

Public trust in nixon before and after the watergate scandal

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Old Executive Office Building and Camp David. Nixon said this is the best way to find out what went on in meetings and how decisions were being made. The tapes were stored in the White House basements and monitored by the Secret Service. Very few people knew of the tapings.

This ultimately lead to Nixon's downfall by having all of his meeting taped in which he resigned the as president on August 9, 1974. As Nixon's last day in the White House, Nixon offered some insight to cabinet members of his Administration who stood by him to, " Never by petty," " always remember, others may hate you, but those who hate you don't win unless you hate them, and then you destroy yourself."

Before Watergate

During Nixon's first term, he established himself as a person of character and a world leader. " Prior to Watergate Americans expressed high regard for the moral character of Richard Nixon. Election survey data for 1972 made available by the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research indicated that when respondents were asked which of 14 political personalities best reflected high moral standards, Richard Nixon was the model choice (35%), followed by Edward Kennedy (13. 2%) and then by George McGovern (12. 9%). Furthermore, 74. 5% of respondents believed that Nixon could be trusted as president, while only 57. 8% felt the same way about McGovern." President Nixon enjoyed strong public support in 1972. I large factor in that support was his foreign policy work. In May of 1972, he put together the first summit between American and Soviet presidents and it was viewed as a great achievement. Nixon " was an

earnest, morally upright character who frequently was listed among the 10 most admired men of his time (Gallup, 1978)."

At the time, Nixon was perceived to have restored order to America – ending the civil rights unrest of the 1960s. He stood tall with meetings with Russia and China. He had earned so much clout in those two areas that Americans weren't even as mad at him about not ending Vietnam as might have been expected. But underneath that shining exterior was a deeply troubled person steeped in paranoia. That paranoia ultimately would be his downfall.

Impact of Watergate on the public's trust.

The highly educated voters who are more politically aware voted for Nixon in 1972 but lost trust in him after the Watergate scandal. They looked at the President as their leader. They were more negative after the scandal.

The Watergate scandal was a watershed in American politics. Before that time, most Americans generally trusted the Commander-in-Chief and as long as he presented plausible arguments, they would believe in him. Nixon won the 1972 election by a wide margin as the public believed in him and the job he was doing.

Nixon's paranoia led him to approve an operation to wiretap (bug) the Democrat offices in the Watergate complex. He did this despite being way ahead in the polls and having little chance of losing the election. Even when the break-in was discovered, the President was not initially in danger of losing the White House.

Opinion polls were taken which views the public opinion regarding the situation and the president. “ From the beginning, polls showed that most Americans believed the president was involved in the Watergate affair, but most did not think it constituted a serious problem (Gallup, 1978).”

However, Nixon would be undone by his paranoia. He began to orchestrate a cover-up for the break-in. But his White House taping system recorded all of his actions in the cover-up. Nixon staff began to turn on him and said he was involved in the cover-up. Things got worse when he fired his Prosecutor Archibald Cox. “ Public support for impeaching the president grew steadily, from 35% at the end of 1973 to 65% in August 1974 (Gallup, 1978).”

The public is concerned when there is a major scandal going and the president if he is still available to lead us. “ During Watergate, Nixon’s paralysis of policy and political activities from the White House damaged the administration’s ability to fend off concerns about the seriousness of Watergate (Woodward 1999).”

The double blow of hearing the President orchestrate criminal activity and lie about it to the American people combined with his paralysis of leadership to end public confidence in him and led to his resignation.