Richard Milhous Nixon: From A Well Respected Politician To A Disgraced President

From a well respected politician to a disgraced president, former president Richard Milhous Nixon had a vision for the future of America and for the American people. However, it would all come crumbling down when the exposition of corruption in his administration came to light to the public.

During his time as president, he displayed an exorbitant amount of sabotage, deception, and cover-ups. A perfect exemplification of Niccolo Machiavelli's three basic principles on being a good leader. Machiavelli’s book The Prince is a guide for leaders, it has influenced many great and horrible leaders and has been a standing point of political power. President Nixon represents a “Machiavellian prince”, in Oliver Stone’s film Nixon, he incorporates Machiavelli’s three important key points in how to stay in power and being a good leader by doing questionable acts, such as learning how not to be good, not worrying about people saying you are cruel, and not always keeping your word. On June 17, 1972 the police apprehended five men in the Watergate complex, the Democratic National Committee headquarters in Washington, DC. The five men were part of a secret organization called the plumbers led by Nixon's advisers and indirectly led by Nixon to help fix the leaks of information which Nixon did not want the public to know and to help Nixon win the re-election. They were charged with attempted burglary and possession of implements of crime.

During the Watergate investigation, fearing his implication in the scandal, Nixon fired the special prosecutor and abolished the office, and also accepted the resignations of the attorney general and deputy attorney general. This mass purge would be later known as “The Saturday Night Massacre” due to the unethical and cruel way to silence an individual. Niccolo Machiavelli refers to a prince who must show authority, sometimes through cruel or wrongful manners. In one of his statements, '... a man who wishes to act entirely up to his professions of virtue soon meets with what destroys him among so much that is evil' (Machiavelli). Machiavelli describes how a prince will become condemned if he constantly aspires to be generous and admirable. This is especially important to politicians because if they keep trying to be the good guy and making empty promises then they will eventually ruin themselves. Whether or this applies to Nixon is debatable.

Nixon made promises during his term as president to end the Vietnam War and eventually succeeded on January 23, 1973. Nixon’s abuse of authority was to keep his presidency and to continue on as president of the United States. As Machiavelli describes in his book, “... not to diverge from the good if he can avoid doing so, but, if compelled, then to know how to set about it” (Machiavelli). In other words, Machiavelli believes that a prince must understand how to adapt to certain situations even if that means being immoral if it's within the best interest of his principality. Being a Machiavellian means to have a mindset of an unscrupulous and cunning individual willing to make sacrifices for the betterment of his country and his people. Nixon used “dirty tactics” in order for the pieces to fall under his favor. Not only for his county but also to salvage his reputation and his career.

On March 18, 1969 against the plea from his advisers, Nixon authorized a secret bombing raid

in Cambodia in order to intimidate Vietnam. To adapt Niccolo Machiavelli's Policies, one must learn to be callous as it is a necessary evil to keep the peace. From the perspective of Nixon, the bombing of Cambodia although an excessive reaction. Through the eyes of Nixon, it was fundamental to keep America's reputation as a powerful country. Machiavelli mainly focuses on evil features more because they would help to advance the power of the prince. He states, "... a prince, so long as he keeps his subjects united and loyal, ought not to mind the reproach of cruelty…"(Machiavelli). The less the public knows, the better the outcome. Machiavelli's concept that a prince must be willing to require any extreme step so as to preserve his power.