

CHAPTER 30

THE CRISIS OF AUTHORITY



"TODAY'S TEEN-AGERS" The coming of age of the "baby-boom" generation, and the rise of youthful activism, led *Time* magazine to devote a 1965 cover story to "Today's Teen-Agers." As notable as the choice of subject was the choice of artist for the cover image: Andy Warhol, the great pop artist whose serial portraits of both famous and unknown people helped define his era. Warhol's work was instrumental in breaking down barriers between serious art and popular culture, both in its subject matter (celebrities, commercial products) and in its techniques, which drew heavily from commercial art. This series of silk-screened photographs made use of one of his trademark media. (*Time Life Pictures/Getty Images*)

RICHARD NIXON'S ELECTION in 1968 was the result of more than the unpopularity of Lyndon Johnson and the war. It was the result, too, of a strong popular reaction against what many Americans considered a frontal assault on the foundations of their culture.

Throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, new movements and interest groups were mobilizing to demand protections and benefits. New values and assumptions were emerging to challenge traditional patterns of thought and behavior. The United States was in the throes, it sometimes seemed, of a cultural revolution.

Some Americans welcomed the changes. But the 1968 election returns suggested that more people feared them. There was growing resentment against the attention directed toward minorities and the poor, against the federal social programs that were funneling billions of dollars into the inner cities to help the poor and unemployed, against the increasing tax burden on the middle class, against the "hippies" and radicals who were dominating public discourse with their bitter critiques of values that many middle-class Americans revered. It was time, their critics believed, for a restoration of stability and a relegitimization of traditional centers of authority.

In Richard Nixon they found a man who seemed to match their mood. Himself a product of a hardworking, middle-class family, he had risen to prominence on the basis of his own unrelenting efforts. He projected an image of stern dedication to traditional values. Yet the presidency of Richard Nixon, far from returning calm and stability to American politics, coincided with, and in many ways helped to produce, more years of crisis.

Several crises were not wholly of Nixon's making. He inherited an unpopular war in Vietnam. Nixon attempted to reduce opposition to the war by withdrawing some American troops and replacing them with Vietnamese soldiers. But in other ways he escalated the war, through higher levels of bombing and through an incursion into Cambodia in the spring of 1970. Nixon also inherited an economy that was beginning to weaken and that, by the beginning of his second term, was reeling under rapidly rising energy prices and growing inflation.

One crisis, at least, was attributable to Nixon and the people in his administration. An obscure break-in at the Democratic National Committee headquarters in Washington, D.C., in June 1972, hardly noticed at the time, gradually expanded to create one of the most serious crises in the history of the presidency—and the first such crisis to drive a president from office. Having won election by railing against crises of authority that threatened social stability, Nixon left office having created a major crisis of authority himself.

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

- 1961 ▶ Representatives of sixty-seven tribes draft Declaration of Indian Purpose
- 1962 ▶ Students for a Democratic Society formed at Port Huron, Michigan
 - ▶ Supreme Court decides *Baker v. Carr*
- 1963 ▶ Betty Friedan publishes *The Feminine Mystique*
- 1964 ▶ Free Speech Movement begins at UC Berkeley
 - ▶ Beatles come to America
- 1965 ▶ United Farm Workers strike
- 1966 ▶ National Organization for Women (NOW) formed
 - ▶ *Miranda v. Arizona* expands rights of criminal suspects
- 1967 ▶ Antiwar protesters march on Pentagon
 - ▶ Israel and Arabs clash in Six-Day War
- 1968 ▶ Campus riots break out at Columbia University and elsewhere
 - ▶ American Indian Movement (AIM) launched
- 1969 ▶ Antiwar movement stages Vietnam "moratorium"
 - ▶ Theodore Roszak publishes *The Making of a Counter Culture*
 - ▶ People's Park uprising at Berkeley
 - ▶ Nixon orders secret bombing of Cambodia
 - ▶ Nixon begins withdrawing American troops from Vietnam
 - ▶ "Stonewall Riot" in New York City launches gay liberation movement
 - ▶ 400,000 people attend rock concert in Woodstock, N.Y.
- 1970 ▶ American troops enter Cambodia
 - ▶ Antiwar protests increase
 - ▶ Students killed at Kent State and Jackson State Universities
 - ▶ Charles Reich publishes *The Greening of America*
- 1971 ▶ Pentagon Papers published
 - ▶ Supreme Court decides *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*
 - ▶ Nixon imposes wage-price freeze and controls
- 1972 ▶ Congress approves Equal Rights Amendment
 - ▶ Nixon visits China
 - ▶ SALT I signed
 - ▶ United States mines Haiphong harbor in North Vietnam
 - ▶ Nixon orders "Christmas bombing" of North Vietnam
 - ▶ Supreme Court decides *Furman v. Georgia*
 - ▶ Burglary interrupted in Watergate office building
 - ▶ Nixon reelected president
- 1973 ▶ Indians demonstrate at Wounded Knee
 - ▶ Supreme Court decides *Roe v. Wade*
 - ▶ Paris accords produce cease-fire; America withdraws from Vietnam
 - ▶ Israel and Arabs clash in Yom Kippur War
 - ▶ Arab oil embargo produces first American energy crisis
 - ▶ Watergate scandal expands
- 1974 ▶ Impeachment proceedings begin against Nixon
 - ▶ Vice President Spiro Agnew resigns; Gerald Ford appointed to replace him
 - ▶ Nixon resigns; Ford becomes president
- 1975 ▶ South Vietnam falls
 - ▶ Khmer Rouge seize control of Cambodia
- 1977 ▶ President Carter pardons Vietnam draft resisters
- 1978 ▶ Supreme Court hands down *Bakke* decision
- 1980 ▶ Large Cuban migration to Florida
- 1982 ▶ Equal Rights Amendment fails to be ratified

THE YOUTH CULTURE

Perhaps most alarming to conservative Americans in the 1960s and 1970s was a pattern of social and cultural protest that was emerging from younger Americans, who were giving vent to two related impulses. One was the impulse, originating with the political left, to create a great new community of “the people,” which would rise up to break the power of elites and force the nation to end the war, pursue racial and economic justice, and transform its political life. The other, at least equally powerful, impulse was the vision of “liberation.” It found expression, in part, through the efforts of particular groups—African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanics, women, gays and lesbians, and others—to define and assert themselves and make demands on the larger society. It also found expression through the efforts of individuals to create a new culture—one that would allow them to escape from what they considered the dehumanizing pressures of what some called the modern “technocracy.”

The New Left

In retrospect, it seems unsurprising that young Americans became so assertive and powerful in American culture and politics in the 1960s. The postwar baby-boom generation, the unprecedented number of people born in a few years just after World War II, was growing up. By 1970, more than half the American population was under thirty years old; more than 8 million Americans—eight times the number in 1950—were attending college. This was the largest generation of youth in American history, and it was coming to maturity in a time of unprecedented affluence, opportunity, and—for many—frustration.

One of the most visible results of the increasingly assertive youth movement was a radicalization of many American college and university students, who in the course of the 1960s formed what became known as the New Left—a large, diverse group of men and women energized by the polarizing developments of their time. The New Left embraced the cause of African Americans and other minorities, but its own ranks consisted overwhelmingly of white people. Blacks and minorities formed political movements of their own. Some members of the New Left were the children of radical parents (members of the so-called Old Left of the 1930s and 1940s).

The New Left drew from the writings of some of the important social critics of the 1950s—among them C. Wright Mills, a sociologist at Columbia University who wrote a series of scathing and brilliant critiques of modern bureaucracies. Relatively few members of the New Left were communists, but many were drawn to the writings of Karl Marx and of contemporary Marxist theorists. Some came to revere Third World Marxists such as Che

Guevara, the South American revolutionary and guerrilla leader; Mao Zedong; and Ho Chi Minh. But the New Left drew its inspiration above all from the civil rights movement, in which many idealistic young white Americans had become involved in the early 1960s.

In 1962, a group of students, most of them from prestigious universities, gathered in Michigan to form an organization to give voice to their demands: Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). Their declaration of beliefs, the Port Huron Statement, expressed their disillusionment with the society they had inherited and their determination to build a new politics.

Some members of SDS moved into inner-city neighborhoods and tried for a time, without great success, to mobilize poor, working-class people politically. But most members of the New Left were students, and their radicalism centered in part on issues related to the modern university. A 1964 dispute at the University of California at Berkeley over the rights of students to engage in political activities on campus gained national attention. The Free Speech Movement, as it called itself, created turmoil at Berkeley as students challenged campus police, occupied administrative offices, and produced a strike in which nearly three-quarters of the Berkeley students participated. The immediate issue was the right of students to pass out literature and recruit volunteers for political causes on campus. But the protest quickly became as well an expression of a more basic critique of the university, and the society it seemed to represent.

The revolt at Berkeley was the first outburst of what was to be nearly a decade of campus turmoil. Students at Berkeley and elsewhere protested the impersonal character of the modern university, and they denounced the role of educational institutions in sustaining what they considered corrupt or immoral public policies. The antiwar movement greatly inflamed the challenge and expanded it to the universities; and beginning in 1968, campus demonstrations, riots, and building seizures became almost commonplace. At Columbia University in New York, students seized several buildings, including the offices of the president, and occupied them for days until local police forcibly and violently ejected them. Harvard University had a similar, and even more violent, experience a year later.

Also in 1969, Berkeley became the scene of perhaps the most prolonged and traumatic conflict of any American college campus in the 1960s: a battle over the efforts of a few students to build a “People’s Park” on a vacant lot the university planned to use to build a parking garage. This seemingly minor event precipitated weeks of impassioned and often violent conflicts between the university administration, which sought to evict the intruders from the land, and the students, many of whom supported the advocates of the park and who saw the university’s efforts to close it as a symbol of the struggle between liberation and oppression.

By the end of the People's Park battle, which lasted for more than a week, the Berkeley campus was completely polarized; even students who had not initially supported or even noticed the People's Park (the great majority) were, by the end, committed to its defense; 85 percent of the 15,000 students voted in a referendum to leave the park alone. Student radicals were, for the first time, winning large audiences for their extravagant rhetoric linking university administrators, the police, and the larger political and economic system, describing them all as part of one united, oppressive force.

Most campus radicals were rarely if ever violent (except at times in their rhetoric). But the image of student radicalism in mainstream culture was one of chaos and disorder, based in part on the disruptive actions of relatively small groups of militants, among them the "Weathermen," a violent offshoot of SDS. The Weathermen were responsible for a few cases of arson and bombing that destroyed campus buildings and claimed several lives. Not many people, not even many students, ever accepted the radical political views that lay at the heart of the New Left. But many supported the position of SDS and other groups on particular issues and, above all, on the Vietnam War. Student activists tried to drive out training programs for military officers (ROTC) and bar military recruiters from college campuses. They attacked the laboratories and corporations that were producing weapons for the war. And between 1967 and 1969, they organized some of the largest political demon-

strations in American history. The October 1967 march on the Pentagon, where demonstrators were met by a solid line of armed troops; the "spring mobilization" of April 1968, which attracted hundreds of thousands of demonstrators in cities around the country; the Vietnam "moratorium" of the fall of 1969, during which millions of opponents of the war gathered in major rallies across the nation; and countless other demonstrations, large and small—all helped thrust the issue of the war into the center of American politics.

Closely related to opposition to the war was opposition to the military draft. The gradual abolition of many traditional deferments—for graduate students, teachers, husbands, fathers, and others—swelled the ranks of those faced with conscription (and thus of those likely to oppose it). Some draft-age Americans simply refused induction, accepting what occasionally were long terms in jail as a result. Others fled to Canada, Sweden, and elsewhere (where they were joined by deserters from the armed forces) to escape conscription. Not until 1977, when President Jimmy Carter issued a general pardon to draft resisters and a more limited amnesty for deserters, did the Vietnam exiles begin to return to the country in substantial numbers.

The Counterculture

Closely related to the New Left was a new youth culture openly scornful of the values and conventions of middle-class society. As if to display their contempt for conven-



BERKELEY, 1969 The People's Park controversy at the University of California at Berkeley turned the campus and the town into something close to a war zone. In this photograph, National Guardsmen with fixed bayonets stand in the way of a planned march to protest the closing of People's Park on May 30, 1969, more than two weeks after they first arrived to keep peace in Berkeley. (AP/Wide World Photos)

ROCK MUSIC IN THE SIXTIES

While folk music often expressed the ideals of young people in the 1960s, rock music expressed their desires. The rock music of the late 1960s and 1970s, even more than the rock 'n' roll of the 1950s and early 1960s, emphasized release. It gave vent to impulse and instinct, to physical and emotional (as opposed to intellectual) urges. That was one reason it was so enormously popular among young people in an age of cultural and sexual revolution. It was also why it seemed so menacing and dangerous to many more conservative Americans seeking to defend more traditional values and behavior.

Rock in the late 1960s seemed simultaneously subversive and liberating. That was partly because of the behavior and lifestyles of rock musicians. They were no longer clean-cut young men wearing red blazers, as many rock performers had been in the 1950s, but men and women whose appearance and behavior were often deliberately outrageous. Rock musicians were connected at times to the drug culture of the 1960s (especially through the so-called psychedelic-rock groups inspired by experiences with the hallucinogen LSD). They had links to mystical Eastern religions (most notably the Beatles, who had spent time in India studying Transcendental Meditation and who, beginning in 1967 with their album *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, incorporated those themes into their music). And they often reveled in flouting social conventions, begin-



ADVERTISING WOODSTOCK Even before the thousands of spectators gathered for the famous rock concert at Woodstock in 1969, organizers envisioned it as something more than a performance. It would, this poster claims, be a search for peace as well as for music. (*Getty Images*)

ning with the Rolling Stones and culminating, perhaps, in the extreme and self-destructive behavior of Jimi

HIPPIES MIRED IN SEA OF MUD



REPORTING WOODSTOCK The *New York Daily News*, whose largely working-class readership was not notably sympathetic toward the young people at Woodstock, ran this slightly derisive front-page story on the concert as heavy rains turned the concert site into a sea of mud. ["They Don't Melt," the caption said.] (*Daily News*)

Hendrix, Jim Morrison, and Janis Joplin, all of whom died very young of drug-related causes.

Late-sixties rock was among many expressions of the impulses that came to be known as the counterculture; and like the counterculture itself, it inspired widely varying reactions. To its defenders, the new rock, with its emphasis on emotional release, was a healthy rebuke to the repressive norms of mainstream culture. To

"Hippies"

tional standards, young Americans flaunted long hair, shabby or flamboyant clothing, and a rebellious disdain for traditional speech and decorum. Also central to the counterculture, as it became known, were drugs: marijuana—which after 1966 became almost as common a youthful diversion as beer drinking—and the less widespread but still substantial use of other, more potent hallucinogens, such as LSD.

There was also a new, more permissive view of sexual behavior—the beginnings of what came to be known as a sexual revolution. To some degree, the emergence of

relaxed approaches to sexuality was a result less of the counterculture than of the new accessibility of effective contraceptives, most notably the birth-control pill and, after 1973, legalized abortion. But the new sexuality also reflected the counterculture's belief that individuals should strive for release from inhibitions and give vent to their instincts.

The counterculture challenged the structure of modern American society, attacking its banality, hollowness, artificiality, materialism, and isolation from nature. The most committed

Haight-Ashbury

them, its virtues were symbolized by the great rock festival at Woodstock, New York, in August 1969, where over 400,000 young people gathered on a remote piece of farmland for several days to hear performances by such artists as the Who, Jimi Hendrix, the Grateful Dead, Janis Joplin, Joe Cocker, the Jefferson Airplane, and many others. The festival was marred by heavy rains that produced a sea of mud, and by supplies and facilities completely inadequate for the unexpectedly large crowd. Drugs were everywhere in evidence, as was a kind of open sexual freedom that a decade earlier would have seemed unthinkable to all but a few Americans. But Woodstock remained through it all peaceful, friendly, and harmonious. There was rhapsodic talk at the time of how Woodstock represented the birth of a new youth culture, the “Woodstock nation.”

Critics of the new rock, and the counterculture with which they associated it, were not impressed with the idea of the “Woodstock nation.” To them, the essence of the counterculture was a kind of numbing hopelessness and despair, with a menacing and violent underside. To them, the appropriate symbol was not Woodstock, but another great rock concert, which more than 300,000 people attended only four months after Woodstock, at the Altamont Speedway east of San Francisco. The concert featured many of the groups that had been at Woodstock, but the Rolling Stones, who had organized the event, were the main attraction. As at Woodstock, drugs were plentiful and sexual exhibitionism was frequent. But



ALTAMONT Hell’s Angels “security guards” club a spectator near the stage during the rock concert at Altamont as other concertgoers—some curious, some aghast—watch. One spectator died as a result of the beatings. (*Photofest*)

unlike Woodstock, Altamont was far from peaceful. Instead, it became ugly, brutal, and violent, and resulted in the deaths of four people. Several of them died accidentally, one, for example, from a bad drug trip, during which he fell into a stream and drowned. But numerous people were brutally beaten by members of the Hell’s Angels motorcycle gang, who had been hired by the Rolling Stones as security guards. One man was beaten and stabbed to death in front of the stage while the Stones were playing “Sympathy for the Devil.”

Woodstock and Altamont, then, became symbols of two aspects of the counterculture of the late 1960s and early 1970s, and of the rock music that created its anthems. The beat poet Allen Ginsberg wrote an

ecstatic poem proclaiming that at Woodstock “a new kind of man has come to his bliss/to end the cold war he has borne/against his own kind of flesh.” The festival and its music, many claimed, had shown the path to an age of love and peace and justice. Altamont, however, suggested a dark underside of the rock culture, its potential for destruction and violence. “As far as I was concerned,” one participant said, “Altamont was the death knell of all those things that we thought would last forever. I personally felt like the sixties had been an extravagant stage show and I had been a spectator in the audience. Altamont had rung down the curtain to no applause.”*

*Allen Ginsberg’s estate is affiliated with the Naropa Institute, Boulder, CO.

adherents of the counterculture—the hippies, who came to dominate the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood of San Francisco and other places, and the social dropouts, some of whom retreated to rural communes—rejected modern society and attempted to find refuge in a simpler, more “natural” existence. But even those whose commitment to the counterculture was less dramatic shared a commitment to the idea of personal fulfillment through rejecting the inhibitions and conventions of middle-class culture. In a corrupt and alienating society, the new creed seemed to suggest, the first responsibility of the individual was culti-

vation of the self, the unleashing of one’s own full potential for pleasure and fulfillment.

The effects of the counterculture reached out to the larger society and helped create a new set of social norms that many young people (and some adults) chose to imitate. Long hair and freakish clothing became the badge not only of hippies and radicals but of an entire generation as well. The use of marijuana, the freer attitudes toward sex, the iconoclastic (and sometimes obscene) language—all spread far beyond the realm of the true devotees of the counterculture.



WOODSTOCK In the summer of 1969, more than 400,000 people gathered for a rock concert on a farm near Woodstock, New York. Despite mostly terrible weather, the gathering was remarkably peaceful—sparking talk among some enthusiasts of the new youth culture about the “Woodstock nation.” (*Shelby Rustin/Black Star/Stock Photo*)

Perhaps the most pervasive element of the new youth society was one that even the least radical members of the generation embraced: rock music. Rock 'n' roll first achieved wide popularity in the 1950s, on the strength of such early performers as Buddy Holly and, above all, Elvis Presley. Early in the 1960s, its influence began to spread, largely a result of the phenomenal popularity of the Beatles, the English group whose first visit to the United States in 1964 created a remarkable sensation, “Beatlemania.” For

Growing Influence of Rock 'n' Roll

a time, most rock musicians—like most popular musicians before them—concentrated largely on uncontroversial, romantic themes. By the late 1960s, however, rock had begun to reflect many of the new iconoclastic values of its time. The Beatles, for example, abandoned their once simple and seemingly innocent style for a new, experimental, even mystical approach that reflected the growing popular fascination with drugs and Eastern religions. Other groups, such as the Rolling Stones, turned even more openly to themes of anger, frustration, and rebelliousness. Rock’s driving rhythms, its undisguised sensuality, its often harsh and angry tone—all made it an appropriate vehicle for expressing the themes of the social and political

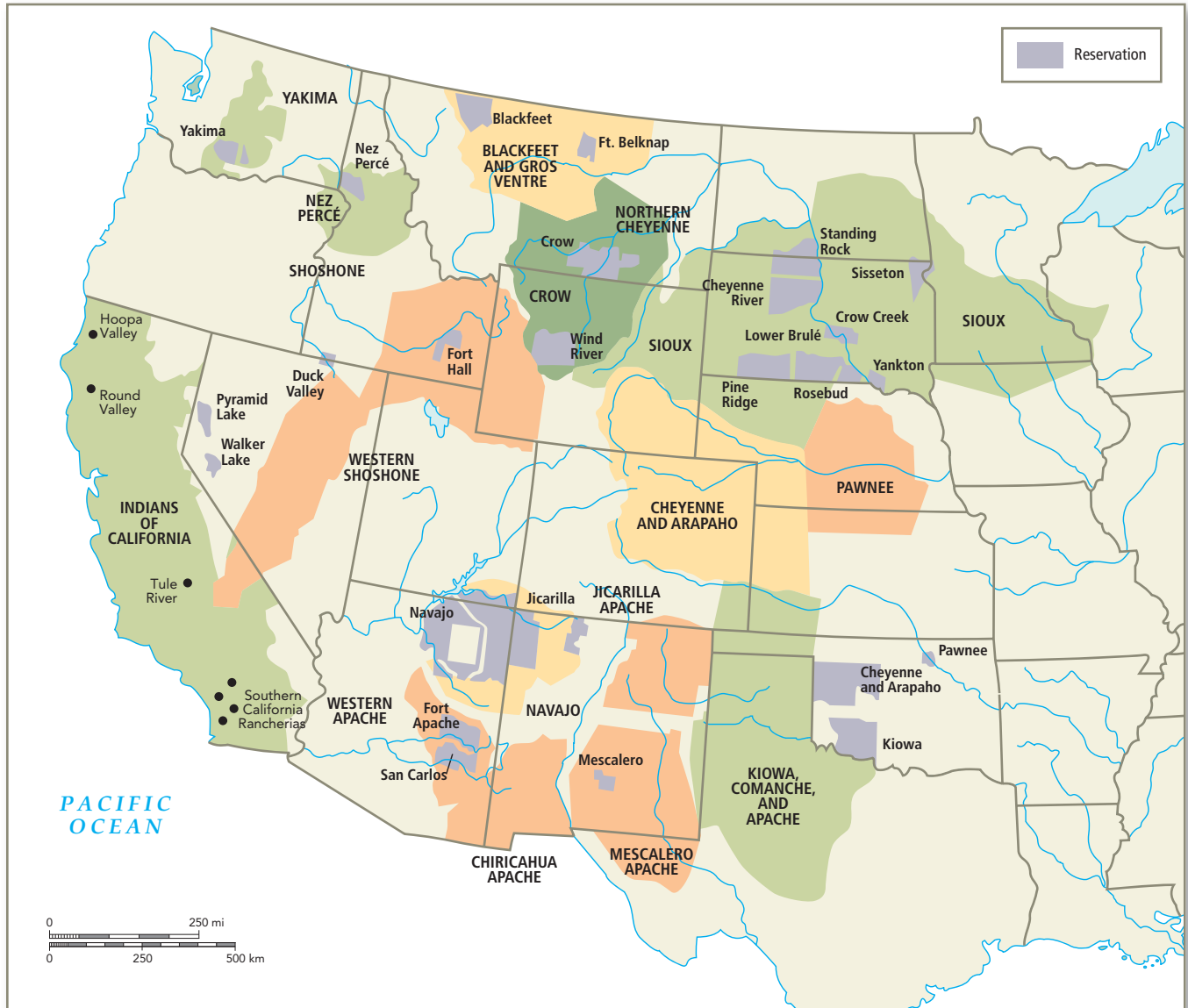
unrest of the late 1960s. A powerful symbol of the fusion of rock music and the counterculture was the great music festival at Woodstock, New York, in the summer of 1969. (See “Patterns of Popular Culture,” pp. 844–845.)

THE MOBILIZATION OF MINORITIES

The growth of African-American protest encouraged other minorities to assert themselves and demand redress of their grievances. For Native Americans, Hispanic Americans, gay men and women, and others, the late 1960s and the 1970s were a time of growing self-expression and political activism.

Seeds of Indian Militancy

Few minorities had deeper or more justifiable grievances against the prevailing culture than American Indians—or Native Americans, as some began to call themselves in the 1960s. Indians were the least prosperous, least healthy, and least stable group in the nation. They were also one of



ABORIGINAL TERRITORIES AND MODERN RESERVATIONS OF WESTERN INDIAN TRIBES This map shows the rough distribution of the Native American population in the western United States before the establishment of reservations by the federal government in the nineteenth century. The large shaded regions in colors other than light green represent the areas in which the various tribes were dominant a century and more ago. The purple shaded areas show the much smaller areas set aside for them as reservations after the Indian wars of the late nineteenth century. ♦ *What impact did life on the reservations have on the rise of Indian activism in the 1960s and 1970s?*

the smallest. They constituted less than 1 percent of the population. Average annual family income for Indians was \$1,000 less than that for blacks. The Native American unemployment rate was ten times the national rate. Joblessness was particularly high on the reservations, where nearly half the Indians lived. But even most Indians living in cities suffered from their limited education and training and could find only menial jobs. Life expectancy among Indians was more than twenty years less than the national average. Suicides among Indian youths were a hundred times more frequent than among white youths. And while black Americans attracted the

Native American Grievances

attention (for good or for ill) of many whites, Indians for many years remained largely ignored.

For much of the postwar era, particularly after the resignation of John Collier as commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1946, federal policy toward the tribes had been shaped by a determination to incorporate Indians into mainstream American society, whether Indians wanted to assimilate or not. Two laws passed in 1953 established the basis of a new policy, which became known as “termination.” Through termination, the federal government withdrew all official recognition of the tribes as legal entities, administratively separate from state governments, and made them subject to the same local jurisdictions as



THE OCCUPATION OF ALCATRAZ Alcatraz is an island in San Francisco Bay that once housed a large federal prison that by the late 1960s had been abandoned. In 1969, a group of Indian activists occupied the island and claimed it as Indian land—precipitating a long standoff with authorities. (AP/Wide World Photos)

white residents. At the same time, the government encouraged Indians to assimilate into the larger society and worked to funnel Native Americans into cities, where, presumably, they would adapt themselves to the white world and lose their cultural distinctiveness.

To some degree, the termination and assimilation policies achieved their objectives. The tribes grew weaker as legal and political entities. Many Native Americans adapted to life in the cities, at least to a degree. On the whole, however, the new policies were a disaster for the tribes and a failure for the reformers who had promoted them. Termination led to widespread corruption and abuse. And Indians themselves fought so bitterly against it that in

1958 the Eisenhower administration barred further “terminations” without the consent of the affected tribes. In the meantime, the struggle against termination had mobilized a new generation of Indian militants and had breathed life into the principal Native American organization, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), which had been created in 1944. The new militancy also benefited from the rapid increase in the Indian population, which was growing

Failure of
“Termination”

much faster than that of the rest of the nation (nearly doubling between 1950 and 1970, to a total of about 800,000).

The Indian Civil Rights Movement

In 1961, more than 400 members of 67 tribes gathered in Chicago to discuss ways of bringing all Indians together in an effort to redress common wrongs. The manifesto they issued, the Declaration of Indian Purpose, stressed the “right to choose our own way of life.” One result of the movement was a gradual change in the way popular culture depicted Indians. By the 1970s, almost no films or television westerns any longer portrayed Indians as brutal savages attacking peaceful white people. And Indian activists even persuaded some white institutions to abandon what they considered demeaning references to them; Dartmouth College, for example, ceased referring to its athletic teams as the “Indians.” In 1968, a group of young militant Indians established the American Indian Movement (AIM), which drew its greatest support from those Indians who lived in urban areas but soon established a significant presence on the reservations as well.

AIM

The new activism had some immediate political results. In 1968, Congress passed the Indian Civil Rights Act, which recognized the legitimacy of tribal laws within the reservations. But leaders of AIM and other insurgent groups were not satisfied and turned increasingly to direct action. In 1968, Indian fishermen clashed with Washington State officials on the Columbia River and in Puget Sound, where Indians claimed that treaties gave them the exclusive right to fish. The following year, members of several tribes made a symbolic protest by occupying the abandoned federal prison on Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay and claiming the site “by right of discovery.”

In response to the growing pressure, the new Nixon administration appointed a Mohawk-Sioux to the position of commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1969; and in 1970, the president promised both increased tribal self-determination and an increase in federal aid. But the protests continued. In November 1972, nearly a thousand demonstrators, most of them Sioux, forcibly occupied the building of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington, D.C., for six days.

A more celebrated protest occurred in February 1973 at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, the site of the 1890 massacre of Sioux by federal troops. Members of AIM seized and occupied the town of Wounded Knee for two months, demanding radical changes in the administration of the reservation and insisting that the government honor its long-forgotten treaty obligations. A brief clash between the occupiers and federal forces left one Indian dead and another wounded.

More immediately effective than these militant protests were the victories that various tribes were achieving in the federal courts. In *United States v. Wheeler* (1978), the Supreme Court confirmed that tribes had independent legal standing and could not be “terminated” by Congress. Other decisions ratified the authority of tribes to impose taxes on businesses within their reservations and to perform other sovereign functions. In 1985, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *County of Oneida v. Oneida Indian Nation*, supported Indian claims to 100,000 acres in upstate New York that the Oneida tribe claimed by virtue of treaty rights long forgotten by whites.

The Indian civil rights movement, like other civil rights movements of the same time, fell far short of winning full justice and equality for its constituents. To some Indians, the principal goal was to defend tribal autonomy, to protect the right of Indians (and, more to the point, individual tribal groups) to remain separate and distinct. To others, the goal was equality—to win for Indians a place in society equal to that of other groups of Americans. Because there was no single Indian culture or tradition in America, the movement never united all Indians.

For all its limits, however, the Indian civil rights movement helped the tribes win a series of new legal rights and protections that gave them a stronger position

Occupation
of Wounded Knee

Wounded Knee, South Dakota, the site of the 1890 massacre of Sioux by federal troops. Members of AIM

Important Legal
Victories

helped the tribes win a series of new legal rights and protections that gave them a stronger position

than they had enjoyed at any previous time in the twentieth century.

Latino Activism

Far more numerous than Indians were Latinos (or Hispanic Americans), the fastest-growing minority group in the United States. They were no more a single, cohesive group than the Indians were. Some—including the descendants of early Spanish settlers in New Mexico—had roots as deep in American history as those of any other group. Others were men and women who had immigrated since World War II.

Large numbers of Puerto Ricans had migrated to eastern cities, particularly New York. South Florida’s substantial Cuban population began with a wave of middle-class refugees fleeing the Castro regime in the early 1960s, followed by a second, much poorer wave of Cuban immigrants in 1980—the so-called Marielitos, named for the port from which they left Cuba. Later in the 1980s, large numbers of immigrants (both legal and illegal) began to arrive from the troubled nations of Central and South America—from Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Peru, and others. But the most numerous and important Latino group in the United States was Mexican Americans.

During World War II, large numbers of Mexican Americans had entered the country in response to the labor shortage, and many had remained in the cities of the Southwest and the Pacific Coast. After the war, when the legal agreements that had allowed Mexican contract workers to enter the country expired, large numbers of immigrants continued to move to the United States illegally. In 1953, the government launched what it called Operation Wetback to deport the illegals, but the effort failed to stem the flow of new arrivals. By 1960, there were substantial Mexican-American neighborhoods (barrios) in American cities from El Paso to Detroit. The largest (with more than 500,000 people, according to census figures) was in Los Angeles, which by then had a bigger Mexican population than any other place except Mexico City.

But the greatest expansion in the Mexican-American population was yet to come. In 1960, the census reported slightly more than 3 million Latinos living in the United States (the great majority of them Mexican Americans). By 1970, that number had grown to 9 million, and by 2006 to 44 million. Since there was also an uncounted but very large number of illegal immigrants in those years, the real number was undoubtedly much larger.

By the late 1960s, therefore, Mexican Americans were one of the largest population groups in the West—out-numbering African Americans—and had established communities in most other parts of the nation as well. They were also among the most urbanized groups in the population; almost 90 percent lived and worked in cities. Many

Surging Latino
Immigration



KENNEDY AND CHAVEZ Cesar Chavez, the magnetic leader of the largely Mexican-American United Farm Workers Union, which represented mostly migrant workers, staged a hunger strike in 1968 to demand that union members receive better treatment by growers. Robert F. Kennedy, just beginning his campaign for the presidency, paid him a visit in Delano, California, to show his support. Chavez, who had by then been fasting for many weeks, looks visibly weak here. Kennedy's visit helped persuade him to end the fast. (*Time Life Pictures/Getty Images*)

of them (particularly members of the older and more assimilated families of Mexican descent) were affluent and successful people. Wealthy Cubans in Miami filled influential positions in the professions and local government; in the Southwest, Mexican Americans elected their own leaders to seats in Congress and to governorships.

But most newly arrived Mexican Americans and other Hispanics were less well educated than either “Anglo” or African Americans and hence less well prepared for high-paying jobs. Some of them found good industrial jobs in unionized industries, and some Mexican Americans became important labor organizers in the AFL-CIO. But many more (including the great majority of illegal immigrants) worked in low-paying service jobs, with few if any benefits and no job security.

Partly because of language barriers, partly because the family-centered culture of many Latino communities discouraged effective organization, and partly because of discrimination, Mexican Americans and others were slower to develop political influence than other minorities. But some did respond to the highly charged climate of the 1960s by strengthening their ethnic identification

and organizing for political and economic power. Young Mexican-American activists began to call themselves “Chicanos” (once a term of derision used by whites) as a way of emphasizing the shared culture of Spanish-speaking Americans. Some Chicanos advocated a form of nationalism not unlike the ideas of black power advocates. The Texas leaders of La Raza Unida, a Chicano political party in the Southwest, called for the creation of something like an autonomous Mexican-American state within a state; it demonstrated significant strength at the polls in the 1970s.

One of the most visible efforts to organize Mexican Americans occurred in California, where an Arizona-born Latino farmworker, Cesar Chavez, created an effective union of itinerant farmworkers. In 1965, his United Farm Workers (UFW), a largely Mexican organization, launched a prolonged strike against growers to demand recognition of their union and increased wages and benefits. When employers resisted, Chavez enlisted the cooperation of college students, churches, and civil rights groups

“Chicano” Activism

Cesar Chavez

(including CORE and SNCC) and organized a nationwide boycott, first of table grapes and then of lettuce. In 1968, Chavez campaigned openly for Robert Kennedy. Two years later, he won a substantial victory when the growers of half of California's table grapes signed contracts with his union.

Latino Americans were at the center of another controversy of the 1970s and beyond: the issue of bilingualism. It was a question that aroused the opposition not only of many whites but of some Hispanics as well. Supporters of bilingualism in education argued that non-English-speaking Americans were entitled to schooling in their own language, that otherwise they would be at a grave disadvantage in comparison with native English speakers. The United States Supreme Court confirmed the right of non-English-speaking students to schooling in their native language in 1974. Opponents cited not only the cost and difficulty of bilingualism but the dangers it posed to students' ability to assimilate into the mainstream of American culture.

Challenging the “Melting Pot” Ideal

The efforts of African Americans, Latinos, Indians, Asians, and others to forge a clearer group identity challenged a longstanding premise of American political thought: the idea of the “melting pot.” Older, European immigrant groups liked to believe that they had advanced in American society by adopting the values and accepting the rules of the country to which they had moved. The newly assertive ethnic groups of the 1960s and after appeared less willing to accept the standards of the larger society and were more likely to demand recognition of their own ethnic identities. Some, although far from all, African Americans, Indians, Latinos, and Asians challenged the assimilationist idea. They advocated instead a culturally pluralistic society, in which racial and ethnic groups would preserve a sense of their own heritage and their own social and cultural norms.

To a considerable degree, the advocates of cultural pluralism succeeded. Recognition of the special character of particular groups was embedded in federal law through a wide range of affirmative action programs, which extended not only to blacks, but to Indians, Latinos, Asians, and others as well. Ethnic studies programs proliferated in schools and universities. Beginning in the 1980s, this impulse led to an even more assertive (and highly controversial) cultural movement that became known as “multiculturalism,” which, among other things, challenged the “Eurocentric” basis of American education and culture and demanded that non-European civilizations be accorded equal attention.

Gay Liberation

The most recent important liberation movement to make major gains in the 1960s, and the most surpris-

ing to many Americans, was the effort by homosexuals to win political and economic rights and, equally important, social acceptance. Homosexuality and lesbianism had been unacknowledged realities throughout American history; not until many years after their deaths did many Americans know, for example, that revered cultural figures such as Walt Whitman and Horatio Alger were homosexuals. But by the late 1960s, the liberating impulses that had affected other groups helped mobilize gay men and women to fight for their own rights.

On June 27, 1969, police officers raided the Stonewall Inn, a gay nightclub in New York City's Greenwich Village, and began arresting patrons simply for frequenting the place. The raid was not unusual; police had been harassing gay bars (and homosexual men and women) for years. It was, in fact, the accumulated resentment of this long history of assaults and humiliations that caused the extraordinary response that summer night. Gay onlookers taunted the police, then attacked them. Someone started a blaze in the Stonewall Inn itself, almost trapping the policemen inside. Rioting continued throughout Greenwich Village (a center of New York's gay community) through much of the night.

The “Stonewall Riot” helped mark the beginning of the gay liberation movement—one of the most controversial challenges to traditional values and assumptions of its time. New organizations sprang up around the country. Public discussion and media coverage of homosexuality, long subject to an unofficial taboo, quickly and dramatically increased. Gay and lesbian activists had some success in challenging the longstanding assumption that homosexuality was “aberrant” behavior. They argued that no sexual preference was any more “normal” than another.

Most of all, however, the gay liberation movement transformed the outlook of gay men and lesbians themselves. It helped them to “come out,” to express their preferences openly and unapologetically, and to demand from society a recognition that gay relationships could be as significant and worthy of respect as heterosexual ones. Even the ravages of the AIDS epidemic (see pp. 907–908), which affected the gay community more disastrously than it affected any other group, failed to halt the growth of gay liberation. In many ways, it strengthened it.

By the early 1990s, gay men and lesbians were achieving some of the same milestones that other oppressed minorities had attained in earlier decades. Some openly gay politicians won election to public office. Universities were establishing gay and lesbian studies programs. And laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual preference were making slow, halting progress at the local level.

“Stonewall Riot”

Impact of the Gay Liberation Movement

Cultural Pluralism

THE QUILT In the early years of gay liberation, the movement focused mostly on ending discrimination and harassment. By the 1990s, however, with the AIDS epidemic sweeping through large numbers of gay men, activists shifted much of their attention to pressing for a cure and to remembering those who had died. One of the most remarkable results of that effort was the AIDS Quilt. Friends and relatives of victims of the disease made individual patches in memory of those they had lost. Then, in many different cities, thousands of quilters would join their pieces to create a vast testament to bereavement and memory. The enormity of the project was most visible in October 1996, when hundreds of thousands of pieces of the quilt were laid out on the Mall in Washington, stretching from the Washington Monument to the Capitol. (Ron Edmunds /AP/Wide World Photos)



But gay liberation also produced a powerful backlash. This became especially evident in 1993, when President Bill Clinton's effort to lift the ban on gays and lesbians serving in the military met a storm of criticism from members of Congress and from within the military itself. The backlash proved so strong that the administration retreated from its position and settled for a weak compromise ("Don't ask, don't tell") by which the military would not ask recruits about their sexual preferences, while those who enlisted in the military were expected not to reveal them.

A decade later, in the prelude to the 2004 presidential election, issues involving gays and lesbians reached a high level of intensity again, sparked in part by the efforts of several cities and states to legalize same-sex marriage. President George W. Bush proposed a constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage, and the issue became a major element of the Republican campaign. Many states put referenda on their ballots in 2004 banning gay marriage, and almost all such referenda were decisively approved by the voters.

THE NEW FEMINISM

American women constitute a slight majority of the population. But during the 1960s and 1970s, many women began to identify with minority groups and to demand a liberation of their own. As a result, the role of women in American life changed more dramatically than that of any other group in the nation.

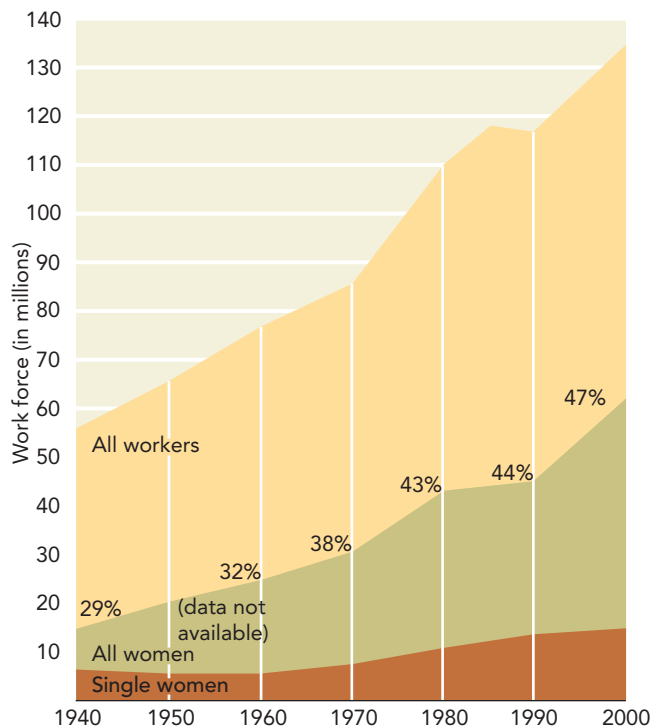
The Rebirth

Feminism had been a weak and often embattled force in American life for more than forty years after the adoption of the woman suffrage amendment in 1920. Yet in the 1960s and 1970s, it evolved very quickly from an almost invisible remnant to one of the most powerful social movements in American history.

The 1963 publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* is often cited as an important early event of contemporary women's liberation. Friedan, a magazine journalist, had traveled around the country interviewing the

women who had graduated with her from Smith College in 1947. Most of these women were living out the dream that postwar American society had created for them: they were affluent wives and mothers living in comfortable suburbs. And yet many of them were deeply frustrated and unhappy. The suburbs, Friedan claimed, had become a “comfortable concentration camp,” providing the women who inhabited them with no outlets for their intelligence, talent, and education. The “feminine mystique” was responsible for “burying millions of women alive.” By chronicling their unhappiness and frustration, Friedan did not so much cause the revival of feminism as help give voice to a movement that was already stirring.

By the time *The Feminine Mystique* appeared, John Kennedy had established the President’s Commission on the Status of Women; it brought national attention to sexual discrimination and helped create important networks of feminist activists who would lobby for legislative redress. Also in 1963, the Kennedy administration helped win passage of the Equal Pay Act, which barred the pervasive practice of paying women less than men for equal work. A year later, Congress incorporated into the Civil Rights Act of 1964 an amendment—Title VII—that extended to women many of the same legal protections against discrimination that were being extended to African Americans.



WOMEN IN THE PAID WORK FORCE, 1940–2000 The number of women working for wages steadily expanded from 1940 on, to the point that in 2000, they constituted just under half the total work force. ♦ *What role did this growing participation in the paid work force have on the rise of feminism in the 1960s and beyond?*

The events of the early 1960s helped expose a contradiction that had been developing for decades between the image of happy domesticity, what Friedan had called the “feminine mystique,” and the reality of women’s roles in America. The reality was that increasing numbers of women (including, by 1963, over a third of all married women) had already entered the workplace and were encountering widespread discrimination there; and that many other women were finding their domestic lives suffocating and frustrating.

In 1966, Friedan joined with other feminists to create the National Organization for Women (NOW), which soon became the nation’s largest and most influential feminist organization. Like other movements for liberation, feminism drew much of its inspiration from the black struggle for freedom.

The new organization responded to the complaints of the women Friedan’s book had examined—affluent suburbanites with no outlet for their interests—by demanding greater educational opportunities for women and denouncing the domestic ideal and the traditional concept of marriage. But the heart of the movement, at least in the beginning, was directed toward the needs of women already in the workplace. NOW denounced the exclusion of women from professions, from politics, and from countless other areas of American life. It decried legal and economic discrimination, including the practice of paying women less than men for equal work (a practice the Equal Pay Act had not effectively eliminated). The organization called for “a fully equal partnership of the sexes, as part of the worldwide revolution of human rights.”

Women’s Liberation

By the late 1960s, new and more radical feminist demands were also attracting a large following. The new feminists were mostly younger, the vanguard of the baby-boom generation. Many of them drew inspiration from the New Left and the counterculture. Some were involved in the civil rights movement, others in the antiwar crusade. Many had found that even within those movements, they faced discrimination and exclusion or subordination to male leaders.

By the early 1970s, a significant change was visible in the tone and direction of the women’s movement. New books by younger feminists expressed a harsher critique of American society than Friedan had offered. Kate Millett’s *Sexual Politics* (1969) signaled the new direction by arguing that “every avenue of power within the society is entirely within male hands.” The answer to women’s problems, in other words, was not, as Friedan had suggested, for individual women to search for greater personal fulfillment; it was for women to band together to

The Feminine Mystique

NOW Founded

New Directions in the Women’s Movement



MARCHING FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS By the end of the 1960s, the struggle for individual rights—which the African-American civil rights movement had helped push to the center of national consciousness—had inspired a broad range of movements. Perhaps the most important in the long run was the drive for women's rights, which was already formidable in the summer of 1970, when thousands of women joined this march through New York City. (Werner Wolff/Black Star/Stock Photo)

assault the male power structure. Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970) was subtitled "The Case for Feminist Revolution."

In its most radical form, the new feminism rejected the whole notion of marriage, family, and even heterosexual intercourse. By the early 1970s, large numbers of women were coming to see themselves as an exploited group organizing against oppression and developing a culture and communities of their own.

Expanding Achievements

By the early 1970s, the public and private achievements of the women's movement were already substantial. In 1971, the government extended its affirmative action guidelines to include women—linking sexism with racism as an officially acknowledged social problem. In the meantime, women were making rapid progress in their efforts to move into the economic and political mainstream. The nation's major all-male educational institu-

tions began to open their doors to women. (Princeton and Yale did so in 1969, and most other all-male colleges and universities soon followed.) Some women's colleges, in the meantime, began accepting male students.

Women were also becoming an important force in business and the professions. Nearly half of all married women held jobs by the mid-1970s, and almost 90 percent of all women with college degrees worked. The two-career family, in which both husband and wife maintained active professional lives, was becoming a widely accepted norm; many women were postponing marriage or motherhood for the sake of their careers. There were also important symbolic changes, such as the refusal of many women to adopt their husbands' names when they married and the use of the term "Ms." in place of "Mrs." or "Miss" to denote the irrelevance of a woman's marital status in the public world. In politics, women were beginning to compete effectively with men for both elected and appointive positions. By the end of the

Political and Economic
Success

twentieth century, considerable numbers of women were serving in both houses of Congress, in numerous federal cabinet positions, as governors of several states, and in many other positions. Ronald Reagan named the first female Supreme Court justice, Sandra Day O'Connor, in 1981; in 1993, Bill Clinton named the second, Ruth Bader Ginsburg. In 1984, the Democratic Party chose a woman, Representative Geraldine Ferraro of New York, as its vice presidential candidate, and in 2008, Hillary Clinton became a formidable candidate in the race for the Democratic presidential nomination. In academia, women were expanding their presence in traditional scholarly fields; they were also creating a field of their own—women's studies, which in the 1980s and early 1990s was among the fastest-growing areas of American scholarship.

In professional athletics, in the meantime, women were beginning to compete with men both for attention and for an equal share of prize money. By the late 1970s, the federal government was pressuring colleges and universities to provide women with athletic programs equal to those available to men.

In 1972, Congress approved the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution, which some feminists had been promoting since the 1920s, and sent it to the states. For a while, ratification seemed almost certain. By the late 1970s, however, the momentum behind the amendment had died. The ERA was in trouble not because of indifference but because of a rising chorus of objections to it from people (including many antifeminist women) who feared it would disrupt traditional social patterns. In 1982, the amendment finally died when the time allotted for ratification expired.

The Abortion Controversy

A vital element of American feminism since the 1920s has been women's effort to win greater control of their own sexual and reproductive lives. In its least controversial form, this impulse helped produce an increasing awareness in the 1960s and 1970s of the problems of rape, sexual abuse, and wife beating. There continued to be some controversy over the dissemination of contraceptives and birth-control information; but that issue, at least, seemed to have lost much of the explosive character it had had in the 1920s. A related issue, however, stimulated as much popular passion as any question of its time: abortion.

Abortion had once been legal in much of the United States, but by the beginning of the twentieth century it was banned by statute in most of the country and remained so into the 1960s (although many abortions continued to be performed quietly, and often dangerously, out of sight of the law). But the women's movement created strong new pressures on behalf of legalizing abortion. Several states had abandoned restrictions on abortion by the end of the 1960s. And in 1973, the Supreme Court's

decision in *Roe v. Wade*, based on a relatively new theory of a constitutional "right to privacy," first recognized by the Court only a few years earlier in *Griswold v. Connecticut* (1965), invalidated all laws prohibiting abortion during the "first trimester"—the first three months of pregnancy. The decision would become the most controversial ruling of the century.

Roe v. Wade

ENVIRONMENTALISM IN A TURBULENT SOCIETY

Like feminism, environmentalism entered the 1960s with a long history and relatively little public support. Also like feminism, environmentalism both profited from and transcended the turbulence of the era and emerged by the 1970s as a powerful and enduring force in American and global life.

The rise of this new movement was in part a result of the environmental degradation that had become increasingly evident in the advanced industrial society of the late twentieth century. It was a result, too, of the growth of the science of ecology, which provided environmentalists with new and powerful arguments. And it was a product as well of some of the countercultural movements of the time: movements that rejected aspects of the modern, industrial, consumer society and called for a return to a more natural existence.

The New Science of Ecology

Until the mid-twentieth century, most people who considered themselves environmentalists (or, to use the more traditional term, conservationists) based their commitment on aesthetic or moral grounds. They wanted to preserve nature because it was too beautiful to despoil, or because it was a mark of divinity on the world. In the course of the twentieth century, however, scientists in the United States and other nations—drawing from earlier, relatively obscure scientific writings—began to create a new rationale for environmentalism. They called it ecology.

Ecology is the science of the interrelatedness of the natural world. It rests on an assumption—as the American zoologist Stephan A. Forbes wrote as early as 1880—that "primeval nature . . . presents a settled harmony of interaction among organic groups," and that this harmony "is in strong contrast with the many serious maladjustments of plants and animals found in countries occupied by man." Such problems as air and water pollution, the destruction of forests, the extinction of species, and toxic wastes are not, ecology teaches, separate, isolated problems. All elements of the earth's environment are intimately and delicately linked. Damaging any one of those elements, therefore, risks damaging all the others.

Idea of an Interrelated World

A number of American scientists built on Forbes's ideas in the early twentieth century, but perhaps the greatest early contribution to popular knowledge of ecology came not from a scientist, but from the writer and naturalist Aldo Leopold. During a career in forest management, Leopold sought to apply the new scientific findings on ecology to his interactions with the natural world. And in 1949, he published a classic of environmental literature, *The Sand County Almanac*, in which he argued that humans have a responsibility to understand and maintain the balance of nature, that they should behave in the natural world according to a code that he called the "land ethic." By then, the science of ecology was spreading widely in the scientific community. Among the findings of ecologists were such now-common ideas as the "food chain," the "ecosystem," "biodiversity," and "endangered species."

The influence of these emerging ideas of ecology could be seen especially clearly in the sensational 1962 book by Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*. Carson was a marine biologist who had become a successful science writer. In 1957, she received a letter from a friend reporting the deaths of songbirds in her yard after the area had been sprayed with the insecticide DDT—the chemical developed in the 1930s to kill mosquitos. Carson began investigating the impact of DDT and discovered growing signs of danger. DDT was slowly being absorbed into the food chain

through water and plants, and the animals who ate and drank them. It was killing some animals (especially birds and fish) and inhibiting the ability of others to reproduce. Carson wrote eloquently about the growing danger of a "silent spring," in which birds would no longer sing and in which sickness and death would soon threaten large numbers of animals and, perhaps, people.

Silent Spring was an enormously influential book and had a direct, if delayed, influence on the decision to ban DDT in the United States in 1972. It was evidence of the growing power of environmentalism, and of the science of ecology, on public policy and national culture. But *Silent Spring* was also a very controversial book, which enraged the chemical industry. Critics of Carson attempted to suppress the book and, when that effort failed, to discredit its findings. Both the future power of environmentalism and the future challenges to it could be seen in the history of Carson's book.

Between 1945 and 1960, the number of ecologists in the United States grew rapidly, and that number doubled again between 1960 and 1970. Funded by government agencies, by universities, by foundations, and eventually even by some corporations, ecological science gradually established itself as a significant field of its own. By the early twenty-first century, there were programs in and departments of ecological science in major universities throughout the United States and in many other nations.

Ecology's Postwar Growth

Much more than other scientists, however, ecologists tend to fuse their commitment to research with a commitment to publicizing their work and promoting responsible public action to deal with environmental crises.

Environmental Advocacy

Among the most important environmental organizations of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries were the Wilderness Society, the Sierra Club, the National Audubon Society, the Nature Conservancy, the National Wildlife Federation, and the National Parks and Conservation Association. All of these organizations predated the rise of modern ecological science, but all of them entered the twenty-first century reenergized and committed to the new concepts of environmentalism. They found allies among other not-for-profit organizations that had no previous experience with environmentalism but now chose to join the battle—among them such groups as the American Civil Liberties Union, the League of Women Voters, the National Council of Churches, and even the AFL-CIO.

Out of these organizations emerged a new generation of professional environmental activists able to contribute to the legal and political battles of the movement. Scientists provided the necessary data. Lawyers fought battles with government

New Professional Environmental Activists



RACHEL CARSON Rachel Carson, who began her career as a marine biologist, wrote the world's best-selling book about the ocean environment in the 1950s. Carson's abiding love for the creatures of shore and surf led to her concern about the harm pesticides might do them. (Bettmann/Corbis)

agencies and in the courts. Lobbyists used traditional techniques of political persuasion with legislators and other officials—knowing that many corporations and other opponents of environmental efforts would be doing the same in opposition to their goals. Perhaps most of all, these organizations learned how to mobilize public opinion on their behalf.

Environmental Degradation

Perhaps the greatest force behind environmentalism was the condition of the environment itself. By the 1960s, the damage to the natural world from the dramatic economic growth of the postwar era was becoming impossible to ignore. Water pollution—which had been a problem in some areas of the country for many decades—was becoming so widespread that almost every major city was dealing with the unpleasant sight and odor, as well as the very real health risks, of polluted rivers and lakes.

Water and Air
Pollution

In Cleveland, Ohio, for example, the Cuyahoga River actually burst into flame from time to time beginning in the 1950s from the petroleum waste being dumped into it.

Perhaps more alarming was the growing awareness that the air itself was becoming unhealthy, that toxic fumes from factories and power plants and, most of all, automobiles were poisoning the atmosphere. Weather forecasts and official atmospheric information began to refer to “smog” levels—using a new word formed from a combination of “smoke” and “fog.” In some large cities—Los Angeles and Denver among them—smog became a perpetual fact of life, rising steadily through the day, blotting out the sun, and creating respiratory difficulties for many citizens.

Environmentalists also brought to public attention some longer-term dangers of unchecked industrial development: the rapid depletion of oil and other irreplaceable fossil fuels; the destruction of lakes and forests as a result of “acid rain” (rainfall polluted by chemical contaminants); the rapid destruction of vast rain forests, in Brazil and elsewhere, which limited the earth’s capacity to replenish its oxygen supply; the depletion of the ozone layer as a result of the release of chlorofluorocarbons into the atmosphere, which threatened to limit the earth’s protection from dangerous ultraviolet rays from the sun; and most alarming, global warming, which if unchecked would create dramatic changes in the earth’s climate and would threaten existing cities and settlements in coastal areas all over the world by causing a rise in ocean levels. Many of these claims became controversial, with skeptics arguing that environmentalists had not conclusively proven their cases. But most environmentalists—and many scientists—came to believe that the problems were real and deserving of immediate, urgent attention.

Earth Day and Beyond

On April 22, 1970, people all over the United States gathered in schools and universities, in churches and clubs, in parks and auditoria, for the first “Earth Day.” Originally proposed by Wisconsin senator Gaylord Nelson as a series of teach-ins on college campuses, Earth Day gradually took on a much larger life. Carefully managed by people who wanted to avoid associations with the radical left, it had an unthreatening quality that made it appealing to many people for whom antiwar demonstrations and civil rights rallies seemed threatening. According to some estimates, over 20 million Americans participated in some part of the Earth Day observances, which may have made it the largest single demonstration in the nation’s history.

The cautious, centrist character of Earth Day and related efforts to popularize environmentalism helped

The First “Earth Day”



EARTH DAY, 1970 The first “Earth Day,” April 22, 1970, was an important event in the development of the environmental movement. Conceived by Wisconsin senator Gaylord Nelson, Earth Day quickly gathered support in many areas of the United States and produced large demonstrations such as this one in New York City, where crowds surround a large banner portraying the earth crying out for help. (Getty Images)

create a movement that had little of the divisiveness of other, more controversial causes. Gradually, environmentalism became more than simply a series of demonstrations and protests. It became part of the consciousness of the vast majority of Americans—absorbed into popular culture, built into primary and secondary education, endorsed by almost all politicians (even if many of them opposed some environmental goals).

It also became part of the fabric of public policy. In 1970, Congress passed and President Nixon signed the National Environmental Protection Act, which created a new agency—the Environmental Protection Agency—to enforce antipollution standards on businesses and consumers. The Clean Air Act, also passed in 1970, and the Clean Water Act, passed in 1972, added tools to the government’s arsenal of weapons against environmental degradation.

NIXON, KISSINGER, AND THE WAR

Richard Nixon assumed office in 1969 committed not only to restoring stability at home but also to creating a new and more stable order in the world. Central to his hopes was a resolution of the stalemate in Vietnam. Yet the new president felt no freer than his predecessor to abandon the American commitment there. He realized that the war was threatening both the nation’s domestic stability and its position in the world. But he feared that a precipitous retreat would destroy American honor and “credibility.” American involvement in Indochina continued for four more years, during which the war expanded both in its geographic scope and in its bloodiness.

Vietnamization

Despite Nixon’s own passionate interest in international affairs, he brought with him into government a man who ultimately seemed to overshadow him in the conduct of diplomacy: Henry Kissinger, a Harvard professor whom the president appointed as his national security adviser. Kissinger quickly established dominance over both the secretary of state, William Rogers, and the secretary of defense, Melvin Laird, who were both more experienced in public life than Kissinger was. That was in part a result of Nixon’s passion for concentrating decision making in the White House. But Kissinger’s keen intelligence, his bureaucratic skills, and his success in handling the press were at least equally important. Together, Nixon and Kissinger set out to find an acceptable solution to the stalemate in Vietnam.

The new Vietnam policy moved along several fronts. One was an effort to limit domestic opposition to the war. Aware that the military draft was one of the most visible

targets of dissent, the administration devised a new “lottery” system, through which only a limited group—those nineteen-year-olds with low lottery numbers—would be subject to conscription. Later, the president urged the creation of an all-volunteer army. By 1973, the Selective Service System was on its way to at least temporary extinction.

More important in stifling dissent, however, was the new policy of “Vietnamization” of the war—the training and equipping of the South Vietnamese military to take over the burden of combat from American forces. In the fall of 1969, Nixon announced reduction of American ground troops from Vietnam by 60,000, the first reduction in U.S. troop strength since the beginning of the war. The reductions continued steadily for more than three years. From a peak of more than 540,000 American troops in 1969, the number had dwindled to about 60,000 by 1972.

Vietnamization helped quiet domestic opposition to the war. But it did nothing to break the stalemate in the negotiations with the North Vietnamese in Paris. The new administration quickly decided that new military pressures would be necessary to do that.

Escalation

By the end of their first year in office, Nixon and Kissinger had concluded that the most effective way to tip the military balance in America’s favor was to destroy the bases in Cambodia from which, the American military believed, the North Vietnamese were launching many of their attacks. Very early in his presidency, Nixon ordered the air force to begin bombing Cambodian territory to destroy the enemy sanctuaries. He kept the raids secret from Congress and the public. In the spring of 1970, possibly with U.S. encouragement and support, conservative military leaders overthrew the neutral government of Cambodia and established a new, pro-American regime under General Lon Nol. Lon Nol quickly gave his approval to American incursions into his territory; and on April 30, Nixon went on television to announce that he was ordering American troops across the border into Cambodia to “clean out” the bases that the enemy had been using for its “increased military aggression.”

Literally overnight, the Cambodian invasion restored the dwindling antiwar movement to vigorous life. The first days of May saw the most widespread and vocal antiwar demonstrations since the beginning of the war. Hundreds of thousands of protesters gathered in Washington, D.C., to denounce the president’s policies. Millions, perhaps, participated in countless other demonstrations on campuses nationwide. The mood of crisis intensified greatly on May 4, when four college students were killed and nine others injured when members of the National Guard opened fire on antiwar demonstrators at Kent

EPA Established

enforce antipollution standards on businesses and consumers.

Consequences of “Vietnamization”

Kent State

State University in Ohio. Ten days later, police killed two black students at Jackson State University in Mississippi during a demonstration there.

The clamor against the war quickly spread into the government and the press. Congress angrily repealed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in December, stripping the president of what had long served as the legal basis for the war. Nixon ignored the action. Then, in June 1971, first the *New York Times* and later other newspapers began publishing excerpts from a secret study of the war prepared by the Defense Department during the Johnson administration. What came to be known as the Pentagon Papers, leaked to the press by former Defense official Daniel Ellsberg, provided evidence of what many had long believed: that the government had been dishonest, both in reporting the military progress of the war and in explaining its own motives for American involvement. The administration went to court to suppress the documents, but the Supreme Court finally ruled that the press had the right to publish them.

Morale and discipline were rapidly deteriorating among U.S. troops in Vietnam, who had been fighting a savage and inconclusive war for more than five years. The trial and conviction in 1971 of Lieutenant William Calley, who was charged with overseeing a massacre of more than 300 unarmed South Vietnamese civilians, attracted wide public attention. Many Americans believed that the My Lai tragedy was not an isolated incident, that it suggested the dehumanizing impact of the war on those who fought it—and the terrible consequences for the Vietnamese people of that dehumanization. Less publicized were other, more widespread problems among American troops in Vietnam: desertion, drug addiction, racial hostilities, refusal to obey orders, even the killing of unpopular officers by enlisted men.

By 1971, nearly two-thirds of those interviewed in public opinion polls were urging American withdrawal from Vietnam. But Richard Nixon showed no sign of retreat. With the approval of the White House, both the FBI and the CIA intensified their surveillance and infiltration of antiwar and radical groups. Administration officials sought to discredit prominent critics of the war by leaking damaging personal information about them. At one point, White House agents broke into the office of a psychiatrist in an unsuccessful effort to steal files on Daniel Ellsberg. During the congressional campaign of 1970, Vice President Spiro Agnew, using the acid rhetoric that had already made him the hero of many conservatives, stepped up his attack on the “effete” and “impudent” critics of the administration. The president himself once climbed on top of an automobile to taunt a crowd of angry demonstrators.

In March 1972, the North Vietnamese mounted their biggest offensive since 1968 (the so-called Easter offensive). Ameri-

Easter Offensive

can and South Vietnamese forces managed to halt the communist advance, but it was clear that without American support the offensive would have succeeded. At the same time, Nixon ordered American planes to bomb targets near Hanoi, the capital of North Vietnam, and Haiphong, its principal port, and called for the mining of seven North Vietnamese harbors (including Haiphong) to stop the flow of supplies from China and the Soviet Union.

“Peace with Honor”

As the 1972 presidential election approached, the administration stepped up its efforts to produce a breakthrough in negotiations with the North Vietnamese. In April 1972, the president dropped his longtime insistence on a removal of North Vietnamese troops from the south before any American withdrawal. Meanwhile, Henry Kissinger was meeting privately in Paris with the North Vietnamese foreign secretary, Le Duc Tho, to work out terms for a cease-fire. On October 26, only days before the presidential election, Kissinger announced that “peace is at hand.” Several weeks later (after the election), negotiations broke down once again. The American and the North Vietnamese governments appeared ready to accept the Kissinger-Tho plan for a cease-fire, but the Thieu regime balked, still insisting on a full withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces from the south. Kissinger tried to win additional concessions from the communists to meet Thieu’s objections, but on December 16 talks broke off.

The next day, December 17, American B-52s began the heaviest and most destructive air raids of the entire war on Hanoi, Haiphong, and other North Vietnamese targets. Civilian casualties were high, and fifteen American B-52s were shot down by the North Vietnamese; in the entire war to that point, the United States had lost only one of the giant bombers. On December 30, Nixon terminated the “Christmas bombing.” The United States and the North Vietnamese returned to the conference table. And on January 27, 1973, they signed an “agreement on ending the war and restoring peace in Vietnam.” Nixon claimed that the Christmas bombing had forced the North Vietnamese to relent. At least equally important, however, was the enormous American pressure on Thieu to accept the cease-fire.

“Christmas Bombing”

The terms of the Paris accords were little different from those Kissinger and Tho had accepted in principle a few months before. There would be an immediate cease-fire. The North Vietnamese would release several hundred American prisoners of war. The Thieu regime would survive for the moment—the principal North Vietnamese concession to the United States—but North Vietnamese forces already in the south would remain there. An undefined committee would work out a permanent settlement.

Defeat in Indochina

American forces were hardly out of Indochina before the Paris accords collapsed. During the first year after the ceasefire, the contending Vietnamese armies suffered greater battle losses than the Americans had absorbed during ten years of fighting. Finally, in March 1975, the North Vietnamese launched a full-scale offensive against the now greatly weakened forces of the south. Thieu appealed to Washington for assistance; the president (now Gerald Ford; Nixon had resigned in 1974) appealed to Congress for additional funding; Congress refused. Late in April 1975,

Fall of Saigon

communist forces marched into Saigon, shortly after officials of the Thieu regime and the staff of the American embassy had fled the country in humiliating disarray. Communist forces quickly occupied the capital, renamed it Ho Chi Minh City, and began the process of reuniting Vietnam under the

Hanoi government. At about the same time, the Lon Nol regime in Cambodia fell to the murderous communists of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge—whose genocidal policies led to the deaths of more than a third of the country's people over the next several years. That was the grim end of over a decade of direct American military involvement in Vietnam. More than 1.2 million Vietnamese soldiers had died in combat, along with countless civilians throughout the region. A beautiful land had been ravaged, its agrarian economy left in ruins; for many years after, Vietnam remained one of the poorest and most politically oppressive nations in the world. The United States had paid a heavy price as well. The war had cost the nation almost \$150 billion in direct costs and much more indirectly. It had resulted in the deaths of over 55,000 young Americans and the injury of 300,000 more. And the nation had suffered a heavy blow to its confidence and self-esteem.

THE EVACUATION OF SAIGON A harried U.S. official struggles to keep panicking Vietnamese from boarding an already overburdened helicopter on the roof of the American embassy in Saigon. The hurried evacuation of Americans took place only hours before the arrival of North Vietnamese troops, signaling the final defeat of South Vietnam. (*AP/Wide World Photos*)



NIXON, KISSINGER, AND THE WORLD

The continuing war in Vietnam provided a dismal backdrop to what Nixon considered his larger mission in world affairs: the construction of a new international order. The president had become convinced that old assumptions of a “bipolar” world—in which the United States and the Soviet Union were the only truly great powers—were now obsolete. America must adapt to the new “multipolar”

Toward a “Multipolar” World

international structure, in which China, Japan, and Western Europe would become major, independent forces. “It will be a safer world and a better world,” he said in 1971, “if we have a strong, healthy United States, Europe, Soviet Union, China, Japan—each balancing the other, not playing one against the other, an even balance.”

China and the Soviet Union

For more than twenty years, ever since the fall of Chiang Kai-shek in 1949, the United States had treated China, the second-largest nation on earth, as if it did not exist. Instead, America recognized the regime-in-exile on Taiwan as the legitimate government of mainland China. Nixon and Kissinger wanted to forge a new relationship with the Chinese communists—in part to strengthen them as a counterbalance to the Soviet Union. The Chinese, for their part, were eager to forestall what they feared was the possibility of a Soviet-American alliance against China and to end China’s own isolation from the international arena.

In July 1971, Nixon sent Henry Kissinger on a secret mission to Beijing. When Kissinger returned, the president made the startling announcement that he would visit China himself within the next few months. That fall, with American approval, the United Nations admitted the communist government of China and expelled the representatives of the Taiwan regime. Finally, in February 1972, Nixon paid a formal visit to China, which erased much of the deep American animosity toward the Chinese communists. Nixon did not yet formally recognize the communist regime, but in 1972 the United States and China began low-level diplomatic relations.

Nixon’s China Visit

The initiatives in China coincided with (and probably assisted) an effort by the Nixon administration to improve relations with the Soviet Union. In 1969, American and Soviet diplomats met in Helsinki, Finland, to begin talks on limiting nuclear weapons. In 1972, they produced the first Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I), which froze

SALT I

the nuclear missiles (ICBMs) of both sides at present levels.

The Problems of Multipolarity

Nixon and Kissinger believed that great-power relationships could not alone ensure international stability, for the

“Third World” remained the most volatile and dangerous source of international tension.

Central to the Nixon-Kissinger policy toward the Third World was the effort to maintain a stable status quo without involving the United States too deeply in local disputes. In 1969 and 1970, the president described what became known as the Nixon Doctrine, by which the United States would “participate in the defense and development of allies and friends” but would leave the “basic responsibility” for the future of those “friends” to the nations themselves. In practice, the Nixon Doctrine meant a declining American interest in contributing to Third World development; a growing contempt for the United Nations, where

Nixon Doctrine



DÉTENTE AT HIGH TIDE The visit of Soviet premier Leonid Brezhnev to Washington in 1973 was a high-water mark in the search for détente between the two nations, a search that had begun as early as 1962, that continued through parts of five presidential administrations, and that collapsed in disarray in the late 1970s. Here, Brezhnev and Nixon share friendly words while standing on the White House balcony. (J.P. Laffont/Corbis Sygma)

less-developed nations were gaining influence through their sheer numbers; and increasing support to authoritarian regimes attempting to withstand radical challenges from within.

In 1970, for example, the CIA poured substantial funds into Chile to help support the established government against a communist challenge. When the Marxist candidate for president, Salvador Allende, came to power through an honest election, the United States began funneling more money to opposition forces in Chile to help “destabilize” the new government. In 1973, a military junta seized power from Allende, who was subsequently murdered. The United States developed a friendly relationship with the new, repressive military government of General Augusto Pinochet.

In the Middle East, conditions were growing more volatile in the aftermath of the 1967 “Six-Day War,” in which Israel routed Egyptian, Syrian, and Jordanian forces, gained control of the whole of the long-divided city of Jerusalem, and occupied substantial new territories: on the west bank of the Jordan River, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, and elsewhere. The war also increased the number of refugee Palestinians—Arabs who claimed the lands now controlled by Israel and who, dislodged from their homes, became a source of considerable instability in Jordan, Lebanon, and the other surrounding countries into which they now moved. Jordan’s ruler, King Hussein, was particularly alarmed by the influx of Palestinians and by the activities of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and other radical groups, which he feared would threaten Jordan’s important relationship with the United States. After a series of uprisings in 1970, Hussein ordered the Jordanian army to expel the Palestinians. Many of them moved to Lebanon, where they became part of many years of instability and civil war.

In October 1973, on the Jewish High Holy Day of Yom Kippur, Egyptian and Syrian forces attacked Israel. For ten days, the Israelis struggled to recover from the surprise attack; finally, they launched an effective counteroffensive against Egyptian forces in the Sinai. At that point, the United States intervened, placing heavy pressure on Israel to accept a cease-fire rather than press its advantage.

The imposed settlement of the Yom Kippur War demonstrated the growing dependence of the United States and its allies on Arab oil. Permitting Israel to continue its drive into Egypt might have jeopardized the ability of the United States to purchase needed petroleum from the Arab states. A brief but painful embargo by the Arab governments on the sale of oil to supporters of Israel (including America) in 1973 provided an ominous warning of the costs of losing access to the region’s resources. The lesson of the Yom Kippur War, therefore, was that the United States could not ignore the interests of the Arab nations in its efforts on behalf of Israel.

A larger lesson of 1973 was that the nations of the Third World could no longer be expected to act as passive, cooperative “client states.” The United States could no longer depend on cheap, easy access to raw materials as it had in the past.

POLITICS AND ECONOMICS UNDER NIXON

For a time in the late 1960s, it had seemed to many Americans that the forces of chaos and radicalism were taking control of the nation. The domestic policy of the Nixon administration was an attempt to restore balance: between the needs of the poor and the desires of the middle class, between the power of the federal government and the interests of local communities. In the end, however, economic and political crises—some beyond the administration’s control, some of its own making—sharply limited Nixon’s ability to fulfill his domestic goals.

Domestic Initiatives

Many of Nixon’s domestic policies were a response to what he believed to be the demands of his own constituency—conservative, middle-class people whom he liked to call the “silent majority” and who wanted to reduce federal “interference” in local affairs. He tried, unsuccessfully, to persuade Congress to pass legislation prohibiting the use of forced busing to achieve school desegregation. He forbade the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to cut off federal funds from school districts that had failed to comply with court orders to integrate. At the same time, he began to reduce or dismantle many of the social programs of the Great Society and the New Frontier. In 1973, for example, he abolished the Office of Economic Opportunity, the centerpiece of the antipoverty program of the Johnson years.

Yet Nixon’s domestic efforts were not entirely conservative. One of the administration’s boldest efforts was an attempt to overhaul the nation’s enormous welfare system. Nixon proposed replacing the existing system, which almost everyone agreed was cumbersome, expensive, and inefficient, with what he called the Family Assistance Plan (FAP). It would in effect have created a guaranteed annual income for all Americans: \$1,600 in federal grants, which could be supplemented by outside earnings up to \$4,000. Even many liberals applauded the proposal as an important step toward expanding federal responsibility for the poor. Nixon, however, presented the plan in conservative terms: as something that would reduce the role of government and transfer to welfare recipients themselves daily responsibility for their own lives. Although the FAP won approval in the House in 1970, concerted attacks by welfare recipients (who considered the benefits inadequate),

“Six-Day War”

Israel routed Egyptian, Syrian, and Jordanian forces, gained control

Dismantling the Great Society

Arab Oil Embargo

Arab states. A brief but painful embargo by the Arab govern-

members of the welfare bureaucracy (whose own influence stood to be sharply diminished by the bill), and conservatives (who opposed a guaranteed income on principle) helped kill it in the Senate.

From the Warren Court to the Nixon Court

Of all the liberal institutions that had aroused the enmity of the “silent majority” in the 1950s and 1960s, none had evoked more anger and bitterness than the Supreme Court. Not only had its rulings on racial matters disrupted traditional social patterns, but its staunch defense of civil liberties had, in the opinions of many Americans, contributed to the increase in crime, disorder, and moral decay. In *Engel v. Vitale* (1962), the Court ruled that prayers in public schools violated the constitutional separation of church and state, sparking outrage among religious fundamentalists and others. In *Roth v. United States* (1957), the Court had sharply limited the authority of local governments to curb pornography. In a series of other decisions, the Court greatly strengthened the civil rights of criminal defendants and, many Americans believed, greatly weakened the power of law enforcement officials to do their jobs. In *Gideon v. Wainwright* (1963), the Court ruled that every felony defendant was entitled to a lawyer regardless of his or her ability to pay. In *Escobedo v. Illinois* (1964), it ruled that a defendant must be allowed access to a lawyer before questioning by police. In *Miranda v. Arizona* (1966), the Court confirmed the obligation of authorities to inform a criminal suspect of his or her rights. By 1968, the Warren Court had become the target of Americans of all kinds who felt the balance of power in the United States had shifted too far toward the poor and dispossessed at the expense of the middle class, and toward criminals at the expense of law-abiding citizens.

One of the most important decisions of the Warren Court in the 1960s was *Baker v. Carr* (1962), which required state legislatures to apportion electoral districts so that all citizens' votes would have equal weight. In dozens of states, systems of legislative districting had given disproportionate representation to sparsely populated rural areas, hence diminishing the voting power of urban residents. The reapportionment that the decision required greatly strengthened the voting power of African Americans, Hispanics, and other groups concentrated in cities.

Nixon was determined to use his judicial appointments to give the Court a more conservative cast. His first opportunity came almost as soon as he entered office. When Chief Justice Earl Warren resigned early in 1969, Nixon replaced him with a federal appeals court judge of conservative leanings, Warren Burger. A few months later, Associate Justice Abe Fortas resigned after allegations of financial improprieties. To replace him, Nixon named Clement F. Haynsworth, a respected federal circuit court

judge from South Carolina. But Haynsworth came under fire from Senate liberals, black organizations, and labor unions for his conservative record on civil rights and for what some claimed was a conflict of interest in several of the cases on which he had sat. The Senate rejected him. Nixon's next choice was G. Harrold Carswell, a judge of the Florida federal appeals court of little distinction and widely considered unfit for the Supreme Court. The Senate rejected his nomination too.

Nixon angrily denounced the votes, calling them expressions of prejudice against the South. But he was careful thereafter to choose men of standing within the legal community to fill vacancies on the Supreme Court: Harry Blackmun, a moderate jurist from Minnesota; Lewis F. Powell Jr., a respected judge from Virginia; and William Rehnquist, a member of the Nixon Justice Department.

The new Court, however, fell short of what many conservatives had expected. Rather than retreating from its commitment to social reform, the Court in many areas actually became more committed. In *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* (1971), it ruled in favor of the use of forced busing to achieve racial balance in schools. In *Furman v. Georgia* (1972), the Court overturned existing capital punishment statutes and established strict new guidelines for such laws in the future. In *Roe v. Wade* (1973), it struck down laws forbidding abortions. In other decisions, however, the Burger Court was more moderate. Although the justices approved busing as a tool for achieving integration, they rejected, in *Milliken v. Bradley* (1974), a plan to transfer students across district lines (in this case, between Detroit and its suburbs) to achieve racial balance. While the Court upheld the principle of affirmative action in its celebrated 1978 decision *Bakke v. Board of Regents of California*, it established restrictive new guidelines for such programs in the future.

Bakke v. Board of Regents of California

The Election of 1972

However unsuccessful his administration may have been in achieving some of its specific goals, Nixon entered the presidential race in 1972 with a substantial reserve of strength. His energetic reelection committee collected enormous sums of money to support the campaign. The president himself used the powers of incumbency with great effect, refraining from campaigning and concentrating on highly publicized international decisions and state visits. Agencies of the federal government dispensed funds and favors to strengthen Nixon's political standing in critical areas.

Nixon was most fortunate in 1972, however, in his opposition. The return of George Wallace to the presidential fray caused some early concern. Nixon was delighted to see Wallace run in the Democratic primaries and quietly encouraged him to do so. But he feared

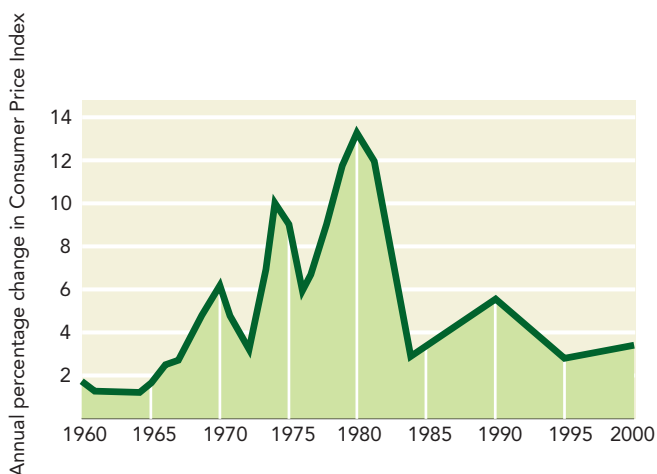
that Wallace would again launch a third-party campaign; Nixon's own reelection strategy rested on the same appeals to the troubled middle class that Wallace was expressing. The possibility of such a campaign vanished in May, when a would-be assassin shot the Alabama governor during a rally at a Maryland shopping center. Paralyzed from the waist down, Wallace was unable to continue campaigning.

The Democrats, in the meantime, were making their own contributions to the Nixon cause by nominating for president a representative of their most liberal wing: Senator George S. McGovern of South Dakota. An outspoken critic of the war, a forceful advocate of advanced liberal positions on most social and economic issues, McGovern seemed to embody many aspects of the turbulent 1960s that middle-class Americans were most eager to reject. McGovern profited greatly from party reforms (which he himself had helped to draft) that reduced the power of party leaders and gave increased influence to women, blacks, and young people in the selection of the Democratic ticket. But those same reforms helped make the Democratic Convention of 1972 an unappealing spectacle to much of the public.

On election day, Nixon won reelection by one of the largest margins in history: 60.7 percent of the popular vote compared with 37.5 percent for the forlorn McGovern, and an electoral margin of 520 to 17.

The Troubled Economy

For three decades, the American economy had been the envy of the world. It had produced as much as a third of



INFLATION, 1960–2000 Inflation was the biggest economic worry of most Americans in the 1970s and early 1980s, and this chart shows why. Having remained very low through the early 1960s, inflation rose slowly in the second half of the decade and then dramatically in the mid- and late 1970s, before beginning a long and steady decline in the early 1980s. ♦ *What caused the great spike in inflation in the 1970s?*

the world's industrial goods and had dominated international trade. The American dollar had been the strongest currency in the world, and the American standard of living had risen steadily from its already substantial heights. Many Americans assumed that this remarkable prosperity was the normal condition of their society. In fact, however, it rested in part on several advantages that were rapidly disappearing by the late 1960s: above all, the absence of significant foreign competition and easy access to raw materials in the Third World.

Inflation, which had been creeping upward for several years when Richard Nixon took office, soon began to soar; it would be the most disturbing economic problem of the 1970s. Its most visible cause was a significant increase in federal deficit spending that began in the 1960s, when the Johnson administration tried to fund the war in Vietnam and its ambitious social programs without raising taxes. But there were other, equally important causes. No longer did the United States have exclusive access to cheap raw materials around the globe; not only were other industrial nations now competing for increasingly scarce raw materials, but Third World suppliers of those materials were beginning to realize their value and to demand higher prices for them.

The greatest immediate blow to the American economy was the increasing cost of energy. More than any nation on earth, the United States based its economy on the easy availability of cheap and plentiful fossil fuels. No society was more dependent on the automobile; none was more wasteful in its use of oil and gas in its homes, schools, and factories. Domestic petroleum reserves were no longer sufficient to meet this demand, and the nation was heavily dependent on imports from the Middle East and Africa.

For many years, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) had operated as an informal bargaining unit for the sale of oil by Third World nations, but had seldom managed to exercise any real strength. But in the early 1970s, OPEC began to use its oil both as an economic tool and as a political weapon. In 1973, in the midst of the Yom Kippur War, Arab members of OPEC announced that they would no longer ship petroleum to nations supporting Israel—which meant the United States and its allies in Western Europe. At about the same time, the OPEC nations agreed to raise their prices 400 percent. These twin shocks produced momentary economic chaos in the West. The United States suffered its first fuel shortage since World War II. And although the boycott ended a few months later, the price of energy continued to skyrocket both because of OPEC's new militant policies and because of the weakening competitive position of the dollar in world markets.

But inflation was only one of the new problems facing the American economy. Another was the decline of the

nation's manufacturing sector. American industry had flourished in the immediate aftermath of World War II, in part because of the new plant capacity the war had created, in part because the country faced almost no competition from other industrial nations. American workers in unionized industries had profited from this postwar success by winning some of the most generous wage and benefits packages in the world.

By the 1970s, however, the climate for American manufacturing had changed significantly. Many of the great industrial plants were now many decades old, much less efficient than the newer plants that Japan and European industrial nations had constructed after the war. In some industries (notably steel and automobiles), management had become complacent and stultifyingly bureaucratic. Most important, U.S. manufacturing now faced major competition from abroad—not only in world trade (which still constituted only a small part of the American economy) but also at home. Automobiles, steel, and many other manufactured goods from Japan and Europe established major footholds in the United States markets. Some of America's new competitors benefited from lower labor costs than their U.S. counterparts; but that was only one of many reasons for their success.

Thus the 1970s marked the beginning of a long, painful process of deindustrialization, during which thousands of factories across the country closed their gates and millions of workers lost their jobs. New employment opportunities were becoming available in other, growing areas of the economy: technology, information systems, and many other more “knowledge-based” industries that would ultimately drive an extraordinary (if unbalanced) economic revival in the 1980s and 1990s. But many industrial workers were poorly equipped to move into those jobs. The result was a growing pool of unemployed and underemployed workers; the virtual disappearance of industrial jobs from many inner cities, where large numbers of minorities lived; and the impoverishment of communities dependent on particular industries. Some of the nation's manufacturing sectors ultimately revived, but few regained the size and dominance they had enjoyed in the 1950s and 1960s; and few employed a work force as large or as relatively well paid as they once had.

The Nixon Response

The Nixon administration responded to these mounting economic problems by focusing on the one thing it thought it could control: inflation. Nixon came to focus on control of the currency. Placing conservative economists at the head of the Federal Reserve Board, he ensured sharply higher interest rates and a contraction of the money supply. But the tight money policy did little to curb inflation: the cost of living rose a cumulative 15 percent dur-

ing Nixon's first two and a half years in office. Economic growth, in the meantime, declined. The United States was encountering a new and puzzling dilemma: “stagflation,” a combination of rising prices and general economic stagnation.

In the summer of 1971, Nixon imposed a ninety-day freeze on all wages and prices at their existing levels. Then, in November, he launched what he called Phase II of his economic plan: mandatory guidelines for wage and price increases, to be administered by a federal agency. Inflation subsided temporarily, but the recession continued. Fearful that the recession would be more damaging than inflation in an election year, the administration reversed itself late in 1971: interest rates were allowed to drop sharply, and government spending was increased—producing the largest budget deficit since World War II. The new tactics helped revive the economy in the short term, but inflation rose substantially—particularly after the administration abandoned the strict Phase II controls.

In 1973, prices rose 9 percent; in 1974, after the Arab oil embargo and the OPEC price increases, they rose 12 percent—the highest rate since the relaxation of price controls shortly after World War II. The value of the dollar continued to slide, and the nation's international trade continued to decline.

The erratic economic programs of the Nixon administration were a sign of a broader national confusion about the prospects for American prosperity. The Nixon pattern—of moving from a tight money policy to curb inflation at one moment, to a spending policy to cure recession at the next—repeated itself during the two administrations that followed him.

THE WATERGATE CRISIS

Although economic problems greatly concerned the American people in the 1970s, another stunning development almost entirely preoccupied the nation beginning early in 1973: the fall of Richard Nixon.

The Scandals

Nixon's crisis was in part a culmination of long-term changes in the presidency. Public expectations of the president had increased dramatically in the years since World War II; yet the constraints placed on the authority of the office had grown as well. In response, a succession of presidents had sought new methods for the exercise of power, often stretching the law, occasionally breaking it. Nixon greatly accelerated these trends. Facing a Democratic Congress hostile to his goals, he attempted to find ways to circumvent the legislature whenever possible. Saddled with a federal bureaucracy

Deindustrialization

“Stagflation”

The Changing Presidency

WATERGATE

More than three decades after Watergate—one of the most famous political scandals in American history—historians and others continue to argue about its causes and significance. Their interpretations fall into several broad categories.

One argument emphasizes the evolution of the institution of the presidency over time and sees Watergate as the result of a much larger pattern of presidential usurpations of power that stretched back at least several decades. Arthur Schlesinger Jr. helped develop this argument in his 1973 book *The Imperial Presidency*, which argues that ever since World War II, Americans have believed that the nation was in a state of permanent crisis, threatened from abroad by the menace of communism, threatened from within by the danger of insufficient will. The



(Bettmann/Corbis)

belief of a succession of presidents in the urgency of this crisis, and in their duty to take whatever measures might

be necessary to combat it, led them gradually to usurp more and more power from Congress, from the courts, and from the public. Initially, this expansion of presidential power came in the realm of international affairs: covert and at times illegal activities overseas.

But in the postwar world, domestic politics began to seem inseparable from international politics. Gradually, presidents began to look for ways to circumvent constraints in domestic matters as well. Nixon's actions in the Watergate crisis were, in other words, a culmination of this long and steady expansion of covert presidential power. Jonathan Schell, in *The Time of Illusion* (1975), offers a variation of this argument, tying the crisis of the presidency to the pressure that nuclear weapons place on presidents to

unresponsive to his wishes, he constructed a hierarchy in which virtually all executive power became concentrated in the White House. Operating within a rigid, even autocratic staff structure, the president became a solitary, at times brooding figure. Unknown to all but a few intimates, he also became mired in a pattern of illegalities and abuses of power that in late 1972 began to break through to the surface.

Early on the morning of June 17, 1972, police arrested five men who had broken into the offices of the Democratic National Committee in the Watergate office building in Washington, D.C. Two others were seized a short time later and charged with supervising the break-in. When reporters for the *Washington Post* began researching the backgrounds of the culprits, they discovered that among those involved in the burglary were former employees of the Committee for the Re-election of the President. One of them had worked in the White House itself. Moreover, they had been paid to execute the break-in from a secret fund of the reelection committee, a fund controlled by members of the White House staff.

Public interest in the disclosures grew slowly in the last months of 1972. Early in 1973, however, the Watergate burglars went on trial; and under relentless prodding from federal judge John J. Sirica, one of the defendants, James W. McCord, agreed to cooperate both with the grand jury and with a special Senate investigating committee. McCord's testimony opened a floodgate of confessions,

and for months a parade of White House and campaign officials exposed one illegality after another. Foremost among them was a member of the inner circle of the White House, counsel to the president John Dean, who leveled allegations against Nixon himself.

Two different sets of scandals emerged from the investigations. One was a general pattern of abuses of power involving both the White House and the Nixon campaign committee, which included, but was not limited to, the Watergate break-in. The other scandal, and the one that became the major focus of public attention for nearly two years, was the way in which the administration tried to manage the investigations of the Watergate break-in and other abuses—a pattern of behavior that became known as the “cover-up.” There was never any conclusive evidence that the president had planned or approved the Watergate burglary in advance.

But there was mounting evidence that he had been involved in illegal efforts to obstruct investigations and withhold information. Testimony before the Senate provided evidence of the complicity of Dean, Attorney General John Mitchell, top White House assistants H. R. Haldeman and John Ehrlichman, and others. As interest in the case grew to something approaching a national obsession, the investigation focused increasingly on a single question: in the words of Senator Howard Baker of Tennessee, a member of the Ervin committee, “What did the President know and when did he know it?”

The Watergate
Break-In

“Cover-Up”

protect the nation's—and their own—“credibility.” Other commentators (but few serious historical studies) go even further and argue that what happened to produce the Watergate scandals was not substantively different from the normal patterns of presidential behavior, that Nixon simply got caught where others had not, and that a long-standing liberal hostility toward Nixon ensured that he would pay a higher price for his behavior than other presidents would.

A second explanation of Watergate emphasizes the difficult social and political environment of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Nixon entered office, according to this view, facing an unprecedentedly radical opposition that would stop at nothing to discredit the war and destroy his authority. He found himself, therefore, drawn into taking similarly desperate measures of his own to defend himself from these extraordinary challenges. Nixon

made this argument in his own 1975 memoirs:

It was this epidemic of unprecedented domestic terrorism that prompted our efforts to discover the best means by which to deal with this new phenomenon of highly organized and highly skilled revolutionaries dedicated to the violent destruction of our democratic system.*

The historian Herbert Parmet echoes parts of this argument in *Richard Nixon and His America* (1990). Stephen Ambrose offers a more muted version of the same view in *Richard Nixon* (1989).

Most of those who have written about Watergate, however, search for the explanation not in institutional or social forces, but in the personalities of the people involved and, most notably, in the personality of Richard Nixon. Even many of those who have developed structural explanations

(Schlesinger, Schell, and Ambrose, for example) return eventually to Nixon himself as the most important explanation for Watergate. Others begin there, perhaps most notably Stanley I. Kutler, in *The Wars of Watergate* (1990) and, later, *Abuse of Power* (1997), in which he presents extensive excerpts from conversations about Watergate taped in the Nixon White House. Kutler emphasizes Nixon's lifelong resort to vicious political tactics and his long-standing belief that he was a special target of unscrupulous enemies and had to “get” them before they got him. Watergate was rooted, Kutler argues, “in the personality and history of Nixon himself.” A “corrosive hatred,” he claims, “decisively shaped Nixon's own behavior, his career, and eventually his historical standing.”

*From *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1978). Copyright © 1978 by Richard Nixon. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission of the Estate of Richard Nixon.

Nixon accepted the departure of those members of his administration implicated in the scandals. But he continued to insist that he himself was innocent. There the matter might have rested, had it not been for the disclosure during the Senate hearings of a White House taping system that had recorded virtually every conversation in the president's office during the period in question. All the groups investigating the scandals sought access to the tapes; Nixon, pleading “executive privilege,” refused to release them. A special prosecutor appointed by the president to handle the Watergate cases, Harvard law professor Archibald Cox, took Nixon to court in October 1973 in an effort to force him to relinquish the recordings. Nixon fired Cox and suffered the humiliation of watching both Attorney General Elliot Richardson and his deputy resign in protest. This “Saturday night massacre” made the president's predicament infinitely worse. Not only did public pressure force him to appoint a new special prosecutor, Texas attorney Leon Jaworski, who proved just as determined as Cox to subpoena the tapes; but the episode precipitated an investigation by the House of Representatives into the possibility of impeachment.

The Fall of Richard Nixon

Nixon's situation deteriorated further in the following months. Late in 1973, Vice President Spiro Agnew became embroiled in a scandal of his own when evidence sur-

posed that he had accepted bribes and kickbacks while serving as governor of Maryland and even as vice president. In return for a Justice Department agreement not to press the case, Agnew pleaded no contest to a lesser charge of income-tax evasion and resigned from the government. With the controversial Agnew no longer in line to succeed to the presidency, the prospect of removing Nixon from the White House became less worrisome to his opponents. The new vice president (the first appointed under the terms of the Twenty-fifth Amendment, which had been adopted in 1967) was House Minority Leader Gerald Ford, an amiable and popular Michigan congressman.

In April 1974, in an effort to head off further subpoenas of the tapes, the president released transcripts of a number of relevant conversations, claiming that they proved his innocence. But even these edited tapes seemed to suggest Nixon's complicity in the cover-up. In July, the crisis reached a climax. First the Supreme Court ruled unanimously, in *United States v. Richard M. Nixon*, that the president must relinquish the tapes to Special Prosecutor Jaworski. Days later, the House Judiciary Committee voted to recommend three articles of impeachment, charging that Nixon had, first, obstructed justice in the Watergate cover-up; second, misused federal agencies to violate the rights of citizens; and third, defied the authority of Congress by refusing to deliver tapes and other materials subpoenaed by the committee.

“Saturday Night Massacre”

U.S. v. Richard M. Nixon



NIXON'S FAREWELL Only moments before, Nixon had been in tears saying good-bye to his staff in the East Room of the White House. But as he boarded a helicopter to begin his trip home to California shortly after resigning as president, he flashed his trademark "victory" sign to the crowd on the White House lawn. (Bettmann/Corbis)

Even without additional evidence, Nixon might well have been impeached by the full House and convicted by the Senate. Early in August, however, he provided at last what many wavering members of Congress had begun to call the "smoking gun." Among the tapes that the Supreme Court compelled Nixon to relinquish were several that offered apparently incontrovertible evidence of his involvement in the Watergate cover-up. Only days after the burglary, the recordings disclosed, the president had ordered the FBI to stop investigating the break-in. Impeachment and conviction now seemed inevitable.

For several days, Nixon brooded in the White House. Finally, on August 8, 1974, he announced his resignation—

the first president in American history ever to do so. At noon the next day, while Nixon and his family were flying west to their home in California, Gerald Ford took the oath of office as president.

Nixon Resigns

Many Americans expressed relief and exhilaration that, as the new president put it, "Our long national nightmare is over." But the wave of good feeling could not obscure the deeper and more lasting damage of the Watergate crisis. In a society in which distrust of leaders and institutions of authority was already widespread, the fall of Richard Nixon seemed to confirm the most cynical assumptions about the character of American public life.

CONCLUSION

The victory of Richard Nixon in the 1968 presidential election represented a popular repudiation of turbulence and radicalism. It was a call for a restoration of order and stability. But order and stability were not the dominant characteristics of Nixon's troubled years in office. Nixon

entered office, rather, when the forces of the left and the counterculture were approaching the peak of their influence. American culture and society in the late 1960s and early 1970s were shaped decisively by, and were deeply divided over, the challenges of young people

to the norms by which most Americans had lived. Also in those years, a host of new liberation movements joined the drive for racial equality, and women mobilized effectively and powerfully to demand changes in the way their society treated gender differences.

Nixon had run for office attacking the failure of his predecessor to end the war in Vietnam. But during the first four years of his presidency, the war—and the protests against it—continued and even in some respects escalated. The division of opinion over the war was as deep as any of the many other divisions in national life. It continued to poison the nation's politics and social fabric until the American role in the conflict finally shuddered to a close in 1973.

But much of the controversy and division in the 1970s was a product of the Nixon presidency itself. Nixon was in many ways a dynamic and even visionary leader, who proposed (but rarely succeeded in enacting) some important domestic reforms and who made important changes in American foreign policy, most notably making overtures to communist China and forging détente

with the Soviet Union. He was also, however, a devious and secretive man whose White House staff became engaged in a series of covert activities—many of them connected with the president's reelection campaign in 1972—that produced the most dramatic political scandal in American history. Watergate, as it was called, preoccupied much of the nation for nearly two years beginning in 1972; and ultimately, in the summer of 1974, the scandal forced Richard Nixon—who had been reelected to office only two years before by one of the largest majorities in modern history—to become the first president in American history to resign. He was a victim in part of the passions and divisions of his time and of the Vietnam War, which he had inherited but had not been able to end quickly. He was a victim as well of his own insecurities and resentments. Whatever the causes of his fall, however, the greatest cost of Watergate was not what it did to Nixon himself, but how it damaged the faith of the American people in their leaders and their government. That faith would remain weak through the remainder of the century and beyond.

INTERACTIVE LEARNING

The *Primary Source Investigator CD-ROM* offers the following materials related to this chapter:

- Interactive maps: **U.S. Elections (M7)**; **Patterns of Protest (M30)**; and **Middle East (M28)**.
- Documents, images, and maps related to the social changes in the late 1960s and 1970s, the presidency of Richard Nixon, and the Watergate scandal. Highlights include documents related to the Watergate crisis, the ensuing investigation, and the resignation

of President Nixon; the text of the legislation that established the Environmental Protection Agency; and images related to the women's liberation movement.

Online Learning Center (www.mhhe.com/brinkley13)

For quizzes, Internet resources, references to additional books and films, and more, consult this book's Online Learning Center.

FOR FURTHER REFERENCE

John Morton Blum, *Years of Discord: American Politics and Society, 1961–1974* (1991) is a good overview. James Miller, *“Democracy in the Streets”: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (1987) is a perceptive history of the New Left through its leading organization, SDS. Kristin Luker, *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood* (1984) is an excellent account of this central battle over the nature of feminism. Margaret Cruikshank, *The Rise of a Gay and Lesbian Liberation Movement* (1992) and David Eisenbach, *Gay Power: An American Revolution* (2006) recount another important struggle of the 1960s and beyond. Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Distant Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (1989) examines the growing Asian community in postwar America. Stephen Ambrose, *Nixon: The Triumph of a Politician, 1962–1972* (1989) and *Nixon, Ruin*

and Recovery, 1973–1990 (1992) provides a thorough chronicle of this important presidency. Joan Hoff, *Nixon Reconsidered* (1994) is a sympathetic account of Nixon's presidency before Watergate. Margaret MacMillan, *Nixon and Mao: The Week That Changed the World* (2007) examines Nixon's most famous diplomatic effort. Stanley J. Kutler, *The Wars of Watergate* (1990) is a scholarly study of the great scandal, and Jonathan Schell, *The Time of Illusion* (1975) is a perceptive contemporary account. David Greenberg, *Nixon's Shadow* (2003) is a perceptive examination of Nixon's place in American culture. Marilyn Young, *The Vietnam Wars, 1945–1990* (1991) provides, among other things, a full account of the last years of American involvement in Vietnam and of the conflicts in the region that followed the American withdrawal.