

## SECTION

## 1

## THE PRESIDENCY IN CRISIS

In this section you will learn about the domestic and foreign crises that occurred under Presidents Nixon, Ford and Carter

## THINK ABOUT IT

Who would you rate as the best President of the 1970s: Nixon, Ford, or Carter? \_\_\_\_\_

Explain your reasons. \_\_\_\_\_

**Important Terms and Concepts:** As you read this section, look for the following:

- ♦ Détente
- ♦ Camp David Accords
- ♦ Watergate Affair
- ♦ Iranian Hostage Crisis

## THE NIXON PRESIDENCY, 1969-1974

President Richard Nixon introduced a number of significant changes to U.S. foreign policy. However, the Watergate scandal dominated his second term in office and brought about his sudden resignation.

### NIXON AND THE GROWTH OF PRESIDENTIAL POWER

The authors of the Constitution separated the powers of government among the President, Congress and the Supreme Court. This was done to prevent any one branch of government from dominating the other two branches. However, over the last sixty years Presidential powers have grown more rapidly than the powers of the other legislative and judicial branches. Many people believed that the expansion of Presidential power went too far during Nixon's Presidency. Some of his major decisions, such as the invasion of Cambodia during the Vietnam War, were made without consulting Congress. This led Congress to pass the War Powers Act, which limited the ability of the President to send troops overseas without Congressional approval. Nixon's decision to open relations with Communist China — a major change in U.S. foreign policy — was also made without the prior approval of Congress.



*Richard M. Nixon*

There were several reasons for this growth in Presidential power:

- **Economic Developments.** During the Great Depression, the nation turned to the President to solve the nation's economic problems. The New Deal gave the President greatly increased power over the economy.
- **Foreign Policy Developments.** Two world wars and the Cold War made foreign affairs, over which the President has more influence than either of the other branches of government, very important.
- **Mass Communication.** Radio and television allowed the President to appeal directly to the public for support.

## FOREIGN POLICY UNDER NIXON

Nixon believed the President's major role was to direct the country's foreign policy. His program included American withdrawal from Vietnam, opening diplomatic relations with Communist China, and developing better relations with the Soviet Union:

HIGHLIGHTS OF NIXON'S FOREIGN POLICY		
<p><b>Ending the Vietnam War (1969-1973)</b></p> <p>Nixon shifted the fighting from American troops to the South Vietnamese army, and began withdrawing U.S. forces. In 1973, Nixon agreed to the Paris Peace Accords, pulling the U.S. out of the war.</p>	<p><b>Re-Opening Relations With China (1972)</b></p> <p>Ever since the communist takeover of China in 1949, the United States had refused to establish diplomatic relations with the government there. Nixon visited Communist China and began to restore normal diplomatic relations.</p>	<p><b>Détente with the Soviet Union (1972)</b></p> <p>Nixon introduced <b>détente</b> (<i>a relaxing of strained relations</i>) with the Soviet Union. In 1972, he became the first U.S. President to visit Moscow. He also agreed to sell American grain to the Soviet Union to ease a severe food shortage there.</p>

## DOMESTIC POLICY UNDER NIXON

In domestic affairs, Nixon wanted to reduce the role of the federal government. He believed that programs such as welfare should be in the hands of state and local officials instead of the federal government. Under his **New Federalism**, he proposed giving local governments greater responsibilities and providing them with federal funds to deal with the problems affecting their citizens.

As a result of the Vietnam War and increased oil prices, serious **inflation** (*rising prices*) occurred in the early 1970s. To combat inflation, Nixon cut government spending on social programs such as education and welfare. He also tried to limit inflation by announcing a sudden freeze on wages and prices; however, this policy was unsuccessful, and the freeze was soon ended.

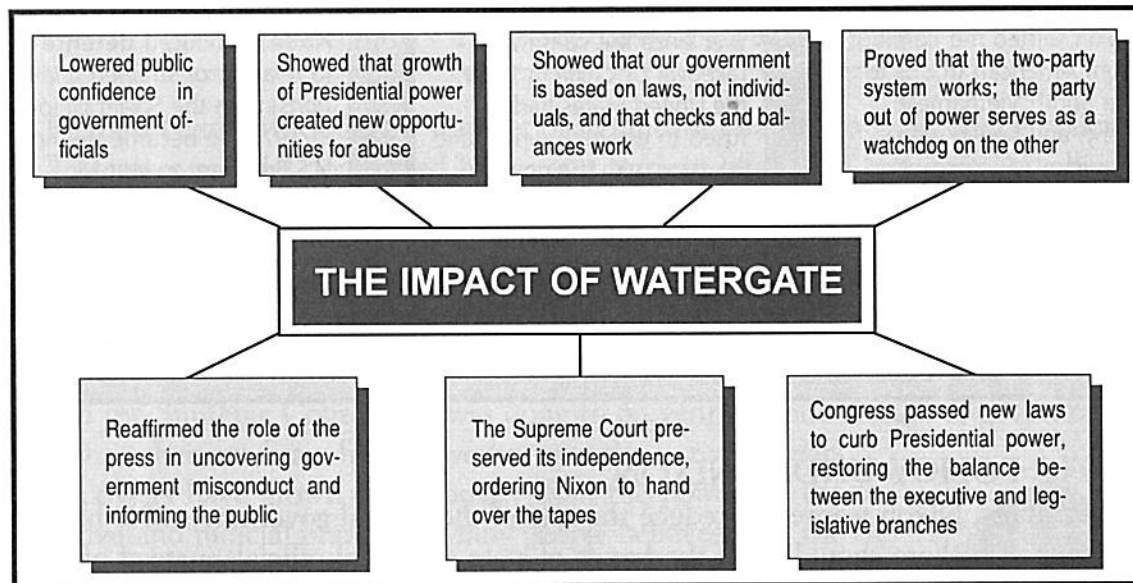
## CORRUPTION IN NIXON'S GOVERNMENT

Despite Nixon's successes in foreign policy, his administration was eventually brought down by internal corruption.

■ **Agnew Resigns.** In 1973, **Spiro Agnew** was forced to resign as Nixon's Vice President when it was discovered that he had taken bribes while he was the Governor of Maryland. With Congressional approval, Nixon appointed **Gerald Ford** to replace Agnew.

◆ ■ **The Watergate Affair.** In 1972, a group of former government employees, working for Nixon's re-election, was caught breaking into Democratic Party headquarters at the Watergate (*a building in Washington, D.C.*). Nixon denied any knowledge of the break-in, but he also hindered the subsequent investigation, saying that any discussion of the details would endanger American security. During Senate hearings, it was revealed that Nixon had secretly tape-recorded all of his White House conversations. At first, Nixon refused to turn over these tapes, claiming that Congress could not question members of the executive branch without Presidential approval. However, in *United States v. Nixon* (1974) the Supreme Court ordered Nixon to turn over the tapes, confirming the principle that no one, not even the President, is above the law.

When the tapes were finally made public, they showed that Nixon had lied about the break-in and cover-up. Congress took steps to **impeach** Nixon (*remove him from office*). Fearing impeachment, Nixon resigned, and Gerald Ford became President.



## THE FORD PRESIDENCY, 1974-1977

Gerald Ford faced a special challenge on taking office. He had never been elected either as Vice-President or President. Ford had been appointed by Nixon, a man who had resigned in disgrace. When Ford became President, one of his first acts was to **pardon** Nixon (*officially excuse someone who may have committed a criminal act*). This action was heavily criticized.