

The Presidency of Richard Nixon.



The 1968 Presidential election saw the Democratic Party in disarray. The Republican Party who had previously leaned too far to the right with nominating Barry Goldwater in 1964, now saw their chance to win greatly improve when they nominated Eisenhower's former Vice-President, Richard Nixon. Nixon's campaign promise was to **restore law and order to the country.**

The 1968 election saw a great disparity between the Popular Vote and the Electoral College vote.

Popular Vote of the 1968 election

Richard Nixon (R)	43.4%
Hubert Humphrey (D)	42.7%
George Wallace (AI)	13.5%

George Wallace from Alabama ran on an American Independent ticket and was the main reason why Nixon did not receive more popular votes.

However, the Electoral College showed a more accurate figure.

Nixon	301
Humphrey	191
Wallace	46

(Nixon only needed 270 votes to win)

The Democrats however, retained control of Congress.

Domestic Policies and Events

Dismantling the Great Society

Nixon saw the public's dislike of Johnson's Great Society, claiming that it was ineffective, costly, mismanaged, and had overextended the federal government's power. Nixon abolished the Office of Economic Opportunity and created a **"revenue sharing program"** that shifted the responsibility of welfare back to the states. Nixon then cut urban renewal, job training, and educational programs. The Democrats often struggled to stop Nixon from cutting even more federal programs.

Environment and Consumer Legislation

Nixon did follow-up on his inaugural speech promises. He signed into law the first Earth Day in 1970, a move to educate the public about the general erosion of the natural environment.

He also allowed the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to enforce regulations from the 1970's **Clean Air Act**, **Resource Recovery Act**, and the **Water Pollution Control Act**. These acts created arguments between the government and big business as the government levied heavy fines for oil spills, excessive auto exhaust emissions, industrial discharge, waste disposal and recycling.

Nixon's government also created to other important regulations:

- The **Consumer Products Safety Commission** was finally created in 1972 to stop unsafe products and stopped fraudulent advertising. It was a logical step after cigarette advertising was banned on radio and television and "sin taxes" were levied.
- The **Truth-in-Lending Act** (1969) required full disclosure of finance charges and annual percentage rates (APR) in consumer credit arrangements.

Foreign Policy

When Nixon first took office, he appointed **Dr. Henry Kissinger** as a special White House advisor on national security. Kissinger was not part of the Cabinet, but he would go on to play a very important role in shaping foreign policy.

As Kissinger was not a government official, he could bypass the federal restrictions and make frequent trips on behalf of the United States to both Red China and the U.S.S.R. Later on, Nixon would appoint Kissinger as Secretary of State, a role he would keep during the Gerald Ford presidency.



Nixon's Foreign Policy	
Country	U.S. Interests
Vietnam	Withdraw troops, place the burden on South Vietnam
China	Economic benefits, eventual diplomatic ties
U.S.S.R.	Slowing the arms race through SALT

The Nixon Doctrine

In the middle of the Vietnam conflict, President Nixon issued a policy statement which became known as the **Nixon Doctrine**. It said that the United States would continue to honor its treaty obligations in Asia, provide military, financial, and humanitarian aid, but actual combat troops would have to be provided by the nations directly involved in the conflict. Nixon hoped to maintain foreign friendship, but also wished to avoid another unwinnable war.

The Opening of China

Since the communist take over of Mainland China by Mao Zedong, the United States had officially recognized and aided Taiwan, the Republic of China, the home of the exiled Jian Jieshi. However, since the early days of his presidency, Richard Nixon had asked Henry Kissinger to investigate the possibility of visiting mainland China and starting trade negotiations between the two nations.

In the early 1970's, China and the Soviet Union were having serious diplomatic problems and communism no longer posed a single, powerful threat to democracy. Nixon believed that a new relationship with communist China might force the Soviet leaders to be more accommodating to the United States.

In 1972, Nixon visited China for diplomatic talks. No significant agreements resulted from the trip but it would pave the way for increased trade and cultural exchanges between the two countries. Diplomatic relations between the United States were officially opened by President Carter in 1979.

Part of the agreement was for the United States to no longer recognize Taiwan as a nation and the mutual defense treaty with the island was ended. Despite Nixon paving the way for negotiations with communist China, there were still concerns over continuing human rights violations by the Chinese government.

Détente: Grain Deals and SALT (Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty)

After his trip to China, President Nixon then visited the Soviet Union. He hoped to relax tensions between the two superpowers (détente) by limiting the nuclear arms race. His plan was to increase trade and cultural relations between the two superpowers, hopefully avoiding any future Cold War conflicts. One key agreement allowed the U.S.S.R. to buy American grain for three years. It proved beneficial for the American farmers, but smaller supplies in the U.S.A. only drove up domestic prices and added to the nation's growing inflation rate.

SALT – Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (1972)

Again, Dr. Henry Kissinger proved invaluable for President Nixon.

Positives:

- Reduced the number of anti-ballistic systems
- Froze the expansion of ICBM's (Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles)
- Received overwhelming support from the U.S. Senate

Negatives:

- Did not place limits on multiple warheads
- Did not slow down the construction of long-range bombers
- Did not prevent construction of new missile systems
- Did not provide for on-site inspections for verification of the treaty

The SALT talks did lead to the United Nations prohibited the placement of nuclear weapons on the ocean floor and in 1972, the United States, the U.S.S.R., and over one hundred other nations agreed to this restriction.

A **SALT II** Treaty was negotiated in 1979 but it was not approved by the Senate. They claimed that it lacked full compliance by the Soviets on the original agreement and it was also rejected as the Soviets had invaded Afghanistan.



Source: Bill Mauldin, *Chicago Sun-Times*, 1973 (adapted)

The “Imperial Presidency” in Trouble

The success of Nixon’s first term in office were followed by political disasters during his re-election campaign. He would become the first President of the United States to resign from office!

The Election of 1972

Despite many still opposed to his actions in Vietnam and a shaky domestic record, Nixon based his campaign on his foreign achievements and the gradual de-escalation in Indochina. The Republican Party were confident as their opponent, George McGovern from South Dakota platformed on a liberal philosophy and strongly opposed the war in Vietnam and Cambodia. This philosophy drew very little national support.

In November, Nixon easily won 60% of the Popular Vote and took 520 of the 538 possible Electoral College votes. However, the Republican party was not able to control either house in Congress.

Side Note: The Republican Party had pushed many news sources to ignore the issue. However, the Washington Post, despite pressure from Nixon's staff, kept two reporters, (Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein) on the story. Their articles were a major component of the consequences that faced Nixon. An excellent movie was made about these events called *All the President's Men*.

In the summer of 1974, the Judiciary Committee of the House of Representatives publicly televised their hearings. They voted to recommend Nixon's impeachment on the charges of obstructing justice and abuse of executive power. The Democratically controlled House of Representatives favored impeachment. Nixon would have little or no change of surviving the hearings. **On August 9th 1974, Richard Nixon resigned as President of the United States** rather than face the hearings and months of debate that would paralyze the government.

Vice-President Gerald R. Ford was then sworn-in as the new President.

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NIXON RESIGNS IN 'INTERESTS OF NATION'

Cites His Achievements for Peace as His Legacy; Ford Pledges a Continuation of Policies, Takes Oath Today

38TH PRESIDENT

Ford---a Blend of Principles, Pragmatism

BY ROBERT SHOGAN
Times Political Writer

WASHINGTON—“A steady conciliator and calm communicator,” is the job description Gerald Rudolph Ford set for himself as Vice President.

Now that an unprecedented political upheaval has made Mr. Ford President, the same formula should serve him well as he tries to lead a shaken nation back to stability.

His task will not be easy. Anunciations are divided and depressed by months of scandal. They are in the mood of reassessing their role ahead and their institutions at home, particularly the Presidency.

And they must get used to the idea that their 38th President is the first to have resigned.




President Concedes He Made Errors in Handling Watergate

BY JACK NELSON
Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON—Richard Milhous Nixon announced his resignation Thursday as President of the United States, the first chief executive in the republic's 198-year history to quit.

Gerald Rudolph Ford, Vice President since Dec. 7, 1973, will take the oath of office at 9 a.m. PDT today to become the nation's 38th President, the first ever to take office without having been elected by the people to either the Presidency or Vice Presidency.

In a 35-minute television speech to the nation, Mr. Nixon, his face drawn and expression somber, said he no longer had “a strong enough political base in the Congress” to succeed in retiring his fight against impeachment and that he was resigning in “the interests of the nation.”

Mr. Nixon, who faced certain conviction in the Senate had he continued to fight, said he was leaving the Presidency at noon today in “good faith” but with satisfaction that, with Ford as the new President, “leadership in America will be in good hands.”

The President said he had “never been a quitter” and that resigning was “abhorrent to every instinct of my body.”

But to have continued the fight, he said, would have “totally absorbed” his time during the months ahead, when the nation would need “a full-time President.”

Mr. Nixon stopped short of acknowledging any guilt in the Watergate coverup, a principal charge against him in the impeachment pro-

PRINCIPALS IN THE DRAMA—President Nixon (left) and Vice President Ford (right) embrace after Nixon's resignation. Ford is seen taking the oath of office.