

Introduction

“Too Many Nice Guys”—What Brought About Resistance in the Nixon Administration

“I think the trouble is that we’ve got too many nice guys around who just want to do the right thing,” said an exasperated Richard Nixon on August 3, 1972. Sitting in the Oval Office with his two closest advisers, Chief of Staff H. R. Haldeman and Assistant for Domestic Affairs John Ehrlichman, the president vented about his cabinet’s lack of toughness. He was especially enraged over the unwillingness of certain administration officials to bend the rules to go after his political enemies. Earlier in the conversation, Nixon exclaimed, “We have all of this power and we’re not using it!” He asked, “Who is doing this full time? Who is running the IRS? Who is running over to the Justice Department? . . . With all of the agencies of government, what in the name of god are we doing about the McGovern contributors?” Haldeman responded, “The short answer to your question is nothing.” Nixon retorted, “Part of the problem is the bureaucracy, part of the problem is our own goddamned fault. There must be something we can do.” Although he griped about several different individuals in his administration during the discussion, the president specifically blamed his recently appointed secretary of the treasury George P. Shultz. During that summer, Shultz and the then commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Johnnie Walters had resisted the White House’s efforts to use the agency to harass and punish their opponents. “He’s not being political enough,” said Nixon. “I don’t care how nice of a guy he is. I don’t care how good of an economist he is. We can’t have this bullshit!”¹

The conversation was not an isolated one—Nixon regularly brought up his frustrations with Shultz and Walters throughout the rest of that summer and into the fall of 1972. These were not tantrums, but rather the culmination of his prolonged struggle to politicize the federal bureaucracy. The president’s taped tirades were not just expressions of his inner demons; they were representative of Nixon’s increasingly sinister views of governance, particularly the powers of the presidency. Nixon’s White House recordings are extremely valuable artifacts as they capture the beleaguered president behind closed doors and expose his uncensored views on a wide range of topics. Taken together, they are much more than just a collection of entertaining sound bites. While they do not capture the totality of the Nixon presidency, the tapes provide indisputable evidence that Nixon created and took great pains to develop a strident culture of loyalty that ultimately led to the crimes of Watergate.

In an attempt to counteract cartoonish depictions of Nixon in popular culture, some scholars and media figures have recently attempted to dismiss the importance of the White House tapes in assessing his presidency. “He needed to vent and blurt—cut that damn agency in half!—before settling down and shrewdly estimating what was possible and what was not,” argues Evan Thomas in *Being Nixon: A Man Divided*.² This broader view of the White House tapes obscures the fact that Nixon’s “blurts” were sometimes the starting points for many of the White House’s plots to control and politicize the administration’s bureaucracy. When it came to trying to use the federal government for political purposes, Nixon was firmly at the center of many of the White House’s operations. Those who study Nixon must confront the fact that his private conversations were often the driving force behind many of his staff’s more sordid schemes. There were times when Nixon’s rants led to real action.

The president’s anger was also emblematic of a deep division within his own administration over the White House’s attempts to fully institutionalize its abuses of power during Nixon’s first term. The president’s vision of a government where he could more readily punish his enemies never came to fruition, but that was only because of the Republicans who said no to Nixon. While many are familiar with the Republicans who turned against the president during the final stages of Watergate (Barry Goldwater, Hugh Scott), there were also Republicans within the Nixon administration who opposed the White House without the lime-light that others received.³ The substantial resistance that the president faced from the IRS was not the only case, as several other Republican appointees also opposed Nixon’s attempts to politicize their work and

dramatically transform their offices. Well before the American public became aware of the White House's dirty tricks, there were Republicans who quietly blocked Nixon's orders and provided an important, yet fragile, check on the imperial presidency. Although many others within the White House followed through on Nixon's dirty tricks to varying degrees, some had enough courage to resist the White House's plots to further expand the power of the presidency. Officials within the newly created Office of Management and Budget (OMB) said no to the president's orders to cut federal funds to universities. Elliot Richardson and his staff also resisted the White House while they were at the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) in small battles that mostly stayed out of the public eye. They later famously stood up to Nixon during the Saturday Night Massacre, a crucial turning point in the Watergate saga, but a moment that was also rooted in Richardson's previous conflicts with the White House.

Taken together, these acts of resistance show that before there was a public bipartisan consensus on Nixon's impeachment in 1974, opposition to the president was not purely political. Instead, it was sometimes driven behind the scenes by the very people who worked for him. The administration officials who opposed the president were not spurred on by political gain; they were concerned primarily with Nixon's very real threat to the federal government. For these men, Nixon's plots to attack his political opponents were also an attack on their ethics and the nonpartisan culture that had shaped their work within the government.

The individuals who refused to carry out Nixon's orders were, like the president, Republicans, but they were also civic-minded officials who were shaped by the broader technocratic culture of the postwar era. Most of them were ideologically moderate within the context of the Nixon era, but some were philosophically conservatives. Still, they shared an even-keeled and nonpartisan approach to civil service, one that placed them at odds with Nixon and the emerging conservative movement's culture of loyalty. While they were not all moderates in terms of their policy beliefs, and came from significantly different backgrounds, they were moderates when it came to their views on how to run the federal government.

Based on his comparatively liberal domestic record, many recent scholars have labeled Nixon as either a moderate or even a liberal when evaluating his entire presidency. Nixon's legislative record is certainly a complex one that does not follow the conservative mold, but it should not completely define his approach to the presidency nor his legacy.

When comparing the men who resisted Nixon's illegal orders with the president, one can see that the true moderates within the administration did not reside within the Oval Office. Although the men who said no to Nixon were in tune with certain elements of the president's domestic agenda, they were often at odds with his temperament and his willingness to abuse his power.

Above everything else, the individuals who opposed Nixon valued public service over the president's cutthroat view of politics. Whereas Nixon was shaped by the politics of the early Cold War, these men were shaped by a nonpartisan culture that had permeated much of the federal bureaucracy. Within certain sectors of the federal government, it was this nonpartisan culture that contributed to the resistance to Nixon. It was a technocratic culture that was largely rooted in postwar consensus values, one that led some conservatives and many moderates to adopt a noncombative approach to the liberal bureaucracy that had been solidified during the New Deal era. Coming up in the age of Eisenhower, a moderate Republican who had little to no interest in rolling back the New Deal, the men who stood up to Nixon did not share his animosity toward the postwar bureaucratic state. Although Nixon was at times in line with the more moderate segments of the Republican Party, especially as Eisenhower's vice president, his recurring bellicosity collided with the nonpartisan technocrats within his own administration. Instead, Nixon's rigid emphasis on loyalty created the conditions where some of his own appointees would end up resisting his orders. As products of a nonpartisan culture that was not invested in targeting the "other"—namely, the liberal establishment and the New Left social movements of the era—the men who resisted Nixon stood in direct contrast to the culture of loyalty that led to Watergate. Unlike the president's men, they did not believe there was a conspiracy to bring down the administration. As a group, they were more than just "nice guys." The individuals who said no to Nixon helped prevent the White House from doing further damage to the federal government and the American people.

Nixon scholars and other historians of the postwar era have often struggled to define Nixon's worldview. Given his mercurial nature and ideological pliability, Nixon remains difficult to fully characterize, even in 2018. In his pre-presidential career, he was both a vocal anticommunist and the man who sought to distance the Eisenhower administration from McCarthyism. He often adopted a form of right-wing populism in his campaigns, but also famously condemned right-wing extremists in California during his failed bid to become governor in 1962. As president he

made peace with both China and the Soviet Union, but continued the nation's war against North Vietnam, bombed sovereign nations such as Cambodia and Laos, and supported the coup against the democratically elected Salvador Allende in Chile. On the domestic side, Nixon's record was also marked by notable achievements that could best be described as either "liberal" or "moderate," while also playing to conservative elements in the GOP. For example, the Environment Protection Agency was created under Nixon's watch, but he later vetoed the Clean Water Act and sought to rein in the new agency behind the scenes. His administration did much to desegregate schools across the South, but Nixon also maintained a "Southern Strategy" in an effort to appeal to disaffected white Democrats through Supreme Court appointments and the White House's public opposition to school busing. Nixon's attempt to reform welfare, the Family Assistance Plan, would have introduced a guaranteed income for poor families, but he later jettisoned the plan and deemed it too costly. These are just a few examples to demonstrate Nixon's complicated domestic and foreign policy records that have contributed to an unsettled legacy.

The stories of Republicans who said no to Nixon do not completely define the totality of Nixon's presidency, but they do collectively offer up a better sense of the thirty-seventh president's worldview. Focusing on these acts of resistance sheds new light on not only who Nixon considered to be his enemies, but also on who he believed would be a part of his "new establishment." In numerous White House meetings, Nixon criticized the post-New Deal liberal establishment that over time had shaped much of academia, the mainstream press, and the federal bureaucracy. Although Nixon's "new establishment" was never fleshed out in terms of its ideology, it was meant to stand in opposition to the liberal establishment, the American left, and the dramatic cultural changes of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Nixon's brand of conservatism was primarily defined by what he opposed. This was true throughout his political career, from his anticommunist crusades in the 1940s to his persistent attempts to enhance the powers of the Oval Office. In the absence of a well-defined ideology, Nixon often adhered to a Manichean form of cultural conservatism when dealing with his opponents in his public campaigns, but also in private. Since he firmly believed that his presidency was under attack by his enemies, administration officials who refused to carry out his orders were quickly labeled as a part of the old "establishment." They had violated a core part of his new establishment—loyalty to his presidency. This culture of loyalty was at the center of what eventually led to Watergate.

In addition to viewing any type of resistance as a blatant example of disloyalty, Nixon was quick to question the masculinity (“toughness”) of officials who showed any signs of hesitation in carrying out one of his orders. Listening to the White House tapes, one can often hear the president directly tie an individual’s loyalty to the White House to his crude understanding of masculinity. Whether it was labeling the federal bureaucracy as having “no guts,” concluding that the nation’s intellectual and political establishment had “gone soft,” or demanding that the new head of the Bureau of Labor Statistics be someone “who has balls,” Nixon regularly used gendered terms that denoted his need for more masculine individuals in his administration.⁴ While these types of conversations have sometimes been dismissed as Nixon’s desperate attempts to sound tough, it should not be ignored that Nixon’s simplistic views on masculinity and loyalty had an impact on how he governed, especially when dealing with internal resistance.

Nixon’s emphasis on masculinity can be situated within a broader history of gender and American history, particularly within the confines of the Cold War. As K.A. Cuordileone’s *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War* demonstrates, Nixon’s political career was deeply connected to the nation’s anxiety over the state of manhood in the postwar era. Cuordileone specifically points to Nixon’s use of the phrase “pink” in his attacks on Helen Gahagan Douglas, his opponent in the 1950 Senate election, as he infamously claimed that the congresswoman was “pink right down to her underwear.” However, Cuordileone also includes a compelling analysis of the 1960 presidential election that some saw, in the absence of significant policy differences, as a battle of personalities, namely Kennedy and Nixon’s masculinity. The media saw the former’s sense of masculinity as “genuine,” while the latter was viewed as inauthentic.⁵

For Nixon, taking action to harass and even punish his enemies was a true sign of masculinity. It would prove whether a member of his administration was either a “tough guy” or a “nice guy,” whether that individual was with “us” or “them.” Despite their many past instances of showing loyalty to the president, officials such as Elliot Richardson and George Shultz were consistently dismissed as weak whenever their independent streaks got in the way of the White House’s plans. Richardson and Shultz did in fact receive prestigious cabinet posts, but they were mostly appointed to these posts because of the prestige that they brought to the administration. This sense of prestige was often connected to their reputations as Ivy League–bred experts who had ties with Washington’s political establishment and/or social scene. Once

they were appointed, they were expected to follow through on Nixon's demands and exhibit a certain level of toughness. There was an almost automatic tension between these types of presidential appointments and the White House's more nefarious plots. When Nixon unleashed an illegal order, it was a test of that particular individual's loyalty. The moderates who opposed such orders failed that test, and proved to not be tough enough to trust with sensitive projects.

For Nixon, it was further evidence that he could not trust individuals who were tied to the Ivy League liberal establishment. In Nixon's mind, these types of officials were more loyal to their elite social networks than to the presidency. Unlike more recent conservative presidents, what was known as the liberal establishment held significantly more influence in the Nixon era, even within the GOP. With the Democrats controlling both the House and the Senate throughout his presidency, and an influential moderate wing within the Republican Party, several of Nixon's appointments were partially driven by an attempt to placate the D. C. establishment during a time when their ranks truly mattered. Nixon resented the establishment, and wanted to build a new one, but he begrudgingly accepted their influence, especially during his first term.

Nixon's heightened sense of loyalty, combined with his skewed understanding of masculinity, eventually led to the development of a bunker mentality that persisted throughout much of his presidency. Although he began his presidency with a healthy amount of ideological diversity, with a significant number of liberal and moderate Republicans in high-level positions, that mentality eventually led to the diminishment of dissenting voices. By the end of his first term, Nixon's growing suspicions about some of the less politically inclined moderates who did not aggressively pursue the White House's enemies turned them into his enemies as well. The president came to the conclusion that they were not fit to lead in the White House's war on the "establishment," including its enemies in the media, the antiwar movement, and even those who were embedded within the federal bureaucracy.

The battles between Nixon and the civil servants who opposed him are not only stories about the Nixon and the authoritarian culture he built inside the White House—they are a part of a larger history of the Republican Party. By looking at the officials who said no, along with the ones who were loyal to the president, one can better understand the significant cultural and ideological shifts that occurred within the GOP during the 1970s. While Nixon is hard to pinpoint when it came to his ideological views, his approach to dealing with his political opponents

aligned him with some of the more aggressively partisan elements of the New Right of the 1970s. “I didn’t like Nixon until Watergate,” admitted M. Stanton Evans to author Rick Perlstein in 2005.⁶

It is important to note that unlike Evans, who cofounded the seminal organization Young Americans for Freedom, Nixon was never a movement conservative. In fact, much of his foreign and domestic policies angered the right and kept him from ever being fully embraced by large segments of the conservative movement of the 1970s. Heather Hendershot’s recent book on William F. Buckley includes a chapter that focuses on the conservative commentator and Richard Nixon, showing that the former generally saw the latter’s presidency as a “long detour.” Hendershot also shows Buckley taking great pains to downplay Nixon’s allegiance to the conservative movement, writing at one point that “the traditional liberal sin is lust for power, so that Nixon’s sins tend to be Democratic sins.” For Buckley and many others in the conservative movement, Nixon’s presidency was one defined by compromise of the movement; Reagan was always their future.⁷

Nevertheless, Nixon’s attempts to use the government to punish his foes on the left placed him alongside the far right of the Republican Party. During his presidency, Nixon firmly believed that the country was in the middle of a period of cultural chaos and political instability, one that had not been seen since the Civil War. He felt that his willingness to bend the rules was justified during a period of civil unrest that was caused by the Left. Whatever ideological disputes he may have had with the more conservative elements of the GOP, they were frequently overridden by his desire to squash the American Left and destroy the influence of the nation’s liberal establishment. It was not a coincidence that when it came to issuing controversial orders, the president often relied on some of the more conservative members of his team. Whenever Nixon’s controversial orders were rejected by a more moderate member of his administration, there was often a conservative who was willing to display his loyalty to the president. “I’d rather take a dumb loyalist than a bright neuter. I really would,” said Nixon during a meeting about his second-term reorganization. “I’m frankly bored to death with dumb loyalists. I love them. They drive me up the wall. On the other hand, believe me they’re damn comfortable to have around here in a crunch.”⁸

When the president felt that he was under siege, he veered aggressively to the right, particularly when he was mapping out his second term. He was explicit in his desire to move the country further to the right in his private discussions in the final few weeks preceding the 1972

election. “What McGovern stands for, the eastern liberal media stands for, the eastern intellectuals stand for . . . must be crushed,” said Nixon in a meeting with Haldeman and his former treasury secretary John Connally on October 17, 1972. “It cannot come back and have an opportunity to have much influence in American life for a while.” He later argued that a landslide victory would weaken the major mainstream print and television media outlets and that it would also be “a terrible blow to the eastern establishment, the university types, all of them of that kind.” Nixon’s views on the nation’s establishment were also tied to regional politics. It was a way for the president to divide the nation in rather simplistic terms when plotting out the future of the Republican Party. “And it will be a great encouragement to the decent people in this country. There’s decent people in every state, but to speak regionally, they’re in the South, they’re throughout the Midwest, out in California, a lot of strong people out there.”

Nixon’s views regarding the decency of the American public and its elite institutions were tied to his repeated desire to create a new, more conservative establishment. His goals went beyond winning a second term, as he wanted to develop a new cultural and political establishment that would move the country in a more conservative direction. “And what we’ve got to do after this election is to build a new establishment.” Nixon’s plan for a new establishment were somewhat amorphous, but they were decidedly driven by his deep-seated anti-Semitism, as he believed that there were too many Jewish employees in his administration who were connected to the liberal establishment. “We have our share of them. They’re very good. . . But there are too many Jews in the government.” Instead of recruiting from the Ivy League, Nixon wanted to “go out in the heartland” and avoid the nation’s elite universities.⁹

In many ways, Nixon wanted to build a government during his second term that resembled J. Edgar Hoover’s FBI. He believed that the longtime FBI director had succeeded in creating a more disciplined island within the federal government, one that was shielded from what he felt was “an attitude of permissiveness” that had seeped through the post-New Deal federal bureaucracy. In recent years scholars have shown that Nixon had a complicated relationship with Hoover, as the two greatly differed when it came to responding to the cultural and social revolts of the late 1960s.¹⁰ In his book on the FBI, Timothy Weiner points to Hoover’s refusal to adopt the Nixon White House’s plan to dramatically increase the government’s surveillance of left-wing radicals (the “Huston Plan”) in 1970 as a key turning point in the

Watergate saga. It is the moment where Hoover began to scale back the FBI's covert operations, spurring the president to bring the planning of those types of activities in-house—i.e., into the halls of the White House. Following Hoover's death in the spring of 1972, Nixon became even more focused on filling the void left behind by the controversial cold warrior. Beverly Gage's work on Hoover and Nixon further demonstrates the importance of the split between Hoover and Nixon in understanding Nixon's eventual downfall. Like Weiner, she presents Hoover's refusal to carry out the "Huston Plan" as a key turning point for the Nixon presidency, one that was shaped not only by Hoover's anxiety over changes in American culture, but also by Hoover's desire to protect the FBI. In a 2012 article, she stresses that Hoover must be understood as a bureaucrat who saw himself as nonpartisan, and that Watergate should primarily be seen as "a bureaucratic conflict within the executive branch itself." Through this lens, Gage argues, one can better understand just why Watergate had a "limited impact on broader political trends," namely the rise of conservatism.¹¹

Gage is correct to point out that Hoover's resistance to the Nixon White House should be situated within a larger story of the presidency versus the bureaucracy. That story, despite its ideological complexities, is still connected to politics as Nixon's antibureaucratic views fit alongside the rise of the conservative movement of the late twentieth century. The Nixon-Hoover split makes Nixon's private views of Hoover's FBI all the more fascinating as the president consistently held Hoover's past leadership in high regard. Just as Hoover's view of himself as a nonpartisan figure matters when studying the FBI, Nixon's own simplified view of Hoover's past leadership is also important when examining his plans for a new establishment in his second term. In his October 17 conversation with Connally and Haldeman, he specifically targeted HEW, the State Department, and the CIA as agencies that had been corrupted by the establishment. The president looked to Hoover's FBI as the ultimate model for his second term. "You take the FBI . . . Everybody says Hoover . . . made them cut their hair and so forth. Great integrity, great ability. He never picked boys from Harvard." He added, "Most of them . . . he got them from the Midwest, he got them from the southern schools and they are the best you ever saw. That's the thing that we're going to do."

In reality, Hoover's FBI was not completely in line with Nixon's appraisal. Still, the agency's history of cracking down on dissent meant that the president saw Hoover as a source of inspiration. After more

than twenty-five years in politics, Nixon was convinced that the nation needed a federal government that would replicate Hoover's fascistic tendencies in attempting to squash all forms of left-wing protest. For the president, it was personal, as he brought up his own humble upbringing in order to offer up a stark contrast with the liberal elites. "We underestimate the ability of the good people of this country. . . I've never been one of these bunch, and I'm never going to be."¹²

Nixon's attempt to bring in a slew of Hoover-style operations under his supervision made his abuses of power exceptional when compared to his predecessors. Previous presidents, including Democrats, participated in operations that used the CIA and FBI to monitor and punish their political opponents. Watergate was partially the culmination of decades of wrongdoings, both in and outside the White House. No president since FDR was left untarnished by the dramatic growth of the federal government during the mid-twentieth century. It would be naïve to completely disconnect Nixon's crimes from the abuses of power that were carried out in previous administrations. For example, historians have shown that the Roosevelt administration had little use for civil liberties and supported the FBI's crackdown on left- and right-wing radicals in the 1930s and 1940s.¹³ The Kennedy and Johnson administrations actively participated in the CIA and FBI's wiretapping of individuals, including journalists.¹⁴

Historians can and should quibble with the moral nature of these and numerous other unethical actions, but most of these activities differed from Nixon's misdeeds for one very important reason. Other presidents had kept a certain level of distance from the state's covert operations, especially when it came to the domestic realm, whereas Nixon was determined to bring them into the Oval Office. Part of this was the product of historical circumstance, with Nixon seeking to fill the void left by Hoover because the FBI director resisted the White House's Huston Plan. The other factor, which can be heard on the White House tapes, was Nixon's strong impulse toward authoritarianism. Viewing his presidency as one that was defined by a moment of civil strife, he sought to consolidate power in ways that tested the nation's democracy. While prior presidents largely used the power of the state to preserve the status quo, Nixon was obsessed with creating a new establishment that expanded his power. Pointing out the exceptionalism of Nixon's presidency and offering up a longer history of the imperial presidency are not mutually exclusive. The two narratives are intertwined, but the actions of other presidents should not be used to excuse Nixon's during his presidency.

The men who said no to Nixon varied in terms of their personal links to the nation's elite institutions and a broader establishment, but they did not share Nixon's sheer hatred of the establishment, its institutions, or its general tolerance of the New Left. When confronted with a refusal to carry out illegal orders, Nixon pointed to an individual's education or other ties to the establishment. Figures like Richardson, Shultz, and many others represented the old guard of the GOP, one that was partially driven by moderation, was open to ideological diversity, and came from a culture that did not completely combine politics with the power of the state. Their decisions to stand up to Nixon were illustrative of a tradition within the Republican Party that was under attack by a growing conservative movement in the 1960s and 1970s. Nixon was a complex figure, but his various plans to expand the power of the presidency to punish his enemies placed him at odds with many of the moderates whom he had hired. As principled civil servants, they were able to limit governmental abuses of power that would have helped conservatives gain more power inside of the Nixon administration. Their shared resistance to the president helped prevent a dramatic expansion of the federal government's ability to silence dissent from the left in the 1970s. Their battles with the White House show the true depths of Watergate and Nixon's ambitious expectations for a second term. More importantly, the civil servants who said no to the president offer up an important counternarrative to revisionist takes on Nixon that depict his time in the Oval Office as being disconnected from the modern conservative movement. These stories show that the moderates were an important roadblock to a conservative movement that shared Nixon's views on mixing politics with civil service. They were resisting not only specific orders, but also a culture that promoted a more cynical approach to government, one that was openly hostile toward opposing viewpoints.

Over the last two decades, numerous scholars have written about the rise of the Right in American politics in the latter half of the twentieth century. Work such as Lisa McGirr's study of grassroots Orange County activists, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right*, and Kim Phillips-Fein's focus on the influence on conservative financial elites in *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement, From the New Deal to Reagan*, have shown that both top-down and bottom-up approaches are important to fully explaining the evolution of the modern conservative movement.¹⁵

More recently, Kevin Kruse's work on the religious right, Jason Stahl's book on conservative think tanks, and Nicole Hemmer's detailed history

of conservative media have examined the rise of conservatism, but all three hold up Nixon as a key character within their narratives.¹⁶ Nixon is shown to play a crucial role in advancing conservatism, particularly when it comes to the cultural front. For Kruse, Nixon's campaign to aggressively woo evangelical voters during his presidency was an important part of his quest to create a new Republican majority. In Stahl's study of conservative think tanks, Nixon and Haldeman are shown to have been obsessed with attacking liberal think tanks such as the Brookings Institution. The president also regularly reached out to leaders of early conservative organizations such as William J. Baroody in an effort to maintain a healthy relationship with the conservative movement. "Until your pioneering efforts, the institutions of public opinion molding were largely monopolized by spokesmen for centralized big government who felt that every public policy program could be solved by massive federal spending programs," wrote Nixon to Baroody.¹⁷ Nixon was distrusted by many conservative media figures who grew frustrated with the thirty-seventh president's ideological flexibility, but Hemmer points to the fact that Nixon was the first presidential candidate to openly court conservative media in 1968. Figures such as William F. Buckley would turn against Nixon following his trip to China in February 1972, but Hemmer shows that Watergate made Nixon more popular among many movement conservatives. "The right believed he was being brought down for his conservatism, that liberals were using Watergate as a pretense to reserve the results of the 1972 election." In the end, "Watergate granted Nixon a reprieve from his conservative critics."¹⁸

Less attention has been paid to the Republicans who were at odds with the New Right of the 1960s and 1970s, the liberals and moderates of the Eisenhower tradition who were in no way a part of the conservative movement. Recent works by Geoffrey Kabaservice and Leah Wright Rigueur offer compelling accounts of the moderate Republicans who opposed the growing influence of the Right. Kabaservice focuses on some of the more prominent moderate leaders and organizations of the 1960s and 1970s, while Rigueur spends much time examining the liberal/moderate African American voices within the GOP. Both historians show that there was significant resistance to the conservative takeover of the party, and more importantly they encourage readers to further explore the role of the moderate in the Republican Party.¹⁹

The main subjects of this study also represented a different part of the GOP. They were the figures who in many ways felt isolated from the New Right's culture and ideology. Overall, they were able to work with

Democrats, and could best be described as bureaucrats who believed that they could find sensible nonpartisan solutions to society's problems. Ideologically Nixon may have been a moderate Republican, especially by today's standards, but his rhetoric, temperament, and ultimately his obsession with his political battles prevented him from being a truly moderate president. Nixon may not have been in tune with the conservative movement, and was occasionally at odds with some of its leaders and organizations, but his view of loyalty and politics fit within its worldview. Rick Perlstein's series of books on the rise of the Right and American culture forgoes studying the policy battles within the Nixon administration, and instead captures Nixon's role as a cultural figure within the nation's broader ideological struggle of the 1960s and 1970s.²⁰ Nixon was not a product of the Right, but he played a crucial role in seizing on events to divide the nation in a manner that strengthened the conservative movement. When it came to politics, Nixon was a conservative.

This book looks at the culture of criminality surrounding Watergate and why it did not succeed. The instances where Republicans said no to Nixon took place at a moment in time where an older brand of Republicanism still had significant influence within the federal government and American political culture. However, it was also a moment where the core of the Republican Party began to gradually turn away from moderate-tempered Republicans who fashioned themselves as analytics-based experts. Although Watergate was heralded by many in the press as a moment of bipartisan unity, many Nixon loyalists and conservatives saw it as a partisan witch hunt of a Republican president and proof of the media's liberal bias. The president, who had a far from perfect relationship with the conservative movement, became a martyr for the cause, whereas the men who stood up to Nixon were seen by some conservative Republicans as traitors to the cause. It was by no means the only reason many moderates and other civic-minded figures lost influence within the GOP in the latter half of the 1970s, but it was symbolic of a sea change within the party not only on ideological issues but with respect to partisan politics.

In addition to interacting with the broader arguments set forth by histories of the conservative movement, this book expands on the historiography of Richard Nixon, his presidency, and Watergate. Nixon scholarship has largely been shaped by memoirs of former Nixon staffers, journalists who covered the White House, government investigators, and other Watergate veterans.²¹ Aside from the numerous memoirs, a disproportionate amount of the literature has been infused by

present-day politics, taking the Nixon presidency outside of its historical context.

The Nixon revisionists of the late 1980s and 1990s presented an alternative to the early judgments of the Nixon administration, which were initially inspired by the nation's shock over the Watergate scandal. Much of the original wave of Nixon scholarship was driven by emotionally charged journalism, and seized on the public's anger about Watergate. Whether from the immediate reactions of the mainstream press or the best-selling memoirs from figures such as John Dean and Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, the earliest drafts of the history of the Nixon presidency revolved around his abuses of power. Historians, however, are trained to have an almost natural inclination to challenge dominant narratives, especially when they are shaped by journalists. Given the onslaught of negative appraisals of Nixon, it was not surprising that historians began to seek alternative approaches to studying his presidency. Writing in the wake of the Reagan administration's comparatively more consistent attack on New Deal liberalism, scholars began to trumpet Nixon as a figure who may have been the country's last liberal or even progressive president. Most of the first wave of major Nixon biographies that were published in the late 1980s and early 1990s were arguably shaped in various ways by Nixon revisionism. Works such as Stephen E. Ambrose's three-volume biography (1990–91) and Tom Wicker's *One of Us: Richard Nixon and the American Dream* (1991) sought to showcase some of the more positive accomplishments of the Nixon administration as opposed to further investigating Watergate. Wicker's book in particular marked a very noticeable shift for the former *New York Times* columnist/reporter who had gone from being placed on the White House's enemies list for his critiques of the president to encouraging a more forgiving depiction of the Nixon presidency.²²

Following Nixon's death in 1994 and President Clinton's failed attempts at progressive reforms, journalists, political commentators, and historians increasingly argued that the real Nixon bore little resemblance to villainous "Tricky Dick." Rather, liberals should have held the president in high regard for his domestic policy accomplishments, from the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency to the passing of Title IX. In *Nixon's Shadow: The History of an Image*, David Greenberg devotes a chapter to the rise of the liberal Nixon trope within academia. Writing in 2003, Greenberg surveyed the trend and correctly pointed out: "Just as the unsparing Watergate-era judgments of Nixon reflected the spirit of those embattled years, so the verdicts of the

Reagan-era Nixon revisionists reflected, if unconsciously, the temper of their own times.”²³

Perhaps the clearest attack on the earlier Watergate-based depictions of Nixon can be found in Joan Hoff’s revisionist examination of the Nixon presidency, *Nixon Reconsidered*. Published in 1994, the book was originally titled *Nixon without Watergate*, as it argued that historians should look beyond Watergate and instead focus on Nixon’s domestic accomplishments when evaluating his legacy of his presidency. Looking back at Watergate, Hoff argued that the scandal was little more than an extension of the postwar presidency run amok and his crimes were not all that exceptional when compared to other presidents. She argued that Nixon’s domestic achievements far outweighed any of his wrongdoings. “Nixon was so much more than Watergate and Watergate so much more than Nixon that his diehard critics can only simplistically conflate them by resorting to political correctness,” and concluded, “Thus, they continue to lament rather than learn from Watergate and the Age of Nixon.” Hoff, a self-described former New Left critic of Nixon, also targeted those who she believed were simply clinging to the anger from the political battles of the Nixon era. “If anything, those who were (and are) most enraged by Nixon are probably those whose ideal views of themselves in an age of authenticity made them most uncomfortable and possibly vengeful, toward an exposed version of their real inner selves.”²⁴

The revisionist trend continued into the new millennium with scholars such as Dean J. Kotlowski and Melvin Small, each of whom argued for a more nuanced take on the thirty-seventh president, while stressing the importance of his administration’s progressive civil rights record and pragmatic foreign policy.²⁵ Both of their books, along with several others, have made valuable contributions to the ongoing discussion on Nixon’s legacy, but are limited by the fact that they were written before the bulk of the White House tapes were released to the public. With researchers being able to listen to Nixon’s tirades about liberals and the Left, it has now become significantly harder to soften Nixon’s combative side or argue that his legacy should be defined by anything other than his abuses of power.

Despite a steady stream of new revelations about Nixon’s dark side and lagging poll numbers, the revisionist trend has persisted.²⁶ During the George W. Bush years, many media figures and scholars looked at Nixon in a more favorable light, often arguing that Bush’s decision to invade Iraq far exceeded the crimes of Watergate.²⁷ The trend has continued on both sides of the ideological aisle, as Nixon’s wrongdoings

have often been diminished by pundits when attempting to elevate a present-day scandal. One only had to google Hillary Clinton–Nixon or Donald Trump–Nixon during the 2016 election to see that the specifics of Nixon’s downfall are often glossed over in order to make a political argument. One popular meme circulated by conservative media featured an image of Nixon with the heading “I deleted 18 minutes of recordings and had to resign as President.” Below the thirty-seventh president is an image of Hillary Clinton with the caption, “I deleted 30,000 emails and I’m running for President.”²⁸ More often than not, comparisons to Nixon do little to inform or remind the public of the real reasons for the president’s resignation.

Nixon revisionism can also be seen in certain segments of popular culture such as the *Colbert Report* and even in more recent biographies of the thirty-seventh president.²⁹ Published in 2015, Evan Thomas’s *Being Nixon: A Man Divided* recently updated several of the revisionist tropes in an attempt to soften Nixon’s image. Thomas sets himself up as the last person who would have anything nice to say about Nixon, given his background as a part of the liberal media establishment through his many years as a reporter and editor at *Newsweek*. Much like Hoff, Thomas argues against the “cartoon version” of Nixon and, wherever possible, attempts to offer up a more balanced portrayal of the inner workings of the man. “Nixon’s inclination toward the dark side has long been a cliché,” concludes Thomas.³⁰ Although Thomas does not agree that Nixon was a liberal—his domestic achievements are largely described as opportunism—he still attempts to move beyond Nixon’s abuses of power and craft a more generous depiction of the president. Aside from a heavy reliance on pro-Nixon sources (family members, ex-staffers), the book also frequently gives Nixon the benefit of the doubt, and fails to fully confront Nixon’s abuses of power. Instead of focusing on Nixon’s actions, Thomas depicts the president as a tragic figure who simply succumbed to his own personal foibles. “Still, it’s true that Watergate got out of hand in part because Nixon was too shy, too trusting to confront his own staff on exactly what happened and who was to blame . . . He was too averse to conflict and too distracted to tame heedless subordinates.”³¹ It is certainly a worthwhile goal to counteract some of the more simplistic and polemical depictions of Nixon, but Thomas too often resorts to forgiving the president, crafting a narrative that offers up a rehabilitation of sorts.

On the whole, Nixon revisionists do not entirely ignore Watergate, but they still have contributed to a gradual shift away from acknowledging the

exceptional nature of the scandal and the danger that Nixon posed to the federal government. Although some of the Nixon revisionists have provided compelling studies that have added to our understanding of the era, they have also led readers away from fully comprehending just why Nixon had so many critics from both sides of the aisle. Certain strains in Nixon scholarship have been too cautious in their analysis and too reliant on comparisons with other presidents. Nixon's image has especially too often been molded by the disappointments of liberal scholars over the policies of the Reagan, Clinton, Bush, and even Obama administrations. This trend has led historians away from judging Nixon and Watergate by the standards of the thirty-seventh president's era. Stanley J. Kutler recognized the dangers of this trend as early as 1987, during a high-profile conference for Nixon scholars at Hofstra University. After presentations by figures such as Stephen Ambrose and Joan Hoff, Kutler argued against those who felt that domestic initiatives such as the Family Assistance Plan deserved more attention than Watergate: "We are, to some extent, in danger of forgetting—not forgetting Richard Nixon, but forgetting what he did and what he symbolized to his contemporaries. History, after all, is not just what the present wishes to make of the past for its own purposes. Historians must judge the past by the standards of that past, not their own."³²

Kutler also directly addressed arguments made by scholars that Watergate was simply the culmination of the postwar imperial presidency, a continuation of a longer history of abuses of power conducted by prior presidents. He conceded that Watergate showed that the "Nation would tolerate an imperial president, but not an imperious one," but that claiming that every postwar president broke the law in a similar fashion ignored the exceptional nature of Nixon's presidency. "Watergate still happened," argued Kutler, who concluded his remarks with a statement on Nixon's legacy. "What did he do? Watergate is both the shortest and the longest answer."³³

Kutler's remarks from more than thirty years ago still ring true because they offer up a seemingly obvious but necessary rebuttal to those who seek to look beyond Watergate. The argument is even more pertinent given the rise of comparisons of Nixon to recent presidents. These comparisons make for compelling debates and may even help academics track certain historical trends from the 1970s to today, but the not-as-bad-as Reagan/Clinton/Bush/Obama/Trump approach often leads to poor historical judgments. One can certainly make the argument that a certain policy or scandal did more damage to the nation than Watergate, or that Nixon is not the worst president in American

history, but that does not erase the fact that the Nixon White House posed a clear and well-documented threat to the U.S. Constitution. Taken together with the substantial amount of literature devoted to Watergate-related conspiracies that tend to present Nixon's resignation as the end result of a secret deep-state coup, the revisionist scholars have contributed to leading the public away from a moment in American history that transcended traditional ideological battles.³⁴

While many scholars grew weary of Watergate in the 1990s, Kutler's *Abuse of Power: The New Nixon Tapes* (1998) demonstrated that there was still much to learn from the scandal. Kutler presented numerous transcripts of the infamous tapes that displayed Nixon's guilt on several fronts, extending beyond the Watergate cover-up. The book was a product of Kutler's lengthy legal battle with the federal government. As a result of Kutler's settlement with the National Archives, the tapes began to be released to the public, dramatically altering the sources that are accessible to Nixon historians. After years of resistance from Richard Nixon and his estate, the National Archives was now forced to let the public hear the recordings that forced his resignation. Whereas the revisionist historians of the 1990s were working primarily from textual documents, the tapes have now offered researchers thousands of hours of conversations from the White House and Camp David.

Through continued pressure from Nixon scholars such as Stanley Kutler and the efforts of the Nixon Library's first federal director, Timothy Naftali, to accelerate the release of the tapes, nearly 3,000 out of 3,700 hours of conservations were made available to the public between 1996 and 2013. Despite the release of the tapes, very few have taken full advantage of this treasure trove of recordings. Instead, most have primarily relied on textual records to evaluate the Nixon presidency. There is certainly much to learn from the textual files, but the tapes offer up a raw, uncensored take on the Nixon White House, one that clearly shows the divisions between some of the more civic-minded officials in the administration and the president. While Nixon's defenders often focus on the size of the collection and insist that the "tapes can be excerpted or taken out of context to 'prove' just about anything," one cannot ignore the totality of Nixon's misdeeds and his broader views on governance that can be heard on the recordings.³⁵ Collectively, the White House tapes challenge some of the more forgiving takes that have shaped some of the more common narratives about Nixon.

Installed in February 1971, Nixon's voice-activated taping system recorded private conversations in several different offices inside the White

House, and was later expanded to capture the president's conversations at Camp David. The recording devices were a secret to everyone inside of the White House with the exception of the president, Haldeman, Nixon's aide Alexander Butterfield, and the Secret Service staff who helped maintain the system. The overwhelming majority of the people captured on the tapes, including key administration figures such as John Ehrlichman and National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, had no idea they were being recorded. The system was quickly taken down in July 1973 shortly after the public first learned about the president's secret taping system during Butterfield's Senate Watergate hearing testimony.

Over the last two decades, the White House tapes have given researchers unprecedented access to the Oval Office, allowing everyone the chance to listen to Nixon's private discussions regarding everything from Vietnam to his thoughts on popular culture such as the 1970s sitcom *All in the Family*. Between the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and the work of outside scholars, the entire collection can be found online. Anyone can easily find some of the more lurid conversations through a simple YouTube search that will pull up tapes that feature the president sounding drunk, ranting about student protestors, or making blatantly racist and anti-Semitic statements. This level of access has left historians wrestling with how to properly use the tapes to situate his presidency within the era of the postwar imperial president. From FDR to LBJ, presidents recorded their private conversations inside of the White House, but unlike Nixon, their systems were not voice-activated. The sizes of their secret White House recordings varied, but they were much more selective with regard to which conversations they recorded for history. Because of Watergate, Nixon never had a chance to fully review and edit his collection for future generations. As a result, no other president has left us with such an unvarnished look into their day-to-day operations. While this does place Nixon at a clear disadvantage when compared to other presidents, historians must also acknowledge that this does not excuse Nixon from his actions. Instead of explaining away Watergate by focusing on other presidents, the Nixon tapes should force historians to fully confront Watergate. By doing so, scholars will be better equipped to not only explain the Nixon presidency, but also better address past, present, and future abuses of power.

Those who defend Nixon have frequently dismissed the White House tapes as a collection of moments where the president was simply letting off steam. White House aides were in fact often adept at handling and eventually ignoring many of the president's more unorthodox requests.

In a 1987 oral history, Ehrlichman compared Nixon's rants to the Queen of Hearts in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, demands that he and his colleagues usually ignored.³⁶ There were in fact many instances where some of Nixon's closest aides chose not to follow through on some of his more sinister orders. "And there were times he'd get up in the night and couldn't sleep, and so I recognized the phone call was just handholding . . . There were times when I knew I couldn't and shouldn't," remembered Charles "Chuck" Colson, who served as special counsel to the president from 1969 to 1973. "If I sensed that it was one of those middle of the night deals where he was just ranting, I'd let him rant and listen." He added, "There were many times when I did not do what he said and got the person involved who should stop him."³⁷

What Colson and other close advisers to the president often underplayed in their later recollections of their time in the White House was the fact that there were also instances where they carried out some of Nixon's more questionable orders. Figures like Colson may have attempted to delay and distract the president when it came to some of his unethical requests, but they also aided and abetted his dark side throughout his presidency. If Nixon brought up one of his more questionable orders on a repeated basis, and not just during a single rant, there were those, like Colson, who were more than willing to carry out the president's wishes.

The officials who said no also attempted to avoid confrontations with the president, as they hoped to maintain a diplomatic relationship with Nixon. The main difference between these officials and the president's men was their collective moral compass. Despite their initial sense of loyalty to the president, they all reached a point where they felt that they had no choice but to resist his orders.

This book uses the tapes as a key primary source in order to better document the Nixon presidency and reveal the overwhelming pressure that administration officials faced when dealing with the White House's illegal orders. It is not my goal to only focus on a few conversations where the president was at his absolute worst. Rather, this study of the Nixon presidency uses the tapes to highlight persistent attempts to expand the powers of the presidency, often in hopes of punishing political opponents. While this book will include plenty of colorful, lewd, and offensive segments from the tapes, there is an overriding emphasis on the numerous conversations that show the White House's protracted efforts to "screw" their enemies.

Most Nixon scholars have made little use of the tapes to further investigate the totality of Nixon's abuses of power and the culture that

led to Watergate. Even among books that have incorporated the tapes into their narratives of the Nixon White House, too many have focused on the minutiae of the Watergate scandal or details surrounding the administration's foreign policy. Whether it is John Dean's recent book *The Nixon Defense*, voluminous collections of transcripts on the Watergate break-in/cover-up, or even books driven by conspiracy theories about Nixon's downfall, too many scholars have been too caught up in either explaining or debunking every single detail of the traditional Watergate narrative.³⁸ Focusing only on the time period between the break-in and the president's resignation obscures and diminishes the decisions that the president made prior to the arrest of the Watergate burglars in the early morning hours of June 17, 1972. It is partially this overemphasis on such a narrow time period that has led many to conclude that Watergate is a well-worn subject.

In addition to Kutler's work, Weiner's 2015 book on the Nixon presidency, *One Man against the World: The Tragedy of Richard Nixon*, and Ken Hughes's invaluable work on Nixon and Vietnam have both recently used the tapes to further explore the Nixon presidency. With a heavy emphasis on Nixon's foreign policy, they are among the very few authors who have taken advantage of recently released materials to uncover new information.³⁹ John A. Farrell's *Richard Nixon: The Life*, the most recent stab at a definitive Nixon biography, also makes excellent use of Nixon's presidential archives. While the book adopts an occasionally forgiving tone toward the thirty-seventh president, it does not brush aside the president's dark side.⁴⁰ For example, the book received a wave of publicity for uncovering a note from H. R. Haldeman that stated that Nixon had instructed him to find a secret way to "monkey wrench" peace negotiations in Vietnam during the final days of the 1968 campaign.⁴¹ Historians had for many years speculated about the Nixon campaign's efforts to block President Johnson's attempts to negotiate a peace settlement, but Farrell's discovery brought scholars significantly closer to fully confronting one of Nixon's darkest moments.⁴²

This book builds off of the work of these and others who have recognized the importance of the White House tapes and other recently released documents in exploring the depths of the Nixon presidency. The tapes provide scholars with much more than just anti-Semitic or racist sound bites—they are a valuable resource that further informs us on Nixon's worldview, and how he viewed both his political enemies and the moderates who refused to do his bidding.

In addition to the Nixon tapes, this book relies on textual documents from the Richard Nixon Presidential Library, the Watergate Special Prosecution Force files, the private papers of the individuals who resisted the president's orders, memoirs, oral histories, and recent interviews with Nixon administration officials. There are inherent limits to oral histories and other accounts of the era, but they have provided extremely valuable insider accounts of the Nixon administration. Most importantly, their memories of the individuals who opposed the president serve as a counterpoint to Nixon's rants about them on the tapes. Those memories, when balanced out with archival sources, further document the dissent that existed within the administration prior to Watergate.

Johnnie Walters's aforementioned refusal to audit political enemies in the summer and fall of 1972 provides the central story of the first chapter. Despite enormous pressure from John Ehrlichman, Walters protected the IRS from becoming a political arm of the White House. Soon after Nixon's special counsel John Dean met with the commissioner to hand over the White House's enemies list, with special instructions to initiate audits, Walters took the list to George Shultz and stated that he would not carry out the order. Shultz supported the decision to say no to the White House and encouraged Walters to do nothing with the list, thereby blocking the White House's attempt to control the nation's tax system. Aside from their rejection of the enemies list, both Shultz and Walters were independent figures within the administration and had previously stood up to the White House in smaller ways.

The first chapter also looks at the history of the relationship between Nixon and the IRS, dating back to the first year of his presidency. Through tracking the White House's many attempts to politicize the IRS, along with the president's increasing desires to control the agency, one can better appreciate Shultz and Walters's courageous actions. The IRS was a central component of Nixon's plans for his second term, and their shared opposition to the president prevented the IRS from engaging in systematic abuses of power. Aside from Walters's memoir and a few historians of the IRS who have mentioned Walters's stand in passing, this is the first full account of the commissioner's decision to not audit the White House's enemies.⁴³ Due to the cloud surrounding Watergate, many have understandably assumed that wide-scale audits on political opponents took place during the Nixon years. The story of Johnnie Walters and George Shultz is a corrective to that broader

assumption, while also showing just how close the White House came to controlling the IRS.

The second chapter looks at how officials within the Office of Management and Budget stopped Nixon's attempt to cut federal funds to universities due to the presence of antiwar protests. While the enemies list project was arguably the most dangerous plot, Nixon's attempt to strip federal subsidies to elite schools was the plan that was the most representative of the cultural chasm between the president and the moderates within his administration. This section will look at the creation of the OMB under Nixon, its impact on the federal government, its internal culture, and most importantly the moment where three assistant directors within the OMB refused to carry out the president's plan to punish the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Soon after the order was passed down, Kenneth Dam, William Morrill, and Paul O'Neill bypassed the current leadership within the OMB and went to their former boss George Shultz, who was then secretary of the treasury. After they told the secretary they would rather resign than carry out the order, Shultz agreed with their stance and told them there was no need to resign. The order was never carried out and Shultz once again helped block Nixon's order. With the exception of an oral history from Paul O'Neill and a memoir from William Morrill, very little has been published about Nixon's MIT order. This chapter uncovers entirely new materials that further add to the public's understanding of Nixon's contempt for the antiwar movement of the Vietnam era.

The second chapter also analyzes Nixon's obsession with the Ivy League establishment and its influence, both within academia and his administration. He was determined to create what he often referred to as a "new establishment," and lessen the influence of the academic elites across the federal government. As the largest recipient of federal aid, and a site of substantial antiwar protests, MIT was the president's number-one target. As historians such as Margaret O'Mara have shown, MIT was just one of many schools who became intertwined with the nation's postwar military industrial complex.⁴⁴ This chapter will explore the history of MIT's relationship with the federal government, the protests that occurred during the Vietnam era, and how the institution's approach to dissent angered the president. As an alumnus of MIT, Shultz was a product of the academic culture that Nixon detested. Shultz's efforts to protect federal aid to universities pitted him against his successor at OMB, the more loyal and more conservative Caspar Weinberger. As the new director of the OMB, and later as the head of

the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW), Weinberger took preliminary steps to initiate the president's plan in late 1972 and early 1973. The plan was never fully carried out, but looking at the details of Weinberger's actions presents an important comparison with the resistance of Shultz and others within the OMB.

Elliot Richardson's iconic refusal to fire the Watergate special prosecutor, Archibald Cox, is arguably the most famous instance of an administration official saying no to President Nixon. Richardson's resignation, which was quickly followed by Deputy William Ruckelshaus's decision to resign, was soon dubbed the Saturday Night Massacre and marked a turning point in the public's overall perception of Nixon and Watergate. However, it was also an extension of the culture that shaped similar decisions made by those within the IRS and the OMB. The last two chapters examine Richardson's time in the Nixon administration, his quiet battles with the White House, and how those experiences helped shape his decision to resign in protest during the Saturday Night Massacre. This last section also emphasizes the importance of his staff—in the State Department, HEW, the Pentagon, and the Justice Department—in supporting and pushing the loyal Richardson to stand up to the White House. After four years of being a fairly loyal soldier within the Nixon administration, the establishment Republican from Massachusetts reached his breaking point with the Saturday Night Massacre. It was what transformed him from being a yes man to someone who said no to the president.

In many ways, Richardson embodied the culture of the Ivy League establishment that Nixon was determined to destroy. His place within the administration was often tenuous, but he consistently proved to be a valuable asset for the White House, giving Nixon more credibility with both moderates and liberals. Furthermore, Richardson was mostly loyal to Nixon on the larger issues, and kept his private disagreements with the White House to himself. This combination of credibility and loyalty led to Nixon's decision to appoint Richardson as attorney general in the midst of the growing Watergate scandal. The decision vastly underestimated Richardson's integrity and eventually resulted in a direct confrontation between the Justice Department and the president. Richardson's dramatic resignation during the Saturday Night Massacre marked the moment that the moderates could no longer remain silent in their dissent. The events surrounding the Saturday Night Massacre have been covered in several memoirs and histories of the Watergate, with Ken Gormley's biography of Archibald Cox, *Archibald Cox: Conscience of a Nation*, offering up the crisis's most thorough recounting.⁴⁵

Even though Richardson's time as attorney general was closely watched by reporters in the summer and fall of 1973, and became a part of Watergate lore, there is still much to learn about the man and his relationship with the thirty-seventh president. The last section of this book offers up the first detailed account of Richardson's relationship with Nixon, and his flexible role within the administration. Relying on Richardson's personal papers and interviews with some of his closest advisers, this last section takes on a traditional narrative and fleshes it out with Richardson's closely guarded perspective on the events that led to Nixon's resignation.

During the initial stages of this project, I gained firsthand experience dealing with the politics surrounding Nixon's legacy, and the persistence of the campaign to rehabilitate his presidency. This project is deeply informed by my time working for the National Archives at the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum in Yorba Linda, California. Originally opened in 1990 as a privately run facility paid for by Nixon allies, the Nixon Library became a part of the federal presidential library system in 2007. This agreement between the private Nixon Foundation and the National Archives led to the library obtaining Nixon's White House records, materials that had been seized by the federal government in the wake of Watergate due to fears that Nixon and his aides would tamper with the materials. I first joined the Nixon Library as a graduate student intern, giving school tours to a wide range of school groups, from kindergarten classes to senior citizens. Working with the library's Education Department, I learned how to lead nonpartisan tours through a museum that was at the time made up of exhibits that were created by Nixon loyalists in 1990. Explaining the life and times of Richard Nixon in front of exhibits that aggressively defended his legacy made me intensely aware of the politics surrounding the Nixon era and public history. Discussing Nixon's abuses of power with students, when pro-Nixon docents, Nixon Foundation employees, and Nixon White House alum were sometimes in the vicinity, was a constant reminder that the thirty-seventh president's legacy is still contested and far from settled.⁴⁶

I was hired in January 2011 as the special assistant to the director of the library. Timothy Naftali, a Cold War historian, who became the library's first federal director in 2007, was then in the final stages of putting together the museum's new nonpartisan Watergate Gallery. Written by Nixon loyalists, the library's previous Watergate exhibit was taken down in 2007 due to its polemical tone. For seventeen years, museum visitors were presented with an outright defense of Nixon that

was meant to convince readers that Watergate was a coup carried out by the president's enemies to reverse his landslide victory over Senator George S. McGovern in 1972. Facing stiff resistance from the Nixon Foundation, and at times his supervisors within the National Archives, Naftali navigated the library through treacherous waters that at several points could have compromised the historical veracity of the exhibit. The exhibit opened in March 2011 and offered museum visitors a full-fledged look at the Watergate scandal, starting at the release of the Pentagon Papers and ending with the Frost-Nixon interviews. Whereas the previous exhibit had glossed over the details of Nixon's crimes, the new exhibit allowed the public to explore the multitude of evidence that brought down the president. With the opening of the new exhibit, students can now listen to uncensored segments of the White House tapes and listen to the president attempt to obstruct justice during the Watergate cover-up.⁴⁷ My research was born out of this experience: while I contributed to the Watergate exhibit, I learned more about the stories of the Republicans who said no to Nixon. The exhibit, which includes an oral history snippet with George Shultz discussing his refusal to have the IRS audit political enemies, convinced me that there was still much to uncover about Nixon's abuses of power.

Naftali left the Nixon Library in November 2011, but I stayed in Yorba Linda until 2014, assisting the library's interim directors and continuing to work with our office's Education Department. After a year where the library opened the new Watergate exhibit, formally declassified the Pentagon Papers, released Nixon's Grand Jury testimony, and hosted its first nonpartisan academic conference, I expected the National Archives to continue to promote nonpartisan public history with the appointment of an independent-minded historian to lead the library.

Instead, the search for a director dragged on for more than three years. A major cause for the delay was the Nixon Foundation's unwillingness to accept a candidate who had been openly critical of Nixon in the past. For nearly a year, the Nixon Foundation refused to meet with the National Archives's leading candidate, Vietnam War historian Mark Atwood Lawrence, due to his prior scholarly work that critiqued Nixon. Combined with the Archivist of the United States David Ferriero's refusal to make an appointment without the Nixon Foundation's approval, the foundation won out and Lawrence dropped out as the lead candidate in the summer of 2013. In the end, a mainstream Vietnam War historian was too much for the Nixon Foundation to handle and for the National Archives to support.⁴⁸ That same year, I was told that the Nixon

Foundation was complaining to my supervisor that my research was “anti-Nixon.” I sometimes felt that I was living my dissertation research, as the complaints of the Nixon Foundation about a low-ranking government employee echoed Nixon’s obsession with punishing bureaucrats within his administration. With the library rapidly losing the influence it had built up in terms of its control over the museum and public programming, I decided to leave the Nixon Library and accept a job offer from the Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives at New York University, where Naftali had become the director.

The library eventually hired Naftali’s successor in January 2015: Michael Ellzey, an assistant city manager from nearby Irvine who had accumulated plenty of experience at managing public-private partnerships. While most of the presidential libraries are led by either historians or archivists, Ellzey’s selection signaled that the National Archives and the Nixon Foundation could not come to a consensus on a trained Nixon expert. “I think what they’re trying to do is get managers,” said Ronald Walker, a former Nixon aide and chairman of the Nixon Foundation. He added, “You have enough researchers at the National Archives.”⁴⁹ The selection was made as the library and the foundation were preparing to update their museum galleries, with the latter raising \$15 million for the project while also taking the lead in crafting the content. Leading the fundraising effort was Fred V. Malek, a longtime Republican operative and former Nixon White House aide. Malek’s career was later tarnished by the discovery that he participated in providing a list of Jewish employees in the Bureau of Labor Statistics in the summer of 1971. Unlike the main characters of this project, Malek followed through on one of Nixon’s unethical orders, as the initiative was the product of one of the president’s frequent anti-Semitic outbursts.⁵⁰ At the opening ceremony for the new museum galleries, Malek was one of several featured speakers. “We are so proud . . . in creating this magnificent new library, the new exhibits, which tell the story and totality of the man who was a great president.” He added that it was time to “start to repay a debt of honor to this great man.” In honor of his fundraising efforts, the newly renovated Nixon Library now has a theater named after Malek and his wife.⁵¹

The Nixon Foundation also hired another Nixon White House aide, Dwight Chapin, and one of the president’s ghostwriters for his memoir, Frank Gannon, as consultants who contributed to the museum’s renovation process.⁵² Chapin was notably one of several White House staff members who was sent to prison after being convicted of perjury when

he lied to a grand jury during the Watergate cover-up. During a May 2017 appearance at the Nixon Library to promote his latest book on Nixon, former Nixon speechwriter and conservative commentator Patrick J. Buchanan thanked the two consultants for their work on the new museum: “[I have] just been on a tour of the library now that Frank Gannon and others, and Dwight Chapin and others and [CEO and president of the Nixon Foundation] Bill [Baribault] have really fixed it up.”⁵³

Unsurprisingly, the new museum galleries maintained a strong defense of Nixon’s presidency. Thanks to the role that the National Archives played in editing the galleries, the overall tone of the museum had considerably softened when compared to the exhibits that were crafted in 1990. Gone are the exhibits that leveled petty attacks on the Kennedys, Woodward and Bernstein, and other liberal icons of the era. Still, the new galleries collectively seek to rescue Nixon’s reputation from Watergate, Vietnam, and all of the negative stories that have shaped mainstream public’s perception of his presidency.

The reopening of the museum in October 2016 ushered in the rebranded “New Nixon Library” and was praised by both local and national media outlets, which mostly focused on the technological innovations that would bring the Nixon era to life for millennials. “Our goal is honesty,” stated Christopher Cox, the president’s grandson. “Now the museum isn’t just better. It’s state of the art.”⁵⁴ The few articles that mentioned the contentious institutional history of the library zeroed in on the seeming willingness to adopt a more even-handed approach. Based on the inclusion of exhibits that allowed visitors to view a selection of the president’s archival records and come to their own conclusions regarding some of his more controversial decisions, the new galleries were presented as balanced. “People can take it all in and then make up their minds about his legacy,” said John Barr, treasurer of the Nixon Foundation.⁵⁵ Reports often overlooked the pro-Nixon framing of the new galleries, choosing to focus more on a narrative of reconciliation than one of contestation. The *OC Register* declared that the library had “made peace with its past,” and praised the museum for “morphing into the kind of jewel that suits both Orange County and a presidential museum.”⁵⁶

The new museum opens with an introductory film that begins with Nixon’s resignation, but does not include any real explanation of why he chose to do so. There are no details when it comes to Watergate, only news clips that feature the Watergate burglars, a very brief mention of the cover-up, a few segments from Nixon’s prime-time resignation speech, and a heavy emphasis on Nixon’s distaste for giving up. “He would not

quit,” says Patrick Buchanan, one of the film’s main talking heads alongside figures such as Henry Kissinger and scholars like Evan Thomas and Mark Updegrave. The museum galleries open with an exhibit on “The Sixties” with the subtitle “A Nation in Turmoil.” The exhibit offers useful short descriptions of some of the major events and movements of the era, but the visuals place a heavy emphasis on the chaos of the era. Much like his 1968 presidential campaign, Nixon is shown to be a law and order candidate, but one who stressed unity over politics. In the exhibit, Nixon is not a part of the culture wars of the era. Instead, he is above the fray. One panel features a selection from Nixon’s first inaugural address. “We cannot learn from one another until we stop shouting at one another.” The 2011 Watergate exhibit survived the museum’s renovation untouched, but whereas it used to sit at the end of the museum, visitors now walk by the president and the First Lady sitting inside their helicopter with a recording of the First Lady recalling, “It’s so sad. It’s so sad.” The museum quickly transitions from Watergate to Nixon’s hard-luck childhood. The very next room features an exhibit “Back to the Beginning” that seeks to evoke compassion, as we learn about the president’s humble beginnings in Southern California alongside a photo of a young Nixon with his father at the family’s general store. While the tone of the new galleries is not nearly as strident as what was produced in the 1990s, Nixon’s final campaign lives on in the halls of the museum.

The recent history of the Nixon Library shows that the legacy of Richard Nixon is still contested ground and deeply tied to present-day politics. Even though debates surrounding Nixon are without a doubt more heated in Orange County, they are still firmly a part of our political culture. Although much has been written about Watergate, focusing on the moderates who said no to Nixon provides a new and deeper level of understanding about the president’s downfall. Taken together, they provide a valuable reminder that acts of opposition to the president’s abuses of power were not based purely on partisan politics. Those who refused to carry out Nixon’s orders came from an older brand of Republicanism that placed a higher value on nonpartisan analytical thinking and a more ethical approach to governance. Watergate was not simply an extension of the deep-seated political divisions of the era; it was a very real test of the nation’s democracy. These arguments about Watergate are not entirely new, but one gains a deeper insight into the constitutional crisis of the era by learning about the Republicans who said no to Nixon.