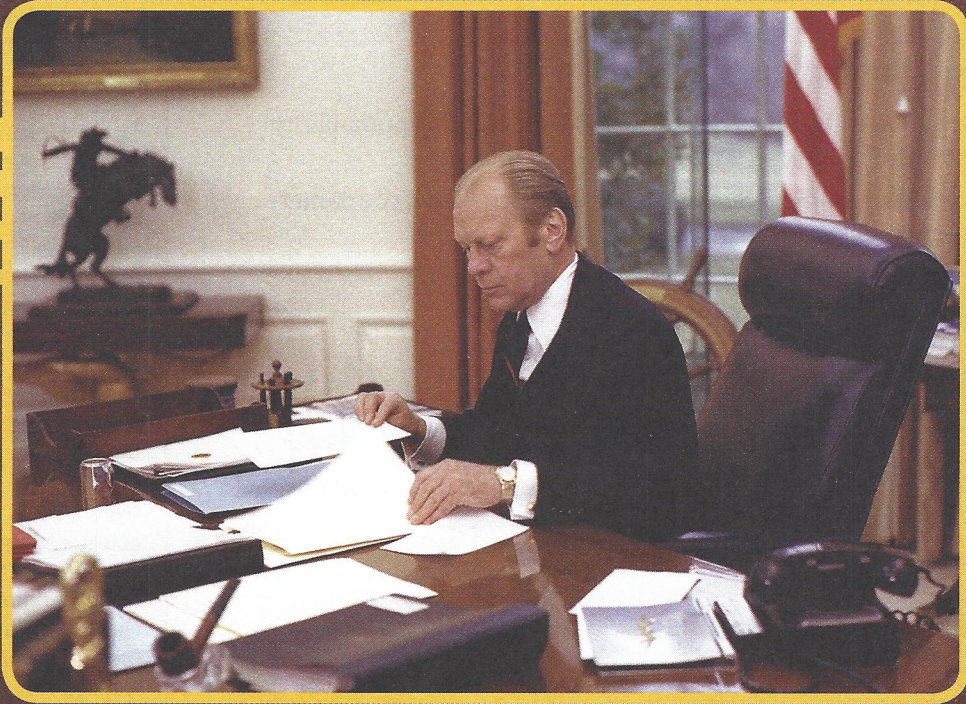


CHAPTER

25



President Gerald Ford, the only unelected president

A Nation Adrift (1973–1980)

- I. The Embattled Presidency**
- II. Domestic Difficulties**
- III. The Ineffectual Presidency**
- IV. The Rising Conservative Tide**

“I did not take the sacred oath of office to preside over the decline and fall of the United States of America.”

President Gerald Ford, September 1975

An average American watching the evening news on December 1, 1979, would have noticed a difference from broadcasts that aired a few weeks earlier. Each night, Walter Cronkite, anchor of the *CBS Evening News*, closed his program with his trademark line “And that’s the way it is. . . .” But that night—shortly after Muslim extremists seized fifty-three American hostages in the American embassy in Teheran, Iran—viewers heard Cronkite add a final phrase: “. . . on the twenty-seventh day of captivity for the American hostages in Iran.” Each night thereafter, Cronkite added another day to the total—thirty, forty, fifty, one hundred, two hundred, and still more with no end in sight. The nightly broadcasts were like drumbeats to Americans, each beat echoing the helplessness of the United States, its decline as a world power, and the inability of its president to deal with the world situation. Cronkite continued the demoralizing count until the 444th day, the day on which the hostages were freed and Americans inaugurated a new president that their frustration, in part, had led them to elect.

The repudiated president in 1980 was Jimmy Carter, but he was only the latest in a series of presidents that American voters had rejected. For much of the 1970s, the United States suffered a “leadership crisis.” It began when one president (Nixon), hounded by scandal, was forced to resign. It continued as his successor, Gerald Ford, tried vainly to unite the nation. Ford had been named, but not elected, vice president, and he had never even won an election outside his own congressional district in Grand Rapids, Michigan. It ended with Carter, a man elected in part because of the failures of his predecessors, being voted from office by a disillusioned American electorate. For much of the 1970s, the United States was a nation adrift.

I. The Embattled Presidency

The Fall of Richard Nixon

Watergate Affair

In the summer of 1972, during the heat of the presidential campaign, police arrested five burglars who, carrying electronic listening devices, were trying to break into the headquarters of the Democratic National Committee at the Watergate Office Complex in Washington. The event caused little stir at the time. The White House vigorously denied any connection with that “third-rate burglary,” and George McGovern’s campaign was already in such deep trouble that few listened to his charges of criminality and corruption against Nixon.

After the election, however, more about the **Watergate affair** began to leak out. One of the convicted burglars alleged to the trial judge that authorities “higher up” were behind the break-in and were trying to cover up the fact. Further investigation revealed a pattern of questionable and illegal activities organized by Nixon’s Committee to Re-elect the President (CREEP).

Resignation of Agnew

Another problem that plagued Nixon’s administration was the allegation that Vice President **Spiro Agnew** had taken bribes from building contractors as the governor of Maryland and as vice president. By striking a bargain with prosecutors, Agnew was allowed to

More Political Shenanigans

Some Nixon aides sent libelous letters to newspapers, accusing Democratic candidates of racism and sexual immorality. Others burglarized the office of Daniel Ellsberg’s psychiatrist (Ellsberg had stolen the Pentagon Papers), trying to find material with which to discredit Ellsberg. In 1973, investigations by both Congress and a federal court resulted in the firing or resignation of several members of Nixon’s staff and cabinet. The controversy did not go away with those dismissals, however; people wondered whether the president himself was involved and, if so, how deeply.

plead *nolo contendere* (no contest; in substance but not technically guilty), and he received only a fine and probation. He also resigned as vice president in October 1973, becoming the first vice president to resign from office since John C. Calhoun resigned for political (not criminal) reasons in 1832 (see Chapter 10). Although Agnew's crimes were unrelated to Watergate, they increased the perception that the Nixon administration was thoroughly corrupt. Using the procedure outlined by the Twenty-fifth Amendment (ratified 1967), President Nixon nominated House minority leader **Gerald Ford** of Michigan to succeed Agnew; both houses of Congress confirmed the nomination by overwhelming margins. Nixon hoped that Ford's popularity in Congress and reputation for honesty would help deflect criticism from his administration.



Senator Howard Baker (R-TN; left) and Bible-quoting Senator Sam Ervin (D-NC; center) directed the nationally televised Senate Watergate hearings.

Resignation of Nixon

Despite all the charges and investigations, no evidence had come to light that implicated Nixon himself in the Watergate scandal. That situation changed in the middle of 1973 when a White House aide revealed that Nixon had installed a secret recording system in the Oval Office that taped every conversation there. Immediately, both the courts and Congress pressed Nixon to release the tapes. The president refused, claiming that national security and the separation of powers were at stake. His refusal began a long struggle over control of the tapes. Nixon tried to placate investigators by first releasing edited transcripts of the tapes and then by releasing some of the tapes. Meanwhile, he maintained his complete innocence of wrongdoing. The president's approval rating plummeted. The tapes and wrench-

ing judicial and congressional inquiries exposed the seamy side of the Nixon administration—the political “dirty tricks,” subtle lies, and outright deceit that Nixon and his aides had practiced. They also revealed that Nixon had a foul mouth.

The Watergate affair became a national trauma. For months, the government seemed paralyzed by the accusations and rumors that flew about. Televised congressional hearings kept the scandal constantly before the public eye. Finally, in July 1974, the Supreme Court ruled unanimously that Nixon must release all the tapes. Those tapes showed that although the president had not known about the Watergate break-in beforehand, he participated in attempts to cover up the involvement of his White House subordinates. With impeachment by the House and conviction by the Senate a virtual certainty in the Democrat-controlled Congress, Nixon resigned on August 9. Gerald Ford, in his first speech as president, said, “My fellow Americans, our long national nightmare is over.”

The Unelected President

Gerald Ford enjoyed a flood of goodwill when he took office. The American people indeed wanted to put the “long national

nightmare” behind them. Furthermore, Ford’s reputation as a decent, honest man was a welcome contrast to Nixon and his bitter struggle with Capitol Hill. But after only a month in office, Ford dashed his popularity with one stroke: he granted Nixon a full **pardon** for any crimes he might have committed while in office. The president maintained that his action would put the Watergate affair behind the nation and that it would save the United States the agony of enduring the trial of a former president.

Ford’s act was brave but politically damaging. Many critics thought it unfair that Nixon should escape punishment while his subordinates suffered. As a result, Ford’s popularity fell dramatically.

Ford also faced several other obstacles that hampered his effectiveness. For instance, he was the nation’s first unelected president. He owed his elevation to the nation’s highest office not to a national election but to an appointment and a resignation. As Ford himself said, “I am acutely aware that I have received the votes of none of you.” Complicating the situation for the Ford administration, the man whom Ford nominated to be vice president, Nelson Rockefeller, also had not been elected by the people. For the first time in history, neither of the nation’s top two officials had been elected.

A second obstacle was the public’s increasingly critical perception of Ford. Despite Ford’s athletic ability (which included a stint as a star center for the University of Michigan’s football team), a series of public accidents gave people the impression that he was clumsy. For example, he stumbled as he descended the ramp of the presidential jet, and he accidentally hit spectators with balls when he played golf.

Ford’s greatest obstacle, however, was a hostile Congress. The Democrats held comfortable majorities in both houses, and they were determined to control the government after the excesses of the Nixon administration. Ford’s main weapon against them was the veto; he vetoed sixty-one bills in less than three years in office in an attempt to hold down government spending and protect the powers of the presidency. Congress, however, overrode twelve of his vetoes, one of the highest number of overrides since the beleaguered presidency of Andrew Johnson. The standoff between Ford and Congress created a legislative deadlock.

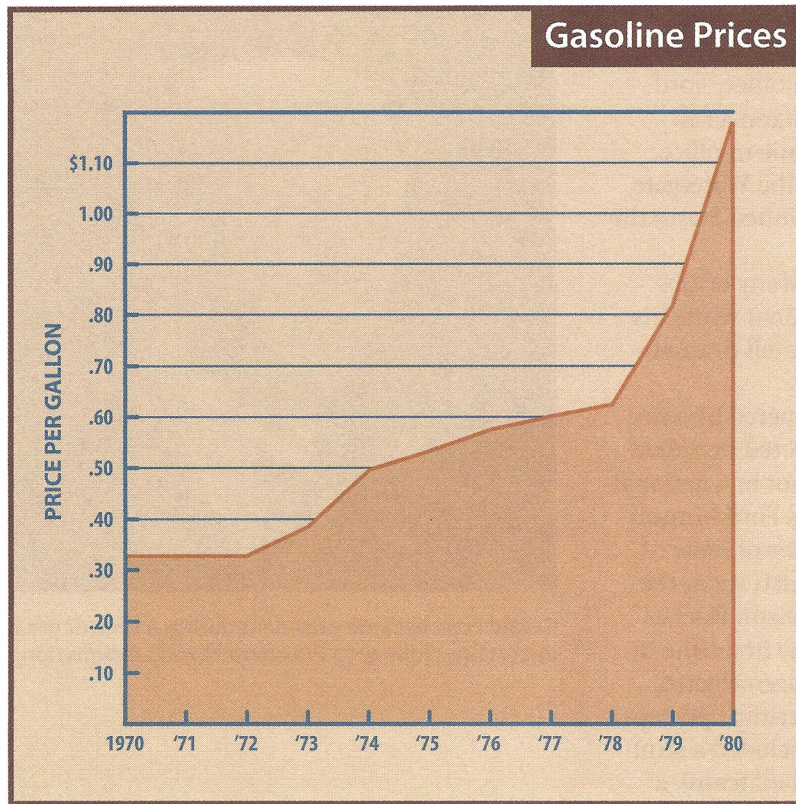
Factors beyond the president’s control also damaged his reputation. In 1975, America tasted final defeat in Southeast Asia as South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos fell to the Communists. A sluggish national economy also worried voters. Under Nixon and Ford, the paralyzed presidency had sunk to its lowest level of prestige since the era of Warren G. Harding.

Section Quiz

1. Why did the release of the presidential tapes cause President Nixon to resign?
2. What event early in Ford’s administration drastically lowered his popularity with the American people?
3. What was Ford’s greatest obstacle to effectiveness in his presidency?
- ★ Was Gerald Ford an ineffective president as his critics claimed, or was he merely the victim of circumstances?



Gerald Ford became president during a time of great uncertainty following President Nixon’s resignation.



II. Domestic Difficulties

The problems of the 1960s—urban violence, student unrest, and racial conflict—gave way to problems in the 1970s that were less dramatic but no less important. Despite all its problems, the 1960s had been economically prosperous; in the 1970s, however, economic conditions became the nation's primary concern. Also, the success of the civil rights movement in the 1960s spurred other groups to agitate for their "rights"—some legitimate, some not—in the 1970s.

Economic Woes

Energy Crisis

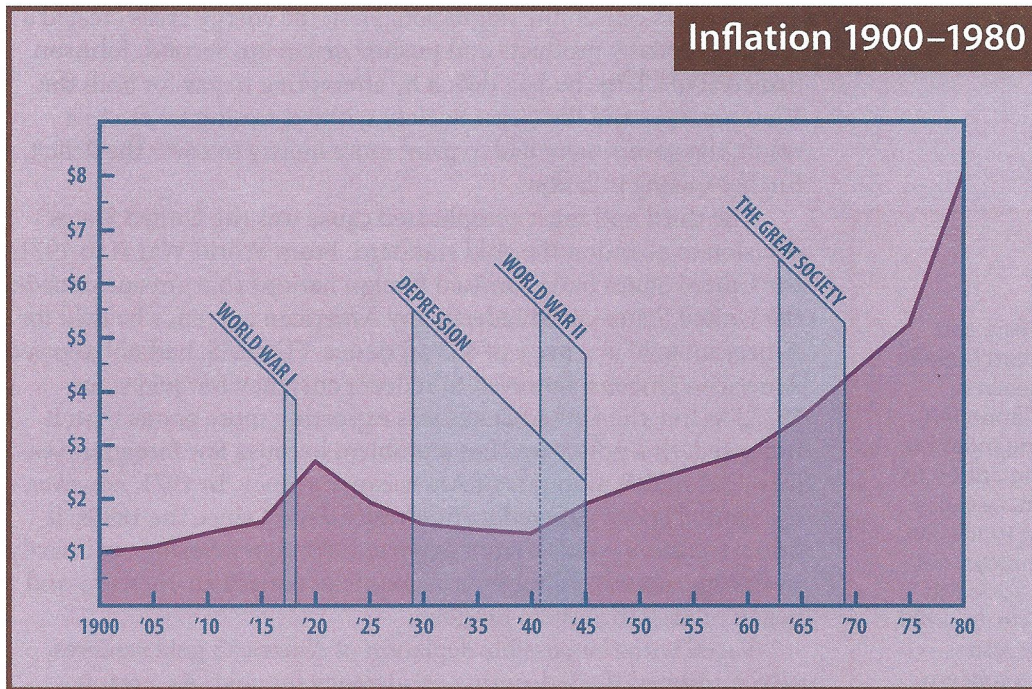
In October 1973 the Arab nations of Egypt and Syria attacked the neighboring Jewish state of Israel. The United States, as it had done since Israel became a nation in 1948, supported the Israelis against the Arabs. In retaliation, the oil-producing Arab nations—all members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)—announced an **oil embargo** against the United States, prohibiting the sale of any oil

to America. When the embargo started, the United States was still under President Nixon's wage and price controls. With a shrinking supply of gasoline held at an artificially low price, supplies became scarce. Gas stations were open fewer hours and limited the amount of gas each customer could buy. Motorists often had to wait in long lines to buy the gas that was available. When price controls were finally lifted, the price of gasoline shot from about 35¢ a gallon at the beginning of 1973 to well over a dollar a gallon by 1980.

The gasoline shortages were only part of an overall **energy crisis**, a combination of higher prices for and shortages of American energy resources. Until the 1970s, Americans had always assumed that there would be enough cheap fuel resources to power any project that American industry undertook. They began to realize, however, that America's energy sources were not

The Arab oil embargo led to long lines and higher prices at American gas stations.





inexhaustible and would not always be inexpensive. Petroleum production had already begun to drop before the embargo, and the embargo itself simply heightened the shortages and drove up prices more quickly. Even when the Arabs lifted the oil embargo, they increased their prices for crude oil fourfold, nudging prices even higher. The prices for all petroleum products—from heating oil and fuels for power plants to phonograph records and asphalt—went up.

During this time, a growing number of people voiced concern about the effects of industrial development on the environment. Beginning in the 1960s, the so-called **environmental movement**—composed of disparate groups including pantheists, Communists, and antihuman organizations—began to sound warnings about industrial pollution of the water and air, particularly that caused by automobiles. Under pressure from these groups, Congress passed a number of laws regulating pollution. In 1970, Congress established the Environmental Protection Agency to oversee and coordinate environmental regulations. The main acts to combat pollution were the Clean Air Act (1970; amended 1977) and the Clean Water Act (1977).

Those actions helped reduce pollution of the environment, but they also increased demands on the nation's energy resources. Many industries, for example, began to switch from highly pollutant coal to oil as a power source, further straining American oil resources. Likewise, regulations to reduce air pollution by cars required adding emission-control devices, which reduced pollution but also lowered fuel efficiency. Additional costs led many industries to plead for delays in implementing the environmental regulations to give them time to make the adjustments.

Stagflation

Normally, when inflation is high, unemployment is low; and when unemployment is high, inflation is low. In the 1970s, however, the United States experienced high inflation and high unemployment at the same time, a condition that economists called **stagflation**.

Christians and Pollution

While Christians should not ally themselves with the pantheistic and antihuman attitudes often found in the environmental movement, there is a role for Christians in controlling or preventing pollution. The Creation Mandate in Genesis 1:26–28 requires Christians to exercise dominion over God's creation. Proper stewardship would include dealing with pollution. Because pollution harms humans, Christians should combat it to obey Christ's command to love one's neighbor.

Economy—The Number One Issue

The energy crisis, the budget deficit, and abandonment of the gold standard fueled inflation without providing a means of reducing unemployment. Stagflation left Congress in a dilemma. Attacking inflation by cutting government spending added to the already high unemployment, because many jobs depended on federal funds. On the other hand, attacking unemployment through government spending added to the already alarming inflation rate. By 1980, most Americans listed economic issues—primarily inflation—as their main concern.

Women's Lib

A radical element that generally preferred the name **women's liberation movement** complicated the feminist movement. These extreme feminists portrayed modern American marriage as a form of slavery in which wives labored in the "demeaning" roles of mother and homemaker. They wanted to "liberate" women from such "slavery" and looked down on women who preferred the traditional role of housewife—being a wife and mother in the home. To achieve their vision of equality, some women's liberationists advocated a platform of bold immorality: "free love" (premarital and extramarital sex), easier divorce laws, recognition of lesbian "marriages," and, above all, a woman's unquestioned "right" to abortion on demand. State laws had long restricted or even prohibited abortion. In the landmark case *Roe v. Wade* (1973), however, the Supreme Court struck down most state abortion laws. Consequently, the slaughter of unborn children by abortion rose to more than one million a year by 1978. Women's liberationists celebrated the decision.

Three factors caused the stagflation. First, the energy crisis created a scarcity of many products and pushed prices up. Second, Johnson had created a large budget deficit by attempting to pay for both the Vietnam War and the Great Society without raising taxes. As a result, the government had to print more money to cover the deficit, further fueling inflation.

The third and most complicated cause was the United States' decision to abandon the gold standard. From World War II to 1971, the United States had promised foreign nations that anyone outside the United States could redeem any American currency he held for American gold at a price of \$35 an ounce. (The U.S. had not allowed American citizens, however, to redeem currency for gold since 1933.) While the United States was exporting more goods than it imported, this policy was not a problem because few foreign investors held sizable amounts of American currency. In 1971, however, the United States suffered its first **trade deficit** since the 1890s; it imported more goods than it exported. Foreign investors, primarily in Europe, now had abundant amounts of American currency and began to exchange them for gold.

Faced with the possible depletion of America's gold reserves, Nixon stopped the redeeming of currency for gold. As a result, nothing backed U.S. currency except the government's promise. Without being fixed to a standard, the value of the dollar dropped in relation to foreign currencies, and the costs of buying foreign goods rose.

Rights Movements

Since black Americans had made dramatic gains in securing their civil rights, many other minorities attempted, with varying degrees of success, to broaden their legal rights. American Indians, for example, protested to dramatize their plight: a high rate of unemployment and lower life expectancy. One of the most publicized protests was at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in 1973, on the hundredth anniversary of the Wounded Knee Massacre (see Chapter 17). Some Indian groups sued the government for violating numerous treaties with the Indians, and the courts often granted the Indians generous financial compensation. Some rights movements of the era agitated for the recognition of unbiblical practices. The "gay rights" movement tried to remove legal prohibitions to the homosexual lifestyle. It also sought to gain legal recognition of homosexual "marriages" for financial purposes such as insurance benefits and for the purpose of normalizing homosexual behavior. The push for homosexual rights has gained ground because it is presented as a struggle for freedom. But opponents to homosexual practice argue that it is immoral. The issue of morality places homosexual practice in a different category from ethnicity, a point that Christians will often argue from Scripture. Others, even some Christians, will argue this on the basis of nature—how the human body is formed—and indicate the negative effects of homosexuality on society. These arguments have lost ground, however, under a steady rejection of scriptural authority in a culture that values freedom above all else.

One of the largest and most influential movements in the 1970s was the **women's rights movement**. Although not a numerical minority, women as a group suffered from various forms of discrimination. For instance, women often received less pay than men working at the same job. In some states, a married woman could

The Woman Who Stopped the ERA

The leader of the fight against the Equal Rights Amendment was a determined woman named Phyllis Schlafly, who was used to competing against long odds. She worked her way through college during World War II, test-firing bullets in an ammunition plant. She earned her master's degree from Radcliffe College, a prestigious women's school. After marrying, she was a homemaker, rearing six children. She also ran for Congress twice, served as a delegate to the Republican National Convention four times, and wrote nine books.

Schlafly first made headlines in 1964 when she published *A Choice Not an Echo*, an examination of Republican national politics that is often credited with helping Barry Goldwater win the 1964 presidential nomination. After

Congress sent the ERA to the states for ratification in 1972, Schlafly tirelessly and relentlessly visited the states that had not ratified the ERA to stress the dangers of the amendment to the traditional rights of women.

She took abuse from reporters, radical feminists, and other opponents, often being insulted and spat upon. Through it all, she remained calm, even, and courteous. She stated her arguments in crisp tones and supported them with a wealth of carefully researched facts. When opponents ridiculed her for speaking out on legal and constitutional issues without being a lawyer, she entered law school and earned her law degree—in her “spare time.”

“The claim that American women are downtrodden and unfairly treated

is the fraud of the century,” Schlafly said. She pointed to her own success. “I’ve achieved my goals in life and I did it without sex-neutral laws.”



not own property in her own name. In addition, widows sometimes discovered after the death of a spouse that the excellent credit rating they had built with their husbands no longer existed; a widower's credit rating, however, continued unimpaired. With such injustices as illustrations, **feminists** (advocates of women's rights) successfully appealed to the public's sense of fairness to address these problems.

Although radical feminists seized much of the public's attention, the real strength of the women's movement lay in the basic justice of its demands in the marketplace. Many women who were uninterested in or even opposed to the demands of the liberationists (see side margin note) were very interested in economic equality. Both higher inflation and rising divorce rates were forcing more women out of the home and into the workplace simply to survive. Those women desired only the opportunity to make a living and support their families. Therefore, Congress and the states corrected economic inequality by passing legislation to give women equal access to employment and equal pay for performing the same jobs as men.

The most controversial and divisive piece of pro-feminist legislation was the **Equal Rights Amendment** (ERA) passed by Congress in 1972. Section 1 of that proposed amendment said briefly, “Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.” Proponents of the amendment claimed that it would reinforce the basic rights as citizens that women held under the Constitution. Opponents claimed that sufficient laws were already in effect to guarantee those rights. Opponents also feared that the amendment would break down the traditional protections that women enjoyed, such as exemption from the military draft, and would increase government

intrusions into individual privacy, such as matters of adoption and child custody. A bitter fight over ratification of the ERA ended in 1982 when the amendment failed to garner the necessary approval of three-fourths of the state legislatures before its deadline for ratification passed. Its failure was a blow to the radicals but did not diminish the genuine gains that women had made.

Section Quiz

1. Why did Arab nations place an oil embargo on the United States in 1973?
2. Name the agency and the two major acts which were Congress's main attempts to protect the environment from pollution.
3. What were the three causes of stagflation in the 1970s?
4. What is the name for the radical wing of the women's rights movement?
- ★ Why do you think the Equal Rights Amendment failed to achieve sufficient support to become part of the Constitution?

III. The Ineffectual Presidency

Rise of Jimmy Carter

1976 Election

Gerald Ford entered the 1976 presidential race encumbered by numerous weights. Although he was the incumbent, he was an unelected incumbent. The high unemployment rate, the Nixon pardon, and the public perception of Ford as a good-natured bumbler all hampered the president's reelection efforts. Furthermore, Ford was not even the preferred choice of many members of his own party. Former California governor **Ronald Reagan**, the hero of the Republican conservatives who dominated the party, mounted a strong challenge to Ford in the primaries. The president won re-nomination but only by a narrow margin after a bruising fight.

The Democrats' candidate proved unusual. **Jimmy Carter** was a well-to-do peanut farmer whose political experience consisted of one term in the Georgia state senate and one term as governor of Georgia. But he surprised the experts by winning the Democratic nomination. Carter's strategy was clever. He placed himself in the political center where he could attract the most voters—to the right of a host of liberal Democratic candidates but to the left of Democratic firebrand George Wallace. He also ran as an "outsider," a candidate untainted by the corruption in Washington and therefore supposedly better able to clean it up.

The 1976 election looked at first as though it would be a landslide for Carter. Ford, however, fought back. The incumbent hammered away at Carter's vagueness on the issues. "Jimmy Carter will say anything anywhere to be president of the United States," Ford said. "He wavers, he wanders, he wiggles, and he waffles." But Ford hurt himself by proclaiming in a televised debate that he did not believe Eastern Europe was under Soviet domination, despite the presence of Soviet-imposed governments and thousands of Soviet troops in those nations. This gaffe merely reinforced the perception of some people that Ford was a bungler. In the end, Carter won

An Assessment of the 1976 Presidential Race

One Democrat, noting Ford's plight, said gleefully, "We could run an armadillo this year and win."

Using "Born-Again" as a Campaign Strategy

As a further contrast to the dishonesty of the Nixon years, Carter claimed to be a "born-again" Christian who wanted a government "as filled with love as the American people." After the trauma of Watergate, Americans were attracted to a candidate who said plainly, "I'll never tell a lie."

narrowly—50.1 percent to 48 percent in the popular vote. The vote in the Electoral College, 297 to 240, was the closest since Woodrow Wilson defeated Charles Evans Hughes in 1916.

The Carter Style

Carter entered office professing his desire to be a “people’s president” with an open, honest, and compassionate administration. He appointed record numbers of women and minorities to government positions. But not all his “healing” gestures were appreciated. When he granted amnesty (a general pardon) to draft dodgers who fled the country to avoid fighting in Vietnam, Carter felt the wrath of veterans who had loyally fulfilled their obligation and fought in the war.

Carter also had some negative characteristics. Like James Polk, he was a compulsive worker who tried to micromanage every aspect of the government; as a result, he was often bogged down by details that could have been delegated to subordinates. Carter’s “outsider” status in Washington and his aloof, humorless personality made it hard for him to work with Congress, despite large Democratic majorities in both houses. These flaws eventually damaged Carter, causing Americans to become disenchanted with his policies and adding to his public perception as a colorless, ineffective leader.

Foreign Affairs

Carter tried to pursue a foreign policy based on fairness and morality, much as Woodrow Wilson had tried to do. The cornerstone of Carter’s foreign policy was the defense of **human rights**, protecting people from government oppression. While Carter’s goals were laudable, the United States could influence only friendly nations concerning human rights. Communist nations, among the worst violators of human rights, were impervious to Carter’s pressures and continued to brutally oppress their people.

Panama Canal Treaty

Carter’s first great challenge in foreign affairs concerned the Panama Canal. Panamanians had resented American control of the canal for many years. The United States had helped Panama win its independence and paid Panama for control of the Canal Zone, according to the original treaty, “in perpetuity” (i.e., essentially forever). The Nixon and Ford administrations had begun negotiations to return the canal to Panama; Carter merely completed the process. He signed the **Panama Canal Treaty** in 1977, and the Senate narrowly ratified it the following year. The new treaty allowed Panama and the United States to operate the canal jointly until 2000, when Panama would take over the operation completely.

The treaty created controversy in the United States. Administration officials, numerous leading Democrats, and even some Republicans, such as Gerald Ford and Senator Howard Baker, defended the treaty. They claimed that the canal’s narrow width and the growth of air power made the canal neither militarily nor economically important to the United States. (They pointed out, for example, that aircraft carriers and oil tankers were too wide to use the canal.) Supporters also hoped that the U.S. action would improve relations with Latin America.

Opponents of the treaty claimed that the waterway was still vital to American interests and should not be handed over to the

Presidential Informality

Carter surprised and delighted the American people by walking down Pennsylvania Avenue after his inauguration instead of riding in the usual armored limousine. He made some televised addresses wearing a sweater instead of a suit, and many photographs showed him relaxing in blue jeans. He calculated that all of these “down-home” images would endear him to the public as “one of them.”



President and Mrs. Carter walk down Pennsylvania Avenue after his inauguration.

Carter’s Policies in Practice

An example of the shortcomings of Carter’s foreign policy was Nicaragua. The Carter administration pressured the friendly but dictatorial regime there to improve its human rights record. Eventually, revolutionaries, with the American government’s quiet approval, overthrew the Nicaraguan dictator. Afterward, however, a Marxist government took power; it was just as repressive as the previous government but far more hostile to the United States.

Panama Canal Treaty Senate Vote

The treaty (actually, there were two treaties collectively known as the Torrijos-Carter Treaty) by which the United States ceded the Panama Canal to Panama was ratified in the Senate by a vote of 68–32. (Both treaties received the same number of votes.) Fifty-two Democrats and 16 Republicans voted to ratify; 10 Democrats and 22 Republicans voted against it.

authoritarian and sometimes unstable government of Panama. As for its narrowness, it could be widened to accommodate larger ships. (It currently is being widened.) Despite passage of the treaty, U.S.–Latin American relations did not improve perceptibly. Furthermore, surrender of the canal increased the perception at home and abroad that the United States was declining in power and influence.



President Carter (center) enjoyed his greatest foreign affairs triumph in negotiating the Camp David Accords between Egypt's president, Anwar Sadat (right), and Israel's prime minister, Menachem Begin (left).

Camp David Accords

President Carter's greatest triumph came in diplomacy in the Middle East. After becoming a nation in 1948, Israel was in constant conflict with its Arab neighbors. The nation fought four brief wars, and the region suffered from constant unrest and violence. But Egypt, one of Israel's most powerful opponents, was tired of the fighting, which had brought it no gain but much loss. In 1978 Carter invited the president of Egypt, Anwar Sadat (AHN-wahr sah-DAHT), and the prime minister of Israel, Menachem Begin (mehn-AH-kehm BAY-gihn), to meet with him at Camp David, the presidential retreat in Maryland.

After thirteen days of arduous negotiations, the three men reached an uneasy agreement known as the **Camp David Accords**. In return for Egypt's recognition of Israel's sovereignty (which no other Arab nation had done) and a guarantee of peace, Israel returned to Egypt the Sinai Peninsula, which it had taken in the Six-Day War (1967). Although some parts of the accords eventually broke down, the agreement marked one of the greatest advances for peace in the Middle East since World War II. Egypt and Israel have yet to go to war since that agreement.

Soviet Union

Carter's success with the Camp David Accords, however, was overshadowed by several setbacks in foreign policy. His dealings with the Soviet Union are one example. Like Nixon and Ford before him, Carter pursued a policy of *detente* with the Soviet Union. The key to good relations, Carter decided, would be passage of the **SALT II Treaty**. This treaty was the result of Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) between the Soviets and the Americans to limit the number and kinds of nuclear weapons of each superpower. The president signed the treaty in June 1979, but he faced a stiff challenge getting it ratified by the Senate. Conservatives charged that the treaty would put the Soviet Union ahead of the United States in nuclear weaponry and that, given the Communists' consistent treaty violations, the United States could not be sure that the Soviets would maintain the agreement.

Two days after Christmas in 1979, all chance of passing the treaty vanished when the Soviet Union invaded the neighboring nation of Afghanistan. The Soviets claimed that they were going to "help" the pro-Communist ruler of Afghanistan, but he was quickly assassinated and replaced by a more pliable Soviet puppet. Furious, Carter announced an embargo on all sales of grain to the Soviets and an American boycott of the 1980 summer Olympic Games in Moscow. He also withdrew the SALT II Treaty from the

Senate's consideration and called for a new registration of young men for the discontinued draft (although he did not revive the draft itself). In his State of the Union address for 1980, he enunciated the "Carter Doctrine," that the United States would resist by military force if necessary any Soviet attempt to push farther south to the Persian Gulf.

Yet even that relatively mild reaction brought a storm of criticism of Carter. Liberals described the Carter Doctrine, draft registration, and withdrawal of the SALT II Treaty as harsh, provocative overreactions that threatened world peace. Farmers complained about their financial losses from the grain embargo. Conservatives claimed that Carter was all talk and that his few concrete actions—such as boycotting the Olympics—were pitifully weak. Whether he tried firmness or conciliation, Carter seemed unable to please anyone.

Iran

The Camp David Accords gave Carter his greatest triumph, but the Middle East also gave him his most damaging defeat when revolution convulsed Iran. The shah (king) of that nation, **Mohammed Reza Pahlavi** (known as the Shah of Iran), was long known to be pro-West in his outlook but repressive in his rule. In January 1979, after months of violent disorder, the Shah fled the country, and a fanatical Islamic extremist, the **Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini** (koh MAY nee) took power. Khomeini denounced everyone who was not as zealous as he and his followers were—the Shah, other Arab nations, the Soviet Union, and especially "the great Satan" who had supported the Shah, the United States. In November, when the exiled Shah went to the United States to receive medical treatment for terminal cancer, enraged Muslims stormed the American embassy in Teheran, Iran, and took fifty-three Americans hostage.

The **Iranian hostage crisis** became Carter's foreign policy nightmare. American citizens raged helplessly as television networks almost daily broadcast footage of Iranians burning American flags and chanting anti-American slogans. The Iranians toyed with the United States for months, raising hopes that they would release the hostages and then dashing those hopes with an almost sadistic glee. Carter, with few options open to him short of military invasion, tried vainly to use economic sanctions, negotiations, and world opinion to move the Iranians to release the hostages.

As the weeks dragged on, the American public's frustration and anger partially turned from Iran to the president himself. The whole nation seemed to be asking, "Why doesn't the president do something?" Carter's inaction—which was perhaps not entirely his fault, considering his limited choices—made him seem weak, indecisive, even spineless.

Domestic Disaster

Carter's foreign problems were matched by his domestic difficulties. The economy was the primary problem. Ford had managed to get the rate of inflation down to 5 percent, but the



The rise of Islamic extremist groups and Arab terrorism in the late 1970s and 1980s presented Carter (and later presidents Reagan and Bush) with some of their thorniest issues in foreign affairs.

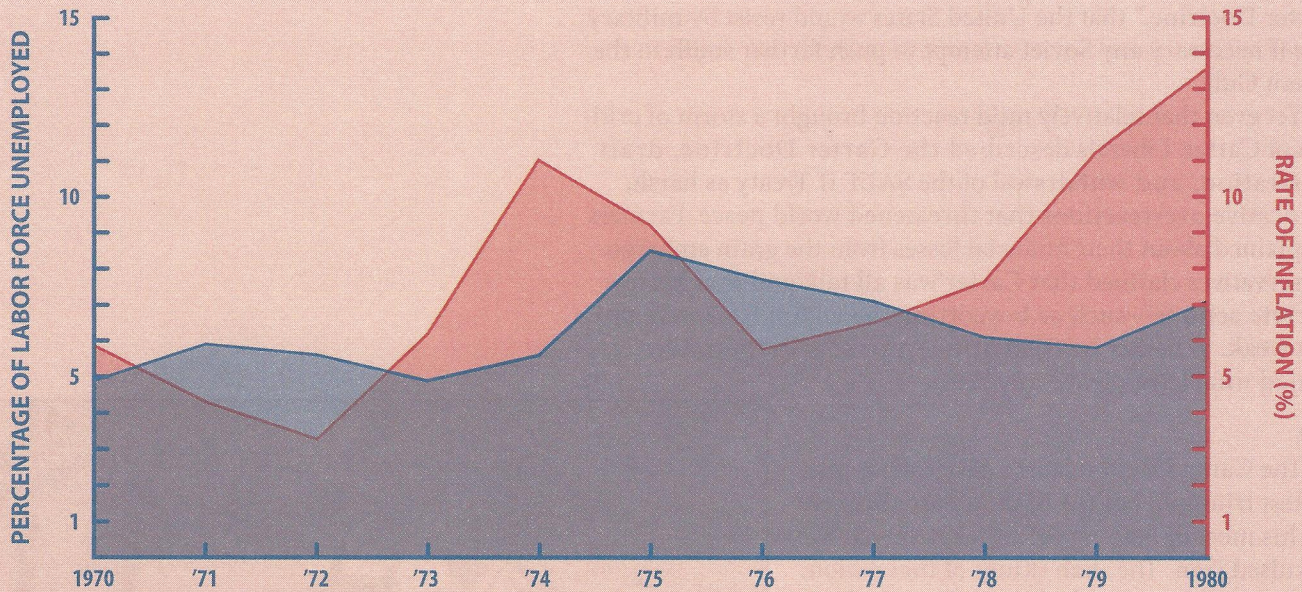
Tragic Abortive Rescue Attempt

In April 1980 an attempted military rescue of the hostages turned into a fiasco. An American helicopter collided with a transport plane in the desert of Iran, and eight American soldiers died without ever getting near the hostages.

A Timely Release

The hostages were finally released after 444 days of captivity on January 20, 1981—the day Americans inaugurated President Ronald Reagan, who promised to bring the United States back to world leadership.

Unemployment and Inflation Rates



More Frustrations

Carter's inability to get along with Congress continued to aggravate matters. His reserved personality and Congress's determination to be independent after the excesses of Watergate paralyzed legislation. A growing number of Americans became frustrated when President Carter and a Democrat majority in Congress could not agree on how to help the nation. Plus, the Iranian revolution in 1979 diminished oil supplies in the United States again, reviving the long lines and high prices at gas stations that had characterized the early 1970s.

result was a recession and an unemployment rate of 8 percent by the time he left office. In four years in office, Carter was able to lower unemployment only slightly, to 7.5 percent. Inflation, however, soared. By 1980, the annual inflation rate rose to over 13 percent. Depositors and investors worried about how inflation was ravaging their hard-earned savings. Consumers complained loudly about rising prices for food, clothing, fuel, and other necessities. The American economy was careening out of control, and Carter seemed helpless to do anything.

As American anger rose, Carter's popularity dropped. By December 1979 only 19 percent of the American people approved of Carter's performance—a rating lower than that of Richard Nixon during the depths of the Watergate affair. The American people—fed up with the failures of Nixon, Ford, and Carter—were looking for bold, new leadership.

Section Quiz

1. Name at least two difficulties President Ford faced in his campaign for reelection.
 2. What act did Carter perform at his inauguration to symbolize his desire to be a "people's president"?
 3. Why was the narrow width of the Panama Canal an argument against its value to the United States?
 4. What was President Carter's greatest diplomatic triumph?
 5. What event virtually eliminated all chance of the Senate's ratifying the SALT II Treaty?
- ★ Knowing what we do now, how was the hostage crisis in Iran near the end of Carter's term a warning to the United States of further dangers to come?

IV. The Rising Conservative Tide

Thunder on the Right

Among the people who were unhappy with the course that America was taking in the 1960s and 1970s were political conservatives, typified by Republicans Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan. Traditional conservatives held to a firm ideology of limited powers for the national government and staunch opposition to the growth of communism. They opposed increased government spending, especially since the nation's budget deficit was growing at an alarming rate. Such conservatives feared particularly that the United States was falling behind the Soviet Union in military power and therefore opposed initiatives such as President Carter's SALT II Treaty. They also denounced Carter's decision to break relations with Nationalist China on Taiwan to establish relations with Communist China. Such an action was to them a cowardly betrayal of a long-time friend and anti-Communist force to accommodate a totalitarian Communist regime. Likewise, most political conservatives opposed the Panama Canal Treaty as symbolic of America's declining power and prestige. Those events energized conservatives as a political force.

New Right

Joining the old-line conservatives was a faction called the **New Right**. Those conservatives shared many beliefs of the traditionalists, notably opposition to communism and belief in limited government. But the New Right was also motivated by numerous social and moral issues, and many New Right groups focused on a single overriding issue. The *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion, for example, spurred a Right-to-Life movement that opposed abortion and sought to use such means as a constitutional amendment to overturn the *Roe* decision. Other New Right activists called for reduction of the increasingly heavy burden of taxation by national, state, and local governments.

Religious Right

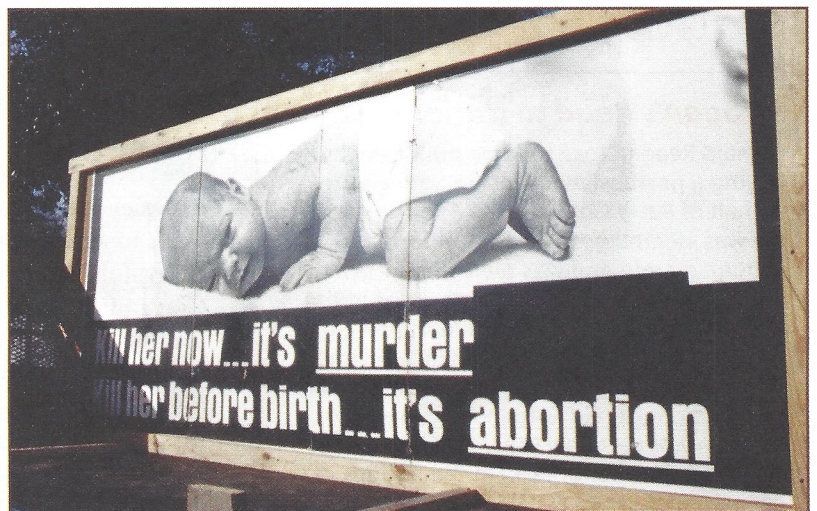
An important component of the New Right was the **Religious Right**, various conservative Christian leaders and organizations that were concerned primarily with moral issues. The Religious Right grew in reaction to immoral trends in the United States, such as widespread drug abuse, the legalization of abortion, and increased toleration and even advocacy of homosexuality. The Religious Right hoped to stem the tide of immorality through political action that would reestablish America's traditional standards of morality, standards that reflected the unique contribution of the Christian faith to American history.

Many of the most prominent leaders of the Religious Right were adherents of the **Charismatic movement**. Using television extensively, the Charismatics managed to motivate many Christians to become active politically. The most influential of the Charismatic television evangelists was **Pat Robertson**, who founded the first Christian television station in the United States

Lower My Taxes!

The most publicized event in the "taxpayers' revolt" was the passage of **Proposition 13** in California in 1978. This initiative, overwhelmingly approved by California voters, forced the state to roll back property taxes drastically.

The Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion sparked a groundswell of opposition and launched a Right-to-Life movement dedicated to finding legal means to overturn the decision.





Jerry Falwell with President George H. W. Bush

in 1961. From that start, he built the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) and became host of a prominent Christian talk show, *The 700 Club*.

Not all the leaders of the Religious Right were Charismatics. Catholics, Mormons, and numerous non-Charismatic Protestants joined the vaguely religious crusade for morality. One such leader was Baptist pastor **Jerry Falwell** of Virginia, who, like Robertson, used television to promote his cause. Falwell founded a religious political action group called the Moral Majority to help elect conservative candidates and to further conservative causes.

Falwell drew heated criticism from liberals, who attacked him for supposedly breaking down the alleged wall of separation between church and state. They

accused him of attempting to force his religious views on the general public and also criticized him for using a religious organization to achieve political ends. (Many of those liberals were silent, however, when liberal politicians and civil rights leaders used liberal churches to register voters and advance liberal causes.)

The Religious Right also benefited because more Americans were turning from theologically liberal churches to more doctrinally conservative ones. In a 1977 survey, seventy million Americans described themselves as “born-again” Christians. Although definitions of “born again” did not always agree with the scriptural doctrine of regeneration, those numbers meant that a large portion of the American population was at least sympathetic to conservative religious views.

The Religious Right greatly feared that the government was undercutting the nation’s traditional religious freedoms. The 1963 Supreme Court decisions against prayer and Bible reading in public schools are major examples of government interference. Another fear was government control of Christian schools. Since the 1960s, many Christians had placed their children in private Christian day schools or had even begun to educate them at home to protect them from secular influences and declining public school educational standards. Some state and federal authorities began to call for regulation or even closing of Christian schools. Religious conservatives, realizing that growing governmental power could threaten all constitutional religious freedoms, began to fight back with their dollars and their ballots.

Election of 1980

Nomination of Reagan

Riding the surge of conservatism to the Republican nomination was Ronald Reagan. A polished speaker whose tone conveyed a sense of absolute sincerity, Reagan had been a leading and persuasive advocate of conservative causes since the 1950s. Trained by his experience in radio broadcasting and acting, Reagan used his vocal skills to rouse conservatives by his defense of free enterprise. He called for shrinking the federal government and steadfastly opposed Communist expansion.

Reagan brushed aside his competition in the 1980 primaries and won the nomination easily. To unify the party, he chose one of his politically moderate opponents, George Bush, to be his running mate. With Reagan at the head of the ticket and the nation in a conservative mood, Republicans believed that they could win back the presidency that they had lost four years earlier.

Reagan’s Road to National Fame

Ronald Reagan rose to fame politically by giving a persuasive television address on behalf of Barry Goldwater in 1964. In 1966, he was elected governor of California by a huge margin and was reelected in 1970. Reagan had made two previous runs at the Republican presidential nomination—a brief attempt to halt Richard Nixon in 1968 and a nearly successful bid to wrest the nomination from Gerald Ford in 1976. By 1980, Reagan was certainly the best-known and most popular Republican in the nation.

Carter's Problems

Carter had more than Reagan to worry about. Despite his moderately liberal social policies, Carter's more conservative economic policies did not please the liberal wing of the Democratic Party. Liberals rallied behind Massachusetts senator **Edward Kennedy**, the younger brother of John and Robert. Kennedy soon realized that he had almost no chance to beat Carter, but he stubbornly remained in the campaign to force the president to pursue more liberal policies. This divisive candidacy hampered Carter's attempts to unify the party behind him.

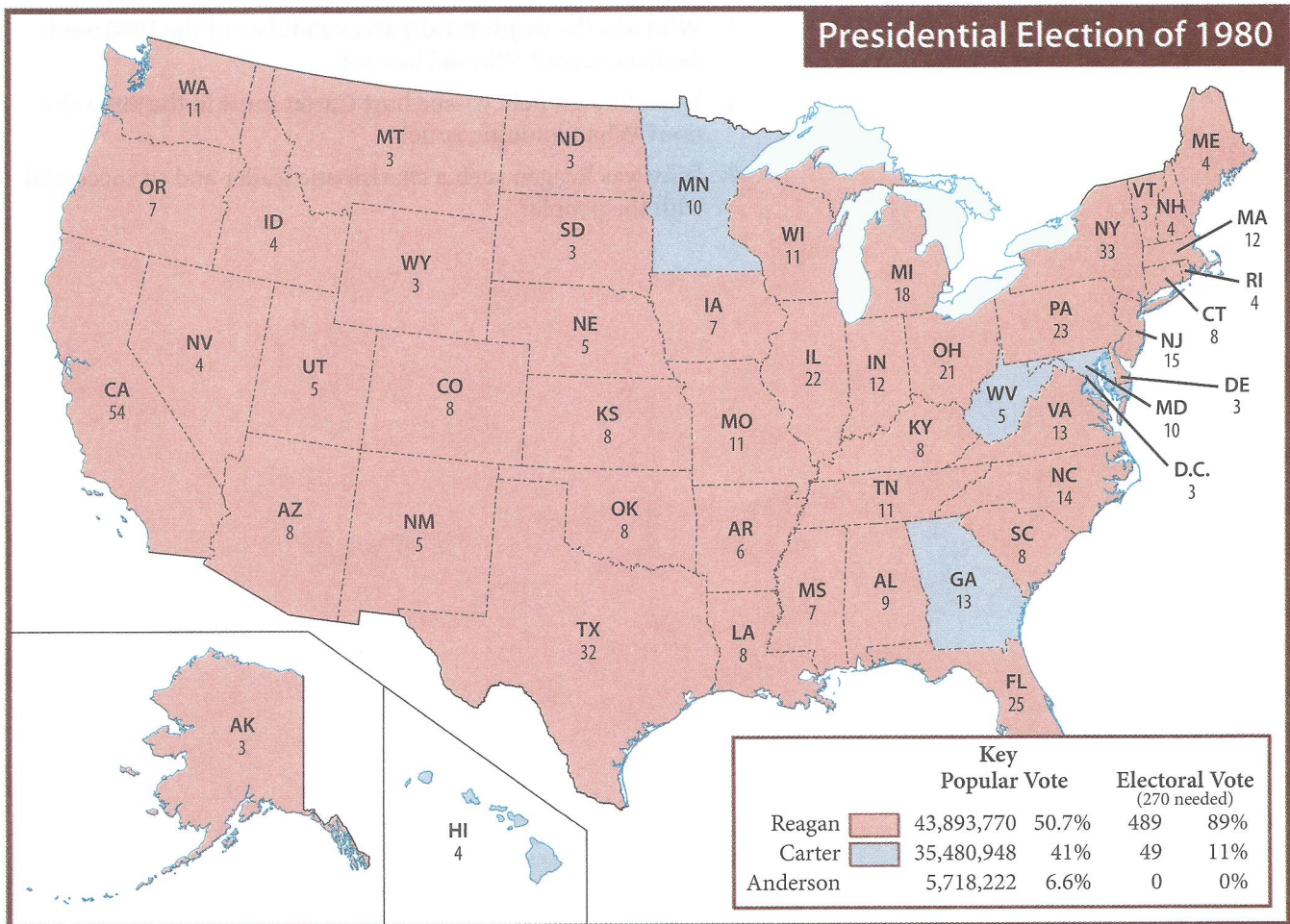
Carter also faced a second liberal opponent. Liberal Republican **John Anderson** of Illinois, proclaiming that both Reagan and Carter were too conservative, announced that he would run as an independent third-party candidate. Anderson had no chance to win, of course, but he was more likely to draw votes from the moderately liberal Carter than from the staunchly conservative Reagan.

The Campaign

Conservative zeal alone was not enough to win a national election. The Republicans were banking on popular discontent with Carter and the Democrats to help them. The hostages in Iran were like a cancer eating at the Carter candidacy, reminding voters of Carter's foreign policy failures. Even more immediate was the state of the economy, mainly the dangerously high inflation rate. Reagan shrewdly perceived the public sentiment. In his closing statement during a televised debate with Carter only a week before the election, Reagan turned to the camera and asked the American people,

The Misery Index

Republican economists combined the unemployment rate with the inflation rate to create the "misery index." Whereas the index had been 2.9 percent in 1953, in June 1980 it was 21.98 percent.





Ronald Reagan won the presidency by a landslide and restored confidence to America.

Are you better off than you were four years ago? Is it easier for you to go and buy things in the stores than it was four years ago? . . . Is America as respected throughout the world as it was? . . . I would like to lead that crusade to take government off the backs of the great people of this country and turn you loose again to do those things that I know you can do so well, because you did them and made this country great.

Until the last days of the campaign, the polls predicted a close race. It was not. On election day, Reagan won 50.7 percent of the popular vote to Carter's 41 percent and John Anderson's 6.6 percent. In the Electoral College, Reagan carried forty-four states for a massive 489–49 landslide victory. In addition, the Republicans picked up twelve seats in the Senate, capturing control of that body for the first time since Eisenhower's first term. The nation had decisively rejected not only Jimmy Carter but also his party. Now it was up to Ronald Reagan and the Republicans to demonstrate their ability to do a better job.

Section Quiz

1. What was the goal of the Right-to-Life movement?
 2. Name the most important Charismatic and non-Charismatic political leaders of the Religious Right.
 3. Who was the major third-party candidate of the 1980 presidential election? Why did he run?
 4. What foreign policy issue hurt Carter most in the 1980 election? What domestic issue?
- ★ Why was Reagan such a charismatic leader and so successful with the people?

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Chapter Review

Making Connections

1. Under the provisions of what amendment did Gerald Ford become vice president? Whom did he replace?
2. Why did attempts to make automobiles produce less pollution actually heighten the energy crisis?
3. What was the most controversial piece of pro-feminist legislation? Why did it not become law?

Developing History Skills

1. How can some extreme “rights movements,” such as the homosexuals’ gay rights movement, undermine genuine civil liberties?

Thinking Critically

1. Why did conservatives oppose the SALT II Treaty?
2. Some political observers in the late 1970s claimed that the presidency had grown too large for one man to handle. Why would they think so? Do you agree or disagree with their claim? Why?

Living as a Christian Citizen

1. Is political activity by Christians, such as that of the Religious Right, legitimate in light of the alleged separation of church and state? Why or why not?

People, Places, and Things to Remember

Watergate affair
 Spiro Agnew
 Gerald Ford
 Nixon pardon
 oil embargo
 energy crisis
 environmental movement
 stagflation
 trade deficit
 women’s liberation movement
Roe v. Wade
 women’s rights movement
 feminists
 Equal Rights Amendment
 Ronald Reagan
 Jimmy Carter
 human rights
 Panama Canal Treaty
 Camp David Accords
 SALT II Treaty
 Mohammed Reza Pahlavi (Shah of Iran)
 Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini
 Iranian hostage crisis
 New Right
 Proposition 13
 Religious Right
 Charismatic movement
 Pat Robertson
 Jerry Falwell
 Edward Kennedy
 John Anderson