. In 1977, Harvey Milk became California's first openly gay man elected to public office. His service on San Francisco's board of supervisors, along with that of San Francisco mayor George Moscone, was tragically cut short by the bullet of disgruntled former city supervisor Dan White.

## Women's liberation in the 1970s

The feminist push for greater rights continued through the 1970s. Feminists opened battered women's shelters and successfully fought for protection from employment discrimination for pregnant women, reform of rape laws—such as the abolition of laws requiring a witness to corroborate a woman's report of rape—criminalization of domestic violence, and funding for schools that sought to counter sexist stereotypes of women. In 1973, the US Supreme Court in **Roe v. Wade** affirmed a number of state laws under which abortions obtained during the first three months of pregnancy were legal. This made nontherapeutic abortion a legal medical procedure nationwide.

Many advances in women's rights were the result of women's greater engagement in politics. For example, **Patsy Mink**, the first Asian American woman elected to Congress, was the coauthor of the **Education Amendments Act of 1972, Title IX** of which prohibits sex discrimination in education. Mink had been interested in fighting discrimination in



education since her youth, when she opposed racial segregation in campus housing while a student at the University of Nebraska. She went to law school after being denied admission to medical school because of her gender. Like Mink, a number of other women sought and won political office, many with the help of the **National Women's Political Caucus**, or NWPC. In 1971, the NWPC was formed by Bella Abzug, Gloria Steinem, Shirley Chisholm, and other leading feminists to encourage women's participation in political parties, elect women to office, and raise money for their campaigns.

The ultimate political goal of the National Organization for Women, or **NOW**, was the passage of an **Equal Rights Amendment**, or **ERA**. The amendment passed Congress in March 1972, and was sent to the states for ratification with a deadline of seven years for passage; if the amendment was not ratified by 38 states by 1979, it would die. Twenty-two states ratified the ERA in 1972, and eight more ratified it in 1973. In the next two years, only four states voted for the amendment. In 1979, still four votes short, the amendment received a brief reprieve when Congress agreed to a three-year extension, but the amendment never passed due to the opposition of socially conservative grassroots organizations.

## **The presidency of Jimmy Carter**

### **Overview**

- Democrat Jimmy Carter served as president of the United States from 1977 to 1981.
- Carter was unable to solve most of the problems plaguing the country during his administration, including an ailing economy and a continuing energy crisis.
- Although Carter brokered the historic **Camp David Accords** between Israel and Egypt, relations with the Middle East broke down after the Iranian Revolution in 1979. Iranian extremists seized the American embassy in Tehran and held 52 American hostages captive there for over a year.
- **The election of Jimmy Carter**

The election of 1976 fell on the bicentennial of the United States, but few people felt much like celebrating. The economy was in bad shape, and the Watergate scandal had eroded Americans' trust in their elected officials. Incumbent president Gerald Ford, who had ascended to the highest office in the land after Nixon's resignation, had little chance of retaining his position given his association with the disgraced ex-president.

Into this bleak political landscape stepped **James Earl "Jimmy" Carter Jr.**, former peanut farmer and governor of Georgia. Carter was such a long shot at the start of the race that when he told his mother he planned to run for president, she asked, "President of what?" But strategic victories in early primaries led Carter to win the 1976 Democratic nomination, along with running mate Walter Mondale.

Carter campaigned as a Washington outsider, a pious and forthright man who promised voters that he would never lie to them. His message resonated just enough to put him in office by a narrow margin, 50.1% of the popular vote to Ford's 48%.

### **The Carter years (1977-1981)**

Carter, as a breath of fresh air after the Nixon and Ford years, enjoyed an initial burst of popularity in 1977, but his ratings slipped as it became increasingly clear that Carter was unwilling to work with Washington to achieve results. He surrounded himself with advisers from his native Georgia and refused to delegate any authority whatsoever: in the first six months of his presidency Carter even personally reviewed requests for use of the White House tennis court.

Carter crafted legislation packages concerning crucial fixes to the energy crisis and the economy in secret, and then rained them down upon an increasingly hostile Congress. As a fiscal conservative, he alienated the liberal wing of the Democratic party by refusing to spend much money to invigorate the economy or to fund social programs. He alienated conservatives by pardoning some 10,000 Vietnam War draft evaders, negotiating the return of control of the Panama Canal to Panama, resuming diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China, and halting the construction of new nuclear weapons.

The economy continued to slump in the late 1970s. Inflation soared to a staggering 13% and gas shortages once again plagued the country after violence erupted in the Middle East. After cloistering himself with advisers for days in summer

1979 in order to determine a solution to these woes, Carter emerged offering nothing more than a highly-critical speech that blamed Americans for causing the present 'malaise' through a loss of moral virtue.

[Read an excerpt from Carter's 'Crisis of Confidence' speech]

Speech delivered by Jimmy Carter, July 15, 1979

" . . . I want to speak to you first tonight about a subject even more serious than energy or inflation. I want to talk to you right now about a fundamental threat to American democracy.

I do not mean our political and civil liberties. They will endure. And I do not refer to the outward strength of America, a nation that is at peace tonight everywhere in the world, with unmatched economic power and military might.

The threat is nearly invisible in ordinary ways. It is a crisis of confidence. It is a crisis that strikes at the very heart and soul and spirit of our national will. We can see this crisis in the growing doubt about the meaning of our own lives and in the loss of a unity of purpose for our nation. . . .

In a nation that was proud of hard work, strong families, close-knit communities, and our faith in God, too many of us now tend to worship self-indulgence and consumption. Human identity is no longer defined by what one does, but by what one owns. But we've discovered that owning things and consuming things does not satisfy our longing for meaning. We've learned that piling up material goods cannot fill the emptiness of lives which have no confidence or purpose.

The symptoms of this crisis of the American spirit are all around us. For the first time in the history of our country a majority of our people believe that the next five years will be worse than the past five years. Two-thirds of our people do not even vote. The productivity of American workers is actually dropping, and the willingness of Americans to save for the future has fallen below that of all other people in the Western world.

As you know, there is a growing disrespect for government and for churches and for schools, the news media, and other institutions. This is not a message of happiness or reassurance, but it is the truth and it is a warning. . . ."

### **Foreign policy and the Iran Hostage Crisis**

As a president deeply committed to human rights around the world, Carter achieved some victories in international relations. Significantly, Carter brought Israel's Menachem Begin and Egypt's Anwar Sadat together at the presidential retreat in Maryland to negotiate the **Camp David Accords**, which stipulated that Egypt would recognize the state of Israel in return for regaining control of the Sinai peninsula.

But elsewhere, things took a turn for the worse. US-Soviet relations, which seemed on the verge of a breakthrough when Carter and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev announced their agreement to a second **Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT II)**, broke down yet again when the USSR invaded Afghanistan in 1979. Consequently, the US Senate never ratified SALT II, and the United States even boycotted the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow.

Meanwhile, the situation in the Middle East rapidly destabilized in January 1979 when followers of **Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini** overthrew Mohammed Reza Pahlevi, the shah of Iran. The shah had been installed as dictator with the help of the CIA in 1953, and Khomeini's Muslim fundamentalist followers sought to purge Iran of secular, Western influences.

In November 1979, Iranian militants seized the US Embassy in Tehran, taking 66 Americans hostage. They demanded that the United States return the shah (who had fled to New York for medical treatment) and his assets to Iran and issue an apology. Though 14 hostages were released within a few months of the siege, negotiations to free the 52 others dragged on for over a year. A complex rescue attempt failed, killing eight American soldiers in a helicopter crash. Finally, the United States agreed to pay the captors nearly \$8 billion to end the hostage crisis. To add insult to injury, Ayatollah Khomeini did not release the hostages until January 20, 1981: Ronald Reagan's inauguration day.

Republican challenger Ronald Reagan defeated Carter in the presidential election of 1980, making him the first elected president to be unseated by the American people since Herbert Hoover in 1932.

Although Carter's years in office were rocky, his post-presidential career as a diplomat and human-rights advocate earned him the Nobel Peace Prize in 2002.

## **Richard Nixon as President**

1. What years did Richard Nixon serve as president of the United States?
2. What were two of Nixon's chief victories as president?
3. Nixon had a "secret plan" to get the United States out of Vietnam. Discuss the two steps of Nixon's plan.
4. What is Vietnamization?
5. What country did Nixon visit which led to a reopened diplomatic relationship?
6. Define détente.
7. What was the SALT Treaty and who was it negotiated with?
8. What is stagflation?
9. What led to Nixon being charged with obstruction of justice?

## **Watergate**

1. What were the Pentagon Papers?
2. What was the job of the "plumbers"?
3. What was CREEP?
4. Who was George McGovern?
5. Describe the Watergate break-in. (4-5 points about the break-in)
6. What did Nixon site as the reason for turning over the tapes?
7. What is executive privilege?
8. When did Nixon resign and who became president? What action did the new president take with the charges against Nixon?

## **Stagflation and the Oil Crisis**

1. How did Nixon try to combat stagflation?

2. What caused the slump in the American economy?
3. What led to Nixon's reelection in 1972?
4. Who attacked Israel in the Yom Kippur War?
5. Why did OPEC announce an oil shipping embargo against the United States?
6. What is globalization?
7. What has the United States done to reduce its dependence on foreign oil?

### **Liberation Movements of the 1970s**

1. What is identity politics?
2. What is AIM?
3. What island did AIM occupy and plan to build a cultural center on?
4. According to a proclamation from AIM the island was just as suitable as most Indian reservations because many things were similar. Read the proclamation and site reasons for this belief.
5. In 1972 AIM marched on Washington, D.C. What was the the journey called? What offices were occupied? What were their demands?
6. What happened at Wounded Knee in February 1973?
7. What was the decision in *Roe vs Wade*?
8. What is Title IX?
9. What was the ultimate goal of NOW?
10. Create a short timeline on ERA.

### **The Presidency of Jimmy Carter**

1. When did Jimmy Carter serve as president?
2. How did Carter campaign for president?
3. Who did Carter blame for the economic slump and gas crisis in the 1970s?

4. **What were the Camp David Accords?**
5. **Why did the United States boycott the 1980 Summer Olympics?**
6. **Describe what happened in Iran after Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini became dictator?**
7. **Who defeated Carter in the presidential election of 1980?**
8. **What award did Carter win in 2002?**

## Watergate Background

The Watergate scandal was one of the worst political scandals in American history. It resulted in the resignation of the president, Richard M. Nixon, under threat of impeachment and the conviction of several high-ranking members of his administration. Watergate takes its name from the break-in at the Democratic National Committee (DNC) headquarters in the Watergate apartment and office complex in Washington, D.C., in June 1972, but the scandal spread, as other illegal activities were made public. This scandal continued until the summer of 1974, when Nixon resigned from office.

The activities that would fall under the umbrella term "Watergate" began early in the Nixon administration. In 1969, Nixon approved wiretaps on the phones of government officials and reporters in an attempt to discern the source of news leaks about activities in Vietnam. In 1971 a special investigations unit was formed to plug news leaks. Dubbed the "plumbers," they broke into the office of Dr. Lewis Fielding looking for information to be used in the espionage trial against the psychiatrist of Daniel Ellsberg, the Rand Corporation analyst who had leaked the Pentagon Papers to the *New York Times*. Also in 1971, Attorney General John N. Mitchell and John Dean, counsel to the president, met to discuss the need to obtain political intelligence for the Committee for the Re-Election of the President (CREEP). In 1972 Mitchell resigned as attorney general to accept the position as director of the committee. Shortly thereafter a plan was approved to break into the DNC headquarters to secure campaign strategy documents and other materials. The deputy director of the committee, Jeb Magruder, later testified that Mitchell had approved a plan developed by G. Gordon Liddy, the chief plumber, to break into the Watergate complex. Mitchell denied this. It has never become clear who ordered the operation or what the conspirators hoped to find.

On June 17, 1972, five men were arrested at the DNC headquarters, including the security coordinator for the committee, James McCord. The burglars were adjusting surveillance equipment they had installed in May when they were caught. Immediately a cover-up began. Magruder destroyed documents and gave false testimony to investigators. The White House blocked an FBI inquiry, declaring that it was a national security operation undertaken by the CIA.

Mitchell resigned from his post on July 1, 1972, citing personal reasons. From the original investigation only the five burglars, plus Liddy and E. Howard Hunt, were indicted. In January all seven were convicted, but the cover-up was beginning to unravel. In March 1973 U.S. District Court judge John Sirica received a letter from McCord charging that witnesses had committed perjury at the trial. He went on to implicate Dean and Magruder. Dean and Magruder broke under questioning and offered

testimony that implicated White House and Nixon campaign officials. Dean testified that Mitchell had approved the break-in with the knowledge of White House domestic adviser John Ehrlichman and chief of staff H. R. Haldeman.

In May 1973 Senator Sam Ervin (D-N.C.) opened a special Senate committee investigation into the affair. At the same time, Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson appointed Archibald Cox, Jr., as special prosecutor to investigate the entire affair. Cox soon uncovered widespread evidence of political espionage, illegal wiretaps, and influence peddling. In July 1973 it was revealed that Nixon had secretly recorded conversations in the White House since 1971. Cox sued to obtain the tapes. On October 20, 1973, Nixon ordered Richardson to fire the special prosecutor. Richardson refused and resigned; his assistant, William Ruckelshaus, refused and was fired. Finally, Solicitor General Robert Bork fired Cox. This became known as the "Saturday Night Massacre." It led to calls for Nixon's impeachment, and the House of Representatives began an impeachment investigation.

Following Nixon's firing of Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox, in April 1974 Nixon appointed a new special prosecutor, Leon Jaworski. Upon assuming office, Jaworski subpoenaed 64 tapes needed for the trials resulting from the indictments. Nixon refused to comply with the subpoena and proposed a compromise in which he offered to provide edited transcripts in place of the actual tapes. The 1,254 pages of transcripts contained embarrassing material, including a large number of presidential deleted expletives; they were also inaccurate and incomplete. The inaccuracies were exposed when the House Judiciary Committee released its version of the tapes.

U.S. District Court judge John Sirica, who had issued the original subpoena, rejected the transcripts as unacceptable and reissued an order for the original tapes. James St. Clair, the head of Nixon's Watergate defense team, appealed Sirica's ruling to the Court of Appeals. Jaworski, wishing to expedite the process, appealed directly to the Supreme Court. The Court agreed to hear the case, *United States v. Nixon*, on July 8, 1974.

Nixon's case rested on two issues. First, the administration questioned the judiciary's jurisdiction in subpoenaing the tapes, citing separation of powers. Second, the administration cited executive privilege, the need for the protection of communication between high government officials and their advisers. The Court unanimously rejected both claims in a ruling on July 24, 1974. On the first point, the Court cited *Marbury v. Madison* (1803), which affirmed the power of judicial review. As for the second point, Chief Justice Warren Burger argued that neither separation of powers nor the need for confidential communication allowed for absolute presidential privilege of immunity from the judicial process.

On August 5, 1974, the transcripts were released, including one particularly damaging to Nixon, in which he discussed using the CIA to obstruct the FBI investigation of the Watergate break-in. These tapes led to the indictments of Haldeman, Ehrlichman,

Mitchell, Charles Colson, Robert Mardian, and Kenneth Parkinson for conspiring to cover up the Watergate scandal. Colson pleaded guilty to charges stemming from the Fielding break-in and the cover-up charges were dropped. Ultimately, Haldeman, Ehrlichman, and Mitchell were found guilty.

Facing a congressional vote on impeachment, Nixon announced his resignation on the evening of August 8, 1974, to be effective the next day at noon.

Information taken from: Korasick, John. "Watergate scandal." In Critchlow, Donald T., and Gary B. Nash, eds. *Encyclopedia of American History: Contemporary United States, 1969 to the Present*, Revised Edition (Volume X). New York: Facts On File, Inc., 2010. *American History Online*. Facts On File, Inc.



## ***U.S. v. Nixon (1974)***

### **History of the Case**

Seven men involved in the Watergate break-in, a break-in of the Democratic National Committee's headquarters located in the Watergate complex, were indicted by a federal grand jury. President Richard Nixon was named by the grand jury as an unindicted co-conspirator. Archibald Cox, who had been appointed as special prosecutor to investigate the Watergate affair, obtained a subpoena that required President Nixon to deliver to the district court tape recordings of his meetings with various assistants. The president released certain edited versions of the tapes to the public, but refused to yield the full transcripts to the district court. Both Cox and the president filed special petitions to have the issue heard immediately by the U.S. Supreme Court.

### **Summary of Arguments**

President Nixon argued that the courts lacked the power to compel production of the tapes. He asserted that because the dispute was between the president and the special prosecutor, it was purely an executive branch conflict not subject to judicial resolution. He also argued that it was for the president, not the courts, to ascertain the scope of the executive privilege. Finally, President Nixon contended that even if the Court were the proper branch to decide the scope of the privilege, the need for executive confidentiality justified the application of the privilege in this case.

The government contended that even if the Court were to acknowledge the existence of an executive privilege, the need for evidence in this criminal trial outweighed that privilege.

### **Decision**

The Supreme Court, in an opinion written by Chief Justice Burger, held that the tapes had to be turned over to the district court for an in-chambers inspection by the judge. Chief Justice Burger argued that this controversy was appropriately before the Court, rather than within the president's discretion, because "it is the duty of the courts to say what the law is." Here, the position of special prosecutor had been intended to be highly independent, thus the Court was justified in resolving the conflict between Cox and the president. Chief Justice Burger asserted that the executive privilege flows

from the Constitution and the Court is the ultimate interpreter of that Constitution; consequently, it was for the Court and not the president to define the scope of the privilege. He then determined that the privilege was merely presumptive, rather than absolute; thus, it might be overcome in certain cases by the "legitimate needs of the judicial process." Chief Justice Burger then proceeded to balance the interests of the president and the prosecution.

He began by noting that the president's right to secrecy was different from that of an ordinary individual: "A President and those who assist him must be free to explore alternatives in the process of shaping policies and making decisions and to do so in a way many would be unwilling to express except privately." Nonetheless, Cox had proven that the tapes were relevant to the government's case and "[t]he need to develop all relevant facts in the adversary system is both fundamental and comprehensive." Chief Justice Burger asserted that the claim of privilege did not rest on the ground that the tapes contained military or diplomatic secrets; thus, it was appropriate to subordinate the privilege to the search for truth in a criminal trial. He was quick to note that this decision was based on a unique set of facts. The president had asserted only a "generalized interest in confidentiality," while the specific need for relevant evidence in a criminal trial is a requirement of the Fifth Amendment's guarantee of due process.

Chief Justice Burger noted that in conducting the inspection of the president's tapes, "the District Court has a very heavy responsibility to see to it that Presidential conversations . . . are accorded that high degree of respect due the President of the United States." Even under the circumstances, President Nixon's communications were to receive "the greatest protection consistent with the fair administration of justice."

### **Aftermath**

Twelve days after the decision, the president made an abridged transcript of the tapes available to the public. Fifteen days after the decision, President Nixon resigned.

### **Significance**

While the outcome of the case was unfavorable to President Nixon, *United States v. Nixon* expanded the power of the presidency. This was the first time the Supreme Court acknowledged that an executive privilege exists; the decision thus resolved decades of controversy over the constitutionality of that privilege.

Source: Hartman, Gary, Roy M. Mersky, and Cindy L. Tate. "United States v. Nixon." *Landmark Supreme Court Cases*. New York: Facts On File, Inc., 2004. *American History Online*. Facts On File, Inc.

TRANSCRIPT OF A RECORDING OF A  
MEETING BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT  
AND H.R. HALDEMAN IN THE OVAL  
OFFICE ON JUNE 23, 1972 FROM  
10:04 TO 11:39 AM

HALDEMAN:

okay -that's fine. Now, on the investigation, you know, the Democratic break-in thing, we're back to the-in the, the problem area because the FBI is not under control, because Gray doesn't exactly know how to control them, and they have, their investigation is now leading into some productive areas, because they've been able to trace the money, not through the money itself, but through the bank, you know, sources - the banker himself. And, and it goes in some directions we don't want it to go. Ah, also there have been some things, like an informant came in off the street to the FBI in Miami, who was a photographer or has a friend who is a photographer who developed some films through this guy, Barker, and the films had pictures of Democratic National Committee letter head documents and things. So I guess, so it's things like that that are gonna, that are filtering in. Mitchell came up with yesterday, and John Dean analyzed very carefully last night and concludes, concurs now with Mitchell's recommendation that the only way to solve this, and we're set up beautifully to do it, ah, in that and that...the only network that paid any attention to it last night was NBC...they did a massive story on the Cuban...

PRESIDENT: That's right.

HALDEMAN: thing.

PRESIDENT: Right.

HALDEMAN: That the way to handle this now is for us to have Walters call Pat Gray and just say, "Stay the hell out of this...this is ah, business here we don't want you to go any further on it." That's not an unusual development,...

PRESIDENT: Um huh.

HALDEMAN: ...and, uh, that would take care of it.

PRESIDENT: What about Pat Gray, ah, you mean he doesn't want to?

HALDEMAN: Pat does want to. He doesn't know how to, and he doesn't have, he doesn't have any basis for doing it. Given this, he will then have the basis. He'll call Mark Felt in, and the two of them ...and Mark Felt wants to cooperate because...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: he's ambitious...

PRESIDENT: Yeah.

HALDEMAN: Ah, he'll call him in and say, "We've got the signal from across the river to, to put the hold on this." And that will fit rather well because the FBI agents who are working the case, at this point, feel that's what it is. This is CIA.

PRESIDENT: But they've traced the money to 'em.

HALDEMAN: Well they have, they've traced to a name, but they haven't gotten to the guy yet.

PRESIDENT: Would it be somebody here?

HALDEMAN: Ken Dahlberg.

PRESIDENT: Who the hell is Ken Dahlberg?

HALDEMAN: He's ah, he gave \$25,000 in Minnesota and ah, the check went directly in to this, to this guy Barker.

PRESIDENT: Maybe he's a ...bum.

PRESIDENT: He didn't get this from the committee though, from Stans.

HALDEMAN: Yeah. It is. It is. It's directly traceable and there's some more through some Texas people in--that went to the Mexican bank which they can also trace to the Mexican bank...they'll get their names today. And pause)

PRESIDENT: Well, I mean, ah, there's no way... I'm just thinking if they don't cooperate, what do they say? They they, they were approached by the Cubans. That's what Dahlberg has to say, the Texans too. Is that the idea?

HALDEMAN: Well, if they will. But then we're relying on more and more people all the time. That's the problem. And ah, they'll stop if we could, if we take this other step.

PRESIDENT: All right. Fine.

HALDEMAN: And, and they seem to feel the thing to do is get them to stop?

PRESIDENT: Right, fine.

HALDEMAN: They say the only way to do that is from White House instructions. And it's got to be to Helms and, ah, what's his name...? Walters.

PRESIDENT: Walters.

HALDEMAN: And the proposal would be that Ehrlichman (coughs) and I call them in

PRESIDENT: All right, fine.

HALDEMAN: and say, ah...

PRESIDENT: How do you call him in, I mean you just, well, we protected Helms from one hell of a lot of things.

HALDEMAN: That's what Ehrlichman says.

PRESIDENT: Of course, this is a, this is a Hunt, you will-that will uncover a lot of things. You open that scab there's a hell of a lot of things and that we just feel that it would be very detrimental to have this thing go any further. This involves these Cubans, Hunt, and a lot of hanky-panky that we have nothing to do with ourselves. Well what the hell, did Mitchell know about this thing to any much of a degree?

HALDEMAN: I think so. I don 't think he knew the details, but I think he knew...

PRESIDENT: You call them in. Good. Good deal! Play it tough. That's the way they play it and that's the way we are going to play it.

HALDEMAN: O.K. We'll do it...

PRESIDENT: When you get in these people when you...get these people in, say: "Look, the problem is that this will open the whole, the whole Bay of Pigs thing, and the President just feels that" ah, without going into the details...don't, don't lie to them to the extent to say there is no involvement, but just say this is sort of a comedy of errors, bizarre, without getting into it, "the President believes that it is going to open the whole Bay of Pigs thing up again. And, ah because these people are plugging for, for keeps and that they should call the FBI in and say that we wish for the country, don't go any further into this case", period!

(Information taken from:

[http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/forresearchers/find/tapes/watergate/trial/exhibit\\_01.pdf](http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/forresearchers/find/tapes/watergate/trial/exhibit_01.pdf))

## Watergate Background

### Worksheet

Define the following terms from the reading:

1. Impeachment

2. The "plumbers"

3. CREEP

4. Perjury

5. Political espionage

**6. "Saturday Night Massacre"**

**7. subpoena**

**8. separation of powers**

**9. judicial review**

**10. indictment**





e. Explain Burger's statement, "A President and those who assist him must be free to explore alternatives in a way many would be unwilling to express except privately." How did the court interpret executive privilege?

f. Do you agree with this analysis that *United States v. Nixon* expanded the power of the presidency? Why or why not?

II. **Transcript of White House Tapes, June 23, 1972 – conversation between President Nixon and Chief of Staff H.R. Haldeman.** (Note: Pat Gray is the Acting Director of the FBI, and Mark Felt is the Associate Director of the FBI. Helms is the Director of the CIA and Walters is the Deputy Director of the CIA)

a. Haldeman tells Nixon, "the FBI is not under control." Why does the FBI need to be controlled?

b. What is Nixon's plan for dealing with the FBI's investigation of the Watergate break-in?

c. What does this excerpt imply about the relationship between the FBI and the CIA?

d. What does this tape reveal about Nixon's view of his power as the president?

e. Why is this tape called the "Smoking Gun" tape?