

President Nixon's Favorite Mayor: Richard G. Lugar's Mayoral Years and Rise to National Politics

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A WARM HOOSIER WELCOME

On February 5th, 1970 at 12:20 in the afternoon, President Richard Milhous Nixon landed in Indianapolis, Indiana. Nixon was accompanied in Air Force One by First Lady Pat Nixon, Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary George W. Romney, and his top aides H. R. Haldeman and John Ehrlichman among others. His other advisor, Daniel P. Moynihan, would rendezvous with the presidential entourage later that day.ⁱ Awaiting his arrival on the tarmac, Governor Edgar Whitcomb and Mayor Richard Lugar led the local reception committee. Donning winter overcoats, the president and Mayor Lugar are seen cordially greeting one another in a striking black and white photo. On the left, the young Lugar extends his hand to a much older and harried Nixon. Both men are smiling and framed by a large camera and microphone to record this historic moment.ⁱⁱ Nixon would later remark that he was received with a “warm Hoosier welcome on a rather cold day.”ⁱⁱⁱ This was the first time Nixon had visited Indianapolis as president and was his first publicized meeting with Mayor Lugar, the up-and-coming politician who now represented the revitalized Republican Party in Indianapolis.

After exchanging pleasantries and traveling to Indianapolis City Hall, Nixon and Lugar spoke to the crowd of approximately 1,000 Hoosiers before convening for their conference on urban affairs. In his speech, Nixon described himself as a “grandson of Indiana,” and touched upon the main reason for visiting stating, “after over a century and a half of power flowing from the people... to Washington D.C... let’s get it back to the city, the people, and the states where it belongs...” Mayor Lugar echoed these sentiments and declared that “Cities can live, can thrive, and can offer hope.”^{iv} Their speeches reflect the underlying motivation for the visit, to promote Nixon’s domestic agenda and decentralization policies, referred to as New Federalism. Republicans believed that by transferring power from the national level back to the local and state levels they would be creating a more streamlined and responsive government. During the meeting on urban affairs, the President convened with nine Indiana mayors to discuss problems faced by city leadership and how the federal government might help address those issues. At 4:30 PM, President Nixon departed Indianapolis to visit Chicago and meet with Democratic

Mayor Richard Daley.^v While brief, President Nixon's visit to Indianapolis greatly influenced both Mayor Lugar's political future and the city of Indianapolis as a whole.

After Nixon's visit, Lugar would be elected as the president of the League of Cities, attend a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) conference in Brussels, host a NATO conference in Indianapolis, and speak at the 1972 Republican National Convention. His close association with Nixon would garner him the title of "Richard Nixon's Favorite Mayor." This label would both propel Lugar's name to the national stage and haunt him for the rest of his political career. Today, Lugar is considered one of the most influential senators in Indiana history. He is largely remembered as a foreign policy expert and co-author of the acclaimed Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Act, which led to the dismantling of thousands of weapons in previous Soviet territory.^{vi} In examining Lugar's towering legacy, one must ask, how does a mayor of a landlocked city in the Midwest become the leading statesman in foreign policy for over 30 years?

The beginning of his involvement in national politics and foreign policy can be traced back to February 5th, 1970, and a warm handshake with the sitting president. This meeting provided Lugar, an ambitious protégé, the necessary exposure, and overseas relations to become a worldly politician. Lugar transformed a short and symbolic meeting with President Nixon into a key political maneuver in his career. By intimately tying his name with Nixon's, Lugar forged an unprecedented relationship between a city mayor and the sitting president. This symbiotic relationship would endure for decades to come and, while Nixon fell into political disgrace post-Watergate, Lugar established a long and remarkable career in the Senate, elevating both himself and Indianapolis to national and global prominence.

On February 5th, the paths of two of the most consequential politicians in American history crossed. One had reached the echelon of political power in America, the presidency, while the other was a rising star with ambitions of his own. This visit was precipitated by Mayor Lugar's city-county consolidation, better known as Unigov, a visionary program that redefined Indianapolis and revitalized the city's Republican party.^{vii} Nixon, looking for both a Republican city and an example of his New Federalist policies, seized upon Indianapolis and its political life as a way to further his domestic agenda.

Meanwhile, Lugar, who was seeking a foothold for his burgeoning political career, welcomed Nixon's administration with open arms. By visiting Indianapolis, Nixon brought national attention to the city and Lugar's successes as mayor, opening the door for Lugar to begin participating in politics on a national scale. While Lugar's association as "Nixon's Favorite Mayor" was problematic immediately after the Watergate scandal, his affiliation with the President was ultimately more beneficial than detrimental to his political career. Nixon's presidential visit was a touchstone moment for Indianapolis, which would rapidly transform from an unassuming, moderately sized city into a globally recognized metropolitan area and Republican stronghold. More importantly, Nixon's visit set the stage for Mayor Lugar, the future pre-eminent statesman, to enter the American consciousness.

RICHARD NIXON'S PRESIDENCY AND NEW FEDERALISM

While Richard Lugar's career was just starting to blossom, Richard Nixon's career had reached its zenith, culminating in his 1968 presidential victory and subsequent reelection in 1972. Starting as a California congressman and later senator, Nixon defined himself as a fierce anti-communist and staunch conservative. He gained notoriety for prosecuting spy Alger Hiss, establishing himself as a common man through his "Checker's" speech, and serving as President Dwight D. Eisenhower's vice president from January 1952 until January 1961. Seemingly incapable of running a clean election campaign, his underhanded political tactics and sour personality earned him the nickname "Tricky Dick." After his first failed campaign for the presidency in 1960, where he was defeated by President John F. Kennedy, Nixon finally won the office in the contentious 1968 race against Vice President Hubert Humphrey.^{viii}

Nixon's presidency is remembered as one of the most consequential administrations in America's history. Globally, Nixon found success in foreign affairs. He revolutionized the Cold War by pursuing rapprochement with China and entering a period of détente with the Soviet Union. Nixon was instrumental in the passage of both the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and Strategic Arms Limitations Talks. Domestically, Nixon created the Environmental Protection Agency, pursued the integration of African-Americans in public school systems, and oversaw the 1969 Apollo 11 moon landing. Despite his successes, his legacy is defined by his failures, most notably his inability to withdraw from the Vietnam

War and his involvement in the Watergate Scandal. In June 1972, members of Nixon's reelection campaign burglarized the Democratic Headquarters in Washington D.C. at the Watergate hotel. While Nixon was not initially involved, he was directly implicated in the subsequent coverup and resigned on August 8th, 1974. He was later pardoned by President Gerald R. Ford, causing national outrage. Nixon's presidency is notable for both his consequential role in shaping foreign affairs and his scandalous resignation.^{ix}

Historical perspectives on Nixon's life and legacy are diverse and scholarship on his administration is extensive. Some condemn Nixon and argue that Watergate tarnished all his other accomplishments. For example, historian Rick Perlstein argues in his work *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America* that Nixon was a political pariah who capitalized on the division within the country to achieve power and, in doing so, is responsible for fracturing America's political state.^x Others, such as Joan Hoff, border upon being Nixon apologists and consider Watergate to be a tragic deviation in an otherwise successful presidency.^{xi} Striking a balance between those two extremes, many scholars such as John A. Farrell, in his biography *Richard Nixon: The Life* can praise Nixon's accomplishments while also criticizing his involvement in Watergate and his prickly personality.^{xii} Farrell's book in particular is one of the most recent biographies of Nixon and represents the dominant view on him this past decade.

One reason for the significance of Nixon's presidency is the vast changes America experienced from 1940 to 1980. During these four decades, seminal events including the Cold War, Civil Rights Movement, Korean War, and Vietnam War dominated American life. The quintessential book on this time period is *Grand Expectations, 1945-1974* by historian James T. Patterson, which contrasts the infinite hope of the '40s with the deep cynicism of the '70s following Watergate.^{xiii} Running concurrently to Patterson's sweeping narrative is the story of the Republican party and its shift from a moderate platform to a socially conservative, right-wing ideology. This political realignment is extensively chronicled in Geoffery Kabaservice's monograph *Rule and Ruin: The Downfall of Moderation and Destruction of the Republican Party*, which traces the party from Eisenhower's presidency to the modern

Tea Party faction.^{xiv} It is within this national context that both Nixon and Lugar entered into politics and, during these divided and uncertain times, pursued key policies that affected both Indianapolis and the country as a whole.

Despite Nixon's reputation as a conservative, his domestic agenda was fairly liberal, especially by twenty-first-century standards. Patterson defines Nixon's domestic policy in three ways: it was flexible, geared towards political survival, and embodied a "win at all costs" mentality.^{xv} Nixon's pursuit of New Federalist policy embodies all three of these characteristics. Under Nixonian New Federalism, the president encouraged the transfer of power from the federal government to the states by using block grants to share federal funds with local institutions. Supporters of Nixon's plan argued that devolution was a pragmatic policy that streamlined a bloated bureaucratic system. Hoff in particular argues that these policies returned power to the people and increased government efficiency.^{xvi} In the article "There will always be New Federalism," Richard P. Nathan contends that Nixon's policies are applicable even in modern times. Republicans from Nixon onwards would continue to support New Federalist policies; Both President Ronald Reagan and President George W. Bush enacted initiatives inspired by Nixonian New Federalism, with varying levels of success.^{xvii}

Opponents of New Federalism argue that these policies were ineffective and an underhanded attempt to defund federal welfare programs. Many Democrats believed that New Federalist policies served as a groundwork to dismantle President Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society, a conglomerate of domestic policies personally despised by Nixon. Despite its controversy, Nixonian New Federalism laid the key groundwork for the modern Republican agenda and nearly 50 years later remains topically relevant in America. Initially, Nixon's philosophy of decentralization was met with significant resistance from Congress and Democratic legislators who defended the Great Society.^{xviii} Frustrated by a sluggish Congress, Nixon needed to prove that his philosophy of decentralization worked. In 1970, this opportunity presented itself in the city of Indianapolis, Indiana, and its new Republican mayor Richard G. Lugar.

RICHARD G. LUGAR'S MAYORAL YEARS

Richard G. Lugar was born on April 4th, 1932 in Indianapolis, Indiana. He graduated valedictorian in high school and later attended Ohio's Denison University where he won a Rhodes Scholarship to study at the University of Oxford. On the heels of his years at Oxford, Lugar volunteered for the Navy and, as a Lieutenant, served as an intelligence briefer for Admiral Arleigh Burke. In this high ranking and selective position, Lugar briefed President Eisenhower on current affairs.^{xix} In interviews, Lugar recounts his time as an intelligence briefer as the foundation for his burgeoning interest in foreign affairs stating, "This was, to say the least, a post-graduate education in international relations."^{xx} After his service, he returned to Indianapolis to help his father run the family business and farm. Lugar would eventually be elected to a position in Indianapolis' school board where he served from 1964 to 1967 and began his long history of bipartisan and practical policy-making. On the school board, Lugar promoted desegregation policies, leading to local criticism and his eventual loss of the position come the next election.^{xxi}

Despite his short school board career, Lugar's entrance into politics would not go unnoticed. By 1967 Keith L. Bulen, the chairman of the Marion County Republican Committee, recognized that Indianapolis' Republicans needed a drastic revitalization. Before Lugar's election, city Democrats had enjoyed a sixteen-year long hold on the mayor's office. However, Bulen recognized a schism forming within his opponent's political party. This was best exemplified by the Democrat's failure to legislate a city-consolidation program under Mayor John Barton. Mayor Barton and Marion County Democratic Chair James W. Beatty had sponsored a reorganization of Indianapolis' government which would strengthen the mayoral office. Two newspapers, *The Indianapolis Star* and *Indianapolis News*, decried this legislation as a "power grab," a phrase quickly picked up by local Republicans and hesitant Democrats. Unable to handle the media onslaught, Beatty and Barton split, fracturing the Democratic party and providing Bulen with an opportunity to regain control of Indianapolis.^{xxii} Now, he only needed the perfect mayoral candidate. He found the necessary qualities in Dick Lugar whom his friend, Gordon Durnil, described as "young, honest, intelligent, sincere, energetic, charismatic, and fully aware of the

problems facing Indianapolis.^{xxiii} With Lugar as his protégé, Bulen set out to achieve the impossible, elect a Republican mayor in a Democrat-controlled city.

Lugar and Bulen ran a tight campaign, cinching him the title of Indianapolis mayor in 1967 at the ripe age of 35. As campaign manager, Bulen ensured that a grassroots effort was established and reached key demographics. He created a neighborhood task force that interviewed Indianapolis residents regarding the problems they faced in their community. A few days before the election, Lugar wrote personal letters to these neighborhoods and vowed that, if elected mayor, he would do his best to resolve their specific grievances. This gave Lugar a personal touch and, since the letters were sent out only days before the election, prevented his opponent Barton from responding. Lugar also ran on a platform of home rule and conservative practicality. He spoke about police services, officer recruitment, improving traffic and parking, and enhanced street services among other topics. The campaign even aired a radio jingle that sang, “Dick Lugar, he’s first-rate. Dick Lugar for a town that’s great.”^{xxiv} In the face of tight finances and slim odds, Bullen’s management of Lugar’s mayoral campaign demonstrated his genius as a political strategist and played a vital role in Lugar’s ascension to power. The enthusiasm within the party was palpable, and *The Reporter*, a local Republican newspaper, wrote, “Dick Lugar is an example of how, by sticking together and working for each other, we can make this a Republican city, state, and nation.” On November 7, 1967, Lugar was elected mayor of Indianapolis, marking the emergence of a Republican-controlled Indianapolis.^{xxv}

As mayor, Richard Lugar would follow several initiatives to improve the city and further his conservative agenda. Perhaps one of his most notable accomplishments was the revitalization of downtown Indianapolis. During a period where people were moving out of the city and into the suburbs in mass numbers, Lugar was determined to maintain the cultural vibrancy of his beloved city. This is exemplified by his insistence that the Pacers, Indianapolis’ professional men’s basketball team, be located downtown rather than in the suburbs. This bucked the growing trend of building stadiums in the suburbs and demonstrated Lugar’s commitment to Indianapolis’ downtown. He also facilitated a partnership

between Indiana University and Purdue University to create Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (colloquially known as IUPUI). Today, IUPUI attracts students from all over the state and is a key part of Indianapolis' downtown scene, elevating the city's cultural status and academic reputation. Overall, Lugar's mayoral years were viewed favorably and he easily defeated challenger John Neff in the 1971 mayoral elections. While often overlooked in favor of his senatorial years, Lugar's leadership as mayor prepared him for a career as a Senator and laid the foundation for his mayoral successor, William Hudnut, to revitalize the city and transform it into a thriving, metropolitan area.^{xxvi}

Within the initial months of his mayoral years, Mayor Lugar began revisiting the idea of government consolidation, a feat that had eluded his Democratic predecessors. These ideas developed into Unigov, a pivotal yet controversial piece of legislation that transformed Indianapolis' geographic and political landscape. Through Unigov, Lugar consolidated downtown Indianapolis with the surrounding suburbs and reworked the city's services and chain of command. This increased Indianapolis' population from 450,000 to 750,000 overnight and Indianapolis skyrocketed to become one of the top ten largest cities in America. Notably, the demographic folded into Marion County was mainly white, conservative suburbanites which diluted both the Democratic and African American voice in Indianapolis.^{xxvii} Through Unigov, Lugar and Bulen successfully established Indianapolis as a major Republican city and stronghold.

At its conception, Unigov faced fierce opposition from Democrats and Republicans alike. Members of both parties feared that this legislation, which passed without a public referendum, would grant Mayor Lugar authoritarian powers and upset the city's democracy. Democrats believed that the real motivation behind Unigov was to ensure the political supremacy of the Republican Party. Fears of political realignment were not unfounded, with Bulen boasting to *The Washington Post* that "It's my greatest coup of all time, moving out there and taking in 85,000 Republicans."^{xxviii} According to scholars Blomquist and Parks, Unigov was "more complicated than the system it replaced," and failed to streamline the local government. Furthermore, Lugar, likely affected by his election loss on the school

board, refused to consolidate public schools. This decision led to the further segregation of Black and White schoolchildren in Indianapolis.^{xxx} Historian Richard B. Pierce decries Unigov and Lugar for failing to consider the African-American vote and believes that the legislation diluted the Black political voice in Indianapolis stating, “Under Unigov, the incorporation of the most white suburbs dropped the African American presence in the city to 18 percent, and black political strength [In Indianapolis] reverted to levels reached in 1945.”^{xxx} Emma Lou Thornbrough offers a particularly harsh critique of the legislation, arguing that Unigov intentionally silenced the African American voice in Indianapolis.^{xxxi}

Despite fierce opposition, Governor Whitcomb signed Unigov into law on March 13th, 1969. Economically it served as a pivotal piece of legislation and established Indianapolis as a leader in urban policy and successful city consolidation. Indianapolis experienced steady job growth compared to other cities and redeveloped the downtown area by redirecting substantial financial resources to urban development. As a result, Indianapolis’ began garnering a reputation as a world-class city with an influential mayor. Durnil considers Unigov legislation as a revolutionary testament to home rule government, a not-so-subtle nod to Nixonian New Federalism. Notably, at this time Indianapolis was the only major city to be controlled by a Republican mayor.^{xxxii} This political anomaly would not go unnoticed by President Nixon’s administration.

By 1970, President Nixon was embroiled in the Vietnam War and public criticism of his inability to withdraw, a promise he had made on the campaign trail, mounted every day. According to Nixon’s aide Haldeman, the Vietnam War “overshadowed everything, all the time, in every discussion, in every decision, in every opportunity and every problem.” As the war dragged on, anti-War protests mounted and Nixon became increasingly sequestered in the White House. For the entirety of 1969, Nixon never made a presidential visit outside of Washington D.C. and aides began urging him to plan an appearance in a major city. Protests against the war were in full swing by 1970 and Nixon, a deeply insecure man, abhorred the idea of a presidential visit being dominated by media coverage of anti-war protestors, embarrassing him and detracting from his visit. His administration eventually identified Indianapolis as a

city where he would receive an enthusiastic welcome and, in turn, positive media coverage. Better yet, Mayor Lugar's Unigov legislation offered a thriving example of New Federalism and decentralized government. Politically, Nixon intentionally stopped by Indianapolis before visiting Chicago and its Democratic Mayor John Daley, whom Nixon partially blamed for his defeat in the 1960 presidential election. By traveling to Indianapolis in his first presidential visit of 1970, Nixon would ensure positive press coverage, exemplify his New Federalist policies, and intentionally prioritize a Republican city and mayor before a Democratic city and his political opponent Mayor Daley. ^{xxxiii}

After several correspondences between Indianapolis and Washington D.C., the presidential visit was confirmed in January of 1970 and Mayor Lugar began preparing both Indianapolis and the Republican party. When examining the correspondence of the mayor's office, it's clear that the presidential visit was extensively planned. Media stations in particular were well vetted before being permitted to the airport or conference. This was to both ensure the security of the president and facilitate positive press coverage. In an announcement to the Republican Party, Bulen urged party members to arrive at the City-County Building by at least 10:30 AM, nearly two hours before Nixon was to arrive at the airport. This was to ensure that friendly faces would be forefront in the crowd and subsequently captured on television by the local stations. According to Bulen's letter, bands started playing at 9:30 AM, concession stands served hot food and drinks, and Republicans who wanted to greet Nixon at the airport were expected to be at the tarmac no later than 11:00 AM. ^{xxxiv} Always a political strategist, Bulen was determined to have a large turnout for President Nixon and he succeeded at rallying a crowd of over 1,000 people for Nixon's speech alone. President Nixon was delighted by the large, positive reception and, during the transition from the speech to the conference, was reported to be in unusually good humor.

Newspaper coverage of the urban affairs conference, which included the president's entourage, several Indiana mayors, and other notable figures reported that the visit was more symbolic than practical. One reporter wrote that Nixon's remarks were, "brief, cheery, and of no major substance." ^{xxxv} A more generous article lauded the fact that President Nixon listened to the mayors more than he spoke. Lugar

reported that the committee overall requested less red tape from the federal government.^{xxxvi} Lugar also told newspapers that Nixon was “an excellent listener and you could tell he was enjoying himself enormously during the entire meeting.” Towards the end of the conference, Moynihan presented a 10-point urban affairs policy drafted by Nixon’s administration. In a letter, Lugar reveals that Moynihan even added an 11th policy point, “Be of good cheer,” which demonstrates the positive atmosphere of the conference.^{xxxvii} While these ten points served more as a policy outline than concrete legislation, it cemented Nixon’s commitment to cities and New Federalism. This commitment to decentralization would later reach Indianapolis by way of generous block grants and other federal government funding. Overall, the president’s visit and conference were a rousing success for everyone involved.

Lugar was able to capitalize on Nixon’s visit by intimately associating himself with the president and, in doing so, drew attention to his successes as mayor of Indianapolis. The visit was well-received by the public and newspapers often connected Lugar with Nixon in their headlines. In many ways, Nixon’s visit was a four-hour-long victory lap for Bulen, Lugar, and the local Republican party. Mayor Lugar constantly referenced his ties with President Nixon in correspondence, even months after the visit occurred.^{xxxviii} This was an intentional decision on Lugar’s part to further establish himself as Nixon’s mayor. He also tied the Indianapolis to Nixon’s administration, writing to Wish TV 8, “Mr. Nixon has chosen the Hoosier capital, not only because of its Republican leadership but because it has begun to work on its own towards answers to the problems plaguing every major city.” He continues the letter by connecting the President’s visit with Unigov stating, “The President recognizes the merits of modernizing city government.”^{xxxix} Between Bulen’s elaborate orchestration of the visit and Lugar intentionally connecting himself to the President, it is clear that both figures sought to further Lugar’s political standing through President Nixon.

NIXON’S FAVORITE MAYOR AND HIS RISE TO NATIONAL PROMINENCE

Given Lugar’s efforts to connect himself with the President, it is no surprise that the press eventually bestowed him with the title of “Nixon’s Favorite Mayor.” This nickname originated with reporter Peter

Braestrup who wrote in *The Washington Post* that, “President Nixon regards him [Richard Lugar], by all accounts, as his favorite mayor.”^{xl} While Nixon never actually called Lugar “his favorite mayor,” the name persisted for the rest of Lugar’s political career. Lugar would proceed to capitalize on his new association as Nixon’s favorite mayor to insert himself into national politics. Mayor Lugar visited Washington on multiple occasions to meet with Nixon’s administration, was elected president of the League of Cities, traveled to Brussels with Moynihan for a NATO conference, hosted another NATO conference in Indianapolis, and spoke at the 1972 RNC in favor of Nixon’s reelection campaign. These opportunities were all direct results of Nixon’s visit to Indianapolis and prepared Lugar for his future Senatorial career, redirecting his interests and specialization from urban affairs to foreign policy.

In 1971, Lugar was elected president of the National League of Cities, an organization that promotes and represents cities in Washington D.C. and serves as a pivotal advocacy group for local government. Lugar’s appointment was largely in recognition of his work in revitalizing Indianapolis and successfully implementing Unigov legislation. Nixon’s presidential visit and the subsequent influence Lugar had on politics at the federal level also played a major part in the board’s decision to elect Lugar as president. During his presidency, Lugar called for more federal faith to be placed in the cities and requested that block grants and other Nixonian policies be implemented.^{xli} Serving as president for a nationally recognized organization served as a pivotal experience for Lugar and allowed him to promote his mayoral work on the national level.

While Mayor Lugar continued his work in urban affairs, he began developing an enduring interest in foreign affairs and international politics. In a 2018 interview with WYFI, Lugar reminisces on how he was invited to his first NATO conference. On February 5th, 1970, after delivering their speeches in front of City Hall, Lugar and Nixon were heading towards the conference on urban affairs and conversing during the elevator ride. On the 25th floor, Nixon suddenly pivoted towards Lugar and said, “Dick I want you to go with Moynihan... to Brussels to represent the United States at a NATO conference on cities.” Lugar accepted immediately.^{xlii} Fifteen days after Nixon’s visit, Lugar received an invitation from Robert

Ellsworth, the United States' official NATO representative, to accompany him to Brussels. Ellsworth congratulated Lugar on the successful presidential visit stating, "I would like to tell you that we read here of the splendid job you did in helping to organize the recent visit."^{xliii} Seemingly a reward for the well-received presidential visit, Lugar's attendance at the NATO conference in Brussels transformed him from a local, Midwestern politician to a global influence and ambassador of the United States.

Lugar traveled to Brussels with the intent of enhancing his political reputation and transforming Indianapolis into a globally recognized city. He arrived on Sunday, April 12th 1970, and departed the conference on Wednesday, April 15th. During this time there, Lugar attended several diplomatic meetings, a lunch in honor of Moynihan, and multiple cocktail hours where he socialized with foreign diplomats.^{xliv} Surely his previous experience as a Naval intelligence briefer aided him while he wined and dined with foreign figures. On his second day in Brussels, Lugar proposed that Indianapolis hold another NATO conference in May of 1971. Talking points for this Hoosier hosted conference included urban growth, with Indianapolis being a case study, municipal affairs in cities, and urban problems including environmental pollution, revenue, city planning, and transportation.^{xlv} This plan was accepted and Lugar's administration began preparing for a global conference to be held in Indianapolis.

As with Nixon's visit, Lugar's preparations for the NATO conference were thorough and designed to highlight the Indianapolis' many achievements. Lugar encouraged "the appropriate displaying and presentation of local accomplishments and projects that should be of interest...those areas include Unigov, Operation Breakthrough...and other Great Indianapolis Progress Committee activities..."^{xlvi} As with the presidential visit, the NATO conference in Indianapolis was a success and greatly strengthened the city's national standing. Both the Brussels and Indianapolis NATO conferences mark Lugar's first foray into foreign diplomacy as a politician. Furthermore, both conferences provided him with vital connections and foreign policy experience that he needed to later maneuver into the Foreign Affairs Committee as a Senator. By inviting Lugar to Brussels, Nixon had inadvertently kindled Lugar's extensive career as one of the most influential foreign policy experts in American history.

A year after hosting the NATO conference in Indianapolis, Mayor Lugar was invited to speak at the 1972 Republican National Convention where he was introduced by then California Governor Ronald Reagan. Reagan, in his classic oratory style, lauded Lugar as a “respected spokesman for and practitioner of the very best in workable new approaches to the urban challenge... he has represented the president not only across this country but also within the NATO community.” Here Reagan directly recognized Unigov and its innovative response to city problems and references Lugar’s entrance into foreign policy. After a sweeping introduction by Reagan, which rallied the crowds into exuberant cheers, Lugar stepped up to the podium and began his speech.

In stark contrast to Reagan’s charisma and masterful oratory skills, Lugar seemed somewhat stiff and wooden in his delivery. He promoted Nixon’s 1972 reelection efforts and touched on domestic affairs before turning his attention to global policies. Lugar vowed to reject isolationism and sharply criticized Democrats who supported withdrawal from the Vietnam war. He also called for more robust military funding and stated that he would refuse to abandon America’s South Vietnamese allies or prisoners of war. He closed by returning to domestic policy and argued against tax increases, welfare programs, income redistribution, and the overinvolvement of the federal government in local affairs, a nod to his decentralization policy support. Despite his insightful arguments, his awkward delivery and critical tone elicited only a lukewarm response from the audience.^{xlvii}

While Lugar’s speech at the RNC may have been overshadowed by Reagan’s oratory skills, the speech represented the culmination of Lugar’s mayoral years and foreshadowed his future initiatives in foreign policy. In the speech, Lugar’s political focus had shifted away from domestic policy and towards foreign affairs. This is especially apparent in his argument against American isolationism and support for the continued involvement of the United States in Vietnam. Lugar’s efforts at globalization would be a continual theme during his years as a senator and mirror many of President Nixon’s foreign policy philosophies. Reagan’s introduction for Lugar also reveals that the GOP viewed mayor Lugar as an emerging figure for the party. With his tag as Nixon’s favorite mayor and successful track record with

Indianapolis' NATO conference, Lugar demanded national attention not often given to local politicians. By virtue of speaking at the 1972 RNC, Lugar demonstrated to the Republican party that he was young, ambitious, and ready for the national stage.

Lugar's rise to national prominence experienced a major setback on August 8th, 1974 when Nixon, unable to escape the Watergate Scandal, became the first and only sitting president to resign. Suddenly the title "Nixon's Favorite Mayor," was a curse rather than a blessing and Lugar struggled to distance himself from the disgraced president while still advocating for many of his policies. Despite this, Republicans urged Lugar to run for the Senate because they believed he was one of the only Republicans who had any chance of winning a seat post-Watergate. Despite several reservations, Lugar eventually accepted the nomination. Bulen, who was once again Lugar's campaign manager, explained their decision to run by stating, "When things look bleak, that's the time to run your very best horse and to us that's Dick Lugar."^{xlvi} As for political strategy, Bulen and Lugar decided to focus on local issues, with Bulen telling reporters that, "We want no presidents in here."^{xlix}

Despite attempts to avoid national politics, it was impossible to ignore the Watergate scandal. Eventually, Lugar addressed his associations with Nixon by distancing himself from the President without directly criticizing him, halfheartedly stating, "The President has recorded and revealed sorry conduct." In response to his nickname, Lugar practiced self-deprecation saying, "I'm not sure I ever qualified as the President's favorite mayor." Lugar's position sparked outrage on both sides. Democrats found this statement paltry, while Republicans were offended by Lugar's dismissal of Nixon. Interestingly, *People Magazine* noted that, despite his public statements, Lugar still wore a Nixon tie clip. They go on to write that, "his [Lugar's] conference room is festooned with pictures of himself with the President and the Nixon family."¹ After the Watergate Scandal faded from public consciousness, Lugar would also revert to openly acknowledging his relationship with the president. These details indicate that, while Lugar publicly distanced himself from the President, privately he continued to admire and respect Nixon.

When the 1974 election votes were tallied, they revealed that not even a genius political strategist like Bulen could outmaneuver the Watergate Scandal. Lugar lost the election to Democratic incumbent

Birch Bayh. While some scholars point to this election as an example of Lugar suffering due to his association with Nixon, it should be noted that election polls were incredibly close until President Ford's unpopular pardon of Nixon.^{li} This, combined with the fact that Lugar easily won the 1976 senate election and continued on to become the longest-serving senator in Indiana's history, demonstrates that Lugar's associations with Nixon created temporary setbacks rather than permanent ones. Ultimately, the lasting impact of Lugar's relationship with Nixon was his rapid rise to prominence on the national stage, which aided his political career rather than hindered it. Without Nixon's presidential visit, Lugar would not have been able to attend the NATO conference in Brussels, host a similar conference in Indianapolis, and most likely would not have been invited to speak at the 1972 RNC. These cumulative events were significantly more impactful than Lugar's singular 1974 election loss. Ultimately, Nixon's relationship with Lugar served a paramount role in him becoming a Senator and foreign relations expert.

A FINAL MEETING BETWEEN TWO STATESMEN

After winning the 1976 election, Lugar served six terms as a senator. There, he worked on both the agricultural and foreign affairs committee. In agriculture, he pursued federal food stamp initiatives and worked to deregulate farming policies. In foreign relations, Lugar co-authored the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction program, which is responsible for deactivating over 7,500 nuclear warheads. For this effort, Lugar and his co-author, Georgia Senator Sam Nunn, were nominated for a Nobel Prize in 2003; in 2013 Lugar was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Barack Obama, who often cites Lugar's mentorship as a formative experience for him as a junior senator. In 1996 Lugar ran a failed primary campaign for the presidency, an aspiration he and Bulen had considered since 1974. However, his dry oratory skills and quiet demeanor failed to catch the public's attention and he quickly withdrew. In 2012, Lugar was challenged in a contentious Republican Primary election by Tea Party member Richard Murdock, who attacked him for his bipartisan cooperation with Democratic Senators. Lugar's defeat in 2012 ended a 36-year long senate career and marks an important milestone in the history of the Republican party. A respected statesman, Lugar would continue to make public

appearances until his death on April 28th, 2019. The Lugar Center, which he established after his senatorial defeat, preserves his preeminent legacy by continuing the foreign policy initiatives he pursued in the Senate.^{lii}

Richard Nixon, on the other hand, traveled a divergent political path from 1974 onwards. After Watergate, Nixon lived the rest of his life in political exile. Post-resignation, the former president threw himself into writing his memoir, in part to foster sympathy for his broken image and in part to earn a viable income for himself and his family. While he managed to earn money off his memoir, he was never able to fully rehabilitate his name or his presidency.^{liii} On June 26th, 1993 a distraught and elderly Nixon was seen mourning profusely at his wife, Pat Nixon's funeral, a rare display of emotion from an otherwise reserved man. He would soon follow her; on April 18th, 1994 President Richard Nixon died suddenly of a stroke. Almost every paper that reported his death recounted his infamous role in Watergate and the legacy he most wanted to leave behind, his foreign policy expertise, was mentioned only in passing. His legacy is best described by Pat Buchanan who summarized the President in seven poignant words, "He wanted to be a great man."^{liv} He never quite fulfilled those ambitions.

In reviewing Lugar's life, it is evident that his political career was heavily influenced by Nixon; several parallels can be drawn between the two. Both men were statesmen who focused more on foreign policy than domestic policy. Both were known more for their intellectualism and practical policies than an effervescent personality. One friend of Lugar's joked that "Dick has maintained that childhood capability of walking into an empty room and blending right in."^{lv} Despite both men lacking the extraverted charisma so often found in politicians, they compensated by being compelling writers as evidenced by their prolific written works. Lugar also intentionally avoided many of Nixon's perceived flaws. For one, Lugar generally ran positive election campaigns and avoided the mudslinging Nixon became infamous for. He also stayed far away from any scandals, in part thanks to the political aftershocks of Watergate. Lugar assimilated the positive qualities of Nixon including the president's intellectualism, writing skills, and foreign policy ideas, into his own political arsenal. At the same time, Lugar learned from Nixon's

mistakes and avoided any scandals and a crooked image. Nixon's political career molded Lugar's career and guided his future political life. In many ways, Lugar, by carving a legacy as an intellectual and foreign policy expert, became the politician Nixon always aspired to be.

In January of 1994, during the 25th anniversary of Nixon's presidential inauguration, Senator Lugar and President Nixon's paths crossed one last time. It was another chilly day in Washington D.C. and, appropriately, the weather was similar to their first encounter nearly 25 years prior. In those two and a half decades much had changed for both statesmen; The Cold War had ended, Bill Clinton was President, and the Republican Party was undergoing a major political transformation and becoming increasingly conservative. This stood in stark contrast to Nixon's promotion of desegregation and the founding of the EPA. It was during this time that the political topography started shifting under Lugar's feet and Lugar, once known as a solid conservative, began being known as a bipartisan negotiator or even a moderate. This new reputation would later be weaponized against him in the 2012 primary election.^{lvi} Regardless of the political present and future, Lugar and Nixon were gathered to recount presidential history. Lugar proclaimed to the gathered crowd, "Our prayers today are for the continuing strength and activity of President Richard Nixon," whom he then referred to as his "foreign policy teacher and counselor." After the celebration, Nixon, who was now in his 80's, privately pulled Lugar aside and confided in him saying, "You know, you really were my favorite mayor."^{lvii}

Three months after this final encounter President Nixon passed away. Lugar, reflecting upon Nixon's complicated legacy, told the *Indianapolis Star* that while "history is never kind... it will be generous to President Nixon."^{lviii} This final interaction perhaps clarifies any remaining questions about the true nature of Nixon and Lugar's working relationship. While they both were ambitious politicians, it appears their relationship was genuine and built upon a foundation of mutual respect and admiration for the other. In many ways, Lugar viewed Nixon as a political mentor and molded his own career after Nixon's presidency. President Nixon's failures paved the way for Senator Lugar's successes, most notably in the realm of foreign policy. By scouting Indianapolis as an example of his New Federalist

policies, President Nixon inadvertently kindled the career of America's most preeminent foreign policy expert and Indiana senator. This enabled Mayor Lugar to elevate both himself and Indianapolis into national and global entities. Numerous future Indiana politicians such as Mitch Daniels would attribute their success to Senator Lugar's mentorship. In this manner, on February 5th 1970, President Nixon shaking hands with a young, Midwestern mayor would forge a lasting legacy in Indianapolis, the United States, and the entire world as a whole.

Notes

- ⁱ “President Richard Nixon’s Daily Diary February 1, 1970-February 28, 1970,” accessed November 11, 2020, <https://www.nixonlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/virtuallibrary/documents/PDD/1970/022%20February%201-28%201970.pdf>.
- ⁱⁱ *Mayor Lugar Greets President Nixon at Indianapolis Airport, February 1970*, photograph, Institute for Civic Leadership and Digital Mayoral Archives, <https://uindy.historyit.com/item.php?id=834082>.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Richard M. Nixon, “Remarks on Arrival at Indianapolis, Indiana” (Speech, Weir Cook Municipal Airport, Indianapolis, IN, February 5, 1970), www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-arrival-indianapolis-indiana.
- ^{iv} Richard M. Nixon, “Richard Nixon’s Speech in Indianapolis with Introduction by Mayor Lugar, February, 1970,” (Speech, Indianapolis City Hall, Indianapolis, February 5th, 1970), <https://uindy.historyit.com/item.php?id=547448>.
- ^v “President Richard Nixon’s Daily Diary February 1, 1970-February 28, 1970.”
- ^{vi} John T. Shaw, *Richard G. Lugar, Statesman of the Senate: Crafting Foreign Policy from Capitol Hill* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012), 5-15.
- ^{vii} William Blomquist and Roger B. Parks, “Fiscal, Service, and Political Impacts of Indianapolis-Marion County’s Unigov,” *Publius* 25, no. 4 (Autumn, 1995): 37-54.
- ^{viii} John A. Farrell, *Richard Nixon: The Life* (New York, NY: Double Day, 2017).
- ^{ix} *Ibid.*
- ^x Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America* (New York, NY: Scribner Press, 2008), 18-19.
- ^{xi} Joan Hoff, *Nixon Reconsidered* (New York, NY: BasicBooks, 1994), 5-13.
- ^{xii} Farrell, *Richard Nixon: The Life*, 18-41.
- ^{xiii} James T. Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1996), 3-9.
- ^{xiv} Geoffery Kabaservice, *Rule and Ruin: The Downfall of Moderation and the Destruction of the Republican Party, From Eisenhower to the Tea Party* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 389-402.
- ^{xv} Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, 741-742.
- ^{xvi} Hoff, *Nixon Reconsidered*, 65-69.
- ^{xvii} Richard P. Nathan, “There will Always be New Federalism,” *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 14, no. 4 (2006): 499-510.
- ^{xviii} Hoff, *Nixon Reconsidered*, 65-69.
- ^{xix} Shaw, *Statesman of the Senate*, 3-10.
- ^{xx} *Richard Lugar: Reason’s Quiet Warrior*, written by John Krull (WYFI, 2018), www.wfyi.org/programs/richard-lugar-reasons-quiet-warrior/television/richard-lugar-reasons-quiet-warrior.
- ^{xxi} *Ibid.*
- ^{xxii} Richard B. Pierce, *Polite Protest: The Political Economy of Race in Indianapolis, 1920-1970* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), 110-112.
- ^{xxiii} Gordon K. Durnil, *Throwing Chairs and Raising Hell: Politics in the Bulen Era* (Carmel, IN: Guild Press of Indiana, 1999), 21.
- ^{xxiv} *Ibid.*, 31.
- ^{xxv} *Ibid.*, 34.
- ^{xxvi} Trevor Foughty, “Mayor for Life: The Secret to Dick Lugar’s Success,” *Capital & Washington* (blog), May 9, 2019, www.capitolandwashington.com/blog/2019/05/09/mayor-for-life-the-secret-to-dick-lugars-success.
- ^{xxvii} Pierce, *Polite Protest*, 121.
- ^{xxviii} Monroe W. Karmin, “Meet the Mayor: Indianapolis’ Lugar: A Friend at the White House,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 19, 1971.
- ^{xxix} Blomquist & Parks, “Impacts of Unigov,” 37-54.
- ^{xxx} Pierce, *Polite Protest*, 121.
- ^{xxxi} Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana Blacks in the Twentieth Century* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000), 178-179.
- ^{xxxii} Karmin, “Meet the Mayor,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 19, 1971.
- ^{xxxiii} Farrell, *Nixon: A Life*, 347-370.
- ^{xxxiv} Keith Bulen, “Letter to Marion County Republicans,” February 1970, www.uindy.historyit.com/item.php?id=546167.
- ^{xxxv} Richard K. Shull, “Nixon Chasing Ecology abroad a Smoking Jet,” *Indianapolis News*, December 1, 1971.

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- ^{xxxvi} Hugh Rutledge, "Mayors Favor New Share-Revenue Plan," *Indianapolis News*. December 1st, 1971.
- ^{xxxvii} Richard Lugar, "Mayor Lugar to Mike Alexander, March 9, 1970," March 9, 1970, www.uindy.historyit.com/item.php?id=546158.
- ^{xxxviii} Ibid.
- ^{xxxix} Institute for Civic Leadership and Digital Mayoral Archives, Box 15, President Nixon's Visit 2-5-70: Clippings.
- ^{xl} Peter Braestrup, "President Nixon's Favorite, Mayor Lugar Put Indianapolis on Map," *The Washington Post*, September 13, 1970.
- ^{xli} Richard Lugar, "Address to the Conference on Cities- Indianapolis, Indiana," (Speech, Indianapolis, IN, circa January 1st, 1970), www.uindy.historyit.com/item.php?id=530044.
- ^{xlii} *Richard Lugar: Reason's Quiet Warrior*.
- ^{xliiii} Robert Ellsworth, "Robert Ellsworth to Mayor Lugar, February 20, 1970," February 20, 1970. www.uindy.historyit.com/item.php?id=744148.
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- ^{xli v} Indianapolis Proposal for a Meeting of the Committee on the Challenges of a Modern Society, n.d., www.uindy.historyit.com/item.php?id=744173.
- ^{xli vi} Committee Description and Responsibilities in Preparation for the Meeting of the Committee on the Challenges of a Modern Society (CCMS), n.d., www.uindy.historyit.com/item.php?id=744174.
- ^{xli vii} Richard G. Lugar, "Richard G. Lugar Delivers Keynote Address, Republican National Convention, 1972." (Speech, Miami Beach Florida, 1972).
- ^{xli viii} R. W. Apple, "Nixon's Favorite Mayor Seeks New Tag," *New York Times*, June 13, 1974.
- ^{xli ix} "Mayor Lugar: The Perils of Being 'Nixon's Favorite,'" *People Magazine*, August 5, 1974.
- ^l Ibid.
- ^{li} R. W. Apple, "Favorite Mayor seeks New Tag." *New York Times*.
- ^{lii} Shaw, *Statesman of the Senate*.
- ^{liii} Richard M. Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1978), 534-538.
- ^{li v} Farrell, *Nixon: The Life*, 354.
- ^{li v i} Michael H. Brown, "Richard Lugar, six-term senator and leading voice on foreign policy, dies at 87," *The Washington Post*, April 28, 2019, www.washingtonpost.com/local/obituaries/richard-lugar-six-term-senator-and-leading-voice-on-foreign-policy-dies-at-87/2019/04/28/2fa890ec-69ce-11e9-a66d-a82d3f3d96d5_story.html.
- ^{li v i i} Kabaservice, *Rule and Ruin*.
- ^{li v i i i} Linda Graham Caleca, "'70 visit cemented city's friendship with Nixon," *Indianapolis Star*, April 24th, 1994.
- ^{li v i i v} Ibid.

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