

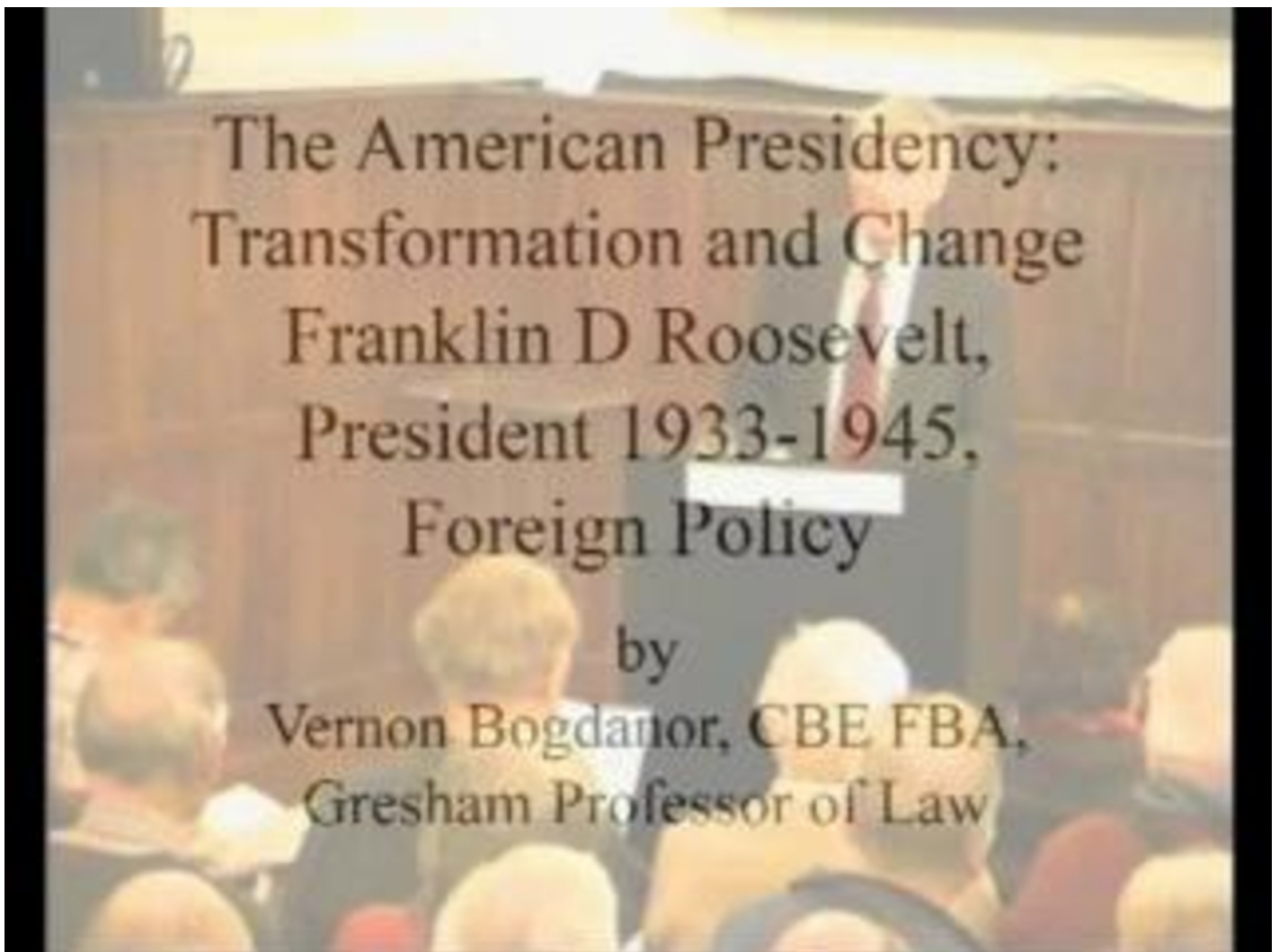


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Franklin D. Roosevelt, President 1933-1945 - Foreign Policy Transcript

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FROM ROOSEVELT TO BUSH
THE AMERICAN PRESIDENCY:
TRANSFORMATION AND CHANGE
FRANKLIN D ROOSEVELT, PRESIDENT 1933-1945 - FOREIGN POLICY

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Ladies and gentlemen, this lecture is on Franklin Roosevelt's foreign policy. In my first lecture, on Franklin Roosevelt's domestic policy, I spoke about the feeling on the part of America that she was an exceptional country, and her foreign policy I think depends very much on that. I think I also mentioned Oscar Wilde's famous aphorism that Britain and America were divided by a common language, and I think the Americans do think, and always have thought about, foreign policy in a different way from Europeans. Americans thought of their Constitution and their political system as being unique. They thought of America as being 'a city on a hill', in John Winthrop's famous phrase, and that has led to two contrasting reactions in the United States, neither of which we share here nor are shared on the Continent.

The first is what might be called universalism, that the American model is so good that every country should adopt it, and in particular, that America shows the great virtues of self-determination in government of democracy. This idea in the 20th Century was strongly stressed by a man who was Roosevelt's mentor in many ways, the previous Democrat President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, who was President from 1913 to 1921 and led America into the First World War.

It was Woodrow Wilson who stressed the view that people throughout the world want what the Americans had, namely, to determine their own futures, to live in a country of their own choice, and decide upon the nature of their governments. Woodrow Wilson said that, 'When I think of the peoples of the world, I am not thinking of men in dinner jackets'; he was thinking of ordinary people who wanted the same things that ordinary Americans wanted. At the end of the First World War, Wilson said that the sacrifices of the War had been so great that they would only be worthwhile if they led to a better world, a different sort of world in which wars did not occur. The basis of that new world, he said, it had to be a kind of tripod, a three-fold basis: first, the self-determination of peoples, that they should choose under which state they wished to live; secondly, that they should be able to choose their government; and thirdly, that there should be a League of Nations, a parliament of man, so that the force of world opinion could rise up and prevent aggression. These were the three aspects of his policy.

When he was trying to persuade the Americans to join the League of Nations, he said that he had met one day in the peace conference in 1919 what he called 'a very dignified and interesting group of gentlemen from Azerbaijan'. He said, 'I did not have time until they were gone to find out where they came from, but I did find this out immediately: that I was talking to men who talked the same language that I did in respect of ideas, in respect of conceptions of liberty, in respect of conceptions of right and justice, and I did find out that the Azerbaijanis were, with all the other delegations that came to see me, metaphorically speaking, holding their hands out to America and saying, 'You are the disciples and leaders of the free world - can't you come and help us?' - In other words, the Azerbaijanis wanted exactly what the Americans want, just as I suppose George W. Bush would say the Iraqis want exactly what the Americans want. This is a still powerful dynamic today of self-determination and human rights, and Woodrow Wilson unleashed it.

Wilson's campaign at the end of the First War failed. To get American allegiance to the League of Nations, he needed a two-thirds majority in the Senate to ratify the treaty. He did not get it, and the Americans therefore did not join the League of Nations. Perhaps even more important than that, Wilson failed to convince the American people that what he said was right.

You may remember that when I was talking about the biography of Franklin Roosevelt, last time, I said that Roosevelt was the Vice-Presidential candidate in 1920. He hoped to be in the Administration that succeeded Wilson, but he and his Presidential candidate, James Cox, were heavily defeated in a landslide for the Republicans, and the Republicans decided to withdraw from American commitments to Europe. That led to a second reaction, a swing to the opposite direction from universalism, also

something we are not perhaps very familiar with in this country: isolationism. That is also based on America being a unique country because, on the isolationist view, the old world, primarily Europe, is so corrupt and so infected by balance of power politics that America should keep out completely.

That had been the view of George Washington, who said that 'America should steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world'. A later President, John Quincy Adams, said in words that a lot of critics of George Bush have used, that 'America does not go abroad in search of monsters to destroy.' In the inter-War period, we had one American writer, John Dos Passos, say, 'Rejection of Europe is what America is all about.' That was the isolationist view, that Europe was corrupt, involved in power politics, had got America unnecessarily into the First World War, and the best thing for Americans to do now was to let Europeans stew in their own juice - if they could not manage their affairs, that was up to them, but America ought to get on with her own affairs. The view came about, held quite strongly in the 1920s, that the First World War had been a mistake.

That feeling was much strengthened when the Depression came about, and most Americans said our first task is to put our own house in order, charity begins at home, and America became a highly introverted country, with tariffs against European countries. Roosevelt broke away from the Gold Standard in 1933, America set its own rate for the dollar and without requiring any international role for it, and he attempted to do all he could to isolate America from foreign competition.

At the same time, opinion in America - and this does, I think, parallel things in Britain - was veering in a strongly pacifist direction. In the Senate, Senator Nye led an investigation into the activities of the munitions manufacturers. This was from 1934 to 1936, and this investigation tended to the view that the munitions manufacturers had a vested interest in war and that America had been brought into the First War as a result of their activities. To emphasise their hatred of war, the Americans passed a series of neutrality acts between 1935 and 1937, which embargoed the shipment of arms to all belligerents, whether they were aggressors or non-aggressors, and prevented the President from making loans to any countries at war, again, whether they were the aggressors or not. The idea was to avoid the conditions that had led America into the First World War, when she had been fighting for the freedom of the seas against U-boat attacks from German submarines. The argument was that America should keep out of all these things and have no relationships at all with any belligerents.

At the same time, Roosevelt reduced the size of the army. I think a lot of people writing about America and writing about foreign policy during this period do not realise how weak America was. By 1940, America had the twentieth largest army in the world, just behind the Netherlands. She had five divisions ready for fighting, and just to give you an analogy: the Germans on the Western Front had 141 divisions, and the Allies 144, of which it should be said 104 were French and 10 were British. So America was a very weak country and decided to turn her back on foreign engagements.

This led to considerable anxiety, as you can imagine, by a part of the army, and the Chief of Staff, General MacArthur, who was to play an important role in the politics of the '40s and '50s - he was a Republican. He spoke to Roosevelt and he used words which I think probably can't ever have been used to an American President before. He later said: 'I spoke recklessly, and said something to the effect that when we lost the next war and an American boy lying in the mud with an enemy bayonet through his belly and an enemy foot on his dying throat spat out his last curse, I wanted the name not to be MacArthur but Roosevelt.' Roosevelt said, 'You can't speak to the President like that,' and dismissed him, and MacArthur said that he was so upset that he was sick on the White House steps as he left the meeting.

The Neutrality Act prevented America playing any part in the European affairs. It could not do anything when the Italians attacked Ethiopia in 1935, and America could do nothing to help the Republican Government in Spain at the time of the Spanish Civil War in 1936. Both of these things, Roosevelt later regretted. It was very clear that American isolationism was in fact the ally of European appeasement; it was actually helping the aggressors because it was making no distinction between the aggressive states and those states which were trying to defend themselves.

Roosevelt awakened to this problem, and although he awakened to it later than many perhaps thought desirable, he awakened to it earlier than most Americans. He had never shared the view that was widespread in the '20s and '30s that World War One had been a mistake. He did not take that view. He shared the view of Woodrow Wilson that America was right to go to war. But he actually went further: he thought America had been wrong in settling for an armistice at the end of the War. He said there should have been unconditional surrender and that the Americans should have marched on to Berlin to show the Germans they had been defeated, and that was his policy in the Second War - that is where 'unconditional surrender' comes from. He held that it wasn't enough to simply defeat the aggressors, you had to make sure it didn't occur again. Roosevelt gradually came to the view that America could not survive as an isolationist country. There were two aspects to his thinking on this.

The first was that developments in the field of defence made it impossible to confine American security to the Western hemisphere. The traditional American view had been that the Monroe Doctrine protecting the Western hemisphere was all America needed. But Roosevelt thought that could only be maintained as long as the Atlantic was not in hostile hands - in other words, it was protected by the British Navy. But suppose the British Navy was no longer in a position to protect the Atlantic? Then, he said, America would be in danger, and in 1940, one of his advisors said, 'The destruction of the British Navy would be the turning of our Atlantic Maginot Line', so America had an interest in keeping Britain afloat, as it were.

Then also, the development of air power made traditional boundaries unrealistic. A British Prime Minister in the 1930s said, 'Our frontier is on the Rhine,' and Roosevelt said something fairly similar. So the security aspects were part of it.

But there was something else which was equally important for him, namely American values, that America could not co-exist with a Fascist or Nazi dominated continent, and that only where American democratic values prevailed could Americans feel physically secure. That too, I think, has been a powerful theme of American politics since Roosevelt. Indeed, I suspect it has held by George Bush.

This did not mean, for Roosevelt, the Americans themselves should fight, or at least he hoped that could be avoided, but America ought to encourage the democracies, and in particular the British, to resist. His skill in the late 1930s was, against the opposition of the Senate and Congress, to make Americans more aware of the problem and to bring American opinion behind him, which he did in small steps.

His first step was taken in October 1937, when he made a speech which was called the Quarantine Speech, because what he said was that there was an epidemic of lawlessness spreading in Europe. He said, 'When an epidemic of physical disease starts to spread, the community approves and joins in a quarantine of the patients in order to protect the health of the community against the spread of the disease. There is no escape,' he said, 'through mere isolation or neutrality.' But people expected something to happen from this and nothing did happen, and that was partly because a lot of people in Britain, and in Europe in general, misunderstood the American Constitution. The President cannot take the lead in foreign policy the way a British Government can. It is up to Congress certainly to make a declaration of war or to support a foreign policy, and the fact that the President had a majority in Congress, which Roosevelt did, did not particularly help him, because many of the Democrats disagreed with his foreign policy, and in particular, many of those who were the strongest supporters of the New Deal were also isolationists and it was difficult for him to antagonise them. He said Europeans were looking for something outside Europe to come forward with a hat and a rabbit in it. 'Well, I haven't got a hat,' he said, 'and I haven't got a rabbit in it.'

As late as June 1940, that is after the fall of France, 64% of Americans said it was more important to keep out of war than to help Britain. Many prominent Americans took that view, amongst them two future Presidents - John F. Kennedy and Gerald Ford. They belonged to a group called America First which said America should not get involved with Britain and France. The leader of that point of view was a great charismatic figure in America, Charles Lindbergh, who had won enormous popular acclaim by being the first to fly solo across the Atlantic, and he was the charismatic and popular leader of those who said America should keep out. If anyone's interested in this, there's a fascinating novel written a few years ago by Philip Roth, the American author, called *The Plot Against America*, and in that novel, Charles Lindbergh becomes President in 1940 and leads America into an alliance with Nazi Germany and it follows on from there.

It was because of this opposition from Congress and the people that Roosevelt could not move faster. It was very different from the British system. Winston Churchill hoped that after Roosevelt's third election victory in 1940 he would immediately declare war on Germany. There was no way he could do that when Congress wouldn't support him and when the people would not support him. As late as August 1941, just three months before Pearl Harbor, the House of Representatives passed a renewal of the draft, that is conscription, by just one vote - it was as close as that.

So the Americans could not be of much help to Europeans, and Neville Chamberlain, who was the Prime Minister at the time, wrote to his sister: 'It is always best and safest to count on nothing from the Americans but words.' He said, 'The Americans,' he said, 'are hardly a people to go tiger shooting with.'

At the time of the Munich Agreement in 1938, America was a powerless spectator. Roosevelt was leading an unarmed and isolated country, and American isolation was of course helping appeasement. I think Winston Churchill did not understand that because he says in his *War Memoirs* 'if only we could have got America into things, it would have made a lot of difference,' but America did not have an army large enough to make very much difference at that time.

In November 1938, events happened in Germany which profoundly affected Roosevelt - a vicious pogrom against the Jews of Germany. Roosevelt said, 'I could scarcely believe that such things could occur in a 20th Century civilisation.' His was the only Government to withdraw its Ambassador from Germany as a result of these events, for consultations, and the Ambassador never returned, and I think that greatly affected Roosevelt's view of the nature of Nazi Germany.

In April 1939, he made a further move, which at first sight seemed to lead to humiliation on his part. He sent to Hitler and Mussolini a message listing 31 countries and asking them to promise that they would not attack any of those countries in the next ten years. Mussolini said that he was not going to reply and it was evidence of a deranged mind, but Hitler did reply and made one of his most demagogic speeches in the Reichstag, because the Germans asked these various countries, most of the small ones, who were very frightened of Germany, whether they had asked Roosevelt to intervene in this way and whether they feared attack from Germany, and of course they all said no, and so Hitler denounced Roosevelt in the Reichstag, to great applause and laughter.

But Roosevelt's audience was not Nazi Germany, but his audience at home, and it was significant to anyone who thought about it that he had addressed this message to Hitler and Mussolini and not to the British and French. In other words, he was pinpointing to American opinion that that was where aggression was going to come from and America had to plan to meet it. He told the Canadian Prime Minister at the time, 'If we are turned down,' which of course he was, 'the issue becomes clearer and public opinion in your country and mine will be helped.' He was, all the time, taking two steps forward and one step back, trying to bring public opinion along to realise the danger.

In 1939, he sought to revise the Neutrality Laws, but Congress would not agree until after the outbreak of the European War in November of that year. Hitler told his advisors, 'Because of the Neutrality Laws, America is not dangerous to us,' but by November, after the European War had broken out, they were revised.

When the War broke out, America declared neutrality, as it had in 1914. Roosevelt, in one of his fireside chats, said 'This nation will remain a neutral nation,' but his approach to that neutrality was very different from Wilson's approach in 1914, because Wilson had said that he wanted Americans to be 'impartial in thought as well as in action', and Roosevelt took a different view. He said, 'I cannot ask that every American remains neutral in thought as well. Even a neutral cannot be asked to close his mind or close his conscience.' Polls showed at that time that 84% of Americans were in favour of Britain and France, and only 2% in favour of Germany, but they still didn't want to get involved. So Roosevelt, behind the mask of neutrality, got himself involved in covert entanglement with the Allies, and particularly Britain, before Pearl Harbor, so that at the time of Pearl Harbor, he was, in effect, at war with Germany. He told Congress in 1939 that 'America's first line of defence was the continued independent existence of European nations, especially Britain and France,' and that helping Britain and France would reduce the danger that America would herself have to fight.

He got round the Neutrality Laws by allowing what was called the 'Cash and Carry Provision'. The Cash and Carry Provision said that other countries could take goods away from America, which possibly could be used for making armaments, if they paid for them in cash, so there were not any loans, and they carried them away in their own ships. Of course, that helped Britain and France but not Germany, because Britain controlled the Atlantic at that time, so that was an unneutral measure to begin with.

Then he set up airplane assembly plants in Canada, near the American border, and the Americans supplied those factories with civilian goods, so they did not count as armaments, and the British and French assembled them into aeroplanes. He told an emissary of Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister, in the event of war, we had the industrial resources of the American nation behind him, that he could rely on that.

Then in September 1940, after the fall of France, by executive agreement, so it did not need the approval of Congress, he gave the British fifty destroyers. Those destroyers were of little use, but there was a tremendous symbolism in it, and Churchill, rightly, called it 'a decidedly unneutral act'.

By 1941, Britain was running out of golden dollar reserves to pay under the Cash and Carry provisions, so Roosevelt introduced the idea of lend lease, with a very homely analogy. He said, 'If your neighbour's house catches fire and he doesn't have a hose, it's pointless you arguing with him about the hose, because while you're arguing with him, his house will get blown up and your house will go up in flames. You lend him the hose, and then when he doesn't need it anymore, he gives it back or pays for a replacement.' Now that analogy was slightly unreal, in a way, because you cannot give back tanks and guns and the rest once they are used - it is like giving back chewing gum once it is used, you can't do it! And how are the British going to pay for all these goods? That was not made clear - when are they going to be able to pay? But, for the moment, that did not matter.

During the War, America covered half of Britain's balance of payments deficit, and that in fact was more than the whole cost of the First World War to America.

Then Roosevelt extended the definition of the American waters in the Atlantic to protect British and Canadian convoys. He included the Atlantic right out to Iceland and Greenland, which American troops occupied, so two-thirds of the Atlantic was to be controlled by America, and there was really an undeclared naval war because he was reporting to the British where German submarines and other ships were, and in September 1941, he gave the order to American naval commanders that they were to shoot on sight any German ships that they saw.

He summed up his strategy by telling Churchill that if he were to put the issue of peace and war to the Congress, they would debate it for three months. The President had said he would wage war but not declare it, and that he would become more and more provocative. Everything was to be done to force an incident with the Germans, but actually, the war came from Japan.

Then in Autumn 1941, before America was at war, he met with Churchill off the coast of Newfoundland, they issued together the Atlantic Charter, saying that all countries were entitled to self-government and freedom and that that would be the aim of the new world order after the War. That began a tacit and unofficial partnership between Britain and America which I think has, on the whole, lasted.

But all the same, America did not go to war until she was attacked at Pearl Harbor in December 1941. Britain and France were the only countries which declared war on Nazi Germany without themselves being attacked.

But that is the first great theme of Roosevelt's foreign policy, the way he manoeuvred, if you like, America into a relationship, in particular with Britain, in order to meet what he saw as the Nazi and Fascist threat in Europe.

The second great theme of his policy is what he did during the War to try and secure his new world order. He was not going to be satisfied with just winning the war, but he had to win it in the way to ensure that that could never happen again - in other words, to achieve what Woodrow Wilson had failed to achieve. Of course, in one sense, he achieved that, in the sense that there have been no further world wars, but the world that succeeded the Second War was by no means a peaceful one - you had the Cold War and there were many local wars, so it did not, on the whole, secure permanent peace. In particular, one of the aims which certainly Britain had gone to war in the immediate sense, of securing the independence of Poland, and America, in a broader sense, for securing the self-government of all peoples, that aim was not achieved because Poland and the other independent countries of Central and Eastern Europe were ruled by the Soviet Union for 45 years until the end of the Cold War in 1989. Roosevelt has been much blamed for that, and people said that he was taken in by Stalin and that he handed much of Eastern Europe, and indeed also China, to the Communists.

Much of the criticism of Roosevelt stems from his behaviour in the Yalta Conference in February 1945, with the Russians and the British, when they tried to draw up an agreement on the future of the world, in effect. Much of the discussion at Yalta was on Poland, which, as I say, Britain and France had gone to war, and with regard to the government of Poland, there were two competing governments: one of Polish exiles in London, which was a broadly democratic government; and one that Stalin had himself set up, which was composed of Communists and people who sympathised with the Communists. The agreement reached at Yalta was that the Communist government would be the basis of the new Polish government, but it would be strengthened with elements from the London government and that there would be free and secret elections in Poland as soon as that was possible. In addition, the three leaders agreed to a declaration on liberated Europe which said that Europe, in general, should have free governments. All this led to the division of Europe and the Cold War, and although the first elections in Poland were reasonably free, there were not any more after that and the Communists gradually took over Poland, as they did the other Eastern European countries. Roosevelt has been much criticised, as I say, for being naïve towards the Soviet Union.

However, it is worth remembering the situation at the time of the Yalta Agreement, that Soviet troops were already deeply in to Eastern Europe, whereas British and American troops had not yet reached Germany. Indeed, they had only defeated the Germans in the Battle of the Bulge because of a very heavy Soviet offensive taking place at the same time. So the facts on the ground were not very favourable to Britain and America.

The time to have made an agreement with Stalin, if such an agreement could have been made, would have been much earlier, when the Soviets were weaker, and that was what the British Government tried to do. In December 1941, shortly after the Soviet Union was attacked by Germany, British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden went to Moscow and wanted to bargain with Stalin, who was in a very weak position, but the Americans said, 'You can't do that because the Atlantic Charter says you can't give away any territories without the consent of the peoples themselves,' and even told Stalin that all he could agree with him

was a declaration of principles - he couldn't agree on specific transfers of territory. Stalin said he was not interested in a declaration of principles. He said a declaration was algebra, but he was interested in arithmetic - in other words, specific territory.

Later on, in October 1943, another conference was held, of Foreign Ministers - Eden, the Soviet Foreign Minister, Molotov, and the American Secretary of State, Cordell Hull - in Moscow. Here too the Russians, although in a stronger position than they had been in 1941, had not really begun to move west. Anthony Eden, who was getting worried about the spread of Soviet power, argued that there should be a federation of the Central European countries, which could be then a unit and resist the Soviet Union, but the Americans and the Russians, together, opposed that. At that point, Stalin realised, as he told his associates, 'We shall do as we like with the Allies' consent'. In other words, the pass, if there was a pass, had been sold long before the Yalta Agreement, and in effect, the Americans, with perhaps the tacit agreement of the British, had consigned Eastern Europe to Stalin long before Yalta.

The reason for that was - or one of the reasons, was that people in Britain and America were worried that, if Stalin did not have promises of gains of territory, he would just stop fighting when he reached Russia's old borders or, worse, try to make an agreement with Germany. Moreover, the British and Americans took the view, which I think was right, that there was no way that they could stop Stalin, other than by the use of force, and they could not use force when the public opinion, after all, had seen Soviet Russia as an ally, which it was. You could not suddenly tell the British and American electorate that today the Soviet Union is an ally, and tomorrow an enemy and we have got to fight against them. Roosevelt told the Polish Ambassador to America: 'Do you expect us and Great Britain to declare war on Joe Stalin if they cross your previous frontier? Even if we wanted to, Russia can still field an army twice our combined strength and we would just have no say in the matter at all.'

So all these matters, I think, were pre-figured already by Yalta, which endorsed decisions that had already been made. You may argue that the decisions about Poland and the declaration on a liberated Europe were attempts to win back by peaceful means what had been lost militarily, and that political decisions could do no more than ratify the military position.

The only other way in which things might have been improved would be if the British and American forces had got further eastwards by the time of the Yalta Conference and had actually been in possession of territories which Stalin wanted. Ironically, Stalin wanted a second front in Europe much earlier than the British were prepared to accept. The Americans also wanted an early second front, but Churchill, who remembered the First World War and the slaughter on the Western Front, said it would be wrong and lead to a lot of killing against this very efficient German army if we landed in Europe too early before we were really trained and prepared. My own view is that Churchill was right on that and that it was right to delay the second front, but the cost of the delay was that Stalin established a dominant position in Central and Eastern Europe.

In return for these decisions at the Yalta Agreement, Roosevelt gained things that he thought were of value, but which were not. The first was that he said that the Russians promised they would join in the fight against Japan two or three months after Germany was defeated. Roosevelt thought that was important. He could not foresee the damage the atom bomb would wreak, that Japan would surrender immediately, and he wanted to limit the number of American losses, and he thought he had made a great gain in getting Stalin to agree to fight in Japan. It was not actually a great gain because Stalin was rather eager to fight in Japan because he wanted to win more territory, as indeed he did, from Japan, so that was not a great gain. But in return for that, Roosevelt agreed to concessions in China at the Yalta Conference which he did not tell the American people and which later led to the accusation that the Democrats had sold out China to the Communists at Yalta. I will talk about that more when I talk about Truman.

Secondly, Roosevelt thought it was very important to do what Woodrow Wilson had not succeeded in doing, to get a League of Nations or United Nations going. Roosevelt thought that Wilson's mistake had been to wait till after the War to get the League of Nations set up, when opinion no longer supported him. He wanted to get a cast iron agreement during the War that the Soviet Union would join the United Nations and play a full part in its working to help create a decent post-War order. Indeed, Roosevelt was so sympathetic to the UN that he thought at one time that when his presidency ended he would become the first Secretary General of the United Nations.

But of course it is clear in hindsight he paid too high a price for all this. He was thinking in terms of securing an international liberal order, but there was no hope of achieving that with Stalin, who obviously did not share Western aims, even if he sometimes used the rhetoric of the West. The UN has proved, no doubt, of some value, but fairly limited value, and certainly has not done what Woodrow Wilson or Roosevelt hoped and be able to prevent war as a kind of parliament of man, because it hasn't done that. So on all this, Roosevelt was wrong.

But, to what extent did it matter that he was wrong, and if he had not been wrong, could he have done anything different? Some people say he was wrong because he was naïve. He told the Americans on Christmas Eve 1943, after his first meeting with Stalin at Tehran, 'I got along fine with Marshall Stalin. I believe that we are going to get along very well with him and the Russian people, very well indeed.' He told one of his associates he thought Stalin had some of the elements of a Christian gentleman about him. He told the American Congress the Yalta Conference ought to spell the end of the system of unilateral action, the exclusive alliance, the spheres of influence, the balance of power, and all the other expedients that had been tried for centuries and had always failed. That was very naïve. But I think you have to ask the question of whether he really believed that, and I think there are strong indications that he did not.

His naval chief, Admiral Lee, said to Roosevelt after the Yalta Conference: 'Mr President, this is so elastic that the Russians can stretch it all the way from Yalta to Washington without ever technically breaking it.' Roosevelt said: 'I know, Bill, I know it, but it is the best I can do for Poland at this time.' And to another advisor he said: 'I didn't say the result was good; I said it was the best I could do.'

He regarded the declaration on liberated Europe and the agreement on Poland as a public test, and if Stalin had failed that test, in my opinion, though some people disagree with it, he would have followed a policy of containment, much as President Truman and later Presidents did. That is a contested view and some people disagree, so that is my personal view. I defend it by saying that he had a strong fallback position. He began to build worldwide bases to contain the Soviet Union, in the Pacific, Latin America, the Canaries, the Azores, West Africa, Iceland, Greenland, and Canada. He made America a global power, which it remains today. He told Stalin - and this was very pointed I think - 'You naturally understand that in this global war there is literally no question, political or military, in which the US is not interested.' He agreed with Winston Churchill that he wasn't going to tell Stalin about the atom bomb, nor about the Ultra secret which enabled the British and Americans to read the position of German troops. As it happened, Stalin learnt about the atom bomb and I suspect Ultra through his spies, but he was not told by Roosevelt or Churchill. So I don't think he was taken in by the Soviet Union and I think he got the best deal he could have done at the end of the War, but that view is very controversial and other people hold different views.

Now, let me conclude. Henry Kissinger, Secretary of State under Nixon and also an academic, said that 'No President, with the possible exception of Abraham Lincoln, has made a more decisive difference in American history.' The difference he made was very obvious. First, he created a powerful presidency, particularly in the field of foreign affairs, and people welcomed that. They welcomed the fact that he got round Congress and the Senate in his measures to help Britain, they said it was a jolly good thing, but people did not welcome it as much when the Americans used that machinery to get themselves into Vietnam without getting Congressional approval. There was a reaction against the imperial presidency at that time, in the '60s and '70s.

He made America, as I have just explained, a global power. In February 1941, Henry Luce, the Editor of Life magazine, said that 'The 20th Century was the American Century,' largely, I think, due to Roosevelt.

This is, again, very controversial, but he began the Special Relationship with Britain, which I think continues, but people disagree about that of course.

Roosevelt was a liberal, grew up as a liberal, as I said last time, and drew up - had to deal with two great crises of liberalism: the first, the Great Depression, and the second, the rise of the totalitarian powers. You may say he was not entirely successful in dealing with either, but I think he was more successful than anyone else would have been. Without him, it is possible the American system might have collapsed in the '30s, and without him, I think it is just possible that Hitler might have won the War, without his aid to Britain in 1940 and '41.

He exuded a spirit of optimism that democratic governments could be effective and that liberalism need not be a weak philosophy, that a liberal society could defend itself effectively against its enemies, and he continued what Woodrow Wilson had begun, the worldwide dynamic towards self-determination, which I think is a central theme, a success story, of the second half of the 20th Century, towards a world order based on self-determination rather than empire. From this point of view, I think we live in Roosevelt's world.

This view of Roosevelt's brought him into conflict with the British and his allies, because Churchill said during the War, 'We mean to hold our own.' He said, 'I have not become the King's First Minister to surrender the empire.' Roosevelt saw the age of imperialism was over. The Americans, he said, were not fighting so that the British could continue to rule 600 million people in India against the wishes of the Indians, because Britain's declaration of war in 1939 was also a declaration of war on behalf of 600 million Indians, who you may say had no particular European quarrel at all. The Atlantic Charter made that clear. Roosevelt

said in the Atlantic Charter: 'I am firmly of the belief that if we are to arrive at a stable peace, it must involve the development of backward countries. I cannot believe that we can fight a war against Fascist slavery and at the same time not work to free people all over the world from a backward colonial policy.'

The British War Cabinet objected to that because Ghandi and Nehru in India said, 'This is marvellous - this is what we have been fighting for all the time, freedom from the British!' The British War Cabinet said it only applied to Europe but did not apply outside Europe, and they said it shouldn't be used to deal with what they called 'the internal affairs of the British Empire'. On this point of view, Churchill said that it was unconcerned with anything outside Europe at all. Churchill tended to have, one might say, not a very flattering view of people whose skin was not white. He called the Japanese 'the wops of the Pacific' and he said, 'We will not let the Hottentots, by a popular vote, throw the white people into the sea'. It was because of that that Roosevelt said, in the middle of the War, to one of his advisors, 'We will have more trouble with Great Britain after the War than we are having with Germany now.' He had tried to persuade the British that they should leave their colonies as soon as they could, with a moderate amount of success I think. He died before the election of 1945, but he would have welcomed the Labour Government in power in Britain certainly on the grounds of decolonisation.

He tried to persuade De Gaulle, the French leader, that France should give up her colony in Indo-China, which became Vietnam. De Gaulle refused, said it was an insult to French power and sovereignty, but how much trouble the world would have been saved if De Gaulle had taken that advice!

The 20th Century has seen this fundamental transformation which Roosevelt understood from a world of empires to a world of nation states, that before the First World War, the great countries were all empires, and by the last part of the 20th Century, that empire had entirely disappeared. Roosevelt is sometimes accused of being anti-British, as seeking to undermine British power, but I think he actually did Britain a favour and was a friend of Britain. I mean, how many people here now regret that Britain does not rule India and large parts of Africa? I wonder if anyone in France regrets they do not rule Indo-China or Vietnam anymore? I think he was actually doing Britain a favour rather than being an enemy of Britain.

He foresaw the future, I think - a world of democracy and self-determination, and although fortunately we don't live in Stalin or Hitler's world, we also don't live in Churchill's world either, who lived in the past and did not foresee the dissolution of the colonial empires. De Gaulle did, but much later, when he came to power in 1958. Roosevelt lived, I think, in the future, and on this point of view, I think we are all, in a sense, the heirs of Roosevelt, or perhaps Woodrow Wilson, because Roosevelt was a Wilsonian in his foreign policy. Therefore, for this reason, I think that these are the two most influential people in the 20th Century, and there's a sense in which I think we're all Roosevelt's children