Richard Nixon Essay, Research Paper

Throughout the Years: Richard Nixon Before and after his Presidency

Richard Nixon was the thirty-seventh president of the United States and the only president to have resigned from office. He was on his was to success after receiving his law degree from Duke University Law School in 1937. California Republicans persuaded Nixon in 1946 to be their candidate to challenge Jerry Voorhis, the popular Democratic Congressman, for his seat in the United States House of Representatives. He accuses Voorhis of being “soft” on Communism. This was damaging to him because the Cold War rivalry between the United States and USSR was just beginning. Voorhis was forced into a defensive position after the two men confronted each other in a series of debates.

Nixon’s campaign was an example of the vigorous and aggressive style characteristic of his political career that led him to win the election. Nixon gained valuable experience in international affairs as a new member of the United States Congress. He helped establish a program known as the Marshall Plan, in which the US assisted Europe rebuild itself following the war. He also served on the House Education and Labor Committee to develop the National Labor Relations Act.

In 1948, writer and editor Whittaker Chambers accused Alger Hiss, a high State Department official, of being a Communist. Nixon, a member of the Un-American Activities Committee, personally pressed the investigation. Hiss denied further charges that he had turned classified documents over to Chambers to be sent to the USSR. Alger Hiss was later convicted and indicted for perjury after sufficient evidence was discovered. Nixon was reelected to Congress after winning both the Republican and Democratic nominations as a result of gaining a national reputation as a dedicated enemy of Communism.

In 1950, the Republicans chose Nixon as candidate for the US Senate from California. Again, he won this election by linking his opponent to being pro-Communist. Nixon was selected to be the running mate of the Republican presidential nomination, General Eisenhower, in 1952. Many of Eisenhower’s advisors wanted Nixon to resign his candidacy shortly after his vice-presidential nomination because of accusations that he misused his senator expenses fund. No evidence was found to prove this, and, in response, Nixon replied on national television with the “Checkers” speech, which contained sentimental reference to Nixon’s dog, Checkers. This speech was his attempt to prove his innocence.

In the following campaign, Nixon once again attacked the Democratic presidential candidate as being soft on Communism. Nixon and Eisenhower’s victory led them both to being reelected in 1956, after surviving Republican attempts to replace Nixon. As vice-president, much of Nixon’s time was spent representing the president before Congress and on trips abroad as a goodwill ambassador, where he was occasionally the target of anti-US feelings.

As Eisenhower neared the end of his second term as president, he endorsed Nixon, who received an impressive vote in party primaries and all but ten of the delegate’s votes on the first ballot at the Republican National Convention. An unusual feature of the campaign was a series of face-to-face discussions between Nixon and his Democratic opponent, Senator John F. Kennedy, who was widely regarded as the winner of the debates, which helped him win the election.

In 1962, Nixon returned to California after losing the presidential election and became Republican candidate for governor. It was another bitter campaign, revolving around Communism and law enforcement, but this time his strategy did not work. Most political observers believed Nixon’s political career had ended by the way he handled the loss. Nixon moved and joined a large law firm in New York City after his defeat, and remained in close relations with national Republican leaders and campaigned for Republican candidates in two elections.

By 1968, he had sufficiently recovered his political standing to announce his candidacy for president. He had two major problems in seeking nomination in 1968. He had not won an election in eighteen years and he had no state in which to base his candidacy. He also could count on few Republican governors for support, though he did have support in Congress and other politicians whom he helped campaigned. He easily won the nomination on the first ballot at the convention and chose the governor of Maryland as his running mate.

Nixon placed Vice-president Humphrey, his Democratic opponent, under stress from the unsuccessful war in Vietnam’s effects. Nearly thirty-two million votes gave him a clear majority in the electoral college. The most important issue Nixon faced when he became president was the Vietnam war. The conflict between North Vietnam and South Vietnam began in 1959, and in 1964 there were reports that North Vietnam had attacked US vessels. Congress and President Johnson authorized the bombing of North Vietnam and to increase US military involvement. Nixon campaigned against the war, and brought US soldier’s back home. He developed the Nixon doctrine, stating that the United States would continue helping Asian nations combat Communism, but would no longer commit US troops to land wars in Asia.

However, in 1970, Nixon expanded the war by allowing an invasion and several bombing missions. Into the second half of 1972, secret peace meetings were held between the assistant to the president for national security affairs and a North Vietnamese delegate. A breakthrough was achieved when a peace plan was agreed on, but abruptly collapsed when Nixon ordered further massive bombing. Nixon was more successful in other foreign policy areas, such as improving relations with China and USSR. Both countries signed trade agreements and treaties. He adopted conservative domestic policies by appointing appeals judge Burger to the Supreme Court in 1969, federal judge Blackmun, Virginia lawyer Powell, and Assistant Attorney General Rehnquist in 1971; to shift the Supreme Court toward more conservative positions.

Nixon also tried to slow the pace of integration of black students into white schools. In 1957, the Supreme Court declared the practice illegal. Nixon then opposed the use of public buses to transport students to integrated schools. Other problems arose, such as inflation and high unemployment He also devalued the dollar to promote US exports and discourage imports.

Nixon won easily over his Democratic opponent in the election of 1972 due to improved economy and temporary peace between the US and Vietnam. During the campaign, five men connected with Nixon’s reelection committee were discreetly arrested for breaking into the Democratic Party’s national headquarters in the Watergate apartment complex in Washington D.C., attempting to steal documents and place wiretaps on the telephones. Secret peace meetings continued between the Untied States and Vietnam. Once an agreement was met, Nixon announced an official cease-fire over national television. At this time Nixon’s popularity was at its peak, but not for long. Severe inflation once again affected the economy, so Nixon devalued the dollar a second time. In addition to this he cut government spending on domestic social programs, such as education, urban renewal, and antipoverty programs, while resisting attempts by the Congress to reduce military spending.

Nixon’s prestige crumbled as a result of the Watergate scandal. Persistent questioning led to an investigation. In the trial of the Watergate burglars had shown that a cover-up had concealed their activities and their connections with high government officials and the president’s closest aids. A Senate committee on Watergate and the Justice Department revealed that this was one of many scandals involving Nixon and his loyalists. The actions of Watergate have been directed against the Democrats and all but one of Nixon’s aids and officials were forced to resign. These discoveries raised questions about Nixon’s knowledge and participation in their cover-up. He issued inconsistent statements claiming the importance of presidency allowed him to withhold documents even if the courts demanded them. The public was outraged that Nixon fired special investigator Cox over the question of access to his records. This ordered the House Judiciary committee to look into possible impeachment. Nixon then agreed to produce the withheld documents as a result of the threat, but soon after it was revealed that some tapes were missing. All of this caused other investigations to begin focusing on Nixon, such as possible income tax evasion and misuse of government funds. Nixon’s top two aids and two other men were indicted in connection with the Watergate cover-up in 1974. Nixon refused to hand over additional tapes that were demanded by the courts. The tapes supplied to the courts would be made public in the trials, so Nixon released edited transcripts that concealed any evidence of his involvement.

In early 1974, the Court ruled against Nixon’s claims of executive privilege in an eight to zero decision. He was also accused of obstructing justice, abusing presidential power, and refusing to comply with the House’s demands. This caused the Judiciary committee to introduce three impeachment articles. His supporters in Congress felt betrayed when he released tapes that year that showed he had participated in the Watergate cover-up as early as 1972. It was clear that he would be impeached by the House and convicted in the Senate, so on August 8, 1974, Nixon announced that his resignation would take effect the following day and Vice – President Ford would take his place as president. One month later, President Ford issued a pardon for all federal crimes Nixon may have committed while president. Through traveling and writing, he gradually regained his public respect.

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