

Presidential Impeachment: A Study of the Factors that Derive Support or Opposition from the American Public

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Research Question

In July of 1974, the United States Congress formally charged President Richard M. Nixon with three separate articles of impeachment. Public support for this action helped to create an extremely hostile environment, one in which his political authority became weaker with each passing day. On August 9, 1974, President Nixon succumbed to this pressure and resigned the office of the presidency. Members of Nixon's political party, the Republicans, like all democratic political parties, are highly sensitive to public opinion. They responded to public support for Richard Nixon's impeachment by abandoning Richard Nixon, and this weakened his influence and sealed his political fate. President Nixon's resignation, therefore, was an indirect consequence of the lack of sympathetic public support he needed to receive to survive his impeachment.

Almost 25 years later, in October of 1998, the United States Congress formally ordered impeachment hearings against President Bill Clinton. Unlike their response to Nixon's impeachment, however, the public opposed Bill Clinton's impeachment. This gave him increased strength within his own political party, the Democrats, whose members, by their nature as well, are also just as dependent on public support as are the Republicans. This allowed Clinton to function in a beneficial political environment, one in which he could not only fight against his enemies, but also evoke public sympathy to promote his agenda. The public remained virtually steadfast in their opposition to President Clinton's impeachment throughout the entire process, in direct contrast to their

attitude towards President Nixon's impeachment. Why did the American public support President Nixon's impeachment more than President Clinton's impeachment?

Hypothesis

The American public was more supportive of President Nixon's impeachment than President Clinton's because they perceived that the economy was healthier in 1998 than in 1974. Polling data that has been taken since 1952 has repeatedly and consistently shown the economy to be amongst the top issues of public concern. The public has historically credited the president with the state of the economy.^{lxxiii} It seems logical that the inordinate accountability that the public attaches to the President with regard to the economy would follow into their decision in whether or not to support his removal from office.

Support for impeachment, like other American democratic political phenomenon, is closely related to public perception of the economy. This perception is the single most powerful influence on presidential approval ratings.^{lxxiii} In democratic elections, the single greatest indicator of whether or not an incumbent wins reelection is the public's perception of the economy.^{lxxiii} It should follow, then, that support for an incumbent politician's impeachment and removal from office can closely be tied to the public's perception of the economy, as well.

This hypothesis is advantageous in that it is highly testable. Both perception of the national economy and support for presidential impeachment can be quantitatively measured through tangible polling data. This data can clearly establish or refute a correlation, based on sets of data collected for both the dependent variable (support for

Presidential impeachment) and the independent variable (public perception of the economy). The result that this yields will provide an important empirical analysis for future studies on presidential impeachment. Additionally, it will indicate the extent that the public's perception of economic conditions will have in predicting possible outcomes of future studies containing alternative dependant variables.

Historically, as public perception of the economy becomes more positive (goes up), incumbent presidents have received higher approval ratings and have had higher success at attaining reelection. Such was the case with former president Dwight Eisenhower. Conversely, as public perception of the economy becomes more negative (goes down), incumbent presidents have received lower approval ratings and have had lower success at attaining reelection. Such was the case with George Bush Sr. in 1992. The political scientist Richard Saunders illustrates an excellent example of this. He credits the elevated popularity of Dwight Eisenhower to the tremendous post World War II boom throughout the 1950's.^{lxxiii} As the first postwar presidents held accountable to tangible public opinion, he was largely credited with this boom and won reelection. Saunders ascribes the bulk of Eisenhower's popularity, and subsequent foreign policy influence, to a beneficial domestic economy.

The inverse was true of the economy during the presidency of George Bush Senior. Political Scientists Harold Clarke, Jonathan Rapkin, and Marianne Steward argue that it was his alleged mismanagement of the economy that lowered his approval rating and cost him his reelection bid.^{lxxiii} As we have consistently seen with virtually all modern presidents, negative public perception of economic conditions often correlate with lowered presidential approval ratings and hindered chances at reelection, even when

coupled they are with popular foreign policy actions such as George Bush Senior's Gulf War.

To prove that the American public's support for presidential impeachment is dependent on their perception of the state of the economy, this research projects attempts to demonstrate co-variation, time order, and non-spuriousness. Data can clearly show that as public perception of the economy fluctuates, so does their support for impeachment of the incumbent president. As the number of people who feel that the economy is doing well goes down, the number of people who support the impeachment of the incumbent president should go up. Conversely, as the numerical values of the number of people who feel that the economy is doing well goes up, the numerical values of the number of people who support the impeachment of the incumbent president should go down. This is the expected co-variation.

It is unlikely that Americans' perception of the economy is influenced by their support for presidential impeachment. Primarily, the American public credits the president with the current state of the economy, and not vice versa. Because it is improbable that Americans' perception of the economy is influenced by their approval of an incumbent president, it should follow that Americans' support for presidential impeachment influencing their perception of the current state of the economy is improbable as well.

Some may feel that the greater number of people who supported President Nixon's impeachment over President Clinton's impeachment can better be explained by an alternate independent variable. They may feel that public support for President Nixon's impeachment over President Clinton's was merely a function of Bill Clinton

being a more popular president than Richard Nixon. While it is true that Clinton did sport significantly higher approval ratings in office than Richard Nixon, this explanation is only half correct. President Clinton was significantly more popular than President Nixon primarily because of the economy.^{lxxiii} The economy was the centerpiece of Bill Clinton's entire domestic policy; he presided over the largest economic expansion in economic history. The high approval ratings he sported were a direct extension of this, and any effect this may have had on public support for his impeachment must be indirectly accredited to the economy from which Clinton's popularity originated.

Others may feel that the public's perception of Clinton's offenses appearing more "human" than Richard Nixon's blatantly criminal offenses may have primarily contributed to the lesser numbers of people who supported the Clinton impeachment. Bill Clinton was charged with perjury and obstruction of justice pertaining to testimony and investigations stemming from a scandalous affair with one of his female interns. Richard Nixon was charged with obstructing a criminal investigation into his alleged ordering of illicit break-ins and wiretaps to obtain privileged information. They may feel that because Clinton's impeachment accusations originated from indiscretions in his personal life and not misdeeds in his political life, the public was more sympathetic to President Clinton's position than President Nixon's. This explanation, however, twists facts significantly. While Clinton's impeachment charges may have their roots in what the public sees as substance of a more personal nature, it is questionable to deny that Clinton's political and the misdeeds that followed from them constituted a level of misjudgment comparable to President Nixon. Clinton attempted to mislead his investigators in a similar manner to Nixon, and it was ultimately these acts, in combination with his misleading Grand Jury

testimony, that resulted in impeachment charges, not the personal lapses in judgment from which they stem. When the public is asked if they support President Clinton's impeachment, they, assuming they are accurately informed, must make their judgment based on the validity of the filed charges. These charges, though worded differently and pertaining to separate proceedings were comparable to the charges filed against President Nixon.

Finally, there may be some who simply feel that the American public believed more in the merits of the charges against President Nixon than President Clinton. Although the charges were similar, the circumstances surrounding them were significantly different. They may have believed that President Nixon was guilty, and that President Clinton was innocent. This explanation, however, fails to take into account the conflicting polling data that consistently revealed a split in the opinion of the American public. While the American public consistently demonstrated their approval of Clinton's performance as president, subsequent to their awareness of Clinton's impeachment charges, they also demonstrated their disapproval of his character.^{lxxiii} The public could purchase syndicated videotapes of the president committing perjury in front of a Federal grand jury, and they could listen to witness after witness testifying to Clinton's attempt to obstruct the investigation against him. Clinton's low levels of character approval in the months following his impeachment charges serve as an indication of the public's confidence in the merits of the charges against him. Still, the public was reluctant to support Clinton's impeachment. Clearly, another explanation must exist.

Some may feel that outside factors, such as foreign policy affairs may have a shifting effect on the independent variable. However, as previous studies have indicated,

public perception of the state of the economy is the single strongest factor in predicting support for a president.^{lxxiii} As was the case for George Bush Senior, negative public perception of economic conditions overshadowed his foreign policy successes in the first Gulf War, and despite 80% approval ratings at the close of the conflict, George Bush Senior lost his bid for reelection. The American public attaches a large, inordinate amount of accountability regarding the economy to the president, more so than any foreign or domestic alteration of a given condition. When the economy is good, people are generally wealthier and therefore happier. When the economy is bad, people are generally poorer and more incensed. The American public is far more sensitive to these factors than any foreign conflict or domestic moral crisis. In either economic scenario, however, the president has historically been seen as responsible, and this reflects in his approval ratings and electoral success. This relationship will concretely exist regardless of what circumstances exist both within the United States and abroad, as polling data has consistently shown.

Literature Review

Presidential impeachment is not something that Americans, as a nation of people, are exceedingly familiar with. Although written into the constitution by America's founding fathers as a means for the public to remove corrupt presidents guilty of "High Crimes and Misdemeanors" via the democratically elected House of Representatives, impeachment proceedings have only been pursued against three out of the 43 Presidents who have served in office since the United States was founded, Presidents Andrew Johnson in 1868, Richard Nixon in 1974, and Bill Clinton in 1998. Of those,

impeachment charges have been officially filed on against two, Johnson and Clinton. After a president is impeached by a majority of the House, it then becomes the U.S. Senate's responsibility to decide on the president's forcible removal via a minimum 2/3 vote. However, none of the charged presidential impeachments resulted in the presidents' forcible removal from office. Because empirical public opinion data on attitudes towards presidential impeachment only exists for Presidents Nixon and Clinton, public opinion of their impeachments will be the focus of this paper.

In 1974, President Nixon was charged with three separate articles of impeachment. His is a unique case in that, although the House of Representatives was actively engaged in the impeachment process, President Nixon resigned the Presidency before the House vote on the articles of impeachment. As such, the outcome of this vote will never be known. Nixon left the office narrowly escaping the possibility (or inevitability) of impeachment.

Even upon leaving office, however, President Nixon was not a popular individual. His party members, feeling angry and betrayed, essentially isolated him. Although contemporary Presidential historians differ over the root cause of Nixon's fallout with the American public, negative public opinion regarding Richard M. Nixon eventually gave way to public support for his impeachment. The U.S. House of Representatives, however, did successfully impeach Clinton. Although impeached, however, Clinton was not forced to leave office. The U.S. Senate subsequently voted not to forcibly remove him from office, and Clinton successfully served out his term as president, clinging to public legitimacy throughout the remainder of his second presidential term.

Unlike President Nixon, President Clinton was considerably well liked during his impeachment and post-impeachment periods. He received high approval ratings and relied on public support to pressure Congress to alleviate his impeachment hardships. Although contemporary Presidential historians do not agree on what the basis of Clinton's popularity with the American public was, a positive public image was one of Bill Clinton's strongest weapons in battling to survive his impeachment. This is true even though polling data taken at the time suggests that many who opposed his impeachment also did not approve of his "personal" actions. In his work Presidential Address: Public Opinion and Polling During Presidential Scandal and Impeachment, political scientist Michael R. Kagay illustrates polling data that shows in late September 1998, 69% of Americans felt that Clinton "did not share the moral values that Americans try to live by." Yet a separate poll taken in the same month illustrates that 67% of Americans "approve of the way Bill Clinton is handling his job as President."^{xxiii}

President Clinton and President Nixon are the only two American presidents in the 20th century to have impeachment charges brought against them. They were both charged with abusing their presidential powers in various ways in the form of perjury and obstruction of justice. These cases were handled differently by both presidential administrations and the legislative bodies that attempted to prosecute them, and both resulted in very different outcomes. However, this does not serve to explain the large discrepancy in public opinion data collected from both of these eras.

The independent prosecutor assigned to Clinton's case, special prosecutor Kenneth Starr, recommended arraigning Clinton on 11 counts of the above charges, detailing allegations of intentionally lying under oath and federal witness tampering. The

four counts that Bill Clinton was impeached on state that he “willfully provided perjurious, false and misleading testimony to the grand jury concerning one or more of the following: (1) the nature and details of his relationship with a subordinate government employee; (2) prior perjurious, false and misleading testimony he gave in a federal civil rights action brought against him; (3) prior false and misleading statements he allowed his attorney to make to a federal judge in that civil rights action; and (4) his corrupt efforts to influence the testimony of witnesses and to impede the discovery of evidence in that civil rights action.”^{lxxiii} These charges stemmed from Clinton’s attempts to conceal his scandalous extramarital affair with Monica Lewinsky, a then-22 year old White House intern, from Kenneth Starr. Although the House of Representatives impeached Clinton with these charges as basis, the ensuing trial in the Senate pronounced that he not be removed from office.

President Nixon’s accusers, however, only accused him one count of each of the perjury and obstruction of justice charges, as well as an additional charge of refusing to comply with House Judiciary Committee subpoenas. These charges stemmed from his illicit behavior regarding the containment of the “Watergate affair;” where criminals were hired to illegally obtain his opponent’s electoral data through forcible entry. The specific basis for Nixon’s impeachment charges were obstruction of justice in the investigation of the break-in at the Democratic national headquarters in the Watergate apartment complex; abuse of power through misuse of the Internal Revenue Service for political purposes, illegal wiretapping, establishment of a private investigative unit that engaged in unlawful activities, and interference with the lawful activities of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Department of Justice, and other

government bodies; and failure to comply with subpoenas issued by the House Judiciary Committee.^{lxxiii} After a bitter battle with the opposition-controlled House of Representatives, President Nixon resigned the office of the Presidency, omitting the possibility of a verdict on his impeachment in the House and an ensuing trial for forcible removal in the Senate. After his final address to the public, Nixon left the office to Vice President Gerald Ford.

These circumstances, however, do not help to explain the widely varying divergence of public opinion regarding their support for these impeachments. Although only separated by 24 years of modern American history, data collected from both of these periods clearly illustrates widely varying public support for their respective impeachments. Polling data taken from the American public immediately before and during Clinton's impeachment evidently illustrates a public opinion that was not in support of the impeachment proceedings. Conversely, data collected in an identical manner regarding Nixon's impeachment during the period it occurred reveals a public that was supportive of it. In a poll taken immediately after the House approved the initial articles of impeachment against President Clinton, 73% of the American public approved of Clinton's performance in office. In the same poll, 81% of respondents said they believed Clinton's presidency was a success.^{lxxiii} Polling taken during Nixon's impeachment era paints a very different picture. His last few months in office were marked with low approval ratings. By December 1973, only 29% of the public approved of the way he was handling his job as president while 60% disapproved. This remained consistent through his final eight months in office prior to his resignation.^{lxxiii}

This paper will thoroughly examine both cases of modern impeachment and the diverging public support for each of them. It is clear that public support for their respective impeachments played a significant role not only in the outcomes of the impeachments, but in the nature of the presidencies of both impeached men. Because the very people pursuing their impeachments, as well as the people pushing their agendas, were democratically accountable, their ability to function as presidents through a state of impeachment can vary tremendously, as these two cases clearly show.

The final days of Nixon's presidency prior to his resignation were wrought with public hostility, which ultimately defined Nixon's presidency in the eyes of the American public to this day. The ensuing chaos of impeachment for the president, who has lost the bulk of his public support, on the brink of his removal from office, served as a defining characteristic of President Nixon's legacy to both the public and his own party.

Conversely, the Clinton impeachment can be construed, at least in the immediate aftermath, as a far less traumatic event in American presidential history. Although he spent much time and resources actively fighting the impeachment charges he was eventually convicted of, President Clinton continued to actively function as the President of the United States, and remained active in shaping U.S. foreign and domestic policy. The public opposition to his impeachment presented him with a powerful tool he could use against the democratically elected officials who were pressing for his removal from office. Although convicted of the impeachment charges, President Clinton was not removed, nor did he remove himself, from office. He continued to ride the storm of criticism through to the prescribed end of his presidency, and successfully managed to salvage at least some of the grandiose presidential legacy he had previously hoped for.

While the public consistently condemned his “personal” life, their simultaneously high approval rating suggests that they remained unwavering in their opposition to his impeachment for what they perceived as actions pertaining to his “personal” life.

The sharply contrasting outcomes described have a significant amount to do with public opinion, both overtly and indirectly. Obviously, democratically accountable person in a leadership position knows that although the public feels strongly on certain issues, there are other factors that come in to play as well. While the American republic is one of the most accountable democracies in the world, the significant influence of the elite institutions of political parties are impossible to ignore. Whether the party chooses to save face, and force a wedge, albeit a temporary one, between themselves and their impeachment-ridden member (as the Republicans did to President Nixon in 1974) or throw all of their support to their impeachment-ridden member in an all out fight against the opposition party (as the Democrats did to President Clinton in 1998) their decision is largely dependant on public opinion.

American political parties lack the ability to discipline members who do not vote in accordance with what the party elites desire. The party representatives’ only true loyalty rests with his constituents, who will punish or reward him with based on his voting actions with the one thing he truly aspires for: reelection. Therefore, public opinion towards a presidential impeachment is absolutely crucial to the party’s reaction to it, and the ensuing support they may or may not choose to show to the president. The party’s reaction, through the indirect influence of public opinion in support or opposition of an impeachment, plays a crucial role in the future legacy of an impeached president.

This may help to explain why, particularly in America, public support plays such a crucial role in the success or failure of an impeachment.

The question of, Why did the American public supported President Nixon's impeachment more than President Clinton's impeachment?, is an immensely important question to address, not just for reasons mentioned above regarding future historical precedents and consequences of public attitude, but rather because it strikes at the very heart of American democracy. Americans elect both the people who serve as president and the legislators who are ultimately responsible for the removal of these leaders if the legislators deem it necessary. These legislators presumably act independently of public opinion, and yet they are heavily accountable to public opinion. This strikes at the larger question, is it essentially the public who impeaches the president? Is the reason Clinton "survived" his impeachment and Nixon felt forced to resign his office merely that Clinton was publicly more popular than popular than Nixon? Is a driving reason behind this the public opposition verses public support of their impeachments, respectively? These questions force Americans to look at themselves and ascertain what it is about the American value system that dictates when they feel a President should remain in office, and when they feel he should be forced to leave amidst a discourse of presidential illegitimacy. Future politicians who are impeached would do well to learn about what factors could create a sympathetic public to rally by their side, and what factors serve to create a hostile public bent on their removal from public office.

Many contemporary political science scholars have published works concerning public opinion's relationship to impeachment. Several schools of thought exist on the topic of impeachment and the role public opinion has in its outcome. However, most

political science scholars agree that public opinion is (but possibly should not be) vital to the outcome of a modern presidential impeachment. Many scholars of democracy argue that it is the accountability of members in both the House of Representatives, the Senate, and, indirectly, the President, that ultimately drives impeachment proceedings forward. These scholars analyze evidence that is vital to this dissertation's hypothesis, and essentially provide the who, what, how, and why elements of public opinion and impeachment, both in the application of theory and the specific cases of Bill Clinton and Richard Nixon.

In their work The Battle for Public Opinion: The President, the Press, and the Polls During Watergate, Political Scientists Gladys E. and Kurt Lang mention that in less than two years, President Nixon had gone from winning reelection in a 49 state landslide to resigning the office of the presidency two years prematurely in the face of no more than 80% (and possibly as high as 90%) public approval of his resignation.^{lxxiii} Clearly, public opinion had radically shifted to unambiguous approval of Nixon's removal from office. The Lang scholars cite media influence and the extraordinarily poor handling of the scandal by the Nixon administration as primary reasons behind this shift. They proceed to build a case outlining the importance of public opinion, as well as the battle to gain its favor, to the outcome of the Watergate scandal and Nixon's political future. They analyze how the emerging of evidence regarding Nixon's involvement in illicit activity, that the public considered to be despicable, sharply lowered his approval ratings and furthered support for his impeachment.

In his book Votes, Money, and the Clinton Impeachment, Irwin L. Morris applies a similar argument to the Clinton impeachment. He cites evidence that national opinion

polls consistently showed that an overwhelming majority of the nationwide U.S. population (60-70%) opposed the impeachment and removal of the President Clinton. He goes on to claim that comparable data for individual congressional districts does not exist.^{lxxiii} This may help to explain why Clinton was successfully impeached in the House, as Representatives did not possess a clear reflection of how their individual constituents felt about the impeachment, and may have reverted to party loyalty. The importance of district and state-specific public opinion regarding the Clinton impeachment, however, is a key element to the outcome of Congress' votes on the impeachment charges in the House and the Senate, respectively. While he does not address specifically why public opinion continued remain supportive of Bill Clinton and condemned his impeachment this fact is still regarded as a phenomena), Morris does clearly demonstrate that on the state level, Senator's support for Bill Clinton had a direct relationship to their votes regarding his removal from office. Although it is not the norm, Senators Collins and Snowe of Maine, both Republicans, each voted against both articles of impeachment. 58.21% of Maine residents opposed Bill Clinton's impeachment.

According to Political Scientists Regina Lawrence and Lance Bennett, much of the credit for his unprecedented popularity is due to the presence of the beneficial economy, as well as perceived international peace and the apparent executive policy success that were all credited to his presidency.^{lxxiii} Ironically, however, they discovered that Clinton's highest approval ratings, and highest opposition to his impeachment, derived from lower income groups, with a positive discrepancy in popularity ranging as high as 10%.^{lxxv} These people were presumably perceived to most likely to feel that

Clinton is handling the economy well, and Lawrence and Bennett's research clearly implies that economic well being can influence political opinion.

Legal scholar Ellen Frankel Paul, in his work Later Rather Than Sooner; Less Rather Than More, closely analyzes the notion of the Clinton phenomena. In this composition, Paul argues that the reason that Clinton's own party did not hold him to the same strident standard that Republicans held Nixon to when they defected from him in 1974 was not merely public opinion. Rather, Paul argues that the United States has suffered a deterioration in their belief of the rule of law; specifically, of treating cases equally. He argues that we are not a nation governed by public opinion, that we are (or ought to be) a nation governed by the rule of law, and the absence of this accounts for the public's opposition to Clinton's impeachment and the partisan support he commanded as a result of this.^{lxxv}

The notion of the importance of public opinion's effect on the actions of a government in a representative democratic republic such as the United States is impossible to deny. Many scholars have published works on the power of the American public opinion, such as scholars David Yalof and Kenneth Dautrich in their work, The First Amendment and the Media in the Court of Public Opinion. In their work, Yalof and Dautrich claim that it is primarily pluralistic public opinion that shapes the behavior of the American Congress. Public opinion is theorized to be rational, stable, and powerful.^{lxxv} It plays into calculations made by all elected public servants.

Other scholars have clearly correlated public opinion with the likelihood of impeachment. In Mark J. Rozell and Clyde Wilcox's political work Clinton Scandal and the Future of American Government, Rozell and Wilcox quote House Judiciary

Republican Lindsay Graham as saying “Without public outrage, impeachment is hard to do, and it should be hard to do,”^{lxxv} in her response to the 65% public opposition to Clinton’s impeachment. He also argues that political support for President Nixon had ebbed significantly before the impeachment movement picked up steam.^{lxxv} Lack of public support for Nixon gave rise to support for his removal; public support for Nixon impeachment was, according to Rozell, grounded in the public perception of a morally, politically, and constitutionally diminished presidency as a result of Watergate.^{lxxv} Rozell clearly correlates the public opinion relating to both impeachments to the outcome of those impeachments, but does not suggest a specific, consistent factor that applies to the alteration that alters public opinion of these impeachments. He only demonstrates that this public opinion has expansive influence in the outcome of the impeachments.

The Political Scientist Diana Owen, in her article Popular Politics and the Clinton/Lewinsky Affair closely examines the effect that the barrage of media coverage had on public opinion of the Clinton impeachment affair. She makes the argument that the media treated the Clinton/Lewinsky affair as a personal scandal treated in an entertainment framework.^{lxxv} This, according to Owen, mitigated the scandal in the eyes of the American public, and contributed to Clinton’s continuity in performing his official role as president. It was ultimately the perceived immaturity of the scandal’s media coverage that framed the scandal as a personal discrepancy and not an impeachable offense for the American public.

While these scholars all present compelling cases of the role and power of public opinion in the Nixon and Clinton impeachments, the factors that shape public opinion in the impeachments, and the statistical breakdown of which segments of the public tended

to support the impeachments and why, they fail to address specifically why public opinion was significantly more in favor of President Nixon's impeachment than President Clinton's. Many do demonstrate the significance of the economic variable, but they fail to compare data between the two impeachments directly to observe the consistency of the strength of the relationship. While factors such as Watergate and the Lewinsky affair are closely analyzed and scrutinized, there is no uniform factor, that is, uniform independent variable, mentioned to account for the discrepancy in a direct comparison. None of these authors addresses a uniform reason why public opinion shifts in favor or in opposition of both Nixon's and Clinton's respective impeachments.

This paper will attempt to establish an independent variable consistent with both impeachments. By isolating a factor, empirical data will be produced that has direct application to future impeachments and the public's opinion of them. Economic perception's impact on the public opinion of these two impeachments is an invaluable tool for researchers to have in their analysis of both the Clinton and the Nixon impeachment. This dissertation's question provides the missing link overlooked by other researchers' separate analysis of these two impeachments, and provides a consistent independent variable.

The question of why the American public supported President Nixon's impeachment more than President Clinton's brings several elements of scholarship to light. Firstly, it clearly provides political scientists with concrete data that can be used to predict the outcome of public opinion of impeachments, as well as, indirectly, the possible outcome of impeachments themselves. Secondly, it fits into the larger context of presidential impeachments and what the public sees as valid impeachable offenses,

defined by behavioral norms and ideologies, by measuring part of what causes public opinion to shift in one direction or another.

Methodology

To test this hypothesis, I proceeded to analyze the National Election Studies data sets for 1974 and 1998. This data, collected around the time of each national election by National Election Studies staffers at the University of Michigan, is stored locally on the Creighton University political science research database ICPSR. I decided to use National Election Studies because they have a well-respected national reputation for accuracy and high-quality sampling, and the studies conducted for 1974 and 1998 both contained questions regarding public opinion issues that were vital to proving my hypothesis. I first opened the 1974 data set, and proceeded to run a basic data correlation crosstab between my dependant variable, which was variable# 742162, “Did you approve or disapprove of the Judiciary committee’s decision to impeach Richard Nixon?” against my independent variable, which was variable #742313, “Would you say that you (and your family) are better off or worse off financially than you were a year ago?” The possible responses to variable #742162 were “approve, mixed emotions, disapprove”, with a numerical value of 1, 3, and 5 assigned to each, respectively, and the possible responses to variable #742313 were “better now, same, worse now”, with a numerical value of 1, 3, and 5 assigned to each, respectively.

Because the question regarding approval of Richard Nixon’s impeachment contained a possible response of “mixed emotions”, which was selected by a statistically negligible (less than 1%) number of respondents, I opted to recode the variable to

eliminate this value (#3). I did this primarily because the question regarding Clinton's impeachment, which I was planning to analyze in my next data set, lacked a "mixed feelings" response. To preserve the consistency of my analysis, I felt that this was the right choice.

I then proceeded to run a Chi Square, along with the ordinal strength calculation options of "Gamma, Somers 'd, and Kendall's Tau C", since I did not have a 2x2 table needed for an accurate Kendall's Tau B. I also decided to run the nominal calculation options of "Contingency Coefficient, Lambda, Phi and Cramer's V" to measure my relationship's strength, along with analyzing column percentages. I then processed my calculations.

From the 1998 Election Study data set, I then proceeded to run a basic data correlation between my other dependant variable, which was variable #980534, "Should Clinton be impeached?" against my other independent variable, which was variable #980414, "Would you say that you (and your family living here) are better off or worse off financially than you were a year ago?" The possible responses to variable #980534 were "yes, no", with numerical values of 1 and 5, respectively, and the possible responses to variable #980414 were "better, worse, the same", with numerical values 1, 3, and 5.

In this particular data set, the numerical values of the respondents' question regarding economic status differed from the question in the 1974 study. In the 1998 data set, "the same" was assigned the same numerical value as "financially worse" in the 1974 data set. To preserve consistency in my calculations, I recoded all of the "5" values in the 1998 data set to be read as "3" values, and all the "3" values to be read as "5". This effectively reversed the order of the variables to an identical state to the 1974 data set.

Just as with the Nixon correlation, I opted to use crosstab correlation statistics to analyze my data. I calculated a Chi Square, and also calculated identical strength calculations to before, using Gamma, Somers 'd, Kendall's Tau C, Contingency Coefficient, Lambda, Phi, and Cramer's V. I also calculated column percentages, just as before. I then proceeded to output the results.

The results of the output concerning public support for Nixon and Clinton's impeachments with regard to economic status are as follows:

Nixon's Impeachment

		Is your Financial Status Now Better or Worse Than Last Year?			Total
		Better Now	Same	Worse Now	
Did You Approve of President Nixon's Impeachment?	Yes Count % within	240 67.6%	322 68.2%	432 75.4%	994 71.0%
	No Count % within	115 32.4%	150 31.8%	141 24.6%	406 29.0%
Total	Count % within	355 100.0%	472 100.0%	573 100.0%	1400 100.0%

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.127	2	.010
N of Valid Cases	1400		

			Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal	Lambda	Approve President Nixon's Impeachment (Dependant)	.000	-

Clinton's

		Is your Financial Status Now Better or Worse Than Last Year?			Total
		Better Now	Same	Worse Now	
Did You Approve of President Clinton's Impeachment?	Yes Count % within	168 26.4%	105 31.7%	91 33.8%	364 29.4
	No Count % within	468 73.6%	226 68.3%	178 66.2%	872 70.6%
Total	Count % within	636 100.0%	331 100.0%	269 100.0%	1236 100.0%

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.125	2	.047
N of Valid Cases	1236		

			Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal	Lambda	Approve President Clinton's Impeachment (Dependant)	.000	-

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal	Phi	.081	.010
	Cramer's V	.081	.010
	Contingency Coefficient	.080	.010
Ordinal	Kendall's tau-c	-.074	.004
	Gamma	-.136	.004
N of Valid Cases		1400	

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal	Phi	.070	.047
	Cramer's V	.070	.047
	Contingency Coefficient	.070	.047
Ordinal	Kendall's tau-c	-.067	.014
	Gamma	-.129	.014
N of Valid Cases		1236	

Analysis

The results that these two outputs yielded were fascinating. The literature suggested that there would be a strong relationship between people's perception of the state of the economy and support for presidential impeachment. Instead, the data revealed that although a relationship does exist, it is considerably weaker than what would be expected. Still, this study's hypothesis has been proven, because it has been established that there is indeed a relationship between the dependant and independent variables. However, the public was only minimally more supportive of Nixon's impeachment than Clinton's because of the state of the economy. Although the results were not as significant as expected, the research did reveal some fascinating findings.

The most fascinating find of the study were the almost uncanny similarity of the results of each impeachment analysis. The data showed that 71.0% of people of all economic backgrounds supported Nixon's impeachment while 70.6% opposed Clinton's. Conversely, 29.0% of people of all economic backgrounds opposed Nixon's

impeachment while 29.4% supported Clinton's. Although I did expect to find that more people supported Nixon's impeachment than opposed Clinton's, the public's respective support of each of these impeachments are almost perfect inverses of each other, and this was not expected. However, even more intriguing similarities can be seen when the percentages are divided categorically.

First, simply observe the total difference values of the people who supported President Nixon's impeachment and those who opposed President Clinton's. There is only a difference of 0.6% amongst the total respondents across the independent variable. Now, observe the difference between those who opposed President Nixon's impeachment against those who supported Clinton's. These only have a difference of 0.4%. Although I did not predict such close equality of percentage differentials, this alone is very interesting, but it is only the beginning.

Next, observe the differing percentage of those who supported the Nixon impeachment that said they were better off economically (67.6%) against those who supported the Nixon impeachment who claimed they were worse off (75.4%). Now, observe the differing percentages of those who opposed the Nixon impeachment who said they were worse off financially (24.6%) from those who opposed the Nixon impeachment who said that they were better off (32.4%). One will notice that they each possess identical percentage differences, 7.8%. Additionally, it was very surprising that the percentages of people who were better off economically that supported Nixon's impeachment and the percentages of those who were worse off financially who opposed the Nixon impeachment were equal.

Now observe the difference in the percentages of those who supported Clinton's impeachment who said that they were better off financially than they were in the previous year (26.4%) compared against those who supported President Clinton's impeachment who claimed they were worse off financially than in the previous year (33.8%). Finally, observe the difference in the percentages of those who opposed Clinton's impeachment who claimed they were better off financially than they were in the previous year (73.6%) against those who opposed President Clinton's impeachment who claimed they were worse off financially than in the previous year (66.2%). Notice the percentile differences, which are precisely 7.4% respectively for each. Relationships between those of changed economic status who support or oppose presidential impeachments appear to be identical across both impeachments. Just as in the Nixon impeachment, I had predicted a positive relationship in the percentages between those who supported Clinton's impeachment and were better off financially, and a positive relationship between those who opposed Clinton's impeachment and were worse off financially. Although the data revealed this, I certainly did not expect to get identical positive relationships across both impeachment studies! This is incredible, but it is still scratching the surface.

Additionally, the percentage discrepancy between those who supported President Nixon's impeachment of differing economic statuses (Worse – Better) (7.8%) against those who supported Clinton's impeachment across differing economic statuses (Worse – Better) (7.4%) appears to be only 0.4%. Those who opposed either president's impeachment across differing economic statuses, share an identical percentage discrepancy as well. Those who opposed President Nixon's impeachment across all economic statuses (Better – Worse) share a percentage discrepancy of 7.8%, and those

who opposed President Clinton's impeachment across all economic statuses (Better – Worse) share a percentage discrepancy of 7.4%, which, again, is a 0.4% total discrepancy. I had originally predicted that both of these percentages would reflect heavier impact of economic status, the independent variable, against public support for impeachment, the dependent variable. However, although what I have observed here is not what I had predicted, this similarity is nothing short of amazing.

It had originally expected that there was a significant majority of those who considered themselves better off financially who would oppose Nixon's impeachment, and a significant majority of those who considered themselves worse off financially to support it. There was also expected to be a majority of people who thought of themselves as better off financially who would have opposed Clinton's impeachment, and a majority of those who considered themselves worse off financially would have supported it. However, the results obtained from the data do not support either of these conclusions. Instead, however, they seem to support the notion that relatively equal amounts of people who are both better and worse off financially supported president Nixon's impeachment while relatively equal amounts of people who are both better and worse off financially opposed Clinton's. Additionally, the results show that relatively equal amounts of people who are both better and worse off financially opposed Nixon's impeachment while a relatively equal number of people of both better and worse off financially supported Clinton's. This strongly suggests the presence of another, yet undiscovered, independent variable.

Also notice that the percentage difference between those that claimed that they were better off economically who opposed President Nixon's impeachment (32.4%) and

those who claimed that they were better off economically and supported President Clinton's (26.4%) is only 6%. The difference between those who claimed they were better off economically who supported President Nixon's impeachment (67.6%) and those who claimed they were better off economically and opposed President Clinton's (73.6%) is precisely 6% as well. The percentage discrepancy between those who claimed that they were worse off economically who supported president Nixon's impeachment (75.4%) and those who claimed that they were worse off economically who opposed Clinton's (66.2%) is exactly 9.2%, and the percentile difference between those who claimed that they were worse off economically who opposed Nixon's impeachment (24.6%) and those who claimed that they were worse off economically who supported Clinton's (33.8%) is 9.2% as well! These comparisons are truly fascinating to observe.

When conducting this analysis, I had originally expected to see a small discrepancy between those who opposed President Nixon's impeachment that were better off financially, and those who supported President Clinton's impeachment who were worse off financially. While the data did show this trend, the percentages for each group were much lower than had originally been predicted. I also expected to see a small discrepancy between those who supported President Nixon's impeachment that were worse off financially, and those who opposed President Clinton's impeachment who were better off financially. While the data also showed this, the percentages were much higher than had been originally expected. This further suggests that an alternate independent variable, other than people's perception of their economic status, is affecting their support or opposition to presidential impeachment

Finally, observe the values of those who stated that their financial status had not changed from its status the previous year and oppose the Nixon impeachment (31.8%) and support the Clinton impeachment (31.7%), as well as support for the Nixon impeachment (68.2%) and opposition to the Clinton impeachment (68.3%). Notice, they differ by only 0.1% for both possible responses to their support for either president's impeachment. The closeness of the relationships between all of the above mentioned values is nothing short of astounding, particularly when it is viewed in the context of the other similar percentage discrepancies.

I had originally predicted that the discrepancies of the percentages of people whose economic statuses had not changed would be negligible. However, I had also predicted that these people would be relatively neutral with regard to their support or opposition to presidential impeachment. What the data showed instead, however, is that something else is significantly influencing their support or opposition to presidential impeachment. A fair majority (68.2%) of people supported the Nixon impeachment even though their economic status had not changed, and a fair majority (68.3%) of people opposed the Clinton impeachment, even though their economic status had not changed either. This points to an alternate independent variable that, as we have observed thus far, is influencing with a support or opposition to presidential impeachment with an uncanny degree of consistency.

As you can see, the first output, regarding support for the Nixon impeachment, yielded a Chi Square of 9.127 with a significance of 0.10, indicating the presence of a relationship. The second output, regarding support for the Clinton impeachment, yielded

a Chi Square of 6.125 with a significance level of 0.47, also indicating the presence of a relationship there. The Lambda measurements in both proved to be statistically invalid.

The strength relationships for each were also very intriguing. In analyzing support for the Nixon impeachment, there were several indicators of a weak relationship between the variables. The Somers 'd value, -.057, the Gamma value, -.136, and the Kendall's Tau C value, -.074, are all statistically significant relationships. They are negative because, as economic status gets worse (values rise from 1-5; 1 being better off and 5 being worse off), support for impeachment rises (values fall from 5-1; 5 being disapproving of Nixon's impeachment and 1 being supportive of it) and vice versa. The Phi (.081), Cramer's V (.081), and the Contingency Coefficient (.080) are all statistically significant relationships that indicate a weak relationship as well.

In my analysis of the Clinton impeachment, there were similar indicators of a weak relationship. The ranging 1-5 values attached to the responses indicating economic status and support for the impeachment of Clinton analysis are identical to those used in the Nixon impeachment analysis. The Somers 'd value, -.055, the Gamma value, -.129, and the Kendall's Tau C value, -.067, all possess low enough significance levels to demonstrate that the values themselves are statistically significant. They also demonstrate the same kind of negative association between the dependant variable and the independent variable that was demonstrated in the Nixon impeachment, indicating a similar weak relationship. The Phi, .070, Cramer's V, .070, and the Contingency Coefficient, .070, all possessed significance levels below .05 as well, and indicated the presence of a weak non-directional relationship, just as before.

In final analysis, these two impeachments appear to be mirror inverses of each other with regard to public opinion, and this stems from a weak, negative relationship between the independent and dependant variables. While in both of these cases, an only relatively weak relationship could be firmly established, the strength of these relationships appeared to be comparatively consistent across the impeachment analyses. For the differences between the two Phi and Cramer's V value sets, the discrepancy was only .011%, and for the Contingency Coefficient, the difference was only .01%. The differences between the two Kendall's Tau C and Gamma value sets illustrated only a .007% discrepancy for each, and the differences between the two Somers' d values in either impeachment study was a negligible .002%. Presumably, however, with the established similarities in the percentage values of the respondents across both impeachment studies, this was to be expected. The numbers all seem to suggest that a relationship between the independent and dependent variables do exist, but that the independent variable can only account for a negligible impact on the dependant variable in both impeachments.

Conclusion

The implications drawn from these variable calculations are far-reaching. It is fascinating to observe the relationship between Americans' perceived economic status and their support for presidential impeachment, as it appears to have remained constant in its influence between the two impeachments. The fact that these presidents were highly dissimilar seems to suggest that outside factors, such as the presence of a foreign conflict such as the cold war, partisan association, or even ideological identification, do not have a measurable influence on public support for impeachment with regard to people's economic status.

These results seem to indicate that modern Americans have credited the same amount of responsibility to the president with regard to their economic status in 1998 as in 1974 when economic status is associated in the context of presidential impeachment. While it does not have a significantly heavy impact, it does have a consistent one. They have increased and decreased their support for that particular president's impeachment in a moderately small, albeit consistent, relationship to economic status.

These results also seem to indicate that economic status is not the strongest influencing element affecting public support for impeachment, and therefore leaves the question of what is the most influencing element open for future study. The close consistency between the percentages of each impeachment strongly suggests that there is at least one other factor that accounts for this low discrepancy, and that its impact across both impeachments is nearly identical.

Future presidents faced with impeachment would, however, do well to appeal to those people whose economic status has been bettered under their presidencies as a

means to solicit support for opposition to their impeachment, as this minor impact could be vital to their political survival. This study most certainly presents an image of Americans failing to have their support for presidential impeachment deriving from perceived economic conditions skewed by external factors over the course of almost 25 years, and this is, without a doubt, the most fascinating find of all.

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