

The impact of the watergate scandal



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I became the 37th President of United States of America in 1968. I have done many good things in my terms. I ended the Vietnam War and saved a lot lives. I also won the re-election in 1972, and the victory was a land-slide. I beat the candidate from Democratic Party for 18 million popular votes and received the electoral votes from 49 states (Reeves 391). With the help of my Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger” s help, I made a lot of improvements in America” s diplomatic relations with communist countries like Soviet Union and China.

But, I was also the first President in US history to resign. I resigned after one and a half year in my second term. And it all came from the biggest mistake in my political career, the decision to cover up the operation in order to bug the Democratic National Convention” s office in Watergate Hotel and Office complex. It was in 1971, when both parties were running for the 1972 election. While I was still dealing with the mess in Vietnam, my White House Counsel made the decision to send a few men to bug the Democratic National Committee” s office to see how they were doing. Everything was planned carefully. Five men were carefully chosen and equipped with the best device we can get at that time. The most important thing of course, was to erase their link with the White House. But you could not plan everything. And what was unexpected was that those men were caught red handed.

However, I was not very worried at that time because nobody knew who those people at that time. But the truth unfolded too quickly, only after a year, in fall 1972, CIA found the link between us and the burglars. And the link was a \$25, 000 cashier” s check we gave them to finance their operation; the check was originally donated for my campaign (Bernstein 1).

Then it came the hard time. Several of my top aides were convicted because of the break-in. And half a year later, it finally came to me. A former secretary in the White House testified that there was a voice-activated recording system installed in the White House. The investigation team immediately requested that the tapes should be handed over to them. Of course I do not want that to happen. For the next 12 months, it was a war between me and the investigation team on the tapes. In this period I tried everything I could not stop the investigation team from getting the tape. I claimed my executive privilege and refused to turn over the tapes. But the Supreme Court finally ruled unanimously rejected my claim.

And that was almost the end of the story. The tapes were reviewed by the investigators and they found the evidence that I discussed with my men to cover up the operation. A few days later, in July 27th, 1973, the House Judiciary committee passed the first impeachment against me. For the first time in my life, I felt so frustrated. In August 8th, I announced that I would resign the next day.

After I ended my life as a President, my successor, who was once my campaign running mate, Gerald R. Ford decided to pardon me (Johnson 1). After this scandal, there was no place for me in DC. I went back home and began to write. I recorded my experience, my wisdom, and my hope for this country.

In retrospect, I did make a mistake. But it is politics and it is a cruel game. And if you don't follow the rules, you are out of the game. In this sense,

nothing I did was wrong. And that is something that only the real players can understand.

Part II

A Critical Analysis

The Watergate Scandal is one of the biggest political scandals in America” s history and it brought many profound influences to the government, society, and culture. We began to question the foundation of our political system, the separation of the three powers, a system we are so proud of. And soon, several adjustments were made to the system in response to the scandal. The influence of media shocked everyone in reporting this scandal and the relation between government and media became more aggressive. The ethics of lawyers are also questioned in the scandal and the model rules of professional ethics began to play an important role to regulate lawyers.

Nixon had a complicated experience in his life. His father is strict and his mother is nice. He had two brothers but they both died of serious disease. This kind of family background has made him unconfident and insecure and contributed to his multiple personalities. And his political experience strengthens the dark side of his personality. The first he ran for president, in 1960, he lost to John F Kennedy by a mere 0. 2% (Leip 1). And after two years, he lost the election of the governor of California. Those failures made him treat his life as a battlefield and his political opponents as serious enemies. This has driven Nixon to pursue his success in politics as well as made him suspicious of everything. Even his closest aide, the Secretary of

State, Henry Kissinger said that " We all know that he never fully trust anyone."

The post-Watergate political environment is extremely worsened. The executive power of presidents is significantly impacted. Since then, the U. S. president faces an increasingly fractious political environment:

administrative bureaucratic system is difficult to effectively control and management; political system is weaker and bipartisan ceased to exist; the news media is extremely aggressive and eager to dig bad news. And Congress took the opportunity to pass " War Powers Resolution of 1973 " and " Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974" and a series of bills to restrict presidential executive power, breaking the president-led constitutional system. And an imperial president " imperial president" never rose again. Watergate marked the beginning of a new round of adjustment of relation between U. S. Congress and the president. Although the " 9. 11" incident, the U. S. president re-expansion of executive power reveals a trend, but whether the President regain the " imperial presidency" the power remains to be seen.

The Watergate Scandal also led to the formal establishment of the Special Prosecutor. Under the shadow of Watergate in 1978, President Carter signed the " Ethics in Government Act of 1978 " and special persecutor provision, establishing a special prosecutor system. The dismissal of Archibald Cox (by acting Attorney General Robert H. Bork under the instruction of Nixon) (Kilpatrick 1), the first Watergate special prosecutor, precipitated a few hearings in the Congress in order to free government policy from the Department of Justice. The hearings focused on passing legislation to appoint

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special prosecutor to investigate into crimes conducted by senior government officials. After several years of debate, the Congress concluded that the special prosecutor should be appointed by a special court and only in limited circumstances could the Minister of Justice dismiss a special prosecutor.

“”” Appointed special prosecutor, free of the control of president, has the power to investigate into illegal acts of all government officials. This bill gives special prosecutor daunting power. The special prosecutor has extensive power to investigate and subpoena. He can investigate any offense of any official and almost could summon any person including the president; his also has the right to appoint the required staff, personnel, litigation and even can use a large number of FBI agents and local police; financially, funding for special persecutor” s investigation has almost no limit; and once appointed, special prosecutor cannot be arbitrarily removed. The enormous power even made special prosecutors themselves very worried. Henry Ruth, the special prosecutor on the Watergate case, said: “ As a special prosecutor, I do not to accept orders from anyone, I do not report directly to the any person about an ongoing investigation, and I can easily abuse my power with few opportunities to be noticed.” Therefore, it was considered the establishment of a fourth branch of government and impact the original separation of three powers.

“”” In order to limit the power of special prosecutor, several provision and new laws were passed. The amendments of 1982 reduced the number of government officials that can be investigated by special prosecutor from

around 120 to 70 and decreased the time can be used on investigation: no more than two years after the official left his office.

Watergate Scandal also brought profound impact to the media industry and marked a new era between government and journalists. Watergate Scandal would never be a scandal without Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, the two Washington Post reporters who barely "knew the names of top government officials in Nixon's administration" (Liebovich 90) persistently dog deep into the story and uncovered the complications behind the scene. The next day after the Watergate Hotel break-in, Woodward and Bernstein published their first report on Watergate Scandal, "GOP Security Aide Among Those Arrested", showing that one of the burglars, James McCord, was a member of Nixon's reelection committee. Their investigation finally came to a \$25,000 check, which was donated for Nixon's reelection campaign, deposited into the burglars' bank account. They published their finding "Bug Suspect Got Campaign Funds" and for the first time the burglary was linked to Nixon and the White House.

"" At that time, Woodward and Bernstein were the only reporters picking up this story. This came from the relation between the White House and the media. Nixon shut down many previous connections between government and media, for example, the "off-the-record dinner" with former President Eisenhower and "fishing trips with chief executives" during Truman's term (Liebovich 90). Nixon took a more conservative, or in some ways, closed attitude with journalists by providing brief press releases with carefully crafted words. He also drastically decreased the number of press conference in his terms. In such an environment, reporters submerged themselves with

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Nixon” s press conference and lacked the determination to get the facts. Watergate brought an end to this. The image of an honest government created in Kennedy” s presidency was shattered. Reporters began to process antagonism and mistrust toward every president.

Watergate Scandal also had a significant influence on the law profession: it marked the formal establishment of a required course for law students: Professional Ethics. The Watergate Scandal not only tarnished the public image of the Nixon administration, but also damaged the blemished people” s confidence in lawyers, because there so many lawyers involved in the scandal, including Nixon himself.

When Nixon” s legal counsel John Dean testified in front of the Congress, he provided a list of names that he believed that had involved in the conspiracy of obstruction of justice. And more than half of the names on the list were marked with an asteroid. A Senator asked Dean what does the asteroid mean, and Dean answered that those are lawyers.

It” s hard to be a lawyer. We expect them to be friendly and fair, but we also want them to do whatever they can when they represent ourselves, and thus is the contradicting nature of lawyer” s work. And it has been a long practice to provide professional ethics course in law school. But only after Watergate Scandal had this became a serious matter. In the early Twentieth Century, professional ethics courses are limited to speeches made by judges and prominent lawyers. Those courses do not count towards credits, and no scores are given. The contents of such speeches are generally tedious and straightforward (Rhode 42). However, lawyer” s professional ethics are

gradually being emphasized after the 1950s. American Bar Association recommend law schools a former professional ethics course to be provided by research shows that most law schools only provide an unscored one-hour lecture every week. So the professional ethics education has always been the weak link the legal education and law school graduates are not well-trained to handle real world temptation (Dershowitz 90).

"" The modern age of professional ethics education in law school began after the Watergate Scandal. Due to the damage made to the public image of law profession, American Bar Association made the decision that requiring law school providing, students attending professional ethic courses. All law school complied with this regulation because American Bar Association is the accrediting agency of law schools. And for law students to get their license they now have to pass a separate professional ethics tests, whose score cannot be compensated by any scores in the general qualification test.

The suddenly gained importance of professional ethics also gave birth to insurance company to insure against unprofessional conduct, lawyers represent other lawyers for unprofessional conduct lawsuits, and trails costing millions of dollars for unprofessional conduct of law firm.

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"" Part III

"" Conclusion

Almost thirty years has passed since former President Gerald Ford announced that the national night had been over, its profound impact is still around us. It all started from a "local theft", determined by a Washington Post editor, reported by two inexperienced reporters, Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward. The two reporters dog so deep that they found themselves a secrete source, whose identity was only revealed more than thirty years later, Mark Felt, a highly ranked CIA agent at that time.