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Megan Sanderson
Utah State University

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CONTINUING CONVERSATIONS: THE IMAGE OF RICHARD NIXON IN POLITICAL CARTOONS

Historians have extensively researched and reported on the images presented by United States presidents. Political cartoons have been an effective means of depicting government figures' behaviors, actions and deficiencies. The goal of this thesis is to examine images of President Richard Nixon as captured in political cartoons, with particular attention to the themes represented in works following the President's key speeches. Nixon's "Address to the Nation on the War in Vietnam" (1969), "Toasts of the President and Premier Chou En-lai of China at a Banquet Honoring the Premier in Peking" (1972), and the "Question-and-Answer Session at the Annual Convention of the Associated Press Managing Editors Association," given in the midst of the Watergate investigation in 1973 present the opportunity to analyze how editorial cartoonists responded to Nixon's words and character. For the most part, liberal political cartoonists during Nixon's second term did not believe the promises made by the president. The speeches represent pivotal moments which instigated critical conversations between Nixon and cartoonists.

In July of 1958, political commentator Stewart Alsop quoted Nixon, "Any letting my hair down, I find that embarrassing. If you let down your hair, you feel too naked...I can't really let my hair down with anyone, not even my family."¹ Nixon delivered this revealing quote during his tenure as President Dwight D. Eisenhower's vice president. This frank statement may have gone unnoticed among many inconsequential interviews.

¹ Stewart Alsop, "The Mystery of Richard Nixon," *The Saturday Evening Post*, July 12, 1958, 28-29, 54-72, accessed September 5, 2015, <http://www.saturdayeveningpost.com/wpcontent/uploads/satevepost/my-stery-of-nixon.pdf>.

However, Nixon entered the presidential race in 1960 (a mere two years following the interview), and later claimed the presidency in 1968. By admitting to concealing aspects of his personality, Nixon granted the American public reason to doubt his authenticity. Events during his presidential career exacerbated suspicious feelings. Assuming any public office requires concealment—but also a level of transparency. By hiding key personality traits of paranoia and pride from the nation, Nixon’s actions bred distrust and uncertainty.

Enter the editorial cartoonist. Long before Nixon took his seat in Congress, cartoonists had seized opportunities to depict and defame United States presidents.² With no clarity as to exactly who was the man behind the façade, editorial cartoonists conjured up their own representations of Nixon. Although depictions of Nixon proved mostly negative, the cartoons provided solid opinions about the president’s words and actions. Many similarities in the works of different cartoonists presented a unified distrust of the president’s public image. Although political cartoons could not dictate how Americans felt about Nixon, they showed that the liberal media remained critical and wary of the president’s policies, arguments, and ultimately, his public image.

History involves not only what important people did and said but what they *symbolized*. The responses a person warranted from their public influence history equally as much as events and dates. It is responses to Nixon which speak of his importance in the visual culture of the 1960s and 1970s. The president wore many masks; the media

² The most current source on political cartooning and its interpretations is Victor S. Navasky, *The Art of Controversy: Political Cartoons and Their Enduring Power* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013). The extensive list of political cartooning sources also includes these books: Robert Philippe, *Political Graphics: Art as a Weapon* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1982); Donald Dewey, *The Art of Ill Will: The Story of American Political Cartoons* (New York: New York University Press, 2008); Roger A. Fischer, *Them Damned Pictures: Explorations in American Political Cartoon Art* (North Haven, Conn.: Archon Books, 1996), and Charles Press, *The Political Cartoon* (Rutherford N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1981).

questioned which mask was the true Nixon. As a result, Nixon's speeches and the resulting cartoons represent continuing conversations.

Pulitzer Prize-winning editorial cartoonist Doug Marlette clarified the distinct surge in political commentary using cartoons in the 1970s. He explained, "We've had a tendency to idolize politicians, to put presidents on pedestals. All that was undermined by the [Vietnam] war and then Watergate...papers are coming to terms with reality and now the thoughts that were almost unthinkable are being drawn."³ Marlette himself criticized Nixon numerous times throughout his career. Hallin also attested, "Journalists often portray the Vietnam era as a time when the media came of age...that the media became more autonomous in relation to government and the professional journalists more autonomous within the news organization."⁴ Editorial cartoonists exhibited little fear in criticizing the politics of the president through their cartoons. Surrendering to political peer pressure threatens the essential authority and validity of political cartoons. If a paranoid or irate politician can buy a cartoonist's opinion, the cartoonist's work loses a sense of integrity. By establishing autonomy within the media, cartoonists could use their craft to provide critical commentary on the tumultuous 1960s and 1970s – and on President Nixon.

Primarily because of his involvement in the Watergate Affair, Nixon upheld the villain status assigned to him. Cartoonists utilized varying representations of Nixon not only throughout his political heyday in the 1960s and 1970s, but occasionally revived Nixon cartoons for the remainder of the twentieth century. Historian Roger Fischer

³ Sylvie Cannon, "Editorial Cartoons and the American Involvement in Vietnam," *Revue française d'études américaines* 43 (February 1990): 59-83, accessed February 17, 2015, www.jstor.org/stable/20872048, 60.

⁴ Daniel C. Hallin, *The Uncensored War: The Media and Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 23.

declared Nixon's distinct personality in the political arena proved "a gift from the gods" for cartoonists.⁵ From the "Checkers Speech" in 1952 to Nixon's resignation following the Watergate scandal, political cartoonists seized opportunities to talk back to the president, portraying Nixon as everything from the villain to the bumbling idiot.

Columnists often fail to capture the same intensity and poignancy with written articles as editorial cartoonists portray with images. In the relative political easiness of the 1950s, editorial cartooning lapsed from its earlier popularity and spitefulness. Henry Ladd Smith in the *Saturday Review* in 1954 argued that editorial cartoonists had lost much of their influence in American journalism, and were no longer front page worthy.⁶ Smith's article, "Rise and Fall of the Political Cartoon," inspired the establishment of the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists in 1957. He called for the return of "fighting cartoonists" who used their art to question politics and its leaders.⁷ The turmoil of increasing war, rampant social reform, and very distinctive presidents inspired a revival of political cartooning. The tumultuous days of 1960s and 1970s energized the work of notorious artists such as Herblock, David Levine, Bill Mauldin and Pat Oliphant. Many were incensed at the social injustices brought on by Nixon's policies – and LBJ's before him – and capitalized on the opportunity to depict him in cartoon form.

Juxtaposing political cartoons with Nixon's speeches reveals how his lies, deceits, and false character reflected in newsprint. The fourteen cartoons analyzed in this thesis represent a miniscule fraction of the total number of Nixon cartoons. All of them directly address words or phrases from Nixon's prominent speeches selected for this study. The

⁵ Fischer, *Them Damned Pictures*: 208.

⁶ Chris Lamb, *Drawn to Extremes: The Use and Abuse of Editorial Cartoons* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 112.

⁷ Henry Ladd Smith, "The Rise and Fall of the Political Cartoon," *Saturday Review* 37, no. 7 (1954).

works generally come from prominent cartoonists of the 1970s, particularly those with established careers and who had tackled more characters than Richard Nixon. Thirdly, accessibility of cartoons also remains an issue. Although many Nixon cartoons were created, not all are available for scholarly use. In terms of a collective study of cartoonists' work involving President Nixon, the historical field lacks a reliable, comprehensive source on the subject.

Additionally, the political affiliations of both the cartoonists and the newspapers for which they worked play into the analysis. With the exemption of Jim Ivey and Art Poinier, the cartoonists in this essay subscribe to liberal political ideas. Although cartoonists generally create cartoons for newspapers which uphold similar political ideologies, some exceptions are included in this study. David Levine and Herblock, both liberal, worked for liberal publications; in contrast, Paul Conrad and Steve Greenberg were liberal cartoonists working for conservative newspapers, the *Los Angeles Times* and *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. Cartoonist Jerry Robinson explained, "Editorial cartoons at their best are unabashedly personal opinions, a free indulgence of exaggeration and prejudice, and irreverent questioning of motives, and often fiercely partisan."⁸ Cartoonists drew on their own opinions to respond to Nixon's arguments and actions. Historian Donald Dewey wrote, "Richard Nixon provided the perfect target for both the liberal and conservative cartoonist."⁹ That both sides of the political spectrum viewed Nixon as fair game for scrutiny indicates the overwhelmingly negative effect Nixon had on the media.

Historiographically, innumerable works center on Nixon the president and Nixon the man. Relatively few delve into Nixon in political cartoons. The secondary sources on

⁸ Fischer, 6-7.

⁹ Dewey, 60.

Nixon typically use political cartoons as visual representations of their main arguments; very few delve directly into the cartoons themselves. Historian Roger Fischer article “The Lucifer Legacy: Boss Tweed and Richard Nixon as Generic Sleaze Symbols in Cartoon Art” examines the influence of political cartoons throughout Richard Nixon’s career.¹⁰ Although this article proves a valuable and informative source on symbolism in editorial cartoons, Fischer’s work fails to examine cartoons as responses to Nixon’s speeches. Similarly, in 1989 Bernard Grofman delved into Nixon’s cartoon image in his article, “Richard Nixon as Pinocchio, Richard II, and Santa Claus: The Use of Allusion in Political Satire.”¹¹ While Grofman’s article does include political cartoons of Nixon, he presents them as a literary tool rather than a historical representation. Outside of these collections, the majority of verifiable sources focus on Nixon and Watergate. A work concentrating specifically on depictions of Nixon after delivering key addresses has yet to surface.

Nixon and Vietnam

During the election of 1968, Richard Nixon ran with the campaign promise of a swift and decisive end to the conflict in Vietnam. One of Nixon’s campaign ads focused on his abilities, the final line from the advertisement stating, “This time, vote like your whole world depends on it.”¹² Although the tagline intended to stir up conversation and generate votes, Nixon’s entire world did depend on the public’s belief that he could end

¹⁰ Roger A. Fischer “The Lucifer Legacy: Boss Tweed and Richard Nixon as Generic Sleaze Symbols in Cartoon Art,” *Journal of American Culture* 13, no. 2 (1990): 1-19.

¹¹ Bernard Grofman, “Richard Nixon as Pinocchio, Richard II, and Santa Claus: The Use of Allusion in Political Satire.” *The Journal of Politics* 51, no. 1 (February 1989): 165-73, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2131614>.

¹² Tim Weiner, *One Man Against the World: The Tragedy of Richard Nixon* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2015), 17.

the fighting and bring American soldiers home. Four years into one of the most contentious conflicts of the century, tensions between Americans and their government had accelerated from passive acceptance to outright protest. Nixon and his aides recognized the need to reassure the public on the state of the fighting in Vietnam—particularly concerning the safety of their sons, brothers, and friends serving under Uncle Sam. Responding to this need, Nixon addressed the public on November 3, 1969, well into his first term. The “Address to the Nation on the War in Vietnam,” televised nationwide, provided Nixon an opportunity to present his strategy to end the war.¹³ Outside of his inauguration address, “Vietnamization” was Nixon’s first attempt to instill confidence in his presidency by announcing his plans to listen to the “silent majority.” Through the speech, Nixon projected an image of authority, determination, and strength—a reassurance America needed after enduring years of a seemingly endless war.

In his speech, Nixon detailed the United States’ previous efforts in Vietnam, as well as his administration’s extensive efforts to halt conflict with the communist North Vietnamese. Nixon projected the image of a confident statesman with a distinct plan to withdraw gradually from the conflict. However, hostilities both on the battlefield and in the political arena continued for several years following the speech. With no foreseeable conclusion on the horizon, public exasperation accelerated into questioning Nixon’s validity as leader of the United States military. As evidenced by the works of editorial cartoonists such as Herbert Block, David Levine, and Art Poinier, Richard Nixon’s policies instigated enough confusion to warrant varied responses through political cartoons.

¹³ Richard Nixon, “Address to the Nation on the War in Vietnam,” Speech, Washington, DC, November 3, 1969, American Rhetoric, <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/richardnixonvietnamsituation.html>. 1-10.

If Americans outside of the counterculture represented “The Great Silent Majority,” then political cartoonists of the 1960s and 1970s embodied the verbose minority. As media historian Daniel C. Hallin explained, journalists were the “watchdogs” of the Vietnam War.¹⁴ Their work centered on presidential involvement in overseas military action and widespread public reaction to extended fighting in an unprecedented war. Although cartoonists generally tackled the war in its later years, foreign policy became a popular subject from the onset of the Vietnam War. Cartoonists routinely implied that high government officials failed to understand the situation in Vietnam. Cartoon representations of government leaders—President Nixon in particular—insinuated their inability to make the correct decisions for America. Unquestionably Richard Nixon endured a bombardment of criticism as a congressman and vice president. Disapproval and ridicule only increased in response to his actions concerning the war in Vietnam.

An exasperated and impatient nation greeted Richard Nixon as he entered the White House. Public opinion polls from 1968 revealed that 44% approved of Nixon’s candidacy because of his “secret plans to end the Vietnam War.”¹⁵ As such, he acknowledged the need to reassure the public and establish certainty in his capabilities to end the fighting. Nixon explained in the Vietnamization speech that the war was no fault of any *one* U.S. President, but a combination of the acts of several presidents. The Nixon Doctrine “was the only way to avoid allowing Johnson’s war to become Nixon’s war.”¹⁶ David Levine, caricaturist for *The New York Review of Books*, created a depiction which supports this argument. His cartoon, titled “The Blind Leading the Blind” (Figure 1)

¹⁴ Hallin, 23.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 215.

suggests that Nixon would not take the entire fault for the Vietnam War. Levine's work portrays stylized versions of Presidents Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, and Lyndon B. Johnson, each pushing Nixon into what appears to be a large mud puddle. They stand in a line in descending order of their presidential terms, Eisenhower at the end of the line and Nixon at the lead. Nixon dives into the mud, as though accepting the fate dealt him by his predecessors. Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson each wear dark sunglasses and carry canes, suggesting that the previous presidents waltzed blindly into Vietnam without truly seeing the effects of their actions. Nixon's eyes are wide open, a symbol that he understood the situation more clearly. This depiction uniquely represents how the acts of the past presidents contributed to Nixon's fate in the Vietnam conflict. Nixon entered a war for which he could not assume all blame. Levine's cartoon insinuates that Nixon would not assume the entirety of responsibility.



Figure 1: David Levine, "The Blind Leading the Blind," 1971, *The New York Review of Books*. <http://www.nybooks.com/galleries/david-levine-illustrator/1971/aug/12/richard-nixon>.

All four of these presidents faced off with political cartoonists in their own time. Because Nixon oversaw the final and most deadly years of the war, he generally holds the blame for actions of the three previous presidents before him. Eisenhower and Kennedy managed the news effectively in terms of the conflict in Vietnam. Johnson and Nixon, on the opposite end, seemed to struggle with almost daily backlash from the press.¹⁷ Despite approval ratings, the seeds of the fighting in Vietnam were sown under Ike and JFK. Any attempt at impartiality—which seems impossible, particularly in print media—should hold Kennedy and Eisenhower equally as accountable for their involvement in Vietnam.

In his “Address to the Nation on the War in Vietnam,” President Nixon emphasized the need to support and sustain confidence in the United States and to stand with its allies. He explained, “For the United States, this first defeat in our Nation’s history would result in a collapse of confidence in American leadership, not only in Asia but throughout the



Figure 2: Herbert Block, “Onward and upward and onward and—” April 23, 1967, *The Washington Post*, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2012637500/>

¹⁷ In 1967, Johnson met his lowest approval rating in response to Vietnam, a dismal 27%. Following the Tet Offensive, his approval rating mellowed at 41%. Nixon averaged a 46% approval rating during the war years. Negative responses to Nixon’s Vietnam policies could have resulted from lingering LBJ disapproval. Statistics reported in Joseph Carroll, “The Iraq-Vietnam Comparison,” Gallup, June 15, 2004, accessed April 18, 2016, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/11998/iraqvietnam-comparison.aspx>.

world.”¹⁸ Based on cartoonists’ works in the following war years, the media’s confidence in their president stood on highly unstable ground. The cartoonists during the Vietnam era concerned themselves with two themes in particular: the escalation of the conflict into Cambodia and Laos and multiple unproductive attempts to end the war. Bombing campaigns in Vietnam began in 1965—two years before publication of Herbert Block’s cartoon “Onward and upward and onward and--” (Figure 2). The cartoon depicts the everyday man, a figure who appeared in many of Herblock’s works, struggling to climb an ascending line of large bombs. On the bombs are inscribed words which justify increased bombing in Vietnam—that bombing will stop the infiltration and break Hanoi’s morale. The last bomb in the frame reads, “Just one more step up in the bombing.” By this point in the war, bombing and ground warfare had accelerated at an alarming rate. Although the bombings exhibited military strength, they failed to contribute to a diplomatic end to the conflict. The figure in the cartoon looks worried, which echoed feelings of much of the American public. Bombings could continue and increase in frequency without bringing any conclusion to the fighting. Herblock masterfully represented the dubious public response to Nixon’s political justifications for increasing attacks.

David Levine, a cartoonist for *The New York Review of Books*, proved no supporter of Richard Nixon. Over Levine’s career he portrayed the president in the most glaring of unflattering lights. For example, one of his June 3, 1971 cartoons depicts Richard Nixon as an infantile zygote connected directly to a football. A cartoon dated the same day shows Nixon with a hand puppet representing Lieutenant William Calley, the Army officer responsible for ordering the murder of unarmed South Vietnamese civilians

¹⁸ Richard Nixon, “Address to the Nation on the War in Vietnam,” 5.

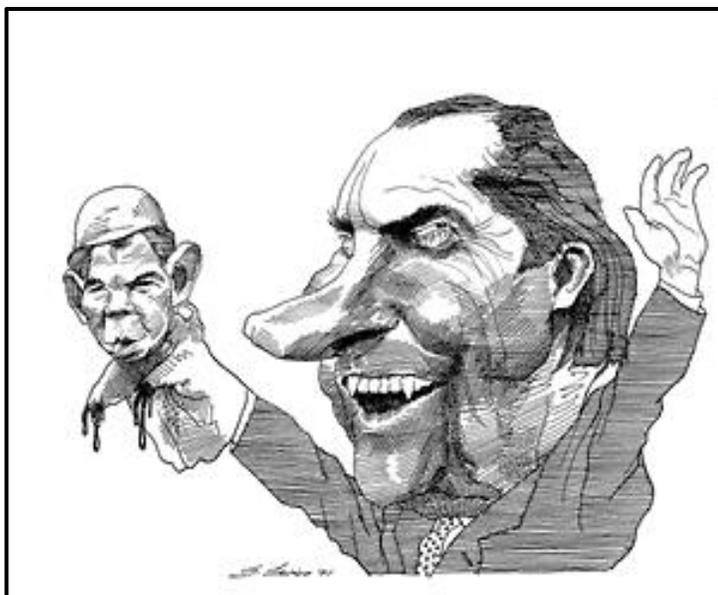


Figure 3: David Levine, “Richard Nixon and Lt. William Calley,” June 3, 1971, *The New York Review of Books* <http://www.nybooks.com/galleries/david-levine-illustrator/1971/jun/03/richard-nixon-and-lt-william-calley>.

in the My Lai Massacre of 1968 (Figure 3). Nixon has a fanged smile on his face, a common characteristic in Levine’s depictions of the president. He stands upright and waves with the opposite hand, both signifying a lack of remorse. Nixon as Calley’s puppeteer insinuates that the President was the controlling

force behind a massacre of twenty-two civilians and burnings of villages. Policies at the time logically contradict the idea and no definitive evidence exists to support such a claim. However, the magnitude of using a puppet as a symbol undoubtedly shows Levine’s cynicism toward Nixon.

Cartoonists employ exaggeration of physical features both for artistic style and as an instrument for commentary. Levine emphasized Richard Nixon's nose; the ski-jump shaped appendage proved another fault the cartoonist—among many in the media—pounced upon. An enlarged, curved nose grew into a staple for caricatures of Nixon. In an interview David Levine explained, "By making the powerful funny looking, [one] might encourage some humility or self-awareness."¹⁹ This statement reveals much about how Nixon appeared to cartoonists. The argument that the president needed to be

¹⁹ David Margolick, “Levine in Winter,” *Vanity Fair*, November 2008, 1, <http://www.vanityfair.com/news/2008/11/levine200811>.

humbled or made self-aware suggests that pomposity or personal ignorance stood as the prominent public image.

Nixon's cartoon nose seemed to grow more gruesome as his policies continued to nosedive in Vietnam. Historian Roger Fischer wrote, "Never has nature so perfectly molded physiognomy to personality."²⁰ Nixon's nose lent an illusion of imperfection not only in physical features but political action as well. Essentially, Nixon proved to be a crook; therefore, the crooked nose substantiated any claims of wrongdoing. Said editorial cartoonist Doug Marlette, "Nixon was to cartooning what Marilyn Monroe was to sex. Nixon looked like his policies. His nose told you he was going to bomb Cambodia."²¹ The prominent nose provided cartoonists with something prominent and distinct upon which to comment—a feature they could exaggerate and manipulate to make their dislike of the President known.

As war continued into the early 1970s, political cartoonists capitalized on public uncertainty towards Vietnam foreign policy. Art Poinier, cartoonist for *The Detroit News*, depicted the instability of the outcomes of Vietnamization in his piece "Where it stops, nobody knows!" (Figure 4).²² A frowning Nixon sits before a spinning roulette wheel with the word "Vietnamization" emblazoned upon it. Instead of a roulette ball, a bomb bounces around the spinning table. Putting Nixon's policies in the context of gambling, Poinier references the insecurity of the outcome. Beside the caricature of Nixon in the cartoon sits a large pile of money. By this point in the war, the American government had spent over eight billion dollars not only supporting United States armed forces, but

²⁰ Fischer, *Them Damned Pictures*, 83.

²¹ Dewey, 96.

²² In terms of political affiliation, *The Detroit News* typically rides the balance of libertarian and conservative. For a conservative paper to print a negative depiction of Richard Nixon indicates that liberal cartoonists were not the only ones upset with the progress and outcomes of Vietnamization.

outfitting the new South Vietnamese army.²³ The Nixon administration essentially gambled that money because there was no assurance of a victory. Despite the amount of planning and good intention, no guarantees existed in the Vietnam War.

Throughout 1972, evident frustration with Nixon surged in editorial cartoons and among the public. Gallup polls taken in 1972 reveal that Nixon's approval rating bounced between 46 and

56 percent.²⁴ Herblock's cartoon "Now, as I was saying four years ago-" (Figure 5), captures the confusion and annoyance aimed at Nixon. In the cartoon, Nixon stands before a massive gravestone with the words "20,000 American dead since 1968." Nixon converses with Herblock's common man while holding a large folder titled "Secret plans to end the war." Herblock used words masterfully in his cartoons. In conjunction with caricatures, the words portrayed poignant themes throughout the twentieth century. In the

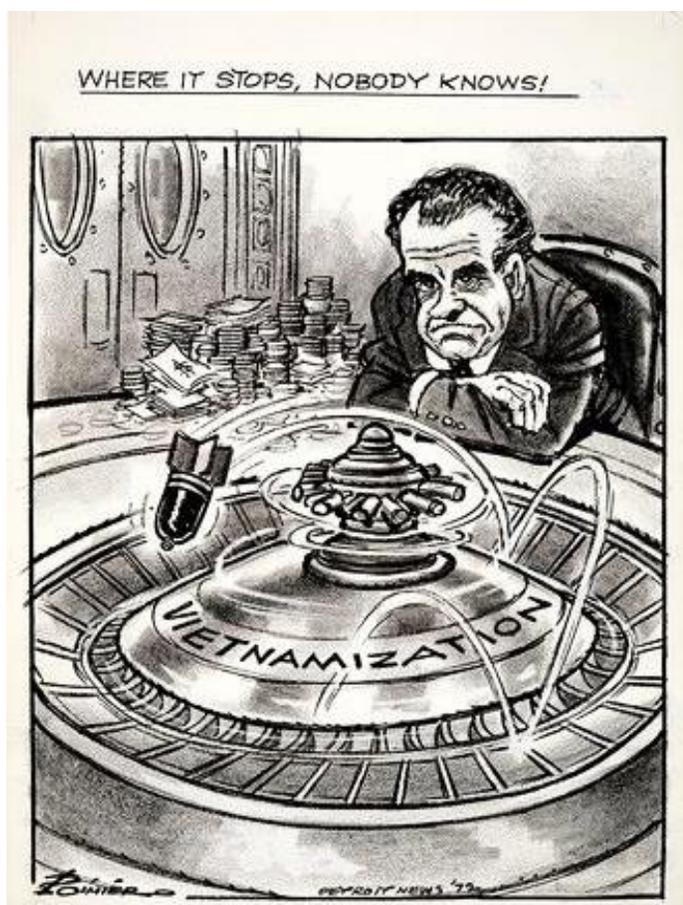


Figure 4: Art Poinier, "Where it stops, nobody knows!" April 7, 1972, *The Detroit News*, http://hti.osu.edu/sites/hti.osu.edu/files/styles/rawmage/public/VC_4.jpg?itok=u6zahQ

²³ "Vietnam Statistics - War Costs: Complete Picture Impossible," *CQ Almanac 1975*, Washington, DC: *Congressional Quarterly* 31 (1976): 301-5, <http://library.cqpress.com/cqalmanac/cqal75-1213988>.

²⁴ Joseph Carroll, "The Iraq-Vietnam Comparison," Gallup, June 15, 2004, accessed April 18, 2016, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/11998/iraqvietnam-comparison.aspx>.

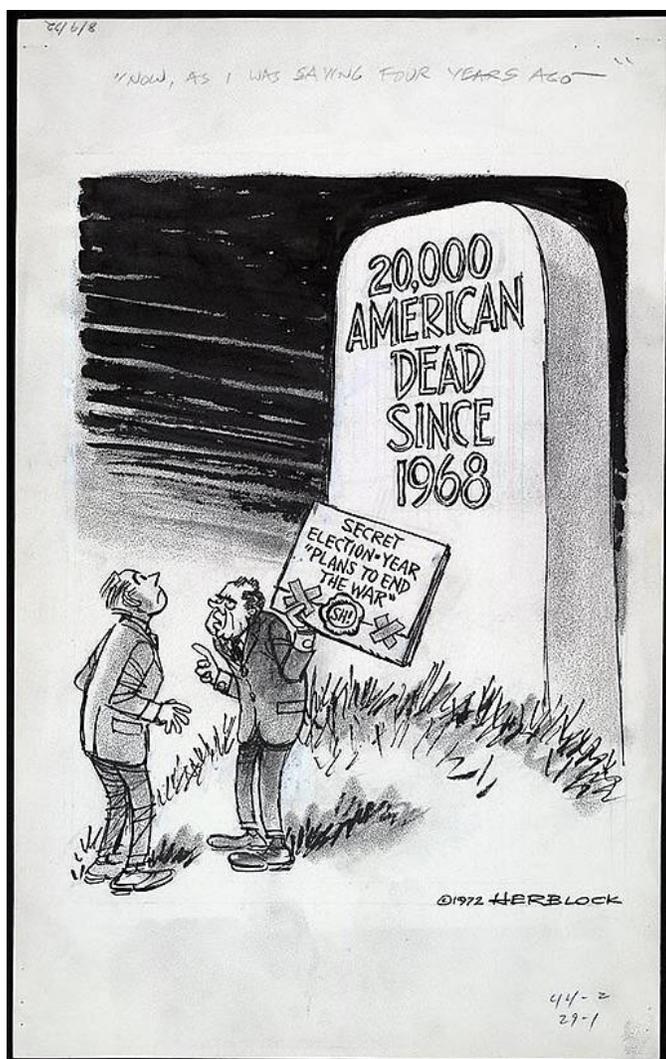


Figure 5: Herbert Block, "Now, as I was saying four years ago-", August 9, 1972, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/00652238/>.

cartoon, the common man looks at the headstone rather than Nixon and his plan. Seemingly Nixon is trying to distract the man away from the death number, but does not succeed. Nixon, similar to three presidents before him, had proposed many grand undertakings, the most important of which included the return of American soldiers to their homes. By 1972, 20,000 more deaths and innumerable physical and psychological tolls added to the weight of the war. No matter how often Nixon touted the success of his policies, the casualties still

increased.

One crucial mistake President Nixon made in the Vietnamization speech was putting a distinct timetable on evacuation of troops from Vietnam, announcing his plans to bring the soldiers home within a year.²⁵ Making such a large claim resulted in two reactions: an upwelling of hope and an increasing expectation for the Nixon administration to keep its grand promises. As the war continued past Nixon's year

²⁵ Richard Nixon, "Address to the Nation on the War in Vietnam," 5.

deadline, questions arose as to the validity of the President's earlier campaign promises. Nixon's presidency began with the promise of a conclusive end to the conflict in Vietnam, and he had failed to deliver on that promise four years later. In American eyes, as well as the eyes of the media, their trusted leader had lied. Lies, during the Vietnam War, mainly concealed failures. Under the Nixon administration, lying grew from concealing mistakes into an intricate system ultimately designed to grant the president unrestrained power.

Attacks through political cartoons stemmed from high tensions and worries of casualties in an everlasting war combined with a cynicism toward the policies put forward by the president. At the end of Nixon's "Address to the Nation on the War in Vietnam," he made a weighty promise: "As President I hold the responsibility for choosing the best path for that goal and then leading the nation along it. I pledge to you tonight that I shall meet this responsibility with all of the strength and wisdom I can command."²⁶ He accepted accountability for future events concerning the war. Editorial cartoonists held him responsible as they visually attributed every hiccup in the Vietnam conflict to Nixon. More than 58,000 Americans and between 1.5 and 2 million Vietnamese died in the war.²⁷ Ultimately, the president's strength and wisdom failed to satisfy the imposing expectations built up in the Nixon Doctrine.

President Nixon delivered "The Great Silent Majority" speech with the intent to reunite a divided nation. With the "Vietnamization" address, President Nixon opened a dialogue but failed to secure trust from the media. As such, cartoonists recognized that secrets were causing nothing but conflict. President Nixon did succeed in ending the

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Cannon, 83.

Vietnam War and bringing the soldiers home from a dank and bloody battlefield. His reputation, however, suffered greatly at the hands of editorial cartoonists.

Nixon the Statesman

The beginning years of the Nixon presidency contained some of the most demanding events of any American president. In response to hardships and frustrations with executive decisions, political cartoonists used their pens to depict Nixon negatively. By 1970, Nixon faced a “daily avalanche of political mockeries,” both in television and in print media.²⁸ However, 1972 could have been the greatest year of Richard Nixon’s life. In February, he stepped foot on the soil of the People’s Republic of China – a feat no American president had previously accomplished. This act shaped American foreign policy for the following generations. Travelling personally to China proved Nixon’s opportunity to redeem himself and revitalize his tarnished reputation in national print media.

As a renowned and successful player in previous U.S. foreign policy decisions, Nixon’s unprecedented international outreach attempt might warrant positive recognition in the press. However, preexisting prejudice combined with the nature of satire in political cartooning resulted in a generally adverse response despite the president’s political victory. The idea of regulating relations with the People’s Republic of China had been Nixon’s primary objective from the beginning of his presidential tenure. However, conflicts in Vietnam and later Watergate overshadowed his successful foreign policy

²⁸ Dewey, 60.

endeavors.²⁹ Despite foreign policy being one of Nixon's assets, political cartoons maintained a generally unflattering opinion.

Recognizing its usefulness in American political and commercial domains, the president intended to forge a new, concrete relationship with communist China. Nixon maintained a goal of "normalization of relations with the People's Republic."³⁰ Following a few days of sightseeing and policy discussion, a formal banquet welcoming the presidential party occurred on the night of February 25, 1972, in the Great Hall of the People. There Nixon and Chairman Mao gave the "Toasts of the President and Premier Chou En-lai of China at a Banquet Honoring the Premier in Peking," which provide a rare opportunity to discuss positive views of Nixon during a period of peace-keeping. Broadcasting live via military channels, major networks displayed Nixon toasting his hosts and shaking hands.³¹ The toasts were tactical, political strategy which benefitted both parties – a romanticized and euphoric image of world leaders meant to assure citizens of the relationship between U.S. and China. In his toast, Nixon explained, "The Great Wall is a reminder of the wall that for almost a generation there has been a wall between the People's Republic of China and the United States of America. In these past four days we have begun the long process of removing that wall between us."³²

The complicated international association between the People's Republic of China and the United States had existed since 1949. The back-and-forth discussions and

²⁹ Weiner, 165.

³⁰ Richard Nixon, "Toasts of the President and Premier Chou En-Lai of China at a Banquet Honoring the Premier in Peking," February 25, 1972, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucab.edu/ws/?pid=3751>.

³¹ Tom Wicker, *One of Us: Richard Nixon and the American Dream* (New York: Random House, 1991), 423.

³² Richard Nixon, "Toasts of the President and Premier Chou En-Lai of China".

compromises eventually assumed the nickname “Ping pong diplomacy.”³³ In his toast, Nixon also acknowledged the disparate nature of international policies:

You believe deeply in your system, and we believe just as deeply in our system. It is not our common beliefs that have brought us together here, but our common interests and common hopes...respecting one another while disagreeing with one another, letting history rather than the battlefield be the judge of their different ideas.³⁴

Editorial cartoonists seized the comical and stereotypical attributes of the nickname “Ping-Pong diplomacy,” utilizing the visual aspect of the description in their commentaries.

One notable ping pong diplomacy cartoon comes from *TIME* Magazine (Figure 6). The cartoon

immediately followed Nixon’s public announcement of plans to travel to China and the Soviet Union. The image shows an enthusiastic game of ping pong between Nixon and Chairman Mao Zedong. From the background, both Henry Kissinger and the Zhou En-lai, Premier of

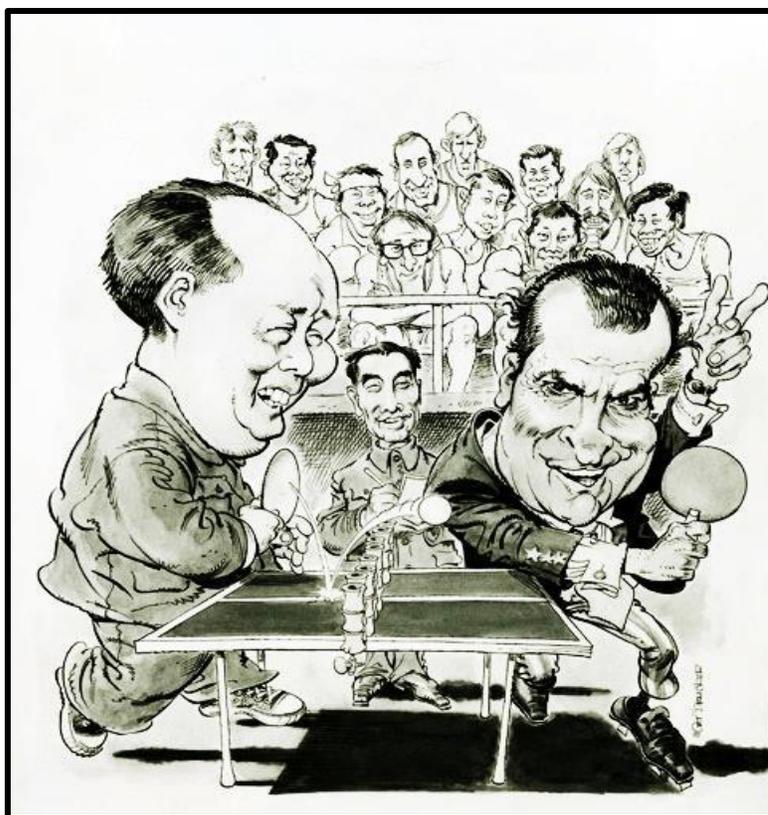


Figure 6: Mort Drucker, “Ping Pong Diplomacy,” July 26, 1971, *Time* Magazine <http://www.npg.si.edu/exhibit/coldwar/coldwar>.

³³ Iwan Morgan, *Nixon*, (London: Hodder Education Publishers, 2002), 156.

³⁴ Richard Nixon, “Toasts of the President and Premier Chou En-Lai of China.”

the PRC, watch the game. Undoubtedly, Nixon and Mao were not the only players in the complicated game which would occur seven months later. Additionally, in the cartoon an audience of both Asian and American figures stands in the background. The implications of the audience represent the great public interest from both Chinese and American citizens in what would result from Nixon's visit.

Foreign policy fit Nixon's personality—the introverted, repressed, yet unabashedly driven man he kept away from the television cameras and newspapers. China changed from a competing nation to a chessboard upon which to play out his ideas and test concepts. As historian Tom Wicker explained:

Foreign affairs lent themselves to 'game plans,' to outlines on the ever-present yellow legal pads upon which Nixon liked to scrawl while alone in his hideaway. Fully detailed foreign policy schemes could be celebrated in solitude...without boring committee meetings or difficult confrontations with lesser minds, by a president who knew the world, knew its leaders, knew what he wanted to do.³⁵

Nixon's career choices prior to the presidency contributed to his power and influence as a foreign policy player. He built his career initially as an adamant anti-communist and member of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). One of his most notable HUAC investigations involved communist spy Alger Hiss.³⁶ Additionally, Nixon ran with President Eisenhower as a means to placate "Cold Warriors" in the height of the Red Scare.³⁷ Due to his past as a communist fighter, Nixon proved a vital tool in opening doors to China and the Soviet Union. If anyone had the credentials to stand as an advocate for democracy in communist countries, it was Richard Nixon. As an

³⁵ Wicker, 423.

³⁶ Greenberg, xxi.

³⁷ Weiner, 153.

undisputable anti-red figure, he could march into communist countries and start meaningful negotiations. To label Nixon as soft on communism would prove illogical.

One cartoon in particular takes a negative stance on Nixon's great foreign policy endeavor (Figure 7). David Levine's representation includes the president scowling menacingly, baring a set of sharp fangs. Meant to mimic the famous photograph of Nixon shaking Mao's hand, the image instead shows Nixon and the Chairman reaching into one another's coat sleeves. Both Nixon and Mao recognized the China visit as an opportunity to advance their own agendas. In the toasts, Nixon agreed that their discussions had been "beneficial for both sides."³⁸ Portraying both men reaching into each other's coat sleeves implies that the friendly handshake disguised the real truth behind the dialogues in China – that both sides would argue and even deceive one another in order to secure the best for their country. Previous cartoons and quotes from Levine insinuate his distrust and aversion toward the president – an attitude which persisted despite instances when the president accomplished something commendable.³⁹

As a whole, cartoon responses to Nixon in China show that the media remained unimpressed. Herblock said, "The political cartoon has always served as a special project, a reminder to the public servant that they are public servants."⁴⁰ Nixon had a penchant for pride and pretentiousness—two qualities exacerbated by personal and public victories in China. By Herblock's argument, political cartoons filled another role of keeping Nixon's ego from over-inflating. In a sense, the media attempted to keep Nixon from getting too egotistical by failing to grant him praise for his good deeds. Cartoons reminded him that his actions in China were not for his own agenda, but for the benefit of

³⁸ Richard Nixon, "Toasts of the President and Premier Chou En-Lai of China."

³⁹ Margolick, "Levine in Winter."

⁴⁰ Dewey, 75.

the American public. As a result, even when Nixon could claim some sense of victory in the foreign policy sphere, editorial cartoonists refused to give him the satisfaction of a positive reaction.

Nixon visiting two prominent players in the political sphere of the Cold War gained some recognition from cartoonists. Another crucial foreign policy endeavor, Nixon's visit to the U.S.S. R. stands as a second positive aspect of his presidency. In what would later gain the nickname "Triangle Diplomacy," Nixon and Kissinger played on the strangled relationship between the Soviet Union and the P.R.C. in order to advance the American agenda. Opening dialogues with China spurred Moscow into advancing its relations with Washington. "Nixon was in the happy position of being sought by both of his country's principal rivals for power and influence—without having made politically damaging concessions to either."⁴¹ By playing off of one country's antagonism toward

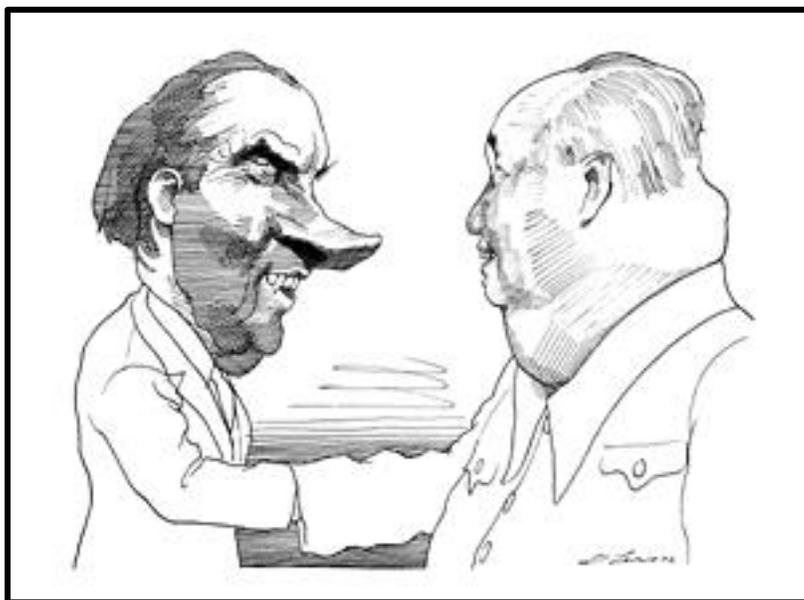


Figure 7: David Levine, "Richard Nixon and Mao Zedong", March 23, 1972, *The New York Review of Books*, <http://www.nybooks.com/galleries/david-levine-illustrator/1972/mar/23/richard-nixon-and-mao-zedong/>.

the other, Nixon furthered his own agenda.

Jim Ivey's representation of Nixon depicts the president's iconic face with Leonid Brezhnev and Mao Zedong instead of ears (Figure 8). Nixon made

⁴¹ Wicker, 597.

reciprocal agreements with two prominent communist leaders, Brezhnev and Zedong, who now had the president's ear. The cartoon represents one of very few which involves neither positive nor negative opinion on the part of the artist, thereby allowing the viewer to make his or her own interpretation. Although the image itself is comparatively simplistic, the visual shows that triangle diplomacy made at least some impact in the media. Political cartoons do acknowledge that Nixon travelled—however, the images never granted him an overwhelmingly positive response.



Figure 8: Jim Ivey, “Richard Nixon with Leonid Brezhnev and Mao Tse-Tung for ears,” 1972, *Orlando Sentinel-Star*, www.loc.gov/pictures/item/acd1996006781/PP/.

Ultimately, the visit ended 25 years of estrangement between the United States and China. With the goal of thawing Cold War tensions, the president, along with brilliant Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, initiated discussion over crucial topics such as international trade and policies concerning Taiwan. However, travelling to China failed to illicit a positive response in political cartoons. Although many historians revere Nixon and Kissinger for their masterful foreign policy strategies, political cartoonists of the time overwhelmingly refused to grant Nixon a victory.

The effects of China reflect in one of many cartoon obituaries by Steve Greenberg. In this cartoon, Nixon gives his stereotypical double V hand gesture. One hand has the words “foreign policy victories,” and the other “Watergate cover up.”

Greenberg explained the visual obituary simply: “There is a simultaneous desire to honor the dead, but also to note his life and failings accurately, and I thought this cartoon was actually too "soft" on him.”⁴² Although the trip to China stands as one of Nixon’s greatest victories, depictions of the president in China are greatly outnumbered in the large collection of cartoons about his failures.⁴³ After decades of failing to gain the approval of the media, the president wanted the world to see his triumph. Unfortunately, any ground gained by succeeding in the international sphere dissolved in the revelations of the Watergate scandal. The president’s actions in the months following his successful foreign policy endeavors overshadowed any attempt at a victory in the public spectrum.

Nixon and Watergate

On November 17, 1973, President Richard Nixon approached the podium at the Annual Convention of the Associated Press Managing Editors Association in Orlando, Florida. This was not the President’s first public question and answer session, nor his last. This address, however, occurred the midst of the Watergate investigation. The meeting began with inquiries on the effects of Watergate, and whether or not Nixon could “*keep the republic*” after becoming a subject in the investigation.⁴⁴ The press questioned the President’s hesitation in turning over the White House tapes and why several had been erased. Questions arose concerning the President’s loyalty to members of his staff indicted in the Watergate investigation, including Chief of Staff H.R. Haldeman,

⁴² Steve Greenberg, “Nixon obit,” April 25, 1994, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* <http://www.greenberg-art.com/Toons/Toons,%20Obits/NixonObit.html>. Russ Witcher *After Watergate: Nixon and the Newsweeklies*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000.

⁴³ Fischer, “The Lucifer Legacy: Boss Tweed and Richard Nixon,” 5.

⁴⁴ Richard Nixon, “Question-and-Answer Session at the Annual Convention of the Associated Press Managing Editors Association.” (Speech, Orlando, FL, November 17, 1973) The American Presidency Project.

Assistant for Domestic Affairs John D. Ehrlichman, and Attorney General John N.

Mitchell. Frustration mounting and patience wearing thin, the President announced:

I made my mistakes, but in all of my years of public life, I have never profited, never profited from public service – I have earned every cent. And in all of my years of public life, I have never obstructed justice. And I think, too, that I could say that in my years of public life, that I welcome this kind of examination, because people have got to know whether or not their President is a crook. Well, I am not a crook. I have earned everything I have got.⁴⁵

Nixon intended to close the argument and vindicate himself from damning allegations.

However, investigations in the next year and a half proved this statement false—so much so that the phrase “I am not a crook” is forever linked to the failed Nixon presidency.

Nixon’s campaign for reelection in 1972 proved the catalyst behind the Watergate scandal. Members of the Committee for Reelection of the President—known by the acronym CREEP—organized not only the Watergate break-in, but subsequent cover-up efforts as well. The committee included high-ranking White House officials Haldeman, Mitchell, and Ehrlichman, whom Nixon defended in the press conference in 1973. The Watergate break-in proved members of CREEP did not object to using illegal

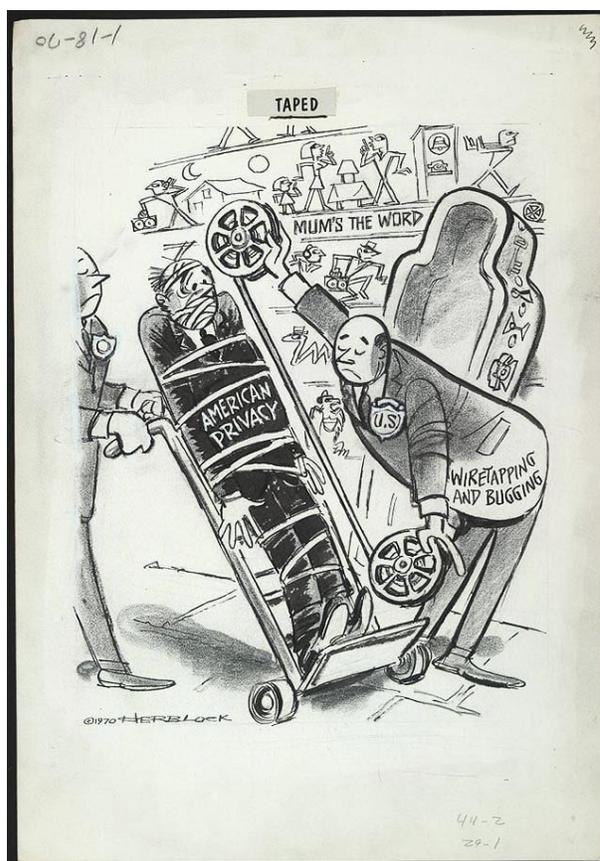


Figure 10: Herbert Block, “Taped,” January 18, 1970, *The Washington Post*.

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/00652235/>

⁴⁵ Ibid.

measures to ensure the President's reelection. On January 27, 1972, committee member G. Gordon Liddy laid out his plan to gain the upper hand on the Democrats. "Liddy spent thirty minutes discussing a \$1 million program, [Operation] Gemstone that included break-ins, wiretapping, sabotage, kidnapping, mugging squads, and the use of prostitutes for political blackmail."⁴⁶ Several CREEP members opposed such drastic measures, urging Liddy to consider less criminal means of gaining political advantage. The reorganized Operation Gemstone, submitted a few days later, eliminated prostitution and kidnapping and focused on break-ins and secret surveillance.

As seen in Herbert Block's cartoon *Taped* (Figure 10), the media had distinct knowledge of wiretapping and bugging performed by high-ranking government figures as early as 1970. The cartoon depicts a man bound and gagged by tape reel, the words "American privacy" stamped on his coat.⁴⁷ Another figure with a snobbish, disapproving look on his face holds tape reels up like a measuring tape against the bound man. In the background stands an Egyptian sarcophagus surrounded by hieroglyphics which the caption "Mum's the word." This cartoon captures the sense of anxiety over federal infringement on rights to privacy. Americans—particularly those in the government and news media circles—now had proof of the existence of illegal surveillance perpetrated by the president himself.

⁴⁶ Keith W. Olson, *Watergate: The Presidential Scandal That Shook America* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 37.

⁴⁷ Fischer, *Them Damned Pictures*, 103. The late 1960s was a period of changes to federal secrecy regulations. Right to privacy came to the front for front of US attention thanks to the 1967 Supreme Court case *US v. Katz*. This case redefined the meaning of the fourth amendment phrase "search and seizure." The case extended the definition and expanded the rights of humans to privacy. This Herblock cartoon depicts paranoia surrounding government surveillance – a primary conflict of the Watergate affair.

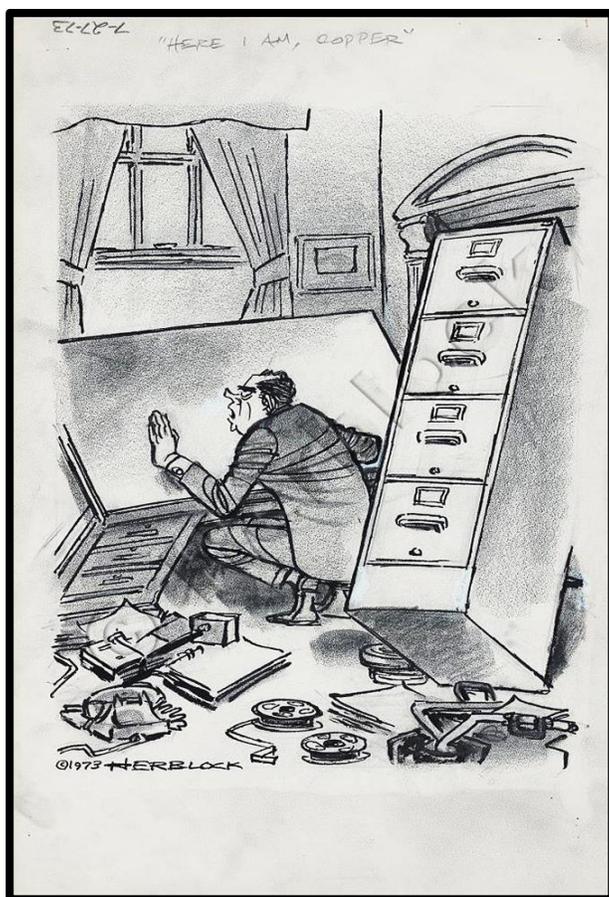


Figure 11: Herbert Block, “Here I Am, Copper,” July 27, 1973, *Washington Post*, www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2009632052/.

Washington Post editorial cartoonist Herbert Block pounced on this crime in President Nixon’s presidency. Again Nixon appeared on the editorial page. Herblock’s “Here I Am, Copper” (Figure 11) depicts a determined Nixon, crouching behind his desk surrounded by scattered tapes and papers. Instead of cowering, the Nixon figure has a determined scowl. A large filing cabinet, barring the entry of both nosy court subpoenas and any law official coming to arrest the President, blocks the door to the room.

The cartoon captures the pressure of the cover-up building on Nixon’s shoulders. With a majority of his “trusted” council either resigning or facing arrests and criminal trials, the President feared the existence of traitors among the White House staff. To make things worse, a Gallup Poll conducted in June of 1973 showed that 67% of the American public believed President Nixon had participated in a cover-up of the Watergate incident.⁴⁸ With mounting evidence weighing against him, the image of Nixon hunkering down in his office and barring all entryways anxiety presents a startling image. America wanted a solution to the Watergate issue, and instead found deferments and roundabout answers.

⁴⁸ William Dudley, *Watergate* (San Diego, Cal.: Greenhaven Press, 2002), 89.

Nixon had yet to face his greatest foe: The Senate Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities. Presided over by tough-as-nails Senator Sam Ervin (D-NC), the committee immediately subpoenaed the Watergate tapes. As historian Kevin Olson wrote, “Without those tapes, there would have been no Saturday Night Massacre, no missing conversations, no eighteen-minute erasure, and no smoking gun.”⁴⁹ Both the President and the Senate Committee recognized that the tapes were the key to the investigation and could easily lead to Nixon’s impeachment. This realization led Nixon through a desperate struggle to keep the recordings out of the hands of the court. To do so, Nixon delayed responding to the subpoenas, altered transcripts of the tapes, and erased the tapes themselves.⁵⁰ In the Managing Editors Question and Answer Session, Nixon skirted around questions which centered on withholding or erasing the tapes. He blamed any erasures and delays in turning over the recordings on the Apollo recording system which created the tapes.⁵¹

On September 29, 1973, the Senate Committee discovered an unexplained 18 ½-minute gap on one of the subpoenaed tapes. Rose Mary Woods, Nixon’s personal secretary, admitted she accidentally erased part of the tape when she interrupted transcription to answer a phone call. She was insistent, however, that the erasure was no longer than five minutes of recording. Suspicious, the Senate Committee ordered a technical evaluation of the tape. Further investigation and deep analysis of the tape revealed that the missing content was the result of five separate erasures.⁵² As evidenced

⁴⁹ Olson, 103-107.

⁵⁰ Stanley I. Kutler, *The Wars of Watergate: The Last Crisis of Richard Nixon* (New York: Knopf, 1990), 453.

⁵¹ Nixon, “Question-and-Answer Session at the Annual Convention of the Associated Press Managing Editors Association.”

⁵² Dudley, 93.

by Herblock's "Nixon awash in his office," (Figure 12) President Richard Nixon now faced wave upon wave of evidence suggesting his connection to the Watergate cover-up. To put the cherry on the proverbial sundae, Nixon finally released a tape dated June 23, 1972—a mere six days following the Watergate break-in. This recording earned the nickname "The Smoking Gun" in the Watergate trial. The topics discussed on the June 23 tape included the burglary, the money paid to the Plumbers for attempting the break-in, and plans to



Figure 12: Herbert Block, "Nixon awash in his office," June 26, 1973, *Washington Post*, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/00652241/>.

conceal the White House's participation in the affair. The President even encouraged Chief of Staff H.R. Haldeman to commit perjury before the Senate Committee, saying "...don't lie to them to the extent to say there is no involvement, but just say this is a comedy of errors."⁵³ Nixon recognized the condemning effects of the "smoking gun" tape's content. Realizing the inevitability of his impeachment, Nixon resigned just four days after turning over the recording.

⁵³ Transcript of June 23 Watergate tape as quoted in David Greenberg, *Nixon's Shadow: the History of an Image*, 189.

Herblock responded with “Nixon hanging between the tapes,” (Figure 13) a clear representation of President Nixon being caught in his lies. The cartoon contains two tape reels with the words “I am a crook.” Nixon hangs between the reels, holding the word “not” in his teeth. He distinctly rebuked any involvement in scandal during the question and answer meeting in front of the Associated Press Managing Editors Association. The



Figure 13: Herbert Block, “Nixon hanging between the tapes,” May 24, 1974, *Washington Post*, www.loc.gov/exhibits/herblockshistory/crook.html.

sound bite “I am not a crook” was thoroughly disproved – as evidenced by his own admittance to knowledge about the break in captured on the “Smoking Gun” tape.

Additionally, the Senate Watergate Committee published Nixon’s enemies list on June 27, 1973. The Enemies List included a “top 20” list for special attention and another list of about 200 “Political Opponents” organized in categories.⁵⁴ The list included figures such as Bill Cosby, Gregory Peck, Ted

Kennedy, Shirley Chisholm, Jane Fonda, Barbra Streisand, Carol Channing, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and many others. Herblock and Paul Conrad distinguished themselves by landing on the list, a fact that Conrad accepted as a badge of

⁵⁴ Lamb, *Drawn to Extremes*, 25. See also Ranan R. Lurie, *Nixon Rated Cartoons*, New York, NY: Quadrangle Company, 1973.

honor.⁵⁵ Conrad created the cartoon “His own worst enemy” in response to landing on the enemies list (Figure 14), which depicts Nixon at his desk in the oval office surrounded by numerous lists of names. In an article titled “Yes, I ended the Vietnam War,”

contemporary journalist Doug Marlette responded to the list:

An occasional politician might in anger elevate a nettlesome cartoonist to the stature of an enemy of the republic, but Richard Nixon's talk of his "Herblock image" and an "enemies list" that targeted Conrad reveals much less of Block and Conrad and their art than it did of his own paranoia.⁵⁶

Cartoonists recognized the humor and irony in ending up on the enemies list, which revealed mistrust about enemies both real and imagined. Although the intent of the enemies list is not known, historical knowledge of Nixon’s personality suggests that the list was meant to silence those who criticized his policies, actions, and even that crafted public persona. In that sense, the list essentially backfired on Nixon. By making journalists his enemies, the President encouraged further criticism and mockery in the media.

Although Nixon succeeded in some admirable aspects as president, his political image could not survive both the disaster of the Watergate



Figure 14: Paul Conrad, “His own worst enemy,” 1973, *Los Angeles Times*, <http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-me-paul-conrad-pictures-photogallery.html>

⁵⁵ Fischer, *Them Damned Pictures*, 14; Dewey, 96.

⁵⁶ Fischer, *Them Damned Pictures*, xi.

affair and his subsequent resignation. Any attempt to supersede previous presidents in the minds of the American public ultimately failed because of Watergate. The resilience of Watergate in defining Nixon's character proves true of later historical depictions of the president. In fact, most history written prior to the 1990s concerning Nixon centered on the scandal.⁵⁷ Because the scandal occurred rather recently in historical terms, it remained in the forefront of, and continues to influence, American memory. As a result, many historians refrained from writing anything which praised Nixon until after his death in 1994. Historical investigation focusing specifically on Nixon's image in political cartoons did not arise until the early twenty-first century.⁵⁸

Of all the scandals in United States history, Watergate provided the most fodder for editorial cartoonists. Herblock in particular saw through the façade Nixon put forward, instead assimilating evidence from the Watergate investigation to depict a guilty man. Nixon committed too many crimes, kept too many secrets to come away from the scandal untouched—or undocumented in newsprint. President Nixon himself accurately summarized his involvement in the Watergate scandal in a 1978 interview: “I brought myself down. I gave them a sword. And they stuck it in and they twisted it with relish. And I guess if I had been in their position, I would have done the same thing.”⁵⁹

Conversations through Images

Woodrow Wilson, the 28th President of the United States, said, “[The President] is rather a kind of magnificent lion, who can roam widely and do great deeds, so long as

⁵⁷ Kutler, xii.

⁵⁸ David Greenberg, *Nixon's Shadow: the History of an Image* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003).

⁵⁹ David Frost, “I Gave Them a Sword”: Behind the Scenes of Nixon Interviews (New York, 1978), 226.

he does not try to break loose from his broad reservation.”⁶⁰ Although this “reservation” may reference the governmental boundaries set in place when each candidate takes the oath of office, it also applies to the public image an American president must uphold. As Nixon solidified his role as a newspaper punchline, historians in recent decades have questioned the archetypal assignment of Nixon as a villain. Using “dirty tricks, distortion, innuendo, rampant redbaiting, and a genius for the politics of fear and division,” he was consistently a magnet for scandal.⁶¹ Political cartoons throughout the 1970s clearly responded to the evidence of Nixon’s errors in judgment and the reputation they left in their wake.

President Nixon’s speeches represent different periods in his political career in which he could present his arguments. As Nixon took the stage to deliver the “Vietnamization” speech, he was a fledgling president intending to soothe the war-battered national public. The toasts given in Peking depict a Nixon endeavoring to use his strengths as a foreign policy leader. Nixon stood as a victor in China – an experience very rarely granted him throughout his political career. Watergate, its implications, and the infamous “I am not a crook” line resonated historically and stole any hope of a heroic heritage from Nixon. Depictions of the president in the political cartoons which reply to these addresses reflect the media’s perceptions of him in varying stages of his lengthy period in the spotlight.

Nixon was both Jekyll and Hyde; a bizarre mixture of near greatness and incorrigible paranoia that left an enduring mark on history and makes him such an intriguing figure. He remained the perpetual outsider, even though he rose to the top of

⁶⁰ Kutler, 607.

⁶¹ Fischer, *Them Damned Pictures*, 208.

the American political hierarchy. The president “was fatally subject to the allure of power. Beneath a public mask of good fellowships, he was man lonely and alone.”⁶²

Cartoonists saw the feeble man behind the powerful presidential curtain. The president struggled throughout his extended political career to build a positive relationship with the media. Cartoonists typically depicted the president as a ski-nosed schemer with frail shoulders, angry jowls, and the five o'clock shadow. Unintentionally creating an even larger target of himself, Nixon contributed stock phrases "let me make this perfectly clear," and “You won't have Nixon to kick around anymore," to the visual culture of the period.⁶³ Cartoonists depicted Nixon in their works as a means to honestly respond to a man who openly decried their profession. The Nixon caricature established itself as a massive part of the visual language of the twentieth century.

Prior to his presidency, many cartoonists depicted Nixon with a stubbly beard. The theme of a bearded Nixon continued up until 1968. Following the presidential election, Herblock offered the newly-elected Nixon a “free shave” in one of his *Washington Post* cartoons. “He was a new president and I thought I’d give him a chance,” Herblock explained, “but it turned out to be the same old Nixon.”⁶⁴ What happened to the clean shave? Ultimately, the president failed to keep promises he made in public speeches, used his platform to boast his own merits, and committed the most notorious crimes of the American presidency. As the reality of Nixon’s shortcomings surfaced, cartoonists made their opinions known through their depictions of the president.

⁶² Wicker, 686.

⁶³ Dewey, 96.

⁶⁴ Chris Lamb, “Herblock Talks About Life as a Cartoonist,” *Editor & Publisher*, June 29, 1991, 32.

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