

Nixon



Nixon's first-term success is affirmed by the fact that he won 49 states for reelection in 1972. On his last day in office, his national popularity was 24%

What happened?

A little background from before he won the Presidency

Born January 1913 in California

↳ Born into poverty

↳ Raised with the Quaker faith

↳ Mom was a Democrat,

↳ Dad a Republican and farmer

↳ 7-year-old brother died when Nixon was 12. 24-year-old brother dies when Nixon was 20.

In high school: involved in football, basketball, piano, debate, literary societies

1934, earned a BA History from Whittier College

1937, earned a law degree from Duke University

Wanted to get into the FBI. Applied and was accepted, but job rescinded due to budget cuts

1938, meets future wife

During World War II, he was active in the US Navy and served in the South Pacific

1946, elected to the House of Representatives

↳ His work on the Alger Hiss case built a reputation as a leading anti-Communist.

↳ Sought to monitor activities of unions.

1950, elected to the Senate

Supported statehood for Alaska and Hawaii, and for civil rights for minorities.

1952-1960 Vice President under Eisenhower

↳ Eisenhower had a heart attack in 1955 and stroke in 1957, and for a few weeks each time Nixon stepped in, earning high praise for his leadership and for not trying to take power.

↳ 1959, "Kitchen Debate" with Khrushchev

People think his political career is over by 1962

↳ Lost Presidency to Kennedy, then lost California governor's race in 1962

1968, Nixon wins the presidency

What follows relates exclusively to Nixon's presidency

“The Good...”

Why might Nixon be celebrated as president?

He was a peacemaker . . .

- Nixon went to China (ending 25 years of no communication between the 2 countries.
 - ↳ His breakthrough with China brought the Soviet Union to the negotiation table)
- He focused on détente (the easing of Cold War hostilities) with the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union
- Nixon signed the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and SALT I, two landmark arms control treaties with the Soviet Union.
- He ordered the removal of all US troops from Vietnam.
- With skilled diplomacy and military pressure, Nixon stopped the India-Pakistan War
- Nixon prevented a nuclear escalation in the Yom Kippur War between Israel and its attackers. With Nixon's aid, Israel was able to survive and win without using its atomic arsenal; the war created an oil crisis in the US, which resolved with the wars end.
- Implemented the Nixon Doctrine, which called for indirect assistance by the United States rather than direct US commitments (as seen in the ongoing Vietnam War).
- Nixon ended the military draft, committing the US to an all-volunteer force

Domestic programs which seeks to balance federalist and anti-federalist approaches . . .

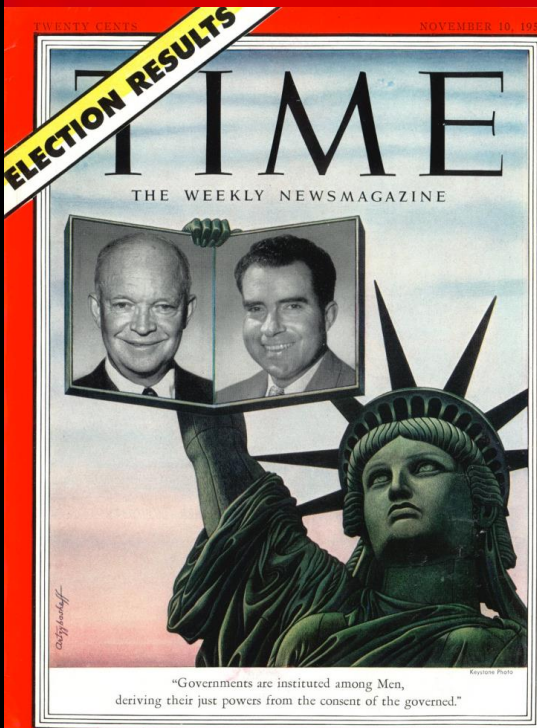
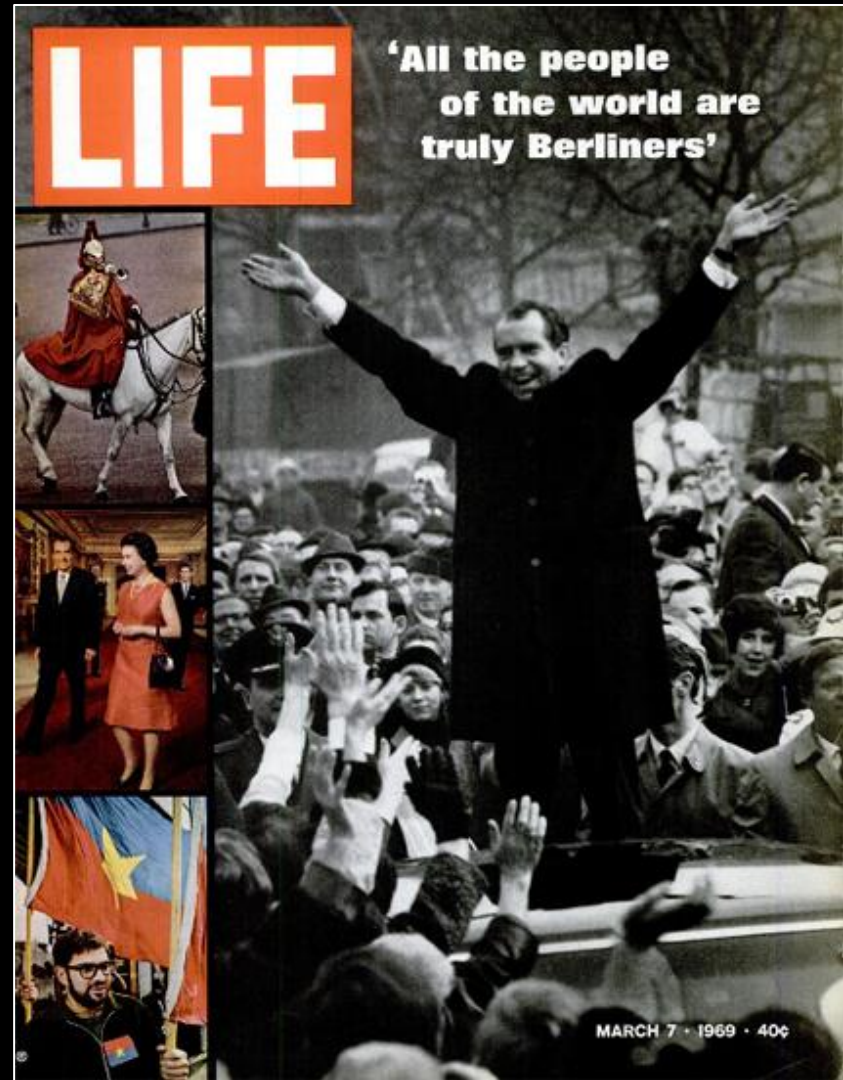
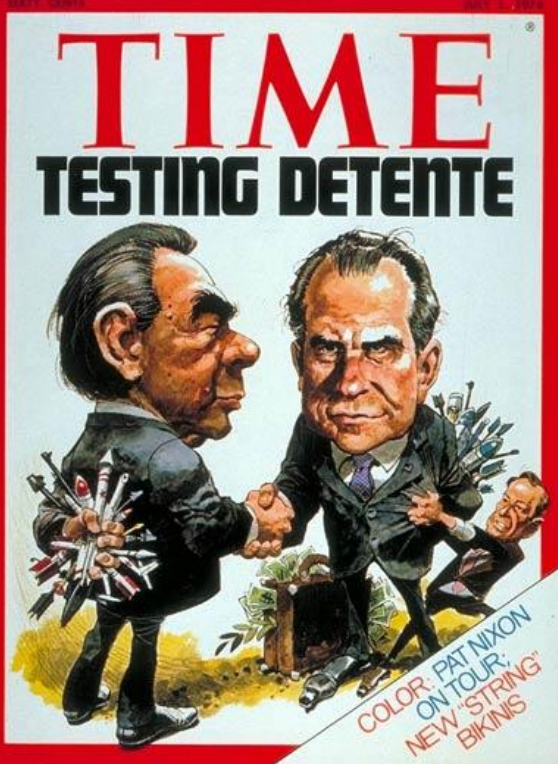
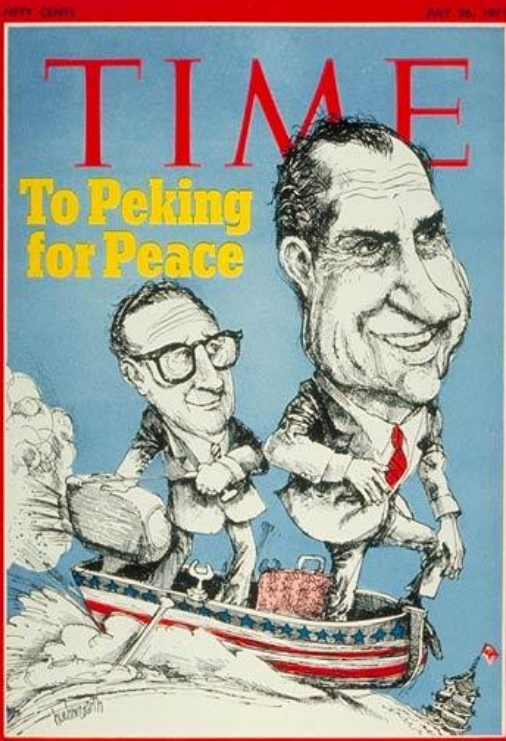
- He signed Title IX of the Civil Rights Act, giving girls equal opportunities to participate in school sports.
- He returned American Indian tribal lands to Indians and ended forced assimilation of Indians.
- He pushed for the 26th Amendment (lowering the voting age from 21 to 18)
- He oversaw the desegregation of many of America’s schools
- Nixon advocated for a policy in which federal powers and responsibilities would be shifted to the states.

Other well-received things Nixon did . . .

- Oversaw the first American on the moon, and the Apollo 13 rescue
- He declared a “war” on cancer
- Appointed more women to jobs in his administration than any prior president
- Repealed investment tax credit; removed two million poor from the tax rolls.
- He imposed wage and price controls.
- 4 Supreme Court justices

Protected the environment . . .

- Created the Environmental Protection Agency in 1970
- Passed laws supporting clean air, marine mammal protection, safe drinking water and endangered species



“...The Bad...”

Why might Nixon be condemned as President?

- Watergate
 - ↪ The President used federal money to hire former government agents to break into his political rival's campaign headquarters, to learn how they planned to win the election.
 - ↪ Nixon ordered government agencies (FBI, IRS, CIA) and the Plumbers to violate citizens constitutional rights
(Constitutional crisis, SEE IMPEACHMENT LECTURE NOTES)
- Pentagon Papers
 - ↪ Nixon tried to prevent their being published, even closing down two newspapers (1st amendment crisis, freedom of the press)
- The Nixon administration vigorously prosecuted anti-war protesters.
(1st amendment crisis, freedom of speech)
- 1968: as LBJ was in peace talks in Vietnam, Nixon felt it would hurt his chances of winning and actively sabotaged the talks.
(Logan Act violation)

“...And The Ugly”

What about Nixon's presidency far exceeds expectations/standards for role models of the time?

- Constant profanity and vulgarity. Paranoia was well known
- Scapegoating targets for political means:
 - ↪ *"You understand what I'm saying? We knew we couldn't make it illegal to be either against the war or black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin. And then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities," Ehrlichman [Nixon policy advisor] said. "We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did."*
- Anti-Semitic
 - ↪ *"The Jews are all over the government,"* Nixon complained to his chief of staff, H.R. Haldeman, in an Oval Office meeting recorded on one of a set of White House tapes released yesterday at the National Archives. Nixon said the Jews needed to be brought under control by putting someone *"in charge who is not Jewish"* in key agencies.
 - ↪ Washington *"is full of Jews,"* the president asserted. *"Most Jews are disloyal."*
- Nixon was against interracial relationships
 - ↪ In relation to Roe v Wade, while Nixon felt it was wrongly decided, he did believe that abortions should be allowable in cases of rape or interracial mating.

“I am not a crook”, 17 November 1973

(37 seconds) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sh163n1IJ4M>

Nixon announcing resignation

(19:09, 1st 3 minutes)

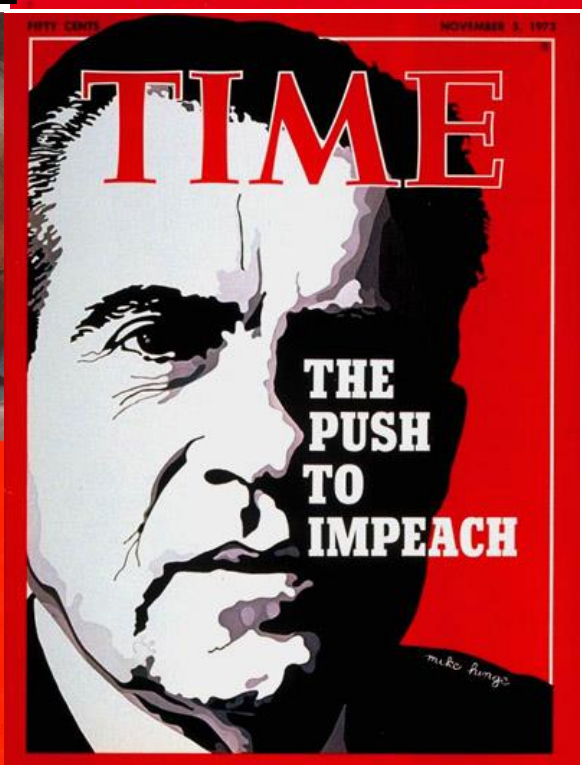
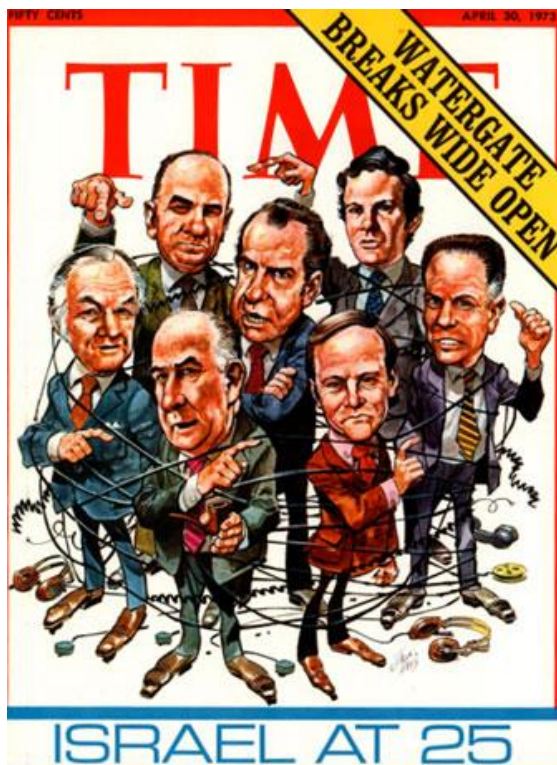
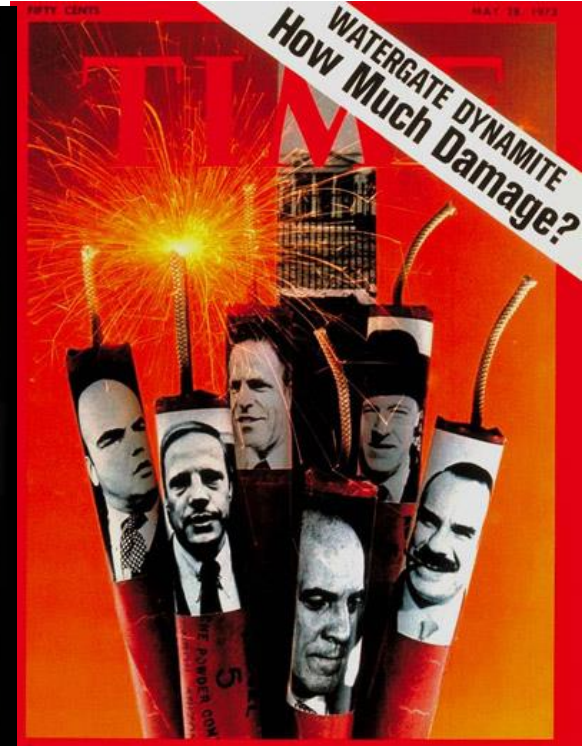
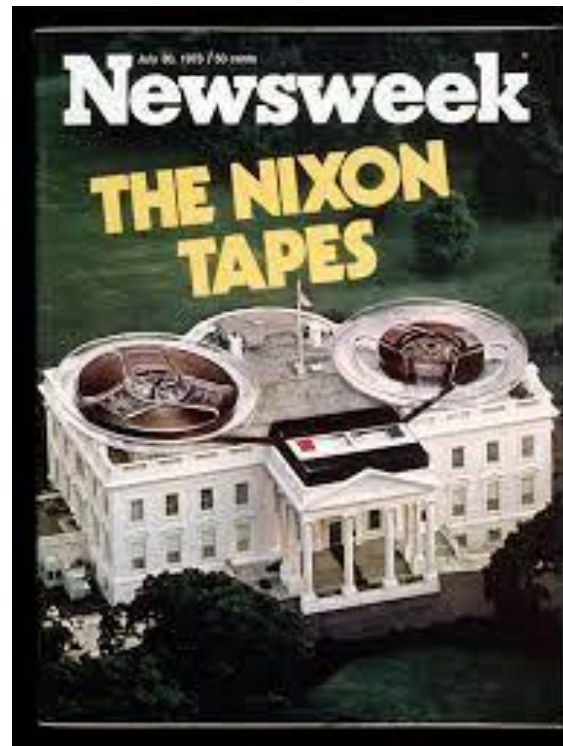
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_DrUajEBtE

News coverage of Nixon leaving the White House as president for the last time.

(1:57) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XTFsoEIX-a0>

Frost/Nixon (scene from film recreated from original 1977 interview)

(3:29) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vFHYiOfBRng>





1. Consider information found in “The Good” category. To what extent were the policies Nixon pursued more conservative or liberal in orientation?
2. Look at what types of information are found in “The Bad” and the “And The Ugly” categories. Why were they grouped as they were?
3. What is the role of a free press in ensuring that no one – not even the president – is above the law?
4. How did Checks and Balances work to contain Nixon’s political crimes, and lead to his resignation?
5. In balance, to what extent should the Nixon Presidency be celebrated or condemned?