Nixon, Ford, Carter Administration

SSUSH 22
Analyze U.S. international and domestic policies including their influences on technological advancements and social change during the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations.
The Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations spanned the 1970s. The country was recovering from the challenges of the Vietnam War. There was a new emphasis on women's equality and environmental issues in the 1970s. Politically, the Nixon administration was rocked by scandal. Internationally, the United States was working to broker peace in the Middle East but also entangled in a dangerous hostage situation.
Additional Resources

- The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History is a resource that provides teachers with lesson plans, primary documents, secondary source essays, and multimedia specific to each historical era. There is a separate section included for this Historical Era devoted to the study of the 1970s. Historical Era #10- 1945 to the Present
  - https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/1945-present
SSUSH 22 A

Analyze the international policies and actions taken as a response to the Cold War including the opening of and establishment of diplomatic relations with China, the end of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, the War Powers Act, the Camp David Accords, and Carter’s response to the 1979 Iranian Revolution and hostage crisis.
International Policies and Actions in Response to the Cold War

- The Cold War conflicts in Korea and Vietnam during the 1950s and 1960s gave way to efforts for de-escalating the tension with world rivals.
- Nixon's two terms as President were marked by tremendous highs and lows.
- Nixon won the election in 1968 based on promises to
  - End the war in Vietnam
  - Restore law and order in the United States
- His efforts to secure more peaceful diplomacy with China and the Soviet Union helped to win him a second term.
International Policies and Actions in Response to the Cold War

- The anti-war movement regained some support following Nixon's escalation of the Vietnam War in 1970.
- Instead of ending the war as he promised, it seemed as though the war was actually expanding.
- President Nixon invaded Cambodia in 1970, which touched off widespread protests.
- One such protest was at Kent State University in Ohio.
- Four students were killed and several other students were wounded by the Ohio National Guard.
International Policies and Actions in Response to the Cold War

- The Vietnam anti-war movement was a key factor in the United States' decision to withdraw from Southeast Asia.
- Nixon's foreign policy goal was to establish cordial relations with the world's leading nations.
- The major sticking point that stalled improved relations with these other countries was the Vietnam War.
- In an effort to end the fighting in Vietnam, Nixon worked at normalizing relations with the People's Republic of China.
International Policies and Actions in Response to the Cold War

- Initially, China ignored the United States' overtures
- Continued conflict between the Soviet Union and China over their shared frontier led the Chinese to secretly approach the Nixon administration
- In February 1972, Nixon, National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, key advisors, and the Nixon family visited China in a well publicized trip.
- Nixon and Kissinger met with Communist Party Chairman Mao Zedong and China's Premier Zhou Enlai.
International Policies and Actions in Response to the Cold War

- The United States agreed to a One China policy, which meant that Taiwan was part of China and not a separate entity.
- The United States would assist in seeking a peaceful solution to the China-Taiwan issue.
- In addition to opening China up for future business relations, Nixon's visit led the Soviet Union to abandon support for North Vietnam.
- The Soviets also agreed to negotiate a new nuclear disarmament treaty.
International Policies and Actions in Response to the Cold War

- North Vietnam, having lost the support of both the Soviet Union and China, concluded a peace treaty with the United States in early 1973.
- One key action taken in the United States following the Vietnam War was to redistribute power concerning military action among the federal branches of government.
- The President had been given immense unilateral power through the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution to take any measures he deemed necessary to protect the United States.
International Policies and Actions in Response to the Cold War

- Congress had been powerless through much of the Vietnam War to adjust the level of troop commitment to the region because of the Gulf of Tonkin's unlimited provisions.
- Once the war was over, the Congress passed the *War Powers Act in 1973*.
  - Required that Congress authorize troop commitments within a certain time frame.
  - Redistributed power to conduct military operations between the executive and legislative branches.
International Policies and Actions in Response to the Cold War

- Shortly after he was reelected in 1972, the Nixon administration fell amid domestic controversy surrounding the Watergate scandal.
- Nixon resigned from office amid the scandal and was replaced by Gerald Ford.
  - Ford continued Nixon's foreign policy objectives.
- He continued to improve relations with both China and the Soviet Union.
- Under the Carter administration, the emphasis in world affairs began to shift to the Middle East.
International Policies and Actions in Response to the Cold War

- He began a re-assessment of U.S.-Israeli relations following the breakdown of Israeli-Egyptian peace talks.
- Ford also was in office when the South Vietnamese government collapsed.
- The communist North Vietnamese successfully took over South Vietnam in 1975, only a few years after the peace terms had been negotiated.
- Thus, the efforts of the United States to stop the spread of communism were unsuccessful in protecting South Vietnam from takeover.
International Policies and Actions in Response to the Cold War

- Ford was not re-elected.
- In 1976, James (Jimmy) Carter was elected President.
- Carter based his foreign policy on human rights.
- In 1978, Carter brokered a deal known as the *Camp David Accords* to end the Israeli-Egyptian conflict.
  - In the resulting treaty
    - Israel agreed to withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula
    - Egypt agreed to recognize the legitimacy of Israel.
International Policies and Actions in Response to the Cold War

- Camp David Accords were viewed by many to be a diplomatic success in setting the Middle East on a path toward peace.
- Yet Carter's administration was rocked by other challenges in the region.
- The United States supported the authoritarian regime of the Shah of Iran.
- This led to a break in U.S.-Iranian relations.
- Islamic fundamentalists overthrew the Iranian government in a 1979 revolution.
International Policies and Actions in Response to the Cold War

- The revolt marked the beginning of a new era in the region.
- The fundamentalists hated the United States for its support of Israel and for what was perceived as a corruption of the Islamic World by western ideology.
- At this time, Iranian-backed terrorist groups increasingly targeted the United States and U.S. interests abroad for terrorist attacks.
- As a part of the revolution, the Iranians seized control of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, Iran in November 1979.
International Policies and Actions in Response to the Cold War

- The embassy staff was held hostage until January 1981.
- After negotiations failed to obtain the hostages' release, a rescue attempt was made, but it also failed.
- The failure of President Carter to obtain the release of the hostages in Iran was a major reason for Carter's re-election loss in 1980.
Additional Resources

- The Jimmy Carter Educational Resources offers background and lesson plans for teaching about the Camp David Accords.
SSUSH 22 B

Connect major domestic issues to their social effects including the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency, the emergence of the National Organization for Women, Nixon’s resignation due to the Watergate scandal, and his pardon by Ford.
Domestic Issues and their Effect

- Domestic policy in the United States during the 1970s addressed issues including pollution and women’s rights.
- The executive branch was also embroiled in the Watergate scandal that resulted in the resignation of President Nixon.
- The abuse of power exposed during the investigation led to significant mistrust of the government by the American public.
- The modern environmental movement gained momentum during the 1970s as a result of two events.
Domestic Issues and their Effect

- The earlier publication of Silent Spring by Rachel Carson grabbed the attention of Americans who became concerned about pollutants and the harm they were doing to the environment.
- Rachel Carson was an ecologist and naturalist.
- She wrote on nature for the United States government during the Great Depression.
- Concerned over the effects of the widespread use of synthetic pesticides during World War II, she wrote Silent Spring.
Domestic Issues and their Effect

- Her simple examples helped readers to understand how all life was interrelated.
- Her study prompted local communities to monitor the effects of spraying or dusting for harmful insects.
- Her work was also instrumental in founding the modern environmental and subsequent government actions to protect the environment.
- The second event, which prompted greater public awareness of the nation and world's environmental issues, was the creation of Earth Day in 1970.
Domestic Issues and their Effect

- Senator Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin, wanted to start an environmental movement - created the Earth Day
  - 20 million Americans took to parks, streets, & auditoriums across the US to rally for a healthy, sustainable environment on April 22, 1970

- The massive support for environmentalism due to the publication of Silent Spring and the development of Earth Day led to:
  - Creation of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
  - Passage of the Clean Air, Clean Water, and Endangered Species Acts.
Domestic Issues and their Effect

- The EPA was the executive branch agency responsible for:
  - Monitoring the environment
  - Monitoring pollutants emitted by industrial facilities
  - Enforcing the laws passed by Congress to protect the environment

- Another issue that gained attention during the modern era was the Women’s Movement.

- Although women acquired suffrage in 1920, there was still disparity between men and women in terms of economic and social equality.
Domestic Issues and their Effect

- The passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 included:
  - Title VII, which forbade the discrimination of women
  - Formed the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to enforce the provisions of Title VII
- However, the EEOC allowed continued gender segregated job postings
  - Betty Friedan (feminist author) & Dr. Pauli Murray (Yale University law professor) decided to organize a women’s rights movement
    - similar to the other civil rights movements.
The new effort was devoted strictly to women’s causes.

Friedan and Murray, along with 300 other men and women, created the National Organization of Women (NOW) in October 1966.

According to NOW’s 1966 Statement of Purpose, the organization’s goal was “to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly equal partnership with men.”
Domestic Issues and their Effect

- The following year, NOW set as its national goals the promotion of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), the repeal of all abortion laws, and the creation of publicly funded child care.
- Further goals included the ending of sexual discrimination in the areas of hiring, promotion, and wages.
- The United States experienced significant change during the 1960s and 1970s related to domestic and foreign policy.
- Another issue facing Americans was the declining level of trust they had for their government.
Domestic Issues and their Effect

- The skepticism began with the Vietnam War and the government’s messages of imminent victory that did not mesh with the images and reporting on the nightly television news.
- Another key contributor to the public’s distrust of the government was the Watergate scandal that led to President Nixon’s resignation in 1974.
- Richard Nixon was elected again to a second term as president in 1972.
- Over the course of the next few years information began to slowly come to light that illegal activity was emanating from the highest levels of government.
Domestic Issues and their Effect

- The Nixon re-election campaign took illegal campaign contributions from corporations who had in turn sought special favors from the President.
- An even bigger scandal emerged when evidence came out that Richard Nixon authorized (or at least knew about) the burglary of the offices of the Democratic National Headquarters in the Washington D.C. Watergate Complex.
- The burglars were trying to find out Democratic campaign strategies and to leave eavesdropping equipment in the office.
Domestic Issues and their Effect

- The Nixon White House tried to cover-up its involvement and obstructed the Congressional investigation.
- When Nixon’s level of involvement in the situation became apparent through investigative news reporting, the House of Representatives began to draw up articles of impeachment against the President.
- Based upon the opinions of both the House and Senate, Congressional Republican leaders informed the President that he would be convicted during an impeachment trial.
Domestic Issues and their Effect

- As a result, Nixon resigned from office on August 9, 1974 to avoid being the first President removed from office.
- Upon Nixon’s resignation, his Vice President was sworn in as the new President to finish out the term.
- Gerald Ford was the new President.
- He was a well-respected thirteen term Congressman from Michigan.
- The ongoing issues surrounding the Watergate scandal maintained their hold on the government once Ford became President.
Domestic Issues and their Effect

- Ford pardoned former President Nixon of any federal criminal wrong-doing.
- Ford believed that it was time to put the national nightmare behind the country and focus on the issues at hand.
- The Watergate scandal had a number of implications.
  - Increased cynicism and distrust of the government
  - Fewer Americans voting in elections and fewer candidates seeking office
  - The two party system was also weakened
  - The reputation of the Republican Party was damaged.
Domestic Issues and their Effect

- The Democratic nominee for President in 1976, Jimmy Carter, campaigned as an outsider who would bring integrity and transparency to the office.
  - He won a convincing victory.
- A few positive outcomes came from the Watergate crisis.
  - The media was credited with continually working to expose the problems of the President.
    - The Constitutional protection afforded to the media allowed the press to do their job as gatherers and disseminators of information
    - Even with threats and intimidation leveled at them.
  - Another positive outcome was that the crisis demonstrated the effectiveness of the United States’ democratic system, especially the success of checks and balances.
Additional Resources

- The National Archives offers a comprehensive collection of documents and interpretation of the Watergate scandal. The collection includes images, recordings, teaching activities, and worksheets to help students analyze the documents.