

Nixon

Won Elections of 1968 and 1972
Republican

Directions

- Read pages 1-5.
- Answer the questions at the end
- ◀ Questions 1-5 are multiple-choice
- ◀ Question 6 is an SAQ or short answer question with parts a, b, c. Be sure to provide some explanation/description of the concept then respond to the effect, significance, or goals (whichever is listed in the short answer).

Second Kennedy Assassination

In 1964, Kennedy's younger brother, Robert Kennedy, had become a senator from New York. Four years later, he decided to enter the presidential race after McCarthy's strong showing in New Hampshire. Bobby Kennedy was more effective than McCarthy in mobilizing the traditional Democratic blue-collar and minority vote. On June 5, 1968, he won a major victory in California's primary, but immediately after his victory speech, he was shot and killed by a young Arab nationalist who opposed Kennedy's support for Israel.

The Election of 1968 — NIXON WINS (Republican)

After Robert Kennedy's death, the election of 1968 turned into a three-way race between two conservatives—George Wallace and Richard Nixon—and one liberal, Vice President Hubert Humphrey.

Democratic Convention at Chicago When the Democrats met in Chicago for their party convention, it was clear that Hubert Humphrey had enough delegates to win the nomination. As vice president, he had loyally supported Johnson's domestic and foreign policies. He controlled the convention, but the antiwar demonstrators were determined to control the streets. Chicago's mayor Richard Daley had the police out in mass, and the resulting violence went out on television across the country as a "police riot." Humphrey left the convention as the nominee of a badly divided Democratic party, and early polls showed he was a clear underdog in a nation sick of disorder and protest.

White Backlash and George Wallace The growing hostility of many whites to federal desegregation, antiwar protests, and race riots was tapped by Governor George Wallace of Alabama. Wallace was the first politician of late-20th-century America to marshal the general resentment against the Washington establishment ("pointy-head liberals," as he called them) and the two-party system. He ran for president as the self-nominated candidate of the American Independent party, hoping to win enough electoral votes to throw the election into the House of Representatives.

Return of Richard Nixon Many observers thought Richard Nixon's political career had ended in 1962 after his unsuccessful run for governor of California. In 1968, however, a new, more confident and less negative Nixon announced his candidacy and soon became the front-runner in the Republican primaries. The favorite of the party regulars, he had little trouble securing his nomination at the Republican convention. For his running mate, he selected Governor Spiro Agnew of Maryland, whose rhetoric was similar to that of George Wallace. Nixon was a "hawk" on the Vietnam War and ran on the slogans of "peace with honor" and "law and order."

Results Wallace and Nixon started strong, but the Democrats began to catch up, especially in northern urban centers, as Humphrey preached to the faithful of the old New Deal coalition. On election night, Nixon defeated Humphrey by a very close popular vote but took a substantial majority of the electoral vote (301 to 191), ending any threat that the three-candidate election would end up in the House of Representatives.

LIMITS OF A SUPERPOWER, 1969-1980

If, when the chips are down, the world's most powerful nation, the United States, acts like a pitiful, helpless giant, the forces of totalitarianism and anarchy will threaten free nations and free institutions throughout the world.

Richard Nixon, Address to the Nation, April 30, 1970

In 1969, television viewers around the world witnessed the astonishing sight of two American astronauts walking on the moon's surface. This event, followed by a series of other successes for the U.S. space program, represented some of the high points of the 1970s. Offsetting these technological triumphs, however, were shocking revelations about White House participation in the Watergate crime, a stagnant economy, and the fall of South Vietnam to communism. Increased foreign economic competition, oil shortages, rising unemployment, and high inflation made Americans aware that even the world's leading superpower would have to adjust to a fast-changing, less manageable world.

Richard Nixon's Foreign Policy

In his January 1969 inaugural address, President Nixon promised to bring Americans together after the turmoil of the 1960s. However, suspicious and secretive by nature, Nixon soon began to isolate himself in the White House and create what Arthur Schlesinger Jr. called an "imperial presidency." Nixon's first interest was international relations, not domestic policy. Together with his national security adviser, Henry Kissinger (who became secretary of state during Nixon's second term), Nixon fashioned a pragmatic foreign policy that reduced the tensions of the Cold War.

Vietnam

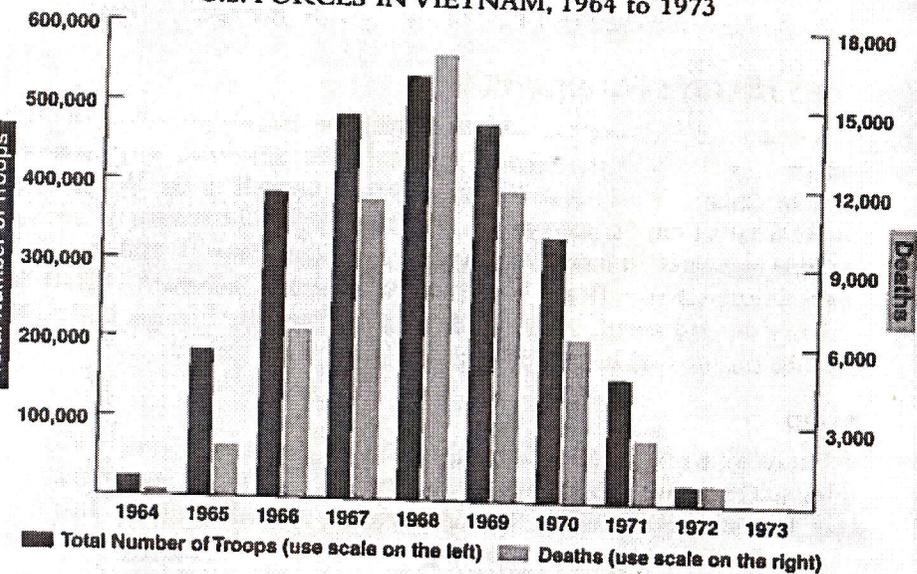
When Nixon took office, more than half a million U.S. troops were in Vietnam. His principal objective was to find a way to reduce U.S. involvement in the war while at the same time avoiding the appearance of conceding defeat. In a word, Nixon said the United States was seeking nothing less than "peace with honor."

“Vietnamization.” Almost immediately, the new president began the process called “Vietnamization.” He announced that he would gradually withdraw U.S. troops from Vietnam and give the South Vietnamese the money, the weapons, and the training that they needed to take over the full conduct of the war. Under this policy, U.S. troops in South Vietnam went from over 540,000 in 1969 to under 30,000 in 1972. Extending the idea of disengagement to other parts of Asia, the president proclaimed the *Nixon Doctrine*, declaring that in the future Asian allies would receive U.S. support but without the extensive use of U.S. ground forces.

Opposition to Nixon’s War Policies Nixon’s gradual withdrawal of forces from Vietnam reduced the number of antiwar protests. However, in April 1970, the president expanded the war by using U.S. forces to invade Cambodia in an effort to destroy Vietnamese Communist bases in that country. A nationwide protest on college campuses against this action resulted in the killing of four youths by National Guard troops at Kent State in Ohio and two students at Jackson State in Mississippi. In reaction to the escalation of the war, the U.S. Senate (but not the House) voted to repeal the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution.

Also in 1970, the American public was shocked to learn about a 1968 massacre of women and children by U.S. troops in the Vietnamese village of My Lai. Further fueling the antiwar sentiment was the publication by the *New York Times* of the Pentagon Papers, a secret government history documenting the mistakes and deceptions of government policy-makers in dealing with Vietnam. The papers had been turned over, or “leaked,” to the press by Daniel Ellsberg, a former Defense Department analyst.

U.S. FORCES IN VIETNAM, 1964 to 1973



Source: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration. Vietnam Conflict Extract Data File and other sources.

Peace Talks, Bombing Attacks, and Armistice On the diplomatic front, Nixon had Kissinger conduct secret meetings with North Vietnam’s foreign minister, Le Duc Tho. Kissinger announced in the fall of 1972 that “peace is at hand,” but this announcement proved premature. When the two sides could not reach a deal, Nixon ordered a massive bombing of North Vietnam (the heaviest air attacks of the long war) to force a settlement. After several weeks of B-52 bomber attacks, the North Vietnamese agreed to an armistice, in which the United States would withdraw the last of its troops and get back over 500 prisoners of war (POWs). The Paris Accords of January 1973 also promised a cease-fire and free elections. In practice, however, the armistice did not end the war between the North and the South and left tens of thousands of enemy troops in South Vietnam. Before the war ended, the death toll probably numbered more than a million.

The armistice finally allowed the United States to extricate itself from a war that had claimed over 58,000 American lives. The \$118 billion spent on the war began an inflationary cycle that racked the U.S. economy for years afterward.

Détente with China and the Soviet Union

Nixon and Kissinger strengthened the U.S. position in the world by taking advantage of the rivalry between the two Communist giants, China and the Soviet Union. Their diplomacy was praised for bringing about *détente*—a deliberate reduction of Cold War tensions. Even after Watergate ended his presidency in disgrace, Nixon’s critics would admit that his conduct of foreign affairs had enhanced world peace.

Visit to China Nixon knew that only an outspoken critic of communism like himself could take the bold step of improving relations with “Red” China (Mao Zedong’s Communist regime) without being condemned as “soft” on communism. After a series of secret negotiations with Chinese leaders, Nixon astonished the world in February 1972 by traveling to Beijing to meet with Mao. His visit initiated diplomatic exchanges that ultimately led to U.S. recognition of the Communist government in 1979.

Arms Control with the U.S.S.R. Nixon used his new relationship with China to put pressure on the Soviets to agree to a treaty limiting antiballistic missiles (ABMs), a new technology that would have expanded the arms race. After the first round of Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT I), U.S. diplomats secured Soviet consent to a freeze on the number of ballistic missiles carrying nuclear warheads. While this agreement did not end the arms race, it was a significant step toward reducing Cold War tensions and bringing about *détente*.

Nixon’s Domestic Policy

Throughout the 1970s, the Democrats continued to hold majorities in both houses of Congress. The Republican president had to live with this reality and obtain some concessions from Congress through moderation and compromise. At the same time, Nixon laid the foundation for a shift in public opinion toward conservatism and for Republican gains that would challenge and overthrow the Democratic control of Congress in the 1980s and 1990s.

The New Federalism

Nixon tried to slow down the growth of Johnson's Great Society programs by proposing the Family Assistance Plan, which would have replaced welfare by providing a guaranteed annual income for working Americans. The Democratic majority in Congress easily defeated this initiative. The Republican president did succeed, however, in shifting some of the responsibility for social programs from the federal to the state and local levels. In a program known as revenue sharing, or the New Federalism, Congress approved giving local governments \$30 billion in block grants over five years to address local needs as they saw fit (instead of specific uses of federal money being controlled by Washington). Republicans hoped revenue sharing would check the growth of the federal government and return responsibility to the states, where it had rested before the New Deal.

Nixon attempted to bypass Congress by impounding (not spending) funds appropriated for social programs. Democrats protested that such action was an abuse of executive powers. The courts agreed with the president's critics, arguing that it was a president's duty to carry out the laws of Congress, whether or not the president agreed with them.

Nixon's Economic Policies

Starting with a recession in 1970, the U.S. economy throughout the 1970s faced the unusual combination of economic slowdown and high inflation—a condition referred to as *stagflation* (*stagnation plus inflation*). To slow inflation, Nixon at first tried to cut federal spending. However, when this policy contributed to a recession and unemployment, he adopted Keynesian economics and deficit spending so as not to alienate middle-class and blue-collar Americans. In August 1971, he surprised the nation by imposing a 90-day wage and price freeze. Next, he took the dollar off the gold standard, which helped to devalue it relative to foreign currencies. This action, combined with a 10 percent surtax on all imports, improved the U.S. balance of trade with foreign competitors.

By the election year of 1972, the recession was over. Also in that year, Congress approved automatic increases for Social Security benefits based on the annual rise in the cost of living. This measure protected seniors, the poor, and the disabled from the worst effects of inflation but also contributed to budget problems in the future. In 1972, Congress also passed Title IX, a statute to end sex discrimination in schools that receive federal funding. Though far-reaching, the law is best known for its requirement that schools provide girls with equal athletic opportunities. Many believe that these new opportunities in athletics proved to be a key step in promoting women's equality.

Southern Strategy

Having received just 43 percent of the popular vote in 1968, Nixon was well aware of being a minority president. He devised a political strategy to form a Republican majority by appealing to the millions of voters who had become disaffected by antiwar protests, black militants, school busing to achieve racial balance, and the excesses of the youth counterculture. Nixon referred to these

conservative Americans as the "silent majority." Many of them were Democrats, including southern whites, northern Catholic blue-collar workers, and recent suburbanites who disagreed with the liberal drift of their party.

To win over the South, the president asked the federal courts in that region to delay integration plans and busing orders. He also nominated two southern conservatives (Clement Haynsworth and G. Harold Carswell) to the Supreme Court. Though the courts rejected his requests and the Senate refused to confirm the two nominees, his strategy played well with southern white voters. At the same time, Nixon authorized Vice President Spiro Agnew to make verbal assaults on war protesters and to attack the press as liberal.

The Burger Court

As liberal justices of the Supreme Court retired, Nixon replaced them with more conservative members. However, like other presidents, Nixon found that his appointees did not always rule as he had hoped. In 1969, after Chief Justice Earl Warren resigned, Nixon appointed Warren E. Burger of Minnesota to replace him. The Burger Court was more conservative than the Warren Court, but several of its major decisions angered conservatives. For example, in 1971 the court ordered busing to achieve racial balance in the schools, and in 1972 it issued strict guidelines that made carrying out the death penalty more difficult. The court's most controversial ruling was *Roe v. Wade* (1973). In this 7–2 decision, the high court struck down many state laws prohibiting abortions as a violation of a women's right to privacy. Finally, in the last days of Nixon's Watergate agony (described later in this chapter), the court that he tried to shape denied his claims to executive privilege and ordered him to turn over the Watergate tapes (*United States v. Nixon*, 1974).

The Election of 1972

The success of Nixon's southern strategy became evident in the presidential election of 1972 when the Republican ticket won majorities in every southern state. Nixon's reelection was practically assured by (1) his foreign policy successes in China and the Soviet Union, (2) the removal of George Wallace from the race by an assassin's bullet that paralyzed the Alabama populist, and (3) the nomination by the Democrats of a very liberal, antiwar, antiestablishment candidate, Senator George McGovern of South Dakota.

McGovern's campaign quickly went off track. After some indecision, he dropped his vice presidential candidate, Senator Thomas Eagleton of Missouri, when it was discovered that he had undergone electroshock treatment for depression. On election day, Nixon overwhelmed McGovern in a landslide victory that carried every state but Massachusetts and won 61 percent of the popular vote. The Democrats still managed to keep control of both houses of Congress. Nevertheless, the voting patterns for Nixon indicated the start of a major political realignment of the Sunbelt and suburban voters, who were forming a new Republican majority. Nixon's electoral triumph in 1972 made the Watergate revelations and scandals of 1973 all the more surprising.

Watergate

The tragedy of Watergate went well beyond the public humiliation of Richard Nixon and the conviction and jailing of 26 White House officials and aides. Watergate had a paralyzing effect on the political system in the mid-1970s, a critical time both at home and overseas, when the country needed respected, strong, and confident leadership.

White House Abuses

In June 1972, a group of men hired by Nixon's reelection committee were caught breaking into the offices of the Democratic national headquarters in the Watergate complex in Washington, D.C. This break-in and attempted bugging were only part of a series of illegal activities and "dirty tricks" conducted by the Nixon administration and the Committee to Re-Elect the President (CREEP).

Earlier, Nixon had ordered wiretaps on government employees and reporters to stop news leaks such as one that had exposed the secret bombing of Cambodia. The president's aides created a group, called the "plumbers," to stop leaks as well as to discredit opponents. Before Watergate, the "plumbers" had burglarized the office of psychiatrist of Daniel Ellsberg, the person behind the leaking of the Pentagon Papers, in order to obtain information to discredit Ellsberg. The White House had also created an "enemies list" of prominent Americans who opposed Nixon, the Vietnam War, or both. People on this list were investigated by government agencies, such as the IRS. The illegal break-in at Watergate reflected the attitude in the Nixon administration that any means could be used to promote the national security—an objective that was often confused with protecting the Nixon administration from its critics.

Watergate Investigation

No solid proof demonstrated that President Nixon ordered any of these illegal activities. However, after months of investigation, it became clear that Nixon did engage in an illegal cover-up to avoid scandal. Tough sentencing of the Watergate burglars by federal judge John Sirica led to information about the use of money and a promise of pardons by the White House staff to keep the burglars quiet. A Senate investigating committee headed by Democrat Sam Ervin of North Carolina brought the abuses to the attention of Americans through televised hearings. A highlight of these hearings was the testimony of a White House lawyer, John Dean, who linked the president to the cover-up. Nixon's top aides, H. R. Haldeman and John Ehrlichman, resigned to protect him and were later indicted, as were many others, for obstructing justice.

The discovery of a taping system in the Oval Office led to a year-long struggle between Nixon, who claimed executive privilege for the tapes, and investigators, who wanted the tapes to prove the cover-up charges.

The Nixon administration received another blow in the fall of 1973, when Vice President Agnew had to resign because he had taken bribes when governor of Maryland. Replacing him was Michigan Representative Gerald Ford.

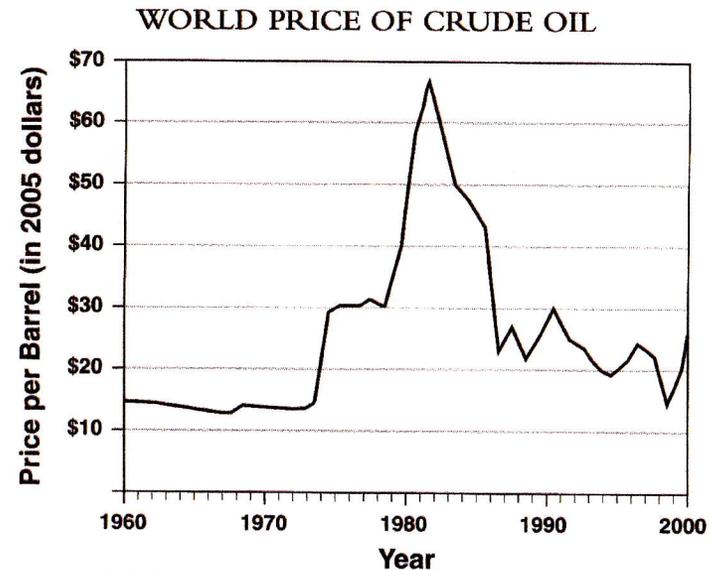
Other Developments in 1973

Although the Watergate affair absorbed most of Nixon's attention during his shortened second term, important developments occurred at home and abroad.

War Powers Act Further discrediting Nixon was the news that he had authorized 3,500 secret bombing raids in Cambodia, a neutral country. Congress used the public uproar over this information to attempt to limit the president's powers over the military. In November 1973, after a long struggle, Congress finally passed the War Powers Act over Nixon's veto. This law required Nixon and any future president to report to Congress within 48 hours after taking military action. It further provided that Congress would have to approve any military action that lasted more than 60 days.

October War and Oil Embargo In world politics, the most important event of 1973 was the outbreak of another Middle Eastern war. On October 6, on the Jewish holy day of Yom Kippur, the Syrians and Egyptians launched a surprise attack on Israel in an attempt to recover the lands lost in the Six-Day War of 1967. President Nixon ordered the U.S. nuclear forces on alert and airlifted almost \$2 billion in arms to Israel to stem their retreat. The tide of battle quickly shifted in favor of the Israelis, and the war was soon over.

The United States was made to pay a huge price for supporting Israel. The



Source: U.S. Energy Administration

Arab members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) placed an embargo on oil sold to Israel's supporters. The embargo caused a worldwide oil shortage and long lines at gas stations in the United States. Even worse was the impact on the U.S. economy, which now suffered from runaway

inflation, the loss of manufacturing jobs, and a lower standard of living for blue-collar workers. Consumers switched from big American-made cars to smaller, more fuel-efficient Japanese cars, which cost U.S. automobile workers over 225,000 jobs. Congress responded by enacting a 55-miles-per-hour speed limit to save gasoline and approving construction of a controversial oil pipeline to tap American oil reserves in Alaska. No government program, however, seemed to bolster the sluggish economy or stem high inflation rates, which continued to the end of the decade.

Resignation of a President

In 1974, Nixon made triumphal visits to Moscow and Cairo, but at home his reputation continued to slide. In October 1973, the president appeared to be interfering with the Watergate investigation when he fired Archibald Cox, the special prosecutor assigned to the case. In protest, the U.S. attorney general resigned. The House of Representatives began impeachment hearings, which caused Nixon to reveal transcripts of some of the Watergate tapes in April 1974. Still, it took a Supreme Court decision in July to force him to turn over the tapes to the courts and Congress. Included on one tape made just days after the Watergate burglary was an 18 ½-minute gap that had been erased. Meanwhile, the House Judiciary Committee voted three articles of impeachment: (1) obstruction of justice, (2) abuse of power, and (3) contempt of Congress.

The conversations recorded on the tapes shocked friends and foes alike. The transcript of one such White House conversation clearly implicated Nixon in the cover-up only days after the Watergate break-in. Faced with certain impeachment in the House and a trial in the Senate, Richard Nixon chose to resign on August 9, 1974. Vice President Gerald Ford then took the oath of office as the first unelected president in U.S. history.

Significance To some, the final outcome of the Watergate scandal (Nixon leaving office under pressure) proved that the U.S. constitutional system of checks and balances worked as it was intended. For others, the scandal underlined the dangerous shift of power to the presidency that began with Franklin Roosevelt and had been expanded during the Cold War. Without a doubt, Watergate contributed to a growing loss of faith in the federal government.

Gerald Ford in the White House

Before Nixon chose him to replace Vice President Agnew in 1973, Gerald Ford had served in Congress for years as a representative from Michigan and as the Republican minority leader of the House. Ford was a likeable and unpretentious man, but many questioned his ability to be president.

Pardoning of Nixon

In his first month in office, President Ford lost the goodwill of many by granting Nixon a full and unconditional pardon for any crime that he might have committed. The pardon was extended even before any formal charges or indictment had been made by a court of law. Ford was accused of making a "corrupt

bargain" with Nixon, but he explained that the purpose of the pardon was to end the "national nightmare," instead of prolonging it for months, if not years. Critics were angered that the full truth of Nixon's deeds never came out.

Investigating the CIA

During Ford's presidency (1974–1977), the Democratic Congress continued to search for abuses in the executive branch, especially in the CIA. This intelligence agency was accused of engineering the assassination of foreign leaders, among them the Marxist president of Chile, Salvador Allende. Ford appointed former Texas Congressman George H. W. Bush to reform the agency.

Failure of U.S. Policy in Southeast Asia

President Ford was unable to get additional funds from Congress for the South Vietnamese, who in 1974 were facing strong attack from Communist forces.

Fall of Saigon In April 1975, the U.S.-supported government in Saigon fell to the enemy, and Vietnam became one country under the rule of the Communist government in Hanoi (North Vietnam's capital). Just before the final collapse, the United States was able to evacuate about 150,000 Vietnamese who had supported the United States and now faced certain persecution. The fall of South Vietnam marked a low point of American prestige overseas and confidence at home.

Genocide in Cambodia Also in 1975, the U.S.-supported government in Vietnam's neighbor, Cambodia, fell to the Khmer Rouge, a radical Communist faction that killed over a million of its own people in a brutal relocation program to rid the country of western influence. Together the wars in Southeast Asia created 10 million refugees, many of whom fled to the United States.

Future of Southeast Asia The fall of Cambodia seemed to fulfill Eisenhower's domino theory, but in fact the rest of Southeast Asia did not fall to communism. Instead, nations such as Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia emerged as the "little tigers" of the vigorously growing Asian (Pacific Rim) economy. Some argued that U.S. support of South Vietnam was not a waste, because it bought time for other nations of East Asia and Southeast Asia to develop and better resist communism.

The Economy and Domestic Policy

On domestic matters, Ford proved less accommodating and more conservative than Nixon. His chief concern was bringing inflation under control. He urged voluntary measures on the part of businesses and consumers, including the wearing of WIN buttons (Whip Inflation Now). Not only did inflation continue, but the economy also sank deeper into recession, with the unemployment rate reaching more than 9 percent. Ford finally agreed to a Democratic package to stimulate the economy, but he vetoed 39 other Democratic bills.

Bicentennial Celebration In 1976, the United States celebrated its 200th birthday. Americans' pride in their history helped to put Watergate and Vietnam behind them. Even the lackluster presidency of Gerald Ford served the purpose of restoring candor and humility to the White House.

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

Questions 1–3 refer to the excerpt below.

“Unlike some anticommunists . . . I have always believed that we can and must communicate and, when possible, negotiate with Communist nations. . . .

“There were, however, a few things in our favor. The most important and interesting was the Soviet split with China. . . .

“It was often said that the key to a Vietnam settlement lay in Moscow and Peking rather than in Hanoi. . . . Aside from wanting to keep Hanoi from going over to Peking, Moscow had little stake in the outcome of the North Vietnamese cause, especially as it increasingly worked against Moscow’s own major interests vis-à-vis the United States. While I understood that the Soviets were not entirely free agents where their support for North Vietnam was concerned, I nonetheless planned to bring maximum pressure to bear on them in this area.”

—Richard Nixon, *RN: Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, 1978

1. Which of the following best explains why Nixon’s foreign policy was a departure from the previous administrations’?
 - (A) He was the first president willing to negotiate with communist leaders
 - (B) He was willing to use massive bombing to force an issue
 - (C) He turned over his foreign policy to his national security advisor
 - (D) He exploited that Communism was not a unified world movement
2. Nixon’s bold move to open up relations with Communist China was helped most by
 - (A) the support of the Communist leaders in the Soviet Union
 - (B) his long history of being a hard-line opponent of communism
 - (C) Mao Zedong’s belief that the Cultural Revolution had failed
 - (D) his belief that Americans trusted China more than the Soviet Union
3. Which of the following was Nixon able to negotiate as a result of his new relationship with China?
 - (A) Withdrawal of Chinese troops from Vietnam
 - (B) Autonomy for Poland in Eastern Europe
 - (C) Freeze on the number of US and USSR ballistic missiles
 - (D) A peace treaty between South and North Korea

Questions 4–5 refer to the following cartoon.



Source: A 1974 Herblock Cartoon, © The Herb Block Foundation

4. Richard Nixon claimed that “I am not a crook,” but which of the following best explains his crime?
 - (A) Destroying evidence that was on the tapes
 - (B) Covering up illegal activities of his reelection campaign
 - (C) Firing the special prosecutors and his attorney general
 - (D) Lying to the grand jury during the investigation
5. Which best explains the role of the tapes in Nixon’s fall?
 - (A) Transcripts of the tapes were published in the newspapers
 - (B) The tapes used in *United States v. Nixon* proved that he was lying
 - (C) The tapes provided evidence that he was involved in the cover-up
 - (D) The tapes turned his closest advisers against him

⑥ SAQ

A) Effects of the War Powers Act of 1973.

B) Significance of détente and Vietnamization

C) Goals of New Federalism