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Study Shows Nixon Supported Abroad Despite Watergate

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 9 — A worldwide survey by correspondents of The New York Times in the last week has indicated that although foreign leaders and public figures now seem to take the Watergate scandal more seriously than they did a few months ago, the affair has not so far cut deeply into their widespread support for Mr. Nixon's course in foreign policy.

Nor does their concern thus far match the apprehension voiced in Washington. Henry A. Kissinger and other Administration officials have openly expressed foreboding recently that if Watergate seriously weakens Mr. Nixon's standing at home over a long period, foreign confidence in the implementation of Mr. Nixon's foreign policy goals will inevitably be undermined.

A similar survey was conducted by The Times in May and the response then showed that overseas criticism of Mr. Nixon was light and that foreign relations did not appear to have suffered any significant damage. At that time, American officials seemed more confident than they do now that Watergate could be isolated from foreign affairs.

Since May, criticism of Mr.

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Nixon seems to have increased abroad — particularly of his refusal to turn over the White House tapes. The foreign press has been preponderantly critical of Mr. Nixon, except in a few isolated cases, such as the conservative newspaper *Le Figaro* of Paris, which said of Mr. Nixon that "there will come a moment when the versatile American democracy will be thankful to him" for holding

The Watergate revelations, combined with America's economic problems, have produced a considerable amount of lamenting abroad about the state of American society. But this has been balanced by widespread admiration for the way that the American press and Congress have exposed the scandals.

As might be expected, interpretations of Watergate have been filtered through the national experiences of the beholders.

In South Korea, and in other Asian countries, for instance, officials asked why a suitable face-saving compromise had not been struck. In Argentina, with her own political crisis, Watergate has received less attention than in Britain and Canada, where it has remained a major news story.

Some Major Conclusions

Among major conclusions drawn from the study are the following:

¶A chief focus of concern is that Congress will pre-empt the President's powers in foreign policy. This is particularly disconcerting in Western Europe where the allies fear Congress will order a unilateral cut in the American force in Europe. In South Vietnam, President Nguyen Van Thieu has expressed concern lest Congress cut back on foreign aid to his country.

¶Although Watergate is taken more seriously now than in May, Soviet and Chinese leaders still require that their media ignore Watergate as much as possible. Neither Peking nor Moscow wants to tarnish Mr. Nixon's image because they have both based their foreign policies on good relations with his Administration. The Russians have printed only a few, noncritical reports. The Chinese have not mentioned Watergate at all in their media.

¶There has been no sign that Watergate has crippled any ongoing negotiations or otherwise set back normal diplomatic business. Mr. Nixon, in fact, has seemed to go out of his way to meet foreign leaders in this period, ranging from Leonid I. Brezhnev, the Soviet Communist party leader, to the Shah of Iran, and including Premier Kakuei Tanaka of Japan, Prime Minister Gough Whitlam of Australia, and President Bernard Bongo of Gabon.

¶Despite the cloud over Mr. Nixon's reputation, he still plans to visit Europe this fall or — if preliminary negotiations are not finished — early next year. And there has been no indication that any of the European countries want to withdraw the welcome mat.

In Washington, State Department officials have reported growing anxiety among foreign public figures about the impact of Watergate on the President's ability to conduct foreign affairs.

'A State of Mind

"There's nothing tangible to point to yet," one top official said. "Rather, it's a state of mind."

"If this thing continues unchecked for another six months," he went on "you'll see a real impact in foreign countries. Foreigners are now reacting like most Americans did earlier this year."

Mr. Kissinger, Mr. Nixon's adviser on national security, has noted a certain ebbing of interest in foreign affairs by the public because of Watergate, and has called on Americans of all political persuasions not to let Watergate become "an excuse for abandoning our international responsibilities."

In a speech last week, Mr. Kissinger said that "no foreign policy — no matter how ingenious — has any chance of success if it is born in the minds of a few and carried in the hearts of none."

Privately, he has told friends that he does not believe the full impact of Watergate will be felt in foreign relations for at least a year. As a result, he believes there is still time to repair the erosion already caused.

Washington officials tend to believe that foreigners, caught up with their own domestic problems, have been much slower to respond to the possible effect of Watergate than have Americans.

A selective nation-by-nation rundown follows:

Britain

British officials are probably more concerned about Watergate than any other ally, but this concern has had no apparent effect on day-to-day diplomatic business.

In long-range terms, British anxieties lie in three areas — trade, money and troops. Officials fear that Mr. Nixon's loss of influence in Congress will make it difficult for him to get the kind of flexible trade bill he is seeking. On monetary matters, the British are nervous about the ability of the Administration to handle economic crises at home. On troops, they are worried about his ability to hold off Congressional demands for unilateral withdrawals from Europe.

A recent article in the *Eve-*

ning Standard attributed to sources close to Prime Minister Heath attracted considerable attention. It said:

"What clearly worries Heath at present is Watergate.

"At all levels of Government, British ministers and officials are finding Washington paralyzed and this is dangerous in every sphere. President Nixon's authority is simply gone. And until stability is restored, the dollar will be weak."

Whether the accuracy of these comments are accepted or not, they do reflect the mood in London, where the press is pulling no punches on Mr. Nixon. *The Spectator*, an ideologically conservative weekly, said recently that "a collective irresponsibility amounting to a collective madness appears to have infected almost everyone high enough up in the Nixon Administration." It added that "only Nixon must be the source of the cancer."

West Germany

Relations with Washington have proceeded at an accelerated pace in recent weeks, underscoring that Watergate had not paralyzed American Foreign-policy machinery. Foreign Minister Walter Scheel and Defense Minister Georg Leber have both been to Washington.

Over-all, opinions have remained about the same as in the spring. Those who always thought Mr. Nixon was a tricky scoundrel still think so. And those who think he should be respected because he is head of Germany's leading ally, still think so.

German media coverage has been high. Recently *Der Spiegel's* cover carried a picture of Mr. Nixon wearing earphones plugged to the stars of the American flag, and a headline reading, "Nixon Finished?"

The chief concern in Bonn is over the troop situation, with most Germans worried about possible Congressional action to force a unilateral cutback. But one official said that West Germany was confident Mr. Nixon could hold off Congress now that negotiations with the Russians on mutual cutbacks were scheduled to begin in October, a view shared by Washington.

France

Officials, businessmen and other public figures have begun to take Watergate seriously as a development of historical impact, undeniably important though still impossible to assess, and not—as they first believed—just the latest caper of the silly season that would soon be forgotten.

Although the Government avoids all comment, privately officials acknowledge that Watergate is being heavily analyzed, with a search for clues to where it will lead. But so far, the search has been frustrating, and French-American relations are continuing as if Watergate did not exist.

Mr. Nixon's image has been tarnished somewhat, but there is also some tendency among commentators to sympathize with him as a victim of the electronic age or of modern idealistic expectations.

There has been some slackening in press interest recently because the French feel a certain sense of impropriety in politics being allowed to interfere with the August vacation season. Some Frenchmen say they have stopped following Watergate because they cannot keep up with all the players and all the details.

France remains unenthusiastic about Mr. Nixon's new European policy, but is going ahead with discussions about his planned visit. The real concern seems to involve the economic and trade problems facing the Atlantic alliance, and Watergate definitely adds to the uncertainty.

Soviet Union

Soviet officials and journalists who were slow to take Watergate seriously at first now realize it is a major scandal. They appear increasingly worried that any loss of stature or power by Mr. Nixon will be translated into a loss for Mr. Brezhnev's policy of improved relations with the United States because the Soviet party leader has tied that policy so closely to his relations with Mr. Nixon.

These comments are made only in private because the Soviet media have suppressed virtually all news about Watergate. As a result of Mr. Brezhnev's June visit to Washington, Soviet-American relations are going ahead independent of Watergate.

Russians, even some of the most sophisticated, do not understand the American system well, and are uneasy about the new assertiveness of Congress and the aggressiveness of the press. They prefer to deal with a neat, solidified, and more unified White House.

Canada

Opinion makers seem more and more revolted with the Watergate revelations, and it is hard to find any public defense of Mr. Nixon. A common Canadian attitude was expressed the other day by a banker in Montreal who said, "We never understood why you people elected Nixon in the first place. He's not a Canadian type at all."

Ironically, the over-all image of the United States seems stronger because of the role of its press.

Canadians, however, have used the Watergate affair as an argument against changing to a republican form of government. Many say that Watergate is a good reason to steer

an independent course in political and economic areas.

Japan

Japanese Government officials continue to give the impression that the Watergate scandal has affected their attitudes toward the United States only marginally, if at all. Newspapers have become more critical, but media coverage has slackened and public interest is passive in a country accustomed to political scandal.

Some commentators have expressed concern about the relative weakening of the President in relations with Congress.

Asahi Shimbun expressed the fear that "such a change will not only make the settlement of the Indochina problem more difficult, but also will bind the hands of the President concerning various internal policies."

A high official in the American Embassy said that he had found no perceptible changes among Japanese he dealt with. But he may never be asked about Watergate because of Oriental politeness.

South Vietnam

The overwhelming fact about Watergate in South Vietnam is the concern it has caused to the Government of President Thieu regarding the future of American aid.

There has been very little interest in the merits of the case, but there has been serious worry about how Watergate will affect Mr. Nixon's power and therefore his program of strong support for Saigon.

One concrete result of Watergate, as noted in a special secret report to President Thieu, is that the American Congress is clearly becoming more important and that more attention must be paid to it by the Saigon Government. American-South Vietnamese relations have always been a White House monopoly, and the Vietnamese have tended to regard Congress as inconsequential. But this will now change, and a high-level team may come to Washington to appeal to Congress.

South Korea

Korean officials, intellectuals and editors have expressed increasing concern about the possible adverse effects of Watergate on American commitments to Seoul.

They feel that the affair should have been ended long ago in a constructive way, for the good of all concerned, including such American allies as Korea. Although officials have refrained from commenting publicly, they privately say that they are disheartened by the American system of democracy and by the increasing power of Congress.

"We are rather sympathetic to Mr. Nixon," said one official privately. "We sympathize with him because he has been betrayed by some of his former trusted aides," which is something unthinkable in the Oriental sense of ethics.

The fear of Congress stems from Korean concern that further restraints may be placed on aid to Korea. "If worse comes to worst," one editor said, "in case of war here Mr. Nixon may be prevented from helping us under the United States-Korean mutual defense treaty."

Australia

Although Watergate has had no discernible effect on relations with the United States—note Mr. Whitlam's recent visit to Washington—President Nixon has come under increased press criticism, particularly for his refusal to turn over the White House tapes. As in other countries with British-style political systems, in Australia people tend to express wonder that Mr. Nixon is able to remain in office. Under similar circumstances in Australia, a prime minister would probably have had to resign.

Despite Mr. Whitlam's early criticism of Mr. Nixon's Vietnam policy, he has not mentioned Watergate, and has persuaded some left-wing Cabinet members to avoid the topic, as part of Australia's effort to mend fences with Washington.

India

India's relations with the United States have improved in recent months, and talks have begun between Ambassador Daniel P. Moynihan and Indian officials to resolve outstanding problems. As the result, there is a tendency in leading circles in New Delhi to avoid discussion of the Watergate question.

In fact, Indian officials and others seem to have lost interest in the affair. There has been scant editorial comment and Mr. Nixon's decision not to turn over the White House tapes has won general support.

There is some concern in India, however, about whether the Watergate affair might involve Mr. Nixon so deeply in internal matters that he would be unable to pay attention to India's economic problems.

Israel

Israeli attitudes toward Watergate are primarily pragmatic. The interest seems to center on the political ramifications rather than on moral issues.

Premier Golda Meir was quoted the other day as having told an American visitor that she was "really worried" about the impact of Watergate on Mr. Nixon and his capacity to govern. But most commentators still believe he will last out his term in office.

There is general admiration for the ability of the American press to ferret out the Watergate story. One Israeli editor said that no Israeli paper could do a similar job.