Module 10: How Will Historians Treat Richard Nixon?

Evidence

The Issues Domestic Policy The Cold War Vietnam Watergate

The materials presented below, all taken from the public speeches of President Richard Nixon, provide a basis upon which to evaluate the historians' interpretations outlined in the conclusion to this module. In five sections, you'll find portions of several speeches in spoken format (as audio files) and full excerpts as transcriptions. Although the documents included are edited versions of longer speeches, they all reproduce the actual words spoken by Nixon. The accompanying photographs provide visual indications of the kinds of issues that shaped Nixon's presidency.

Defining the Issues

This speech, delivered by Nixon to the Republican National Convention in August 1968, defined the objectives of his candidacy and laid out the standards by which Nixon himself wished the American people and historians to evaluate his future presidency.

1. Nomination Acceptance Speech August 8, 1968
2. Photo: Nixon in Motorcade 1968 campaign
3. Photo: Nixon in Crowd 1968 campaign
4. Photo: Presidential Inauguration January 20, 1969

Domestic Policy

Nixon placed a high priority on certain aspects of his domestic policy. Four social problems drew his particular attention: welfare, race relations, energy, and the environment. The excerpts in this section outline Nixon's new federal approach to such problems in the everyday lives of Americans.

5. Welfare: Address to the Nation on Domestic Programs August 8, 1969
7. Energy: Annual Message on the State
8. Environment: Annual Message on
The Cold War

Foreign policy was always a high priority for President Nixon, particularly in relation to the other superpower, the Soviet Union, and the emerging communist power, China. The materials in this section illustrate how Nixon's presidency transformed United States policies and attitudes regarding the Cold War. Starting with the striking change in rhetoric articulated in Nixon's inaugural address in 1969, the speeches illustrate how Nixon's statements on China and the Soviet Union defined the emerging policy of détente, or coexistence, between the superpowers. The photographs from Nixon's trip to China in 1972 provide the most visible evidence of the dramatic change in United States foreign policy toward the communist world.

9. **Title of Peacemaker:** Inaugural Address January 20, 1969

10. **China: Toast of the President at a Banquet Honoring in Peking** February 21, 1972

11. **Soviet Union: Toast of the President to Brezhnev of the U.S.S.R.** June 18, 1973

12. **Permanent Peace: Address to the People of the Soviet Union** July 2, 1974

13. **Photo: Nixon Reviewing Troops in China** February 21, 1972

14. **Photo: Nixon Observing the Great Wall of China** February 24, 1972

15. **Photo: Nixon at the Great Wall** February 24, 1972

16. **Photo: Nixon With Premier Chou En-Lai** February 27, 1972

17. **Photo: Nixon Greets a Young Chinese Girl in Hangchow** February 27, 1972

Vietnam

The speeches in this section trace the evolution of Nixon's strategy regarding the Vietnam War, starting with his promise of "an honorable end to the war" at the time of his nomination in 1968 to the declaration of a cease-fire with an American
withdrawal of troops in early 1973. The interview with television correspondents in mid-1970 provided a clear statement of how the "domino theory" continued to shape United States policies in Southeast Asia, while Nixon's address on the invasion of Cambodia defined the reasons for escalating United States involvement beyond the borders of Vietnam. Yet the speeches of November 1969 and January 1973 also illustrate how persistently the Nixon administration sought an end to the war, even while trying to determine an outcome that would be most satisfactory in domestic and world political terms.

18. Statement on Vietnam: Nomination Acceptance Speech
August 8, 1968

19. Domino Theory: A Conversation With the President on Foreign Policy
July 1, 1970

20. Withdrawal Plan: Address to the Nation on Vietnam
November 3, 1969

21. Cambodia Invasion: Address to the Nation
April 30, 1970

22. Agreement on Peace: Address to the Nation
January 23, 1973

23. Photo: Nixon Shaking Hands With Armed Forces in Vietnam

Watergate

In his first recorded statement on the Watergate break-in on June 22, thirteen days after the event, Nixon set the tone for the following two years, during which he pursued various strategies designed to keep the scandal from destroying his presidency. As illustrated in the speeches to the nation in April 1973 and April 1974, however, his strategies were clearly failing. Pressure on the president increased in the media, the judicial system, Congress, and certainly in public opinion. The Watergate crisis ended in August 1974 with Nixon's resignation.

25. First Statement on Watergate: President's News Conference
June 22, 1972

26. Address to the Nation About Watergate Investigations
April 30, 1973

27. Address to the Nation About the Release of Tapes
April 29, 1974

28. Address to the Nation About Resignation
August 8, 1974

29. Photo: Nixon, With Edited

30. Photo: Address to Cabinet and Staff