
The Abuse American Presidency in the Modern Era (Watergate Scandal)

To what extent has the abuse of office been a problem for the American presidency in the modern era? In your response make reference to at least 2 presidential scandals. In the age of technology and the evasiveness of the media, presidential scandals have become more prominent. It is suggested that the number of scandals is on the rise and have now become a regular occurrence. These trends have become increasingly apparent with the number of sex scandals that have been reported among members of Congress and governors.

The relationship between the public and their leaders has been shaped by the link the press or news media provides. Freedom of speech and free press coverage allows the nation to be aware of scandals that may be left unturned as most governments would prefer a lack of transparency, especially with political power scandals. Governments around the world have had to adapt to the change of culture in high media presence in the life of the administration and government officials.

Governments work hard in avoiding exposing the President and office as these changes can affect and alter political behaviour as well as damage the nation's perspective on the office. Kellan go on to suggest that, it is an empirical truth that a nation with a free press is a more open and successful democracy because "research demonstrates that greater freedom of the press is associated with less corruption and better governance.

There have been many scandals reported within American presidents and other leaders of the world, but for this assignment, I will be analysing two American presidential scandals and what extent has the abuse of office been a problem for the American presidency in the modern era. I will also discuss how these scandals have had an impact on the prestigiousness of the office of the president. I have chosen the Watergate scandal of President Richard Nixon and the Iran Contra scandal of President Ronald Reagan. For both scandals the focus will be on the following, the particular scandal, those involved in the scandal, the knowledge that the president may have had of the scandal, the result of the scandal and how in the present day it has tainted the office and the presidency.

Therefore, it is important to understand that the perception of the public and the political support of the president play an important role in how the politician survives the scandal and poorly handled scandals often lead to the collapse of many governments. It is also important to understand the implications this type of abuse of office has on the reputation and trust the public has on the government.

These scandals can also help to create an agenda item for the opposition party especially for presidents who are up for re-election, the notion of a scandal can be used by the opposition to the incompetence of the party as a messaging for their campaign. In contrary this type of rhetoric projects the culture of politics in this age and the lack of respect for the office of the president which for some of these scandals it has been used to their demise.

The President of the United States is one of the world's most powerful political figures in the

world, he/she directs the executive branch of the federal government and is the commander-in-chief of the United States Armed Forces. Therefore, his image is vital to the people he governs and needs to be trustworthy. Scandals have occurred in the office of the president since the beginning and the extent of what makes a scandal ranges as the presidential scandal has not become a political study and it appears there is no measure to why scandals occur.

However, it has been noted that a range of scandals that have occurred since the presence of the media these include affairs, fathering children out of wedlock, slush funds for personal expense only to mention a few. For the two scandals in this assignment, I will be focusing on political scandals which can often be found to be the worst type as they explain the reasoning for such misbehaviour. I will further establish who took part in the scandal relating or involving the president, what was the scandal and lastly when the scandal took place.

Scandals usually begin with the establishment of a frame. The increase in presidential scandals fits no political study as it is an unmeasurable study to understand if the abuse of office is becoming more common or if the media's coverage has become more scandal focused or additionally has it become a bargaining chip for the opposition in a new set of rules in politics. Nonetheless, this new realm of presidential scandals continues to challenge the relationship.

I will begin with the most famous scandal, Richard Nixon's Watergate. The Watergate scandal may have been one of the most complex political scandals in American history as it involved many members of a group created by Nixon's closest to destabilise the Democratic party and help re-elect Nixon for another term. To break down this scandal, it is important to understand the events of this scandal and how it abused power and transparency required for any administration.

The what and when would be the break-in and burglary of the Watergate building at the Democratic National Committee can simply not be justified and highlights Nixon's administration's willingness to circumvent the law. For many during the investigation, the question asked by Senator Howard Backer that overshadowed the scandal was "what did the president know and how much did he know?" and rightly so, the question held such weight as it allowed the public and senators to understand to what extent had this abuse of power began and was the President aware of such.

It also highlighted Nixon and his aides willingness to continue purely for egoistic reasoning to undermine the electoral process in place and to use dirty tricks to attain the information but also the disappearance of moral values in the administration. Additionally, it cannot be ignored that many of Nixon's aides had been well established employees of the CIA, employed to protect the American public but instead formed a group called the Plumbers whose main job was to stop political leaks and participated in dirty campaign tricks against the Democrats to help re-elect President Nixon for another term, these aides misused the office and the trust of the American public and abused power given to them.

Therefore, using the formula, the who would be the Plumbers. Like mentioned previously although Nixon did manage to win for a second term in a landslide but how much of this scandal had the president been aware of? During the Saturday Night Massacre after the release of the tapes Nixon went onto declare his innocence in a press conference once again but the Investigation continued because it has now become apparent to the public that Nixon and his administration had been in full effect to cover the Watergate break in to cover the president and

to avoid tarnishing Nixon's presidency.

Although in recent years the invasiveness of the media has been critiqued it can be said that without the efforts and perseverance of the media, Nixon's Watergate scandal would have been swept under the rug. The Washington Post's Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein helped to push the story and continued to investigate helping it to grow in importance as it was a clear abuse of power from Nixon and his aides. Referring to the question concerning the impact such events have had on the Presidency, transparency has become a vital quality in any future Presidents and accountability to wrongdoing have also become important for the office.

It has remained important to the American public that any President found to have had any prior knowledge of such scandal is investigated fairly. This is seen to date with the ongoing investigations being conducted on President Trump's administration and can also be attached to the impeachment of Bill Clinton in 1998. The reputation of the office is hugely impacted when a scandal occurs as it.

To some extent, the re-election of Nixon was a success but to what measures of success because although it may have not been proven, using illegal measures as well dirty tricks does not make the re-election that successful and proves to create future problems for the presidency. However, after the break in of the Watergate building Nixon's sustained a strong stance on denying any knowledge of the break in and any involvement of acquiring the relevant information, denying the American public the trust they had placed into his hands when electing him initially.

Nixon's government discredited the systems put into place to avoid leaks, while sabotaging and therefore abused the power he had as president which ended resulted to Nixon resigning from office in 1974 to avoid facing impeachment. Following his resignation twenty-one, individuals associated with Nixon's administration were imprisoned all for crimes related to the Watergate scandal. Nixon himself managed to avoid impeachment and imprisonment and was later pardoned by Gerald Ford.

Less than 12 years later, unimaginably America was faced with another political scandal, this time with President Ronald Reagan and his closest staffers. Like Watergate, the Iran-Contra scandal was complex and like the question asked by Senator Backer, was Reagan aware of the deal before the outbreak of the scandal? During Reagan's presidency, the threat of the spread of communism foreshadowed his policies and international engagement.

During this period Reagan feared that Central America was under threat of the spread of Communism especially in Nicaragua, who had recently elected a new government known as the Sandista government. In Reagan's eyes, he viewed the Sandista government to be a communist party and for Reagan's administration similar to Eisenhower, Reagan believed through the Reagan Doctrine that a solution to contain and protect democratic governments from this spread of communism was necessary to avoid them from taking over the world.

To that point, Reagan pledged to support the Contras, the anti-communist rebel fighters but this would backfire later in the mid-1980s on Reagan's administration as Congress decided to not provide any federal funding through the Boland amendment (Matthews and others, 2019). This was not the only political issue being faced by the Reagan administration, by 1979 the Islamic Revolution had changed Iran and Hezbollah had taken hostage of several American citizens in

Lebanon

Therefore, with two policy problems, Reagan's aides being his National Security Advisors, Olivier North and John Poindexter started working together but more so North had facilitated to sell weapons to Iran channelling the sell through Israel with the money being funnelled through to the Contras which had been done behind the back of Congress and discrediting the Boland amendment.

Using the formula of who, when and what a scandal is, it is clear to understand that the who was the Reagan administration; the president himself, his aides and the National Security Advisors, however, the weight of the blame can be shifted onto others more, for example, Olivier North became the face of the scandal in 1986 when the scandal was broken by a newspaper in Lebanon. Nonetheless, for Reagan as president a lack of knowledge or accountability for what later tainted his administration shows a clear abuse of power and disinterest in the transparency needed as the head of the office.

In many public speeches, Reagan sustained denial in any prior knowledge of the Iran-Contra agreement, resulting in Reagan having the highest disapproval rating for any President during his term, however although Reagan had been subject to impeachment, the votes were taken up to the House of Judiciary Committee. Reagan left many people disappointed as he had been viewed as a powerful, charismatic and overall successful leader of the nation.

These views were based more on his relations with the press than anything else due to this very notion, the appearance of a leader who lacked knowledge of what was happening in his administration leaves to be equally as disruptive to the office and allowed for abuse of power by his aides.

To conclude scandal has become a prominent cancer on the office of the president and has negatively impacted the integrity of the office to the American public which can be attributed to the recent lack of interest in government that for America has played a role in their low voting number, it also important to understand that with the two scandals I evaluated without the presence of the media and the invasiveness of the media in modern days that such scandals may have never received the attention they needed.