

Chapter 16 Notes: America in the 1970s

Section 1: Nixon's Foreign Policy

Easing the Cold War

President Nixon sought to ease Cold War tensions by improving relations with the Soviet Union and China.

- President Nixon hoped to build a more stable, peaceful world by reaching out to the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China.
- To help him in this task, Nixon appointed **Henry Kissinger** as his national security adviser.
- Kissinger and Nixon believed that foreign policies should be based on national interests rather than political beliefs.
- Nixon followed a policy of **détente**—attempts at **relaxing** international tensions—but realized détente would work only if a **balance of power** existed.
- In February 1972, Nixon and China's premier **Zhou Enlai** agreed to allow greater scientific and cultural exchange and to resume trade.
- Nixon followed his trip to China with a visit to Moscow in May 1972.
- The Soviets—led by **Leonid Brezhnev**—wanted to prevent a Chinese-American alliance and hoped to buy United States **technology**.
- While in Moscow, Nixon signed the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty, which restricted the number of certain types of nuclear missiles.

The Middle East

Nixon's foreign policy included easing Arab-Israeli tensions in the Middle East.

- President Nixon's foreign policy aimed to maintain world stability without being drawn into regional disputes.
- Tensions between Israel and the Arab states erupted in war.
 - In 1967 the "Six-Day War" broke out.
 - The Yom Kippur War erupted in 1973.
- Angered by the U.S. support of Israel, Arab oil-producing states placed an **embargo** on oil to the United States and other "non-friendly" nations.

- Kissinger engaged in shuttle diplomacy—traveling back and forth among Middle Eastern Capitals—trying to resolve the oil crisis and forging lasting peace.
- Early in 1974, **Golda Meir** and **Anwar el-Sadat** agreed to separate Israeli and Egyptian forces in the Sinai Peninsula.

Latin America

The Nixon administration continued the effort to halt the spread of communism in Latin America.

- In 1970 the country of Chile elected Salvador Allende, a Marxist, as president.
- The United States, angered by Allende’s takeover of American companies, decided to undermine the Allende government.
- In 1973, with the backing of the Central Intelligence Agency, a group of Chilean military leaders under General Augusto Pinochet overthrew the government and killed Allende.

Section 2: Nixon and Watergate

Nixon’s Domestic Program

The Nixon administration sought to reduce the role of the federal government in American life.

- Nixon thought the federal courts should be tougher on criminals and appointed Supreme Court justices he hoped would support his views.
- Wanting to reduce federal involvement in people’s lives and to cut federal spending, Nixon introduced a program called the **New Federalism**.
 - **Revenue sharing** with state and local governments became law in 1972.
- On civil rights issues, Nixon took a conservative position aimed at appealing to white voters.
 - However, he also tried to integrate schools and promote **affirmative action**.
- While attempting to change the direction of government, President Nixon had to deal with serious economic problems such as unemployment and inflation.
 - First, Nixon cut federal spending and called for a **tight money policy**.
 - Next, he temporarily froze wages and prices and issued guidelines for any future increases.
 - Last, he increased federal spending to stimulate the economy, which created a budget **deficit**.

Re-election and Watergate

During his second term, President Nixon was involved in a political scandal that forced him to resign.

- As the 1972 election neared, Nixon had doubts about his chances for reelection.
- In their efforts to win the election, the president and his advisers sometimes crossed the boundaries of the law.
- The Democrats' lack of unity, combined with an upsurge in the economy and the prospect of peace in Vietnam, led to a landslide victory for Nixon.
- During Nixon's second term, severe economic problems confronted the nation.
 - The president imposed measures to save oil and urged Americans to conserve **energy**.
- In June 1972, Nixon's reelection committee had five men break into the Democratic Party's office at the **Watergate** apartment-office complex in Washington, D.C.
- Starting in May 1973, the Senate hearings on Watergate, chaired by Senator **Sam Ervin**, revealed the inner workings of the Nixon White House.
- President Nixon claimed **executive privilege** and refused to hand over secret tapes that recorded his conversations while in office.
- The Supreme Court ruled that the president had to turn over all of the tapes, and Nixon complied.
- Several days later, the House Judiciary Committee voted to **impeach** Nixon, and on August 9, 1974, Nixon resigned his office in disgrace.
- In the middle of the turmoil, Vice President Spiro Agnew was charged with taking bribes while governor of Maryland.
- **Gerald R. Ford** became the new vice president and the new president soon afterward.

A Time for Healing

President Ford set out to unite the nation after the Watergate scandal.

- Gerald Ford's pardon of Nixon and his offer of **amnesty** to men who illegally avoided military service during the Vietnam War stirred **controversy**.
- Ford and Kissinger extended the policy of détente with the Soviet Union and worked to improve relations with China.
- To attempt to solve the country's economic troubles, Ford launched voluntary wage and price controls, tried to cut government spending, and passed a tax cut.

- Despite his efforts, Ford could not solve the nation's economic woes.

Section 3: The Carter Presidency

An Informal Presidency

President Carter faced a weakened economy and a growing energy crisis.

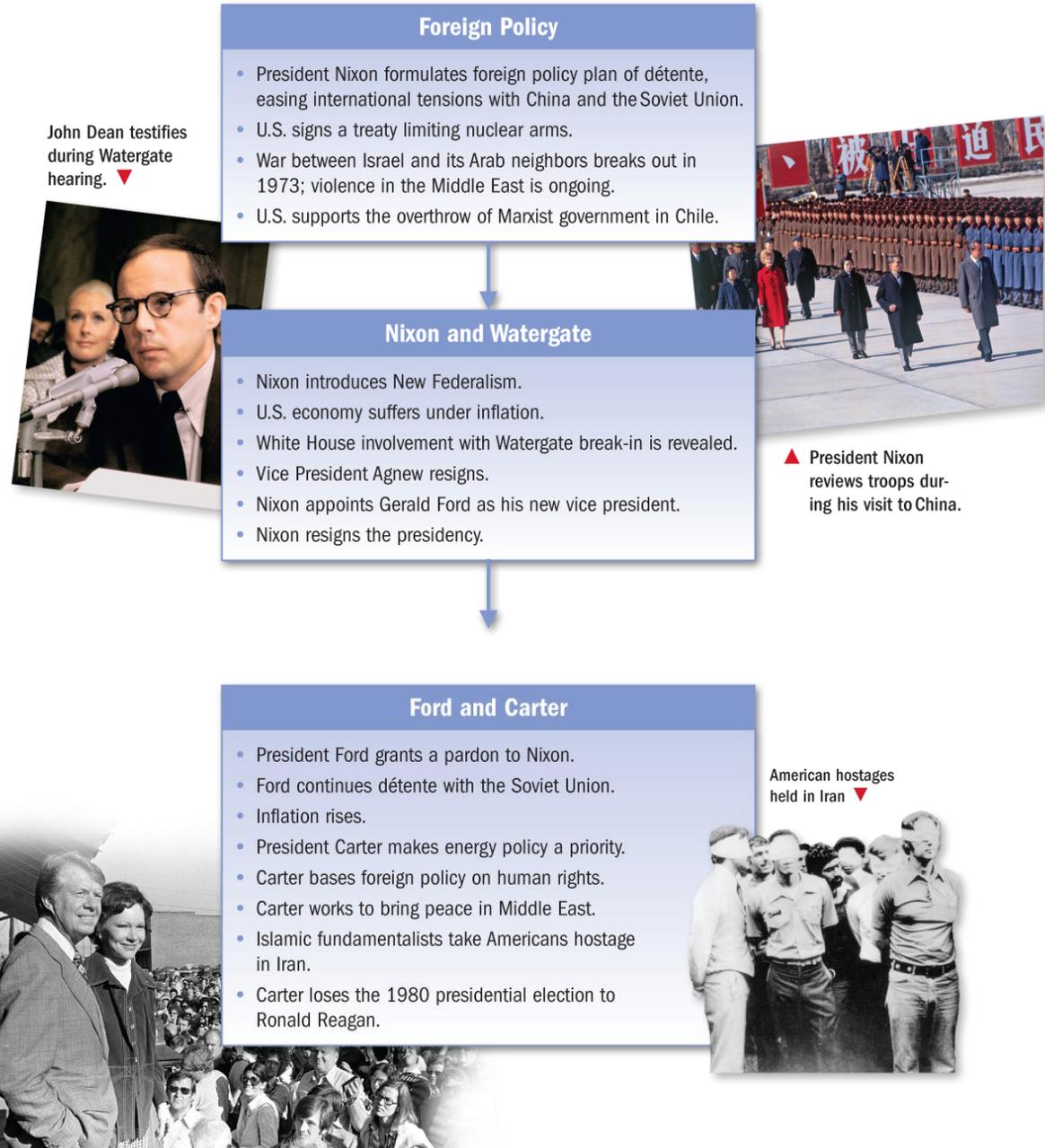
- In the 1976 election President Ford faced a challenge for the Republican nomination from California governor **Ronald Reagan**.
- **Jimmy Carter**—the Democratic candidate—stressed his **integrity**, his religious faith, and his standing as an outsider.
 - Carter won in a close election, gaining 50.1 percent of the popular vote.
- As American money paid for overseas oil, the nation faced a growing **trade deficit**—the value of foreign imports **exceeded** the value of American exports.
- In April 1977, Carter presented a National Energy Plan to resolve the energy crisis, but Congress would only pass a weakened version of the plan.
- In March 1979, a major accident occurred at the **Three Mile Island** nuclear power plant, and an antinuclear protest movement soon spread.

Foreign Affairs

President Carter had some foreign policy successes but faced a growing crisis in the Middle Eastern country of Iran.

- Carter based his foreign policy on **human rights**.
 - For example, Carter condemned South Africa for its policy of **apartheid**.
- Carter signed two treaties that turned the Panama Canal over to Panama by the year 2000, but ensured that the canal would remain a neutral waterway open to all shipping.
- In an attempt to bring peace to the Middle East, President Carter, Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin, and Egyptian president Anwar el-Sadat reached an agreement known as the **Camp David Accords**.
- The president signed a second Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty, but any hope of Senate approval ended in December 1979 when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan.
- In January 1979, Islamic **fundamentalists** forced Iran's leader to flee Iran. The new leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, was hostile to the United States.

- In November 1979, Iranian students stormed the American embassy in Tehran and held 52 Americans hostage.
- Ronald Reagan swept to victory in the presidential election of 1980 with an electoral vote margin of 489 to 49.



The Path of Watergate

The Watergate scandal rocked the nation's trust in its elected officials but ultimately illustrated that America's system of government works.

Security guard Frank Willis discovered the Watergate break-in ▶



June 1972
Watergate break-in reported

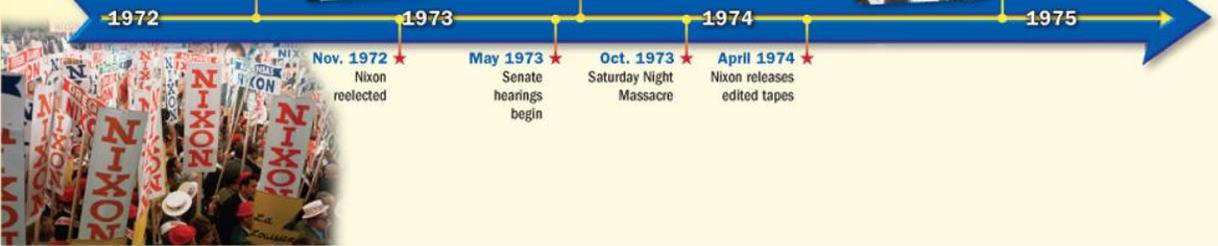
June 1973
John Dean implicates Nixon in cover-up



August 1974
Nixon releases tapes and resigns

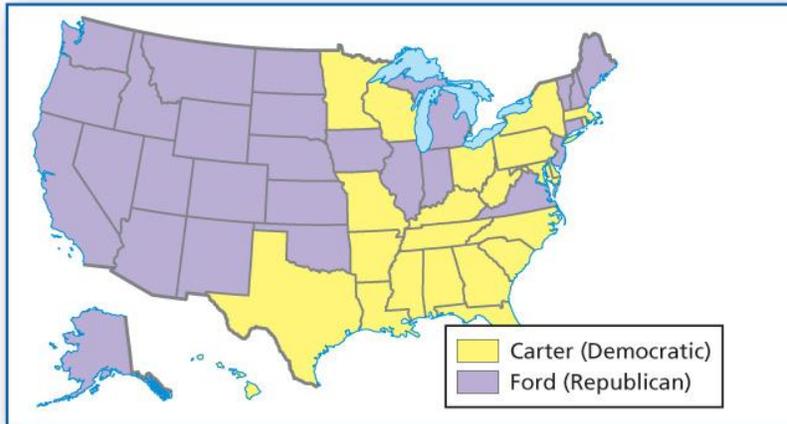
"I would say only that if some of my judgments were wrong—and some were wrong—they were made in what I believed at the time to be the best interest of the Nation."

—Nixon's resignation speech, August 8, 1974

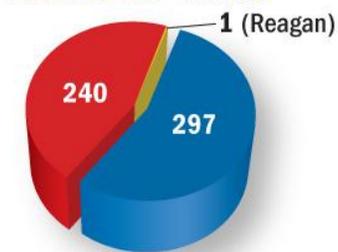


By the Numbers Election of 1976

A Southern President Jimmy Carter's election marked the first time since 1844 that a candidate from the Deep South was elected president.



Electoral Votes



Popular Vote

