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Richard Nixon



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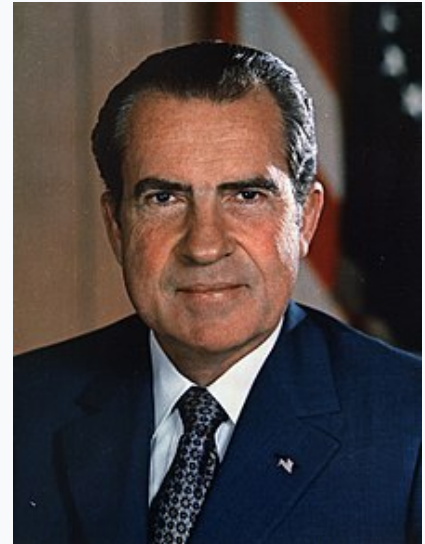
"Nixon" and "Richard M. Nixon" redirect here. For other uses, see [Nixon \(disambiguation\)](#) and [Richard Nixon \(disambiguation\)](#).

Richard Milhous Nixon (January 9, 1913 – April 22, 1994) was an American politician who served as the **37th President of the United States**, serving from 1969 until 1974, when he resigned from office, the only **U.S. president** to do so. He had previously served as the 36th **Vice President of the United States** from 1953 to 1961, and prior to that as a **U.S. Representative** and also **Senator** from **California**.

Nixon was born in [Yorba Linda, California](#). After completing his undergraduate studies at [Whittier College](#), he graduated from [Duke University School of Law](#) in 1937 and returned to California to practice law. He and his wife [Pat](#) moved to Washington in 1942 to work for the [federal government](#). He subsequently served on [active duty](#) in the [U.S. Navy Reserve](#) during [World War II](#). Nixon was elected to the [House of Representatives](#) in [1946](#) and to the [Senate](#) in [1950](#). His pursuit of the [Hiss Case](#) established his reputation as a leading anti-communist and elevated him to national prominence. He was the [running mate](#) of [Dwight D. Eisenhower](#), the Republican Party presidential nominee in the [1952 election](#). Nixon served for eight years as [Vice President](#), becoming the second-youngest vice president in history at age 40. He waged an unsuccessful [presidential campaign in 1960](#), narrowly losing to [John F. Kennedy](#), and lost a race for [Governor of California](#) to [Pat Brown](#) in [1962](#). In [1968](#), he ran for the presidency again and was elected, defeating incumbent Vice President [Hubert Humphrey](#).

Nixon ended American involvement in the [war in Vietnam](#) in 1973 and brought the American [POWs](#) home, and ended the [military draft](#). [Nixon's visit to China](#) in 1972 eventually led to [diplomatic relations between the two nations](#) and he initiated [détente](#) and the [Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty](#) with the Soviet

Richard Nixon



37th President of the United States

In office

January 20, 1969 – August 9, 1974

Vice President [Spiro Agnew](#) (1969–1973)
None (Oct–Dec. 1973)
[Gerald Ford](#) (1973–1974)

Preceded by [Lyndon B. Johnson](#)

Succeeded by [Gerald Ford](#)

36th Vice President of the United States

In office

January 20, 1953 – January 20, 1961

President [Dwight D. Eisenhower](#)

Preceded by [Alben W. Barkley](#)

Succeeded by [Lyndon B. Johnson](#)

United States Senator from California

In office

December 1, 1950 – January 1, 1953

Preceded by [Sheridan Downey](#)

Succeeded by [Thomas Kuchel](#)

Member of the U.S. House of Representatives from California's 12th district

Union the same year. His administration generally transferred power from Washington D.C. to the states. He imposed wage and price controls for ninety days, enforced [desegregation](#) of Southern schools, established the [Environmental Protection Agency](#) and began the [War on Cancer](#). Nixon also presided over the [Apollo 11](#) moon landing, which signaled the end of the [moon race](#). He was reelected in one of the largest electoral [landslides](#) in U.S. history in [1972](#) when he defeated [George McGovern](#).

In his second term, Nixon ordered [an airlift](#) to resupply [Israeli](#) losses in the [Yom Kippur War](#), resulting in the restart of the [Middle East peace process](#) and an [oil crisis](#) at home. The Nixon administration supported [a coup in Chile](#) that ousted the government of [Salvador Allende](#) and propelled [Augusto Pinochet](#) to power. By late 1973, the [Watergate scandal](#) escalated, costing Nixon much of his political support. On August 9, 1974, he resigned in the face of almost certain [impeachment](#) and removal from office. After his resignation, he was issued a [controversial pardon](#) by his successor, [Gerald Ford](#). In 20 years of retirement, Nixon wrote nine books and undertook many foreign trips, helping to rehabilitate his image into that of elder statesman. He suffered a debilitating [stroke](#) on April 18, 1994 and [died four days later](#) at the age of 81.

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In office

January 3, 1947 – November 30, 1950

Preceded by [Jerry Voorhis](#)

Succeeded by [Patrick J. Hillings](#)

Personal details

Born	Richard Milhous Nixon <div>January 9, 1913</div> <div>Yorba Linda, California, U.S.</div>
Died	April 22, 1994 (aged 81) <div>Manhattan, New York, U.S.</div>
Cause of death	Stroke and cerebral edema
Resting place	Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum <div>Yorba Linda, California, U.S.</div>
Political party	Republican
Spouse(s)	Pat Ryan (m. 1940; d. 1993)
Children	Patricia "Tricia" and Julie
Parents	Frank Nixon <div>Hannah Milhous Nixon</div>
Alma mater	Whittier College (BA) <div>Duke University (JD)</div>
Profession	Lawyer
Signature	

Military service

Allegiance	 United States
Service/branch	 United States Navy Reserve
Years of service	1942–1946, active duty <div>1946–1966, inactive duty</div>
Rank	 Commander
Battles/wars	<ul style="list-style-type: none">World War II South Pacific theater^[1]
Awards	 Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal (2)



This article is part of
a series about
Richard Nixon

[Birthplace](#) · [1946 U.S. House election](#) · [1950 U.S. Senate election](#)
["Checkers speech"](#)

Vice President of the United States

[Motorcade attack](#) · [Kitchen Debate](#) · [Operation 40](#) · [1960 presidential election](#)

Post-vice presidency

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Early life

Richard Milhous Nixon was born on January 9, 1913 in [Yorba Linda, California](#), in a house that was built by his father.^{[2][3]} His parents were [Hannah \(Milhous\) Nixon](#) and [Francis A. Nixon](#). His mother was a [Quaker](#), and his father converted from [Methodism](#) to the Quaker faith. Nixon was a descendant of the early American settler, [Thomas Cornell](#), who was also an ancestor of [Ezra Cornell](#), the founder of [Cornell University](#), as well as of [Jimmy Carter](#) and [Bill Gates](#).^[4]

Nixon's upbringing was marked by evangelical Quaker observances of the time, such as refraining from alcohol, dancing, and swearing. Nixon had four brothers: Harold (1909–33), [Donald](#) (1914–87), Arthur (1918–25), and [Edward](#) (born 1930).^[5] Four of the five Nixon boys were named after kings who had ruled in historical or legendary Britain; Richard, for example, was named after [Richard the Lionheart](#).^{[6][7]}



Nixon (second from right) makes his newspaper debut in 1916, contributing five cents to a fund for war orphans. [Donald](#) is to the left of his brother.

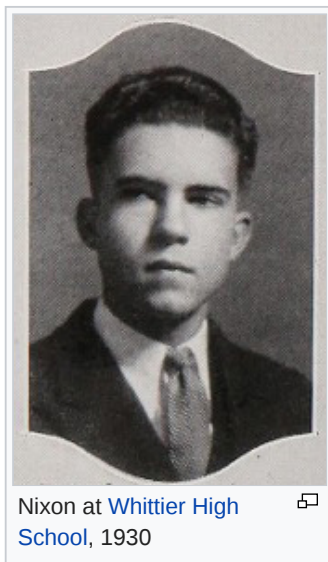
President of the United States
Presidency
First term
1968 presidential election (campaign)
1st Inauguration
Nixon Doctrine · War policy · Visit to China
Nixonomics (Nixon shock)
EPA · Environmental policy · Clean Water · NOAA · War on Cancer · War on Drugs
Second term
1972 presidential election (Convention)
2nd Inauguration
Détente · Paris Peace Accords · Endangered Species Act · Watergate scandal (Timeline · Tapes · <i>United States v. Nixon</i>)
Watergate Committee · Impeachment process · Resignation speech
Post-presidency
Pardon · The Nixon Interviews · <i>Nixon v. General Services Administration</i> · State funeral · Electoral history
Presidential Library and Museum · Foundation · Center for the National Interest
<i>Six Crises</i> · Bibliography

V · T · E

Nixon's early life was marked by financial hardship, but he would have a happy childhood. He later quoted a saying of Eisenhower to describe his boyhood: "We were poor, but the glory of it was we didn't know it".^[8] The Nixon family ranch failed in 1922, and the family moved to [Whittier](#), California. In an area with many Quakers, Frank Nixon opened a grocery store and gas station.^[9] Richard's younger brother Arthur died in 1925 at the age of seven after a short illness.^[10] At the age of twelve, a spot was found on Richard's lung, and, with a family history of [tuberculosis](#), he was forbidden to play sports. Eventually, the spot was found to be scar tissue from an early bout of pneumonia.^{[11][12]}

Primary and secondary education

Young Richard attended East Whittier Elementary School, where he was president of his eighth-grade class.^[13] His parents believed that attending [Whittier High School](#) had caused Richard's older brother Harold to live a dissolute lifestyle before he fell ill of tuberculosis (he died of the disease in 1933), so they sent Richard to the larger [Fullerton Union High School](#).^{[14][15]} He had to ride a school bus for an hour each way during his freshman year, and he received excellent grades. Later, he lived with an aunt in [Fullerton](#) during the week.^[16] He played junior varsity football, and seldom missed a practice, even though he was rarely used in games.^[17] He had greater success as a debater, winning a number of championships and taking his only formal tutelage in public speaking from Fullerton's Head of English, H. Lynn Sheller. Nixon later remembered Sheller's words, "Remember, speaking is conversation ... don't shout at people. Talk to them. Converse with them."^[18] Nixon stated that he tried to use the conversational tone as much as possible.^[18]



At the start of his junior year beginning in September 1928, Richard's parents permitted him to transfer to Whittier High School. At Whittier High, Nixon suffered his first electoral defeat, for student body president. He often rose at 4 a.m., to drive the family truck into Los Angeles and purchase vegetables at the market. He then drove to the store to wash and display them, before going to school. Harold had been diagnosed with tuberculosis the previous year; when their mother took him to Arizona in the hopes of improving his health, the demands on Richard increased, causing him to give up football. Nevertheless, Richard graduated from Whittier High third in his class of 207 students.^[19]

Collegiate and law school education

Nixon was offered a tuition grant to attend [Harvard University](#), but Harold's continued illness and the need for their mother to care for him meant Richard was needed at the store. He remained in his hometown and attended [Whittier College](#), his expenses there covered by a bequest from his maternal grandfather.^[20] Nixon played for the basketball team; he also tried out for football but lacked the size to play. He remained on the team as a substitute and was noted for his enthusiasm.^[21] Instead of fraternities and sororities, Whittier had literary societies. Nixon was snubbed by the only one for men, the Franklins; many members of the Franklins were from prominent families, but Nixon was not. He responded by helping to found a new society, the Orthogonian Society.^[22] In addition to the society, schoolwork, and work at the store, Nixon found time for a large number of extracurricular activities, becoming a champion debater and gaining a reputation as a hard worker.^[23] In 1933, he became engaged to Ola Florence Welch, daughter of the Whittier police chief. The two broke up in 1935.^[24]

After his graduation from Whittier in 1934, Nixon received a full scholarship to attend [Duke University School of Law](#).^[25] The school was new and sought to attract top students by offering scholarships.^[26] It paid high salaries to its professors, many of whom had national or international reputations.^[27] The number of scholarships was greatly reduced for second- and third-year students, forcing recipients into intense competition.^[26] Nixon not only kept his scholarship but was elected president of the Duke Bar Association,^[28] inducted into the [Order of the Coif](#),^[29] and graduated third in his class in June 1937.^[25]

Early career and marriage

After graduating from Duke, Nixon initially hoped to join the [Federal Bureau of Investigation](#). He received no response to his letter of application and learned years later that he had been hired, but his appointment had been canceled at the last minute due to budget cuts.^[30] Instead, he returned to California and was admitted to the [bar](#) in 1937. He began practicing in Whittier with the law firm Wingert and Bewley,^[25] working on [commercial litigation](#) for local petroleum companies and other corporate matters, as well as on [wills](#).^[31] In later years, Nixon proudly stated that he was the only modern president to have previously worked as a practicing attorney. Nixon was reluctant to work on divorce cases, disliking frank sexual talk from women.^[32] In 1938, he opened up his own branch of Wingert and Bewley in [La Habra, California](#),^[33] and became a full partner in the firm the following year.^[34]

In January 1938, Nixon was cast in the Whittier Community Players production of *The Dark Tower*. There he played opposite a high school teacher named [Thelma "Pat" Ryan](#).^[25] Nixon described it in his memoirs as "a case of [love at first sight](#)"^[35]—for Nixon only, as Pat Ryan turned down the young lawyer several times before agreeing to date him.^[36] Once they began their courtship, Ryan was reluctant to marry Nixon; they dated for two years before she assented to his proposal. They wed in a small ceremony on June 21, 1940. After a honeymoon in Mexico, the Nixons began their married life in Whittier.^[37] They had two daughters, [Tricia](#) (born 1946) and [Julie](#) (born 1948).^[38]

World War II

In January 1942, the couple moved to Washington, D.C., where Nixon took a job at the [Office of Price Administration](#).^[25] In his political campaigns, Nixon would suggest that this was his response to [Pearl Harbor](#), but he had sought the position throughout the latter part of 1941. Both Nixon and his wife believed he was limiting his prospects by remaining in Whittier.^[39] He was assigned to the tire rationing division, where he was tasked with replying to correspondence. He did not enjoy the role, and four months later, applied to join the [United States Navy](#).^[40] As a birthright Quaker, he could have claimed exemption from [the draft](#); he might also have been deferred because he worked in government service. But instead of exploiting his circumstance, Nixon sought a commission in the navy. His application was successful, and he was appointed a [lieutenant junior grade](#) in the U.S. Naval Reserve (U.S. Navy Reserve) on June 15, 1942.^{[41][42]}



In October 1942, he was assigned as aide to the commander of the [Naval Air Station Ottumwa](#) in [Iowa](#) until May 1943.^[41] On October 1, 1943, Nixon was promoted to [lieutenant](#).^[41] Seeking more excitement, he requested sea duty and was reassigned as the naval passenger control officer for the [South Pacific Combat Air Transport Command](#), supporting the [logistics](#) of operations in the [South West Pacific theater](#).^{[43][44]} he was the Officer in Charge of the Combat Air Transport Command at Guadalcanal in the Solomons and in March 1944 at Green Island ([Nissan Island](#)) just north of [Bougainville](#).^[41] His unit prepared manifests and flight plans for C-47 operations and supervised the loading and unloading of the cargo aircraft. For this service, he received a [Navy](#)

[Letter of Commendation](#) (awarded a Navy Commendation Ribbon which was later updated to the [Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal](#)) from his commanding officer for "meritorious and efficient performance of duty as Officer in Charge of the South Pacific Combat Air Transport Command". Upon his return to the U.S., Nixon was appointed the administrative officer of the [Alameda Naval Air Station](#) in California. In January 1945, he was transferred to the [Bureau of Aeronautics](#) office in Philadelphia to help negotiate the termination of war contracts, and received his second letter of commendation, from the [Secretary of the Navy](#) ^[45] for "meritorious service, tireless effort, and devotion to duty". Later, Nixon was transferred to other offices to work on contracts and finally to Baltimore.^[46] On October 3, 1945, he was promoted to [lieutenant commander](#).^{[41][45]} On March 10, 1946, he was relieved of active duty.^[41] He resigned his commission on New Year's Day 1946.^[47] On June 1, 1953, he was promoted to commander.^[41] He retired in the U.S. Naval Reserve on June 6, 1966.^[41]



Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal		American Campaign Medal	
Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with two stars	World War II Victory Medal	Armed Forces Reserve Medal with silver hourglass device	

Rising politician



Richard and Pat Nixon introduce General [Dwight D. Eisenhower](#)—Richard Nixon's running mate—to their daughters [Tricia](#) (standing) and [Julie](#) (carried by her father), [Washington National Airport](#), September 10, 1952. ⁵¹

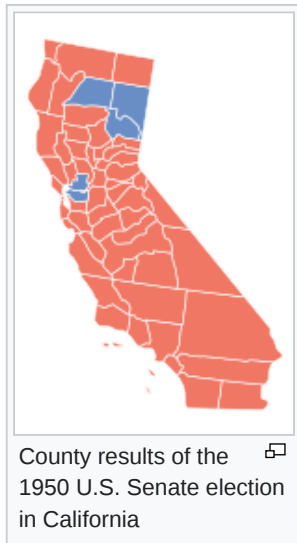
Congressional career (1947–1953)

For more information on Nixon's congressional election campaigns, see [California's 12th congressional district election, 1946](#) and [United States Senate election in California, 1950](#).

House of Representatives



In 1945, Republicans in [California's 12th congressional district](#), frustrated by their inability to defeat Democratic Congressman [Jerry Voorhis](#), sought a consensus candidate who would run a strong campaign against him. They formed a "Committee of 100" to decide on a candidate, hoping to avoid internal dissensions which had led to Voorhis victories. After the committee failed to attract higher-profile candidates, Herman Perry, Whittier's [Bank of America](#) branch manager, suggested Nixon, a family friend with whom he had served on the Whittier College Board of Trustees before the war. Perry wrote to Nixon in [Baltimore](#). After a night of excited talk between the Nixons, the naval officer responded to Perry with enthusiasm. Nixon flew to California and was selected by the committee. When he left the Navy at the start of 1946, Nixon and his wife returned to Whittier, where Nixon began a year of intensive campaigning.^{[48][49]} He contended that Voorhis had been ineffective as a congressman and suggested that Voorhis's endorsement by a group linked to communists meant that Voorhis must have radical views.^[50] Nixon won the election, receiving 65,586 votes to Voorhis' 49,994.^[51]



In Congress, Nixon supported the [Taft–Hartley Act](#) of 1947, a federal law that monitors the activities and power of labor unions, and he served on the [Education and Labor Committee](#). He was part of the Herter Committee, which went to Europe to report on the need for U.S. foreign aid. Nixon was the youngest member of the committee and the only Westerner.^[52] Advocacy by Herter Committee members, including Nixon, led to congressional passage of the [Marshall Plan](#).^[53]



In his memoirs, Nixon recounts that he joined the [House Un-American Activities Committee](#) (HUAC) "at the end of 1947." However, he was already a HUAC member in early February 1947, when he heard "Enemy Number One" [Gerhard Eisler](#) and his sister [Ruth Fischer](#) testify. On February 18, 1947, Nixon referred to Eisler's belligerence toward HUAC in his maiden speech to the House. Also by early February 1947, fellow U.S. Representative [Charles J. Kersten](#) had introduced him to Father [John Francis Cronin](#) in Baltimore, who shared with Nixon his 1945 privately circulated paper "The Problem of American Communism in 1945,"^[54] with much information from the FBI's [William C. Sullivan](#) (who by 1961 would head domestic intelligence under [Hoover](#)).^[55]

By May 1948, Nixon had co-sponsored a "[Mundt-Nixon Bill](#)" to implement "a new approach to the complicated problem of internal communist subversion... It provided for registration of all [Communist Party](#) members and required a statement of the source of all printed and broadcast material issued by organizations that were found to be Communist fronts." He served as floor manager for the Republican Party. On May 19, 1948, the bill passed the House by 319 to 58 but failed to pass the Senate.^[56] (The Nixon Library cites this bill's passage as Nixon's first significant victory in Congress.^[57])

Nixon first gained national attention in August 1948 when as a HUAC member, his persistence helped break the [Alger Hiss](#) spy case. While many doubted [Whittaker Chambers'](#) allegations that Hiss, a former [State Department](#) official, had been a Soviet spy, Nixon believed them to be true and pressed for the committee to continue its investigation. Under suit for defamation filed by Hiss, Chambers produced documents corroborating his allegations. These included paper and [microfilm](#) copies that Chambers turned over to House investigators after having hidden them overnight in a field; they became known as the "[Pumpkin Papers](#)".^[58] Hiss was convicted of [perjury](#) in 1950 for denying under oath he had passed documents to Chambers.^[59] In 1948, Nixon successfully [cross-filed](#) as a candidate in his district, winning both major party primaries,^[60] and was comfortably reelected.^[61]

Senate



Nixon on his "station wagon tour" in Sausalito, California, 1950

In 1949, Nixon began to consider running for the [United States Senate](#) against the Democratic incumbent, [Sheridan Downey](#),^[62] and entered the race in November.^[63] Downey, faced with a bitter primary battle with Representative [Helen Gahagan Douglas](#), announced his retirement in March 1950.^[64] Nixon and Douglas won the primary elections^[65] and engaged in a contentious campaign in which the ongoing [Korean War](#) was a major issue.^[66] Nixon tried to focus attention on Douglas' liberal voting record. As part of that effort, a "[Pink Sheet](#)" was distributed by the Nixon campaign suggesting that, as Douglas' voting record was similar to that of New York Congressman [Vito Marcantonio](#) (believed by some to be a communist), their political views must be nearly identical.^[67] Nixon won the election by almost twenty percentage points.^[68] During this campaign, Nixon was first

called "Tricky Dick" by his opponents for his campaign tactics.^[69]

In the Senate, Nixon took a prominent position in opposing global communism, traveling frequently and speaking out against it.^[70] He maintained friendly relations with his fellow anti-communist, the controversial [Wisconsin](#) senator, [Joseph McCarthy](#), but was careful to keep some distance between himself and McCarthy's allegations.^[71] Nixon also criticized President [Harry S. Truman](#)'s handling of the Korean War.^[70] He supported statehood for Alaska and Hawaii, voted in favor of civil rights for minorities, and supported federal disaster relief for India and Yugoslavia.^[72] He voted against price controls and other monetary restrictions, benefits for illegal immigrants, and public power.^[72]

Vice Presidency (1953–1961)

General [Dwight D. Eisenhower](#) was nominated for president by the Republicans in 1952. He had no strong preference for a vice presidential candidate, and Republican officeholders and party officials met in a "[smoke-filled room](#)" and recommended Nixon to the general, who agreed to the

senator's selection. Nixon's youth (he was then 39), stance against communism, and political base in California—one of the largest states—were all seen as vote-winners by the leaders. Among the candidates considered along with Nixon were Ohio Senator [Robert A. Taft](#), New Jersey Governor [Alfred Driscoll](#) and Illinois Senator [Everett Dirksen](#).^{[73][74]} On the campaign trail, Eisenhower spoke to his plans for the country, leaving the negative campaigning to his [running mate](#).^[75]

In mid-September, the Republican ticket faced a major crisis.^[76] The media reported that Nixon had a political fund, maintained by his backers, which reimbursed him for political expenses.^[77] Such a fund was not illegal, but it exposed Nixon to allegations of possible conflict of interest. With pressure building for Eisenhower to demand Nixon's resignation from the [ticket](#), the senator went on television to deliver an address to the nation on September 23, 1952.^[78] The address, later termed the [Checkers speech](#), was heard by about 60 million Americans—including the largest television audience up to that point.^[79] Nixon emotionally defended himself, stating that the fund was not secret, nor had donors received special favors. He painted himself as a man of modest means (his wife had no mink coat; instead she wore a "respectable Republican cloth coat") and a patriot.^[78] The speech would be remembered for the gift which Nixon had received, but which he would not give back: "a little cocker spaniel dog ... sent all the way from Texas. And our little girl—Tricia, the 6-year-old—named it Checkers."^[78] The speech prompted a huge public outpouring of support for Nixon.^[80] Eisenhower decided to retain him on the ticket,^[81] which proved victorious in [the November election](#).^[75]



Front cover of literature for the Eisenhower–Nixon campaign, 1952

Eisenhower gave Nixon responsibilities during his term as vice president—more than any previous vice president.^[82] Nixon attended [Cabinet](#) and [National Security Council](#) meetings and chaired them when Eisenhower was absent. A 1953 tour of the Far East succeeded in increasing local goodwill toward the United States and prompted Nixon to appreciate the potential of the region as an industrial center. He visited [Saigon](#) and [Hanoi](#) in [French Indochina](#).^[83] On his return to the United States at the end of 1953, Nixon increased the amount of time he devoted to foreign relations.^[84]

Biographer Irwin Gellman, who chronicled Nixon's congressional years, said of his vice presidency:

Eisenhower radically altered the role of his running mate by presenting him with critical assignments in both foreign and domestic affairs once he assumed his office. The vice president welcomed the president's initiatives and worked energetically to accomplish White House objectives. Because of the collaboration between these two leaders, Nixon deserves the title, "the first modern vice president".^[85]

Despite intense campaigning by Nixon, who reprised his strong attacks on the Democrats, the Republicans lost control of both houses of Congress in the [1954 elections](#). These losses caused Nixon to contemplate leaving politics once he had served out his term.^[86] On September 24, 1955, President Eisenhower suffered a heart attack; his condition was initially believed to be life-threatening. Eisenhower was unable to perform his duties for six weeks. The [25th Amendment to the United States Constitution](#) had not yet been proposed, and the Vice President had no formal

power to act. Nonetheless, Nixon acted in Eisenhower's stead during this period, presiding over Cabinet meetings and ensuring that aides and Cabinet officers did not seek power.^[87] According to Nixon biographer [Stephen Ambrose](#), Nixon had "earned the high praise he received for his conduct during the crisis ... he made no attempt to seize power".^[88]

His spirits buoyed, Nixon sought a second term, but some of Eisenhower's aides aimed to displace him. In a December 1955 meeting, Eisenhower proposed that Nixon not run for reelection in order to give him administrative experience before a 1960 presidential run and instead become a Cabinet officer in a second Eisenhower administration. Nixon believed such an action would destroy his political career. When Eisenhower announced his reelection bid in February 1956, he hedged on the choice of his running mate, stating that it was improper to address that question until he had been renominated. Although no Republican was opposing Eisenhower, Nixon received a substantial number of write-in votes against the President in the 1956 [New Hampshire primary](#) election. In late April, the President announced that Nixon would again be his running mate.^[89] Eisenhower and Nixon were reelected by a comfortable margin in the [November 1956 election](#).^[90]

In early 1957, Nixon undertook another major foreign trip, this time to Africa. On his return, he helped shepherd the [Civil Rights Act of 1957](#) through Congress. The bill was weakened in the Senate, and civil rights leaders were divided over whether Eisenhower should sign it. Nixon advised the President to sign the bill, which he did.^[91] Eisenhower suffered a mild stroke in November 1957, and Nixon gave a press conference, assuring the nation that the Cabinet was functioning well as a team during Eisenhower's brief illness.^[92]

On April 27, 1958, Richard and Pat Nixon reluctantly embarked on a goodwill tour of South America. In [Montevideo](#), Uruguay, Nixon made an impromptu visit

to a college campus, where he fielded questions from students on U.S. foreign policy. The trip was uneventful until the Nixon party reached [Lima](#), Peru, where he was met with student demonstrations. Nixon went to the campus, got out of his car to confront the students, and stayed until forced back into the car by a volley of thrown objects. At his hotel, Nixon faced another mob, and one demonstrator spat on him.^[93] In [Caracas](#), Venezuela, Nixon and his wife were spat on by anti-American demonstrators and [their limousine was attacked](#) by a pipe-wielding mob.^[94] According to Ambrose, Nixon's courageous conduct "caused even some of his bitterest enemies to give him some grudging respect".^[95] Reporting to the cabinet after the trip, Nixon claimed that there was "absolute proof that [the protestors] were directed and controlled by a central Communist conspiracy." Secretary of State John Foster Dulles concurred in this view; [Director of Central Intelligence Allen Dulles](#) sharply rebuked it.^[96]

In July 1959, President Eisenhower sent Nixon to the [Soviet Union](#) for the opening of the [American National Exhibition](#) in Moscow. On July 24, while touring the exhibits with Soviet Premier [Nikita Khrushchev](#), the two stopped at a model of an American kitchen and engaged in an impromptu exchange about the merits of capitalism versus communism that became known as the "[Kitchen Debate](#)".^[97]



Vice President Nixon and Soviet Premier [Nikita Khrushchev](#) speak as the press looks on in part of what came to be known as the [Kitchen Debate](#), July 24, 1959.

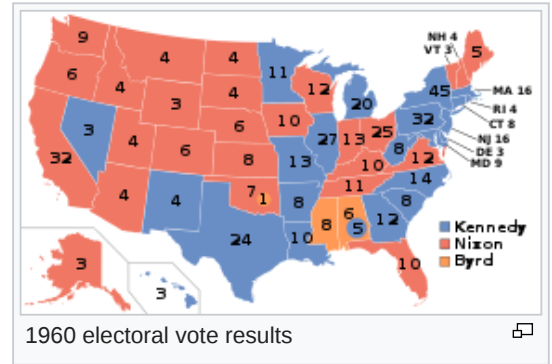
1960 and 1962 elections; wilderness years

Main article: [United States presidential election, 1960](#)

In 1960, Nixon launched his first campaign for President of the United States. He faced little opposition in the Republican primaries^[98] and chose former Massachusetts Senator [Henry Cabot Lodge Jr.](#) as his running mate.^[99] His Democratic opponent was [John F. Kennedy](#), and the race remained close for the duration.^[100] Nixon campaigned on his experience, but Kennedy called for new blood and claimed the [Eisenhower–Nixon](#)

[administration](#) had allowed the Soviet Union to

overtake the U.S. in [ballistic missiles](#) (the "missile gap").^[101] A new political medium was introduced in the campaign: televised [presidential debates](#). In the first of four such debates, Nixon appeared pale, with a [five o'clock shadow](#), in contrast to the photogenic Kennedy.^[99] Nixon's performance in the debate was perceived to be mediocre in the visual medium of television, though many people listening on the radio thought that Nixon had won.^[102] Nixon lost the election narrowly, with Kennedy ahead by only 112,827 votes (0.2 percent) in the popular vote.^[99]



Outgoing Vice President Nixon and incoming Vice President Lyndon Johnson leave the White House on the morning of January 20, 1961, for the [Kennedy–Johnson inauguration ceremonies](#)

There were charges of [vote fraud](#) in Texas and Illinois, both states won by Kennedy; Nixon refused to consider contesting the election, feeling a lengthy controversy would diminish the United States in the eyes of the world, and the uncertainty would hurt U.S. interests.^[103] At the end of his term of office as vice president in January 1961, Nixon and his family returned to California, where he practiced law and wrote a bestselling book, *Six Crises*, which included coverage of the Hiss case, Eisenhower's heart attack, and the Fund Crisis, which had been resolved by the Checkers speech.^{[99][104]}

Local and national Republican leaders encouraged Nixon to challenge incumbent [Pat Brown](#) for [Governor of California in the 1962 election](#).^[99] Despite initial reluctance, Nixon entered the race.^[99] The campaign was clouded by public suspicion that Nixon viewed the office as a stepping-stone for another presidential run, some opposition from the far-right of the party, and his own lack

of interest in being California's governor.^[99] Nixon hoped that a successful run would confirm his status as the nation's leading active Republican politician, and ensure he remained a major player in national politics.^[105] Instead, he lost to Brown by more than five percentage points, and the defeat was widely believed to be the end of his political career.^[99] In [an impromptu concession speech](#) the morning after the election, Nixon blamed the media for favoring his opponent, saying, "You won't have Nixon to kick around anymore because, gentlemen, this is my last press conference".^[106] The California defeat was highlighted in the November 11, 1962, episode of *ABC's Howard K. Smith: News and Comment*, titled "The Political Obituary of Richard M. Nixon".^[107] Alger Hiss appeared on the program, and many members of the public complained

that it was unseemly to give a convicted felon air time to attack a former vice president. The furor drove Smith and his program from the air,^[108] and public sympathy for Nixon grew.^[107]

In 1963 the Nixon family traveled to Europe, where Nixon gave press conferences and met with leaders of the countries he visited.^[109] The family moved to New York City, where Nixon became a senior [partner](#) in the leading law firm [Nixon, Mudge, Rose, Guthrie & Alexander](#).^[99] When announcing his California campaign, Nixon had pledged not to run for president in 1964; even if he had not, he believed it would be difficult to defeat Kennedy, or after [his assassination](#), Kennedy's successor, Lyndon Johnson.^[110]

In 1964, he supported Arizona Senator [Barry Goldwater](#) for the Republican nomination for U.S. President; when Goldwater won the nomination, Nixon was selected to introduce him at [the convention](#). Although he thought Goldwater unlikely to win, Nixon campaigned for him loyally. The [election](#) was a disaster for the Republicans; Goldwater's landslide loss to Johnson was matched by heavy losses for the party in Congress and among state governors.^[111]

Nixon was one of the few leading Republicans not blamed for the disastrous results, and he sought to build on that in the 1966 Congressional elections. He campaigned for many Republicans, seeking to regain seats lost in the Johnson landslide, and received credit for helping the Republicans make major gains that year.^[112]



Nixon shows his papers to an East German officer to cross between the sectors of the divided City of Berlin, 1963 ✎

1968 presidential election



Nixon and Johnson meet at the White House before Nixon's nomination, July 1968. ✎

Main articles: [Richard Nixon presidential campaign, 1968](#) and [United States presidential election, 1968](#)

At the end of 1967, Nixon told his family he planned to run for president a second time. Although Pat Nixon did not always enjoy public life^[113] (for example, she had been embarrassed by the need to reveal how little the family owned in the Checkers speech),^[114] she was supportive of her

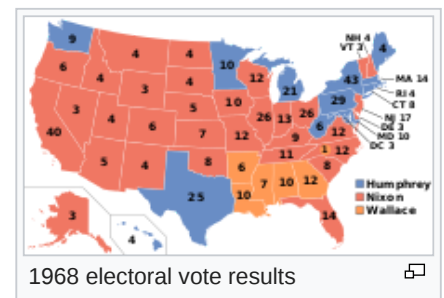
husband's ambitions. Nixon believed that with the Democrats torn over the issue of the [Vietnam War](#), a Republican had a good chance of winning, although he expected the election to be as close as in 1960.^[113]

One of the most tumultuous [primary election](#) seasons ever began as the [Tet Offensive](#) was launched, followed by the withdrawal of President Johnson as a candidate after doing unexpectedly poorly in the New Hampshire primary; it concluded with the [assassination](#) of one of the Democratic candidates, Senator [Robert F. Kennedy](#), just moments after his victory in the California primary. On the Republican side, Nixon's main opposition was Michigan Governor [George Romney](#), though New York Governor [Nelson Rockefeller](#) and California Governor [Ronald Reagan](#) each hoped to be nominated in a [brokered convention](#). Nixon secured the nomination on the first ballot.^[115] He selected Maryland Governor [Spiro Agnew](#) as his running mate, a choice which Nixon believed would unite the party, appealing to both Northern moderates and Southerners disaffected with the Democrats.^[116]

Nixon's Democratic opponent in the general election was Vice President [Hubert Humphrey](#), who was nominated at a [convention](#) marked by [violent protests](#).^[117] Throughout the campaign, Nixon portrayed himself as a figure of stability during a period of national unrest and upheaval.^[117] He appealed to what he later called the "silent majority" of [socially conservative](#) Americans who disliked the [hippie counterculture](#) and the [anti-war](#) demonstrators. Agnew became an increasingly vocal critic of these groups, solidifying Nixon's position with the right.^[118]

Nixon waged a prominent television advertising campaign, meeting with supporters in front of cameras.^[119] He stressed that the crime rate was too high, and attacked what he perceived as a surrender by the Democrats of the United States' nuclear superiority.^[120] Nixon promised "[peace with honor](#)" in the Vietnam War and proclaimed that "new leadership will end the war and win the peace in the Pacific".^[121] He did not release specifics of how he hoped to end the war, resulting in media intimations that he must have a "secret plan".^[121] His slogan of "Nixon's the One" proved to be effective.^[119]

Johnson's negotiators hoped to reach a truce, or at least a cessation of bombings, in Vietnam prior to the election. On October 22, 1968, candidate Nixon received information that Johnson was preparing a so-called "[October surprise](#)" to elect Humphrey in the last days of the campaign, and his administration had abandoned three non-negotiable conditions for a bombing halt.^[122] Whether the Nixon campaign interfered with any ongoing negotiations between the Johnson administration and the South Vietnamese by engaging [Anna Chennault](#), a prominent Chinese-American fundraiser for the Republican party, remains an ongoing controversy. While notes uncovered in 2016 may support such a contention, the context of said notes remains of



debate^[122] and it is not clear whether the government of South Vietnam needed much encouragement to opt out of a peace process they considered disadvantageous.^[123]

In a three-way race between Nixon, Humphrey, and [American Independent Party](#) candidate former Alabama Governor [George Wallace](#), Nixon defeated Humphrey by nearly 500,000 votes (seven-tenths of a percentage point), with 301 electoral votes to 191 for Humphrey and 46 for Wallace.^{[117][124]} In his victory speech, Nixon pledged that his administration would try to [bring the divided nation together](#).^[125] Nixon said: "I have received a very gracious message from the Vice President, congratulating me for winning the election. I congratulated him for his gallant and courageous fight against great odds. I also told him that I know exactly how he felt. I know how it feels to lose a close one."^[126]

Presidency (1969–1974)

Main article: [Presidency of Richard Nixon](#)

Nixon [was inaugurated](#) as [president](#) on January 20, 1969, sworn in by his onetime political rival, [Chief Justice Earl Warren](#). Pat Nixon held the family Bibles open at [Isaiah 2:4](#), which reads, "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks." In his inaugural address, which received almost uniformly positive reviews, Nixon remarked that "the greatest honor history can bestow is the title of peacemaker"^[127]—a phrase that would later be placed on his gravestone.^[128] He spoke about turning partisan politics into a new age of unity:

In these difficult years, America has suffered from a fever of words; from inflated rhetoric that promises more than it can deliver; from angry rhetoric that fans discontents into hatreds; from bombastic rhetoric that postures instead of persuading. We cannot learn from one another until we stop shouting at one another, until we speak quietly enough so that our words can be heard as well as our voices.^[129]

Foreign policy



Nixon is sworn in as the 37th President by Chief Justice [Earl Warren](#) on January 20, 1969, with the new First Lady, Pat, holding the family Bibles.



Nixon and Chinese Premier [Zhou Enlai](#) toast during Nixon's 1972 visit to China 📷

China

Main article: [1972 Nixon visit to China](#)

Nixon laid the groundwork for his overture to China before he became president, writing in *Foreign Affairs* a year before his election: "There is no place on this small planet for a billion of its potentially most able people to live in angry isolation."^[130] Assisting him in this venture was his [National Security Advisor](#) and future Secretary of State, [Henry Kissinger](#), with whom the President worked closely, bypassing Cabinet officials. With relations between the Soviet Union and China at a nadir—[border clashes between the two](#) took place during Nixon's first year in office—Nixon sent private word to the Chinese that he desired closer relations. A breakthrough came in early 1971, when [Chairman Mao](#) invited a team of American table tennis players [to visit China and play against top Chinese players](#). Nixon followed up by sending Kissinger to China for clandestine meetings with Chinese officials.^[130] On July 15, 1971, it was simultaneously announced by Beijing and by Nixon (on television and radio) that the President would visit China the following February. The announcements astounded the world.^[131] The secrecy allowed both sets of leaders time to prepare the political climate in their countries for the contact.^[132]



President Nixon shakes hands with 📷
Chinese Premier [Zhou Enlai](#) upon
arriving in Beijing, 1972

In February 1972, Nixon and his wife traveled to China. Kissinger briefed Nixon for over 40 hours in preparation.^[133] Upon touching down, the President and First Lady emerged from [Air Force One](#) and greeted Chinese Premier [Zhou Enlai](#). Nixon made a point of shaking Zhou's hand, something which then-Secretary of State [John Foster Dulles](#) had refused to do in 1954 when the two met in Geneva.^[134] Over 100 television journalists accompanied the president. On Nixon's orders, television was strongly favored over printed publications, as Nixon felt that the medium would capture the visit much better than print. It also gave him the opportunity to snub the print journalists he despised.^[134]

Nixon and Kissinger met for an hour with Mao and Zhou at Mao's official private residence, where they discussed a range of issues.^[135] Mao later told his doctor that he had been impressed by Nixon, whom he considered forthright, unlike the leftists and the Soviets.^[135] He said he was

suspicious of Kissinger,^[135] though the National Security Advisor referred to their meeting as his "encounter with history".^[134] A formal banquet welcoming the presidential party was given that evening in the [Great Hall of the People](#). The following day, Nixon met with Zhou; the joint communique following this meeting recognized Taiwan as a part of China, and looked forward to a peaceful solution to the problem of reunification.^[136] When not in meetings, Nixon toured architectural wonders including the [Forbidden City](#), [Ming Tombs](#), and the [Great Wall](#).^[134] Americans received their first glimpse into Chinese life through the cameras which accompanied Pat Nixon, who toured the city of Beijing and visited communes, schools, factories, and hospitals.^[134]

The visit ushered in a new era of Sino-American relations.^[117] Fearing the possibility of a Sino-American alliance, the Soviet Union yielded to pressure for [détente](#) with the United States.^[137]

Vietnam War

Main articles: [Vietnam War](#), [Vietnamization](#), and [Role of the United States in the Vietnam War](#)

When Nixon took office, about 300 American soldiers were dying each week in Vietnam,^[138] and the war was broadly unpopular in the United States, with violent protests against the war ongoing. The Johnson administration had agreed to suspend bombing in exchange for negotiations without preconditions, but this agreement never fully took force. According to Walter Isaacson, soon after taking office, Nixon had concluded that the Vietnam War could not be won and he was determined to end the war quickly.^[139] He sought some arrangement which would permit American forces to withdraw, while leaving South Vietnam secure against attack.^[140]



Nixon approved a secret [B-52](#) carpet bombing campaign of North Vietnamese (and, later, allied [Khmer Rouge](#)) positions in Cambodia in March 1969 (code-named [Operation Menu](#)), without the consent of Cambodian leader [Norodom Sihanouk](#).^{[141][142][143]} In mid-1969, Nixon began efforts to negotiate peace with the North Vietnamese, sending a personal letter to North Vietnamese leaders, and peace talks began in Paris. Initial talks, however, did not result in an agreement.^[144] In May 1969 he publicly proposed to withdraw all American troops from South Vietnam provided North Vietnam also did so and for South Vietnam to hold internationally supervised elections with [Viet Cong](#) participation.^[145]

In July 1969, Nixon visited [South Vietnam](#), where he met with his U.S. military commanders and President [Nguyễn Văn Thiệu](#). Amid protests at home demanding an immediate pullout, he implemented a strategy of replacing American troops with [Vietnamese troops](#), known as "[Vietnamization](#)".^[117] He soon instituted phased U.S. troop withdrawals^[146] but authorized incursions into Laos, in part to interrupt the [Ho Chi Minh trail](#), used to supply North Vietnamese forces, that passed through Laos and Cambodia. Nixon announced the ground invasion of Cambodia to the American public on April 30, 1970.^[147] His responses to protesters included an impromptu, early morning meeting with them at the [Lincoln Memorial](#) on May 9, 1970.^{[148][149][150]} Documents uncovered from the Soviet archives after 1991 reveal that the North Vietnamese attempt to overrun Cambodia in 1970 was launched at the explicit request of the Khmer Rouge and negotiated by [Pol Pot](#)'s then-second-in-command, [Nuon Chea](#).^[151] Nixon's campaign promise to curb the war, contrasted with the escalated bombing, led to claims that Nixon had a "[credibility](#)

gap" on the issue.^[146] It is estimated that between 50,000 and 150,000 people were killed during the [bombing of Cambodia](#) between 1970 and 1973.^[142]

In 1971, excerpts from the "[Pentagon Papers](#)", which had been leaked by [Daniel Ellsberg](#), were published by [The New York Times](#) and [The Washington Post](#). When news of the leak first appeared, Nixon was inclined to do nothing; the Papers, a history of United States' involvement in Vietnam, mostly concerned the lies of prior administrations and contained few real revelations. He was persuaded by Kissinger that the papers were more harmful than they appeared, and the President tried to prevent publication. The Supreme Court eventually ruled for the newspapers.^[152] Nixon's actions in favor of [William Calley](#), sentenced to life imprisonment because of his role in the [My Lai Massacre](#), which eventually led to his release, were approved by the 1971 public opinion but nowadays a point of criticism of his presidency.

As U.S. troop withdrawals continued, [conscription](#) was reduced and in 1973 ended; the armed forces became all-volunteer.^[153] After years of fighting, the [Paris Peace Accords](#) were signed at the beginning of 1973. The agreement implemented a cease fire and allowed for the withdrawal of remaining American troops without requiring the 160,000 [North Vietnam Army](#) regulars located in the South to withdraw.^[154] Once American combat support ended, there was a brief truce, before fighting broke out again. North Vietnam conquered South Vietnam in 1975.^[155]

Latin American policy

See also: [U.S. intervention in Chile § 1973 coup](#), and [Operation Condor](#)

Nixon had been a firm supporter of Kennedy in the 1961 [Bay of Pigs Invasion](#) and 1962 [Cuban Missile Crisis](#); on taking office he stepped up covert operations against Cuba and its president, [Fidel Castro](#). He maintained close relations with the Cuban-American exile community through his friend, [Bebe Rebozo](#), who often suggested ways of irritating Castro. These activities concerned the Soviets and Cubans, who feared Nixon might attack Cuba and break the understanding between Kennedy and Khrushchev which had ended the missile crisis. In August 1970, the Soviets asked Nixon to reaffirm the understanding; despite his hard line against Castro, Nixon agreed. The process had not yet been completed when the Soviets began expanding their base at the Cuban port of [Cienfuegos](#) in October 1970. A minor confrontation ensued, which was concluded with an understanding that the Soviets would not use Cienfuegos for submarines bearing ballistic missiles. The final round of diplomatic notes, reaffirming the 1962 accord, were exchanged in November.^[156]

The election of Marxist candidate [Salvador Allende](#) as [President of Chile](#) in September 1970 spurred Nixon and Kissinger to pursue a vigorous campaign of covert resistance to Allende,^{[157]:25} first designed to convince the Chilean congress to confirm [Jorge Alessandri](#) as the winner of the election and then messages to military officers in support of a coup.^[157] Other support included strikes organized against Allende and funding for Allende opponents. It was even alleged that



Richard Nixon and [Nicolae Ceaușescu](#) during the former's state visit in the [Socialist Republic of Romania](#), 2 August 1969



Nixon and Mexican president [Gustavo Díaz Ordaz](#) riding a presidential motorcade in San Diego, California, September 1970

"Nixon personally authorized" \$700,000 in covert funds to print anti-Allende messages in a prominent Chilean newspaper.^{[157]:93} Following an extended period of social, political, and economic unrest, General [Augusto Pinochet](#) assumed power in a violent [coup d'état](#) on September 11, 1973; among the [dead was Allende](#).^[158]

Soviet Union

Nixon used the improving international environment to address the topic of nuclear peace. Following the announcement of his visit to China, the Nixon administration concluded negotiations for him to visit the Soviet Union. The President and First Lady arrived in Moscow on May 22, 1972 and met with [Leonid Brezhnev](#), the [General Secretary of the Communist Party](#); [Alexei Kosygin](#), the [Chairman of the Council of Ministers](#); and [Nikolai Podgorny](#), the [head of state](#), among other leading Soviet officials.^[159]

Nixon engaged in intense negotiations with Brezhnev.^[159]

Out of the summit came agreements for increased trade and two landmark arms control treaties: [SALT I](#), the first comprehensive limitation pact signed by the two superpowers,^[117] and the [Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty](#), which banned the development of systems designed to intercept incoming missiles. Nixon and Brezhnev proclaimed a new era of "peaceful coexistence". A banquet was held that evening at the [Kremlin](#).^[159]

Seeking to foster better relations with the United States, both China and the Soviet Union cut back on their diplomatic support for North Vietnam and advised Hanoi to come to terms militarily.^{[160][161][162]} Nixon later described his strategy:

I had long believed that an indispensable element of any successful peace initiative in Vietnam was to enlist, if possible, the help of the Soviets and the Chinese. Though rapprochement with China and détente with the Soviet Union were ends in themselves, I also considered them possible means to hasten the end of the war. At worst, Hanoi was bound to feel less confident if Washington was dealing with Moscow and Beijing. At best, if the two major Communist powers decided that they had bigger fish to fry, Hanoi would be pressured into negotiating a settlement we could accept.^[163]

Having made considerable progress over the previous two years in U.S.-Soviet relations, Nixon embarked on a second trip to the Soviet Union in 1974.^[164] He arrived in Moscow on June 27 to a welcome ceremony, cheering crowds, and a state dinner at the [Grand Kremlin Palace](#) that evening.^[164] Nixon and Brezhnev met in [Yalta](#), where they discussed a proposed mutual defense pact, détente, and [MIRVs](#). While he considered proposing a comprehensive test-ban treaty, Nixon felt he would not have time as president to complete it.^[164] There were no significant breakthroughs in these negotiations.^[164]

Middle Eastern policy

As part of the [Nixon Doctrine](#) that the U.S. would avoid direct combat assistance to allies where possible, instead giving them assistance to defend themselves, the U.S. greatly increased arms sales to the Middle East—particularly Israel, Iran and Saudi Arabia—during the Nixon



Nixon meets with Brezhnev during the Soviet leader's trip to the U.S., 1973.

administration.^[165] The Nixon administration strongly supported Israel, an American ally in the Middle East, but the support was not unconditional. Nixon believed that Israel should make peace with its Arab neighbors and that the United States should encourage it. The president believed that—except during the [Suez Crisis](#)—the U.S. had failed to intervene with Israel, and should use the leverage of the large U.S. military aid to Israel to urge the parties to the negotiating table. The Arab-Israeli conflict was not a major focus of Nixon's attention during his first term—for one thing, he felt that no matter what he did, American Jews would oppose his reelection.^[a]



Nixon meets with President [Anwar Sadat](#) of Egypt, June 1974

On October 6, 1973, an Arab coalition led by Egypt and Syria, supported with arms and materiel by the Soviet Union, attacked Israel in the [Yom Kippur War](#). Israel suffered heavy losses and Nixon ordered an airlift to resupply Israeli losses, cutting through inter-departmental squabbles and bureaucracy and taking personal responsibility for any response by Arab nations. More than a week later, by the time the U.S. and Soviet Union began [negotiating a truce](#), Israel had penetrated deep into enemy territory. The truce negotiations rapidly escalated into a superpower crisis; when Israel gained the upper hand, Egyptian President Sadat requested a joint U.S.-USSR peacekeeping mission, which the U.S. refused. When Soviet Premier Brezhnev threatened to unilaterally enforce any peacekeeping mission militarily, Nixon ordered the U.S. military to [DEFCON3](#),^[166] placing all U.S. military personnel and bases on alert for nuclear war. This was the closest that the world had come to nuclear war since the Cuban Missile Crisis. Brezhnev backed down as a result of Nixon's actions.^[167]

Because Israel's victory was largely due to U.S. support, the Arab OPEC nations retaliated by refusing to sell crude oil to the U.S., resulting in the [1973 oil crisis](#).^[168] The embargo caused gasoline shortages and rationing in the United States in late 1973, and was eventually ended by the oil-producing nations as peace in the Middle East took hold.^[169]

After the war, and under Nixon's presidency, the U.S. reestablished relations with Egypt for the first time since 1967. Nixon used the Middle East crisis to restart [the stalled Middle East Peace Negotiations](#); he wrote in a confidential memo to Kissinger on October 20:

I believe that, beyond a doubt, we are now facing the best opportunity we have had in 15 years to build a lasting peace in the Middle East. I am convinced history will hold us responsible if we let this opportunity slip by ... I now consider a permanent Middle East settlement to be the most important final goal to which we must devote ourselves.^[170]

Nixon made one of his final international visits as president to the Middle East in June 1974, and became the first President to visit Israel.^[171]

Domestic policy



Nixon at the [Washington Senators'](#) 1969 Opening Day. To the right of Nixon is team owner [Bob Short](#) and then Baseball Commissioner [Bowie Kuhn](#). [Marine Corps Aide to the President Jack Brennan](#) sits in uniform behind Nixon.

Economy

Further information: [Nixon shock](#) and [1970s energy crisis](#)

At the time Nixon took office in 1969, inflation was at 4.7 percent—its highest rate since the Korean War. The [Great Society](#) had been enacted under Johnson, which, together with the Vietnam War costs, was causing large budget deficits. Unemployment was low, but interest rates were at their highest in a century.^[172] Nixon's major economic goal was to reduce inflation; the most obvious means of doing so was to end the war.^[172] This could not be accomplished overnight, and the U.S. economy continued to struggle through 1970, contributing to a lackluster Republican performance in the midterm congressional elections (Democrats controlled both Houses of Congress throughout Nixon's presidency).^[173] According to political economist Nigel Bowles in his 2011 study of Nixon's economic record, the new president did little to alter Johnson's policies through the first year of his presidency.^[174]

Nixon was far more interested in foreign affairs than domestic policies, but believed that voters tend to focus on their own financial condition, and that economic conditions were a threat to his reelection. As part of his "[New Federalism](#)" views, he proposed grants to the states, but these proposals were for the most part lost in the congressional budget process. However, Nixon gained political credit for advocating them.^[173] In 1970, Congress had granted the President the power to impose wage and price freezes, though the Democratic majorities, knowing Nixon had opposed such controls through his career, did not expect Nixon to actually use the authority.^[174] With inflation unresolved by August 1971, and an election year looming, Nixon convened a summit of his economic advisers at [Camp David](#). He then announced temporary wage and price controls, allowed the dollar to float against other currencies, and ended the convertibility of the dollar into gold.^[175] Bowles points out,

by identifying himself with a policy whose purpose was inflation's defeat, Nixon made it difficult for Democratic opponents ... to criticize him. His opponents could offer no alternative policy that was either plausible or believable since the one they favored was one they had designed but which the president had appropriated for himself.^[174]