

THE NEW POLITICS OF THE LATE 1960s

27.1

Explain Nixon's policies and politics, domestic and international.

Summary

The late 1960s saw the emergence of a conservative backlash against the social and cultural changes of the 1960s. This new conservatism was rooted in the development of white suburban culture. Conservatism came to be associated with the Republican Party and with the political ideology of Barry Goldwater. Conservative forces propelled Richard Nixon to the White House, but his administration pursued a relatively liberal domestic agenda, working with liberal Democrats in Congress to pass Title IX, create the Environmental Protection Agency, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and to increase funding for the arts. Nonetheless, Nixon employed a "Southern strategy" in his 1972 reelection campaign, pursuing policies that played to the racial fears of conservative southern white voters. Nixon and Kissinger's approach to the war on Vietnam centered on expanded bombing, including bombing of neutral Cambodia, and the gradual withdrawal of American troops. The shift policy was accompanied by even greater domestic conflict over the war. In 1973 a cease-fire agreement was reached and American troops left Vietnam. As American involvement in the war in Vietnam wound down, Nixon pursued a new relationship with China and worked to reduce tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union. Nixon-Kissinger initiatives in the Middle East, South America, and in international monetary policy were less successful.

THE COMING OF LYNDON B. JOHNSON

26.3

Analyze the successes and failures of the Johnson administration in terms of the two issues that dominated his years in office—the launching of the Great Society programs and the war in Vietnam.

Summary

Lyndon Johnson's childhood experience with poverty and his remarkable effectiveness as a member of Congress prepared him to advance an ambitious domestic agenda as president. Johnson worked closely with Congress to pass landmark civil rights legislation, launch a war on poverty, and to implement his vision of the "Great Society." Johnson's Great Society agenda gathered momentum after his landslide victory in 1964. The core Great Society legislation of 1965 included federal aid to education, Medicare and Medicaid, immigration reform, and a Voting Rights Act. As significant as Johnson's domestic victories were, they were undermined by the war in Vietnam. The war divided the country, destroyed support for Johnson's domestic agenda, and led to widespread cynicism in American society about authority in general and government in particular. The escalation of U.S. involvement in Vietnam began under Kennedy. Johnson hesitated at first to further expand the war, but became convinced that his political career depended on securing victory in Vietnam. With the military situation in

THE MOVEMENTS OF THE 1960s AND 1970s

27.2

Analyze the many political and cultural movements that followed in the track of the Civil Rights movement.

Summary

Inspired by the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 60s, a variety of groups pushed for greater legal and social equality in the 1960s and 70s. The women's movement moved forward on a number of fronts. More women, and a more diverse group of women, started running for and winning elections. At the end of the 1960s, some younger women began consciousness-raising groups, discussing their experiences as women, and the emotional, political, economic toll that sexism was taking in their lives. A number of women filed cases to force the federal government to protect women from discrimination in the workplace. The success of NOW and *Ms* magazine demonstrated that feminism had entered the mainstream. In 1970, the Equal Rights Amendment passed Congress and was sent to the states for ratification. The 1960s also saw farm workers organize to protect their collective interests. Led by Caesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, and others, farm workers made significant gains. The founding of the American Indian Movement signaled a new direction in Indian activism. Dramatic protest actions drew attention to American Indians, their concerns, and their status. The black Civil Rights Movement entered a new phase in the 1970s. School integration efforts moved north. Black politicians were elected to high office in many cities. Affirmative action became a central issue in the national debate over race in America. The 1969 confrontation between gay men and the New York City police at the Stonewall Inn marked the beginning of gay liberation movement. The counterculture of the 1960s celebrated new values associated with a new generation and rejected the culture and traditions of the 1950s. By the end of the 1960s, the counterculture was in decline, in part as a result of the movement's own excesses.

Vietnam deteriorating rapidly, Johnson began a rapid escalation of U.S. troops in Vietnam in the spring of 1965. Increasing the U.S. troop presence did not bring victory, and military morale declined along with public support for the war. The 1968 Tet Offensive destroyed the last vestiges of public confidence in Johnson's conducting of the war, and Johnson decided not to seek a second term as president. The assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy plunged the nation into even greater uncertainty and unrest. Divisions within the Democratic Party, highlighted by the violence at the Democratic convention, opened the door for Republican Richard Nixon's victory in the 1968 presidential election.