

# **The Nixon, Ford, and Carter Years**

A Presentation Based on the  
Georgia Standards of Excellence  
(GSE) Objectives for High School  
History Students

## **SSUSH22** Analyze U.S. international and domestic policies including their influences on technological advancements and social changes during the **Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations.**

- SSUSH22a. 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.**
- 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.**

# Nixon in China

- President Nixon was anti-communist, but he believed the best route to world peace was to build a better relationship with China and Russia.
- **Nixon lifted trade & travel restrictions with China.**
- Nixon **traveled to China in 1972**, becoming the first U.S. President to visit the country.
- Nixon agreed to a “one China” policy, i.e., that Taiwan was a part of China
- **Nixon rightly believed that his visit to China would convince the Soviets to open peace talks with the U.S.**



# Détente

- **Détente** is a period of easing Cold War tensions between the U.S. and the Soviet Union from 1967 to 1979.
- The era was a time of increased trade and cooperation with the Soviet Union and the signing of the SALT treaties.
- Relations would cool again with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

# Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT)

- [N]egotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union. . . curtailing the manufacture of strategic missiles capable of carrying nuclear weapons.
- SALT I and SALT II were signed by the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. in 1972 and 1979
- [M]ost important were the Treaty on Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Systems and the Interim Agreement and Protocol on Limitation of Strategic Offensive Weapons. (1972).

# Stagflation

- In the 1960s, the country's economy headed into a period of "stagflation," (stagnant economy paired with rising prices)
- Chief causes were:
  - Federal budget deficits esp. w/ Vietnam War
  - Increased foreign trade competition
  - Rapid increase in oil prices
- Nixon fought this with a wage & price freeze, but it failed to work in the long run.

# The 1972 Presidential Election

- In 1970, President Nixon began his reelection campaign.
- During the campaign Nixon built on his “southern strategy” by condemning the busing of students to achieve racial integration, which was very unpopular in many places in the North as well as the South.
- By 1971, members of Nixon’s staff had formed the Committee for the Re-Election of the President (CREEP).
- CREEP was designed to spearhead a campaign effort separate from the Republican National Committee’s campaign work.

# The War Powers Act

- To prevent future conflicts similar to Vietnam, Congress passed the **War Powers Resolution** (aka War Powers Act) in November 1973, over-riding the President's veto.
- This bill requires the President to consult with Congress within 48 hours of involving U.S. forces in combat, and a limit of 60 to 90 days without Congressional authorization.
- This act has been considered controversial and has been ignored by subsequent Presidents.
- Chiefly it has been used as a political tool to criticize Presidential actions.



# Watergate

- Fearing that various political issues might cause him to lose, some of the campaign staff began spying on Nixon's opponent George McGovern.
- In June 1972, five men linked to Nixon's campaign, including CREEP's security head James McCord, were arrested while breaking into the **Democratic Party's National Committee headquarters** in the Watergate office building.



# Watergate

- The men were attempting to steal campaign information and tap the phones.
- Nixon began to cover up any connection between his staff and the break in, and he ordered that the CIA was to stop the FBI's investigation.
- The President denied any wrong doing and eventually won reelection.
- By June of 1973 it was revealed that Nixon had installed a taping system in the Oval Office to record conversations that he had hoped to use to write a book after he left office.

# Watergate

- Claiming **executive privilege**, Nixon refused to give the tapes to prosecutors investigating the break-in.
- He was forced by the Supreme Court decision in *United States v. Nixon* to turn the tapes over in 1974.
- With evidence of a **Presidential cover-up**, the House of Representatives proceeded to impeach Nixon.
- In August 1974, Nixon resigned from the Presidency, thus Vice-President **Gerald Ford** became President.



# The Ford Presidency

- In 1974, **President Ford pardoned Nixon** for any crimes he committed or may have taken part in while in office.
- Although this action drew fierce criticism, President Ford believed the pardon was necessary so the country could put the scandal aside and move forward.
- President Ford's popularity dropped as a result of the pardon: his approval rating fell from 71% to 50%.
- Ford was also unable to revive the sagging economy despite his WIN (Whip Inflation Now) program, cuts in government spending and support for higher interest rates.
- In the 1976 Presidential campaign, Ford was defeated by Georgian **James E. ("Jimmy") Carter, Jr.**
- Although Carter had been Governor of Georgia, he had no experience in national politics. However, **many people viewed him as morally virtuous and someone who would restore honesty and integrity to the Presidency.**

# The End of the Vietnam War

- By 1971, a great majority of Americans wanted the war to end.
- **Protesters accosted soldiers** returning home from their tours of duty by shouting obscenities, pounding on their cars, and even spitting and getting into fights.
- Until 1972, President Nixon had insisted that the North Vietnamese army pull all troops out of South Vietnam before negotiating a peace treaty.
- Although **Nixon reversed this stance**, South Vietnam's President Nguyen Van Thieu **disagreed**
- After **peace negotiations** began in 1972, they **broke down**, and **the President ordered the heaviest bombing attack of the war.**
- Eventually, Thieu agreed to allow North Vietnamese troops to remain, leading the following consequences:
  1. a peace treaty was signed to end the war in 1973.
  2. After the U.S. troops pulled out, Communists attacked.
  3. Although President Nixon had promised to defend South Vietnam, he was no longer President, and Congress refused President Ford's request for money to help defend them.
  4. South Vietnam fell to Communists' control in April 1975.

# Roe v. Wade and Abortion Rights

- ***Roe v. Wade***: This 1973 ruling held that women have the Constitutional right under certain circumstances to terminate a pregnancy based on the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment and the idea of privacy afforded under the Constitution.

# Roe v. Wade

from < [http://www.oyez.org/cases/1970-1979/1971/1971\\_70\\_18](http://www.oyez.org/cases/1970-1979/1971/1971_70_18) >

- Roe, a Texas resident, sought to terminate her pregnancy by abortion. Texas law prohibited abortions except to save the pregnant woman's life.

Question: Does the Constitution embrace a woman's right to terminate her pregnancy by abortion?

- The Court held that a woman's right to an abortion fell within the right to privacy (recognized in *Griswold v. Connecticut*) protected by the Fourteenth Amendment.
- The decision gave a woman total autonomy over the pregnancy during the first trimester and defined different levels of state interest for the second and third trimesters. As a result, the laws of 46 states were affected by the Court's ruling.
- Decision: 7 votes for Roe, 2 vote(s) against
- Legal provision: Due Process

# ***Regents of the University of California v. Bakke***

- This 1978 ruling declared the admissions process at the UC Davis Medical School was unconstitutional because it excluded a student, Allan Bakke, from a federally funded program on the basis of race.
- Although the justices provided no clear decision on whether race could be a factor in admission to college for the purpose of diversity, the ruling was seen as support for affirmative action.  
(***Affirmative action*** is the practice of improving the education and job opportunities of members of groups that have not been treated fairly in the past because of their race, sex, etc.)
- A subsequent Supreme Court decision, *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003), affirmed that race could be a factor, but not a deciding factor, in admissions processes in order to achieve diversity.



# The Middle East



# The Carter Administration

- In 1978, President Carter helped to broker a peace agreement between Israel and Egypt, two Middle Eastern countries which had been bitter enemies.
- Israel is a Jewish country, Egypt is an Arab nation.
- The peace treaty was known as the Camp David Accords.



# The Carter Administration and the Crisis in Iran

- The U.S. had long supported Iran because it was a major oil supplier and was a buffer against Russian expansion.
- Iran was headed by the Shah (Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi), who was becoming unpopular among fundamentalists because of the increasing westernization and secularization of Iran.



# The Iranian Revolution and Hostage Crisis

- In 1979, Islamic extremists headed by the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, a Shi'ite religious leader, forced the Shah of Iran to flee the country and took control of the Iranian government.
- The Shah, who was ill, was allowed to receive medical treatment in the U.S.
- In response, revolutionaries stormed the U.S. embassy and took 66 Americans hostage on November 4, 1979. Fourteen were later released, reducing the hostage count to 52.



# The Iran Hostage Crisis

- Unable to negotiate the release of the hostages, Carter ordered a secret rescue attempt.
- The rescue mission failed when several U.S. helicopters suffered mechanical problems; after a command was issued to abort the mission, another helicopter and a plane collided during a dust storm, killing eight soldiers and injuring four others.
- The failure made Carter look bad and contributed to his defeat in the 1980 election.
- The hostages were finally released on Carter's last day in office after being held for 444 days.

# The Carter Presidency

- Carter's greatest achievement remained the **Camp David Accords**, a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, two bitter Middle Eastern enemies.
- Carter also brought a new sense of urgency to issues of human rights at home and abroad. For example, Carter:
  - spearheaded the effort to return control of the Panama Canal to Panamanians
  - spoke out against human rights violations by foreign countries (most notably the Soviet Union).
- Still, Carter was perceived as a failure in reviving the economy and resolving the Iran hostage crisis.
- Ronald Reagan defeated Carter in 1980's election.

# The Modern Environmentalist Movement



- In 1962 Rachel Carson, a biologist, wrote ***Silent Spring*** which decried the use of pesticides and their effects on the environment, focusing in on the use of DDT
- Events such as Cleveland's Cuyahoga River catching fire (1969) helped spur the environmental movement.

# Earth Day

- In 1970, in response to *Silent Spring* and several environmental accidents, Earth Day was formed by several groups to educate and promote the environmental movement





# Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

- In response to the growing environmental movement, the U.S. formed the EPA in 1970 to create and enforce pollution standards
- The EPA is an example of the government reacting to the wishes of it's citizens.



# Some Victories of the Environmental Movement

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), 1970
- Clean Air Act, 1970
- Clean Water Act, 1973
- Endangered Species Act, 1973

# The National Organization of Women (NOW) and the Origins and Goals of the Modern Women's Rights Movement.

- The women's rights movement has roots in the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention, but progress was slow.
- For example, not until 1920 did women across the country win the right to vote.
- By the early 1960s, many women had grown unhappy with staying/working in the home, unequal pay when performing the same job as men, and lack of equal educational opportunities.
- A combination of discrimination and resentment led to the rise of the **feminist** movement .
- **Feminism** promotes political, social and economic equality among the sexes.

# Feminist Leadership

- The women's movement related to the civil rights movement in terms of how society tended to view and treat them as a group.
- Although increasing numbers of women were entering college and the workplace, some feminist leaders, such as **Betty Friedan** and **Gloria Steinem**, were impatient with the slow pace of change.

# National Organization for Women (NOW)

- NOW was organized in 1966 by Betty Friedan
- Its goals were:
  - 1) getting an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) passed to help with:
    - improving educational opportunities for women
    - equal pay for equal work
    - ending discrimination in the workplace, and
  - 2) protect reproductive rights, especially the right to an abortion



# Feminism's Tactics and Achievements

- While feminists did adopt many of the civil rights movement's tactics, such as **protest marches** and civil suits (**court cases**), they also worked within the political frameworks of the nation by **lobbying legislators** for **laws and regulations**, such as:
  - The **Civil Rights Act of 1964**, which outlawed sexual discrimination in the workplace under **Title VII**, and set up the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to investigate job discrimination claims
  - **Title IX** of the **1972 Higher Education Act** which barred discrimination in education
  - The **Equal Credit Opportunity Act**, banning denial of credit based on gender
  - **Roe v. Wade**, a 1973 Supreme Court decision granting the right to an abortion up to the third trimester of pregnancy

# Failure of the ERA

- Although NOW achieved many of its goals, the organization as well as the Equal Rights Amendment had critics.
- For example, **Phyllis Schlafly** opposed the ERA because she believed it would lead to military drafting of mothers and require women to contribute more to family finances.
- Consequently, the ERA fell three states shy of ratification.
- Still, the feminist movement achieved a number of successes, such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VII, which outlawed sexual discrimination in the workplace.

