



## **The American Presidency: Jimmy Carter Professor Sir Vernon Bogdanor FBA CBE 25 November 2008**

Just as Nixon is the only American President to have resigned before completing his term, Ford is the only accidental American President; that is, the only American President never to have been elected either as President or as Vice-President.

He became President in a fairly curious way, because around ten months before Nixon himself resigned, his Vice-President, Spiro Agnew, was also forced to resign because he was accused of having taken bribes in a previous position as Governor of Maryland. Agnew plea-bargained, and they said they would not take it further if he resigned the office. This meant that Nixon had to choose someone who could replace Agnew as Vice-President, and he chose the popular Gerald Ford, who was the leader of the Republicans in the House of Representatives, the Minority Leader. He had been a member of the House of Representatives since 1949, was much liked and respected, and it was very easy to secure confirmation for him; there were no problems as Nixon might have had with many others.

Gerald Ford was thought to be of only modest attainments, and Lyndon Johnson said that his problem was he must have played American football once too often without his helmet. Johnson also said that Ford was incapable of walking and chewing gum at the same time. Whereas one motive of Nixon's to get Ford in was that it would be an easy confirmation, people thought a second motive might be that no one would want to replace him with Ford and therefore that Nixon would be safe, but that of course turned out not to be the case, and Gerald Ford succeeded to the Presidency.

These views about his competence were perhaps an underestimation of his abilities. He was born to a very poor family and his father left his mother after a short time; in fact, his original surname was King, but his father left his mother when he was an infant and his mother then remarried a Ford, so Gerald Ford then took his stepfather's surname. He was always regarded as honest, straightforward and decent, but he was not as lacking in attainments as the criticisms suggest. In fact, he had achieved a place at Yale Law School and was in the top quarter of his class at Yale. Perhaps more important, he knew what he did not know and he chose very good advisers, including keeping on Henry Kissinger, for example, Nixon's Secretary of State, and many other respected people.

He stands out I think as perhaps the only Twentieth Century American President without any psychological hang-ups, and that may be due to the fact that he never stood for the office. It may be that anyone who was prepared to go through the procedure for standing for the President should not get it! Ford never had. Alan Greenspan, who became one of his economic advisors, has said of Ford that 'He was a secure man, with fewer psychological hang-ups than almost anyone I'd ever met.' He said, 'He was secure in himself, probably one of those rare people who would continually score 'normal' in psychometric tests.' Ford had no illusions about his abilities or why he was there, and he said, significantly, when becoming President, 'I am a Ford and not a Lincoln!'

He faced, as his successor, Jimmy Carter, did, two terrible and traumatic problems which afflicted America throughout the 1970s. The first was the trauma of Watergate, which had led to a widespread distrust of all politicians; the feeling that they were all somehow deceitful or crooked and could not be trusted. Gerald Ford's first act as President, and a highly controversial one, was to pardon Richard Nixon and give him immunity from any future prosecution. It was highly controversial, and approval ratings fell immediately, from 71% to 49%, but Ford said his aim was to 'bind up the nation's wounds' and Watergate otherwise would be 'a running sore' with the possibility of Nixon being prosecuted, preparing the defence, and it would go on and on, so he wanted to stop it. Interestingly enough, Ford entitled his memoirs, written long after his Presidency, 'A Time to Heal', and I think most people probably agree in retrospect that this was the right decision to make, not necessarily out of considerations of abstract justice, but just to try and lance

the boil of Watergate and put it behind America. Although it did that to a great extent, there was still this widespread distrust of political leaders, and people said, or many people said, this was not just an accident that Nixon had behaved as he did. They saw it was almost a necessary consequence of the growth of presidential power which one had seen since Franklin D. Roosevelt. People said that some of Nixon's predecessors had done some of the same things - telephone tapping, spying on opponents and all the rest of it - and had perhaps run fairly close to the law. It was seen to be a consequence of the so-called 'imperial presidency', because, once you said the President should be a powerful executive and should not be controlled very strongly by Congress, those developments were bound to happen. The conclusion people took from this was that, therefore, the cure for future Watergates was to bind the President much more tightly, particularly through Congressional control - the President should not be above the law. That stream of thought affected many people throughout the Seventies; that the power of the presidency had gone too far.

There was a second deep trauma that afflicted America throughout the 1970s, and that was the Vietnam War. By the time that Nixon had been forced to resign the Presidency, he had achieved an agreement with the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong in 1973, the Paris Peace Agreements. The effect of these agreements were that America, in the form of American troops and advisors and the like, would withdraw from South Vietnam, and similarly, the Vietcong would promise to end the guerrilla warfare, and therefore, in the American view, there would be a chance to see if the South Vietnam Government could survive without American help and aid. That agreement depended crucially on Congress being willing to deal with infractions of the agreement, and the difficulty for the Americans was, as soon as the agreement was signed, the Vietcong seemed to show they were not going to take much notice of it. They said that they were nothing to do with North Vietnam but that they were an indigenous force in South Vietnam, represented popular wishes and were perfectly entitled to act against the Government there.

Both Nixon and Ford asked if Congress would send humanitarian aid to South Vietnam, the supplies and so on that South Vietnam might need to sustain it and remain viable, and Congress refused to do so. Congress also refused to allow the President to take any military action against the Vietcong or North Vietnam, and in 1973, also, it passed a War Powers Act, putting great restrictions on the power of the President in military action, saying that any military action had to be approved very rapidly by Congress, or Congress would cut off the funds. The supporters of Nixon and Ford, broadly speaking Republicans, say that the collapse of South Vietnam in 1975 was entirely due to that; to the fact that the President was now hamstrung in carrying out an effective foreign policy. The defenders of Congress, the opponents of action in Vietnam, say that South Vietnam was never very viable. They saw that most Americans had come to the conclusion that it was not the sort of government America ought to be sustaining - it was corrupt and authoritarian and was unlikely to survive - and that the trauma had damaged America very considerably, and that the sooner America left, the better, so Congress was not going to encourage any further involvement in that part of the world. That dispute is still running amongst commentators, but from the point of view of the 1970s, it left very deep divisions in American society. This was because it seemed that - and it was the case - the collapse of South Vietnam in 1975, when people saw on television the frantic Vietnamese trying to get onto helicopters and get into the American Embassy and escape, this was a great humiliation for America: the first war that America had lost, seemingly against a very small and insignificant power, a guerrilla army, the first war that America had lost. Then, when North Vietnam took over the South, which it did very rapidly, one million people from the South fled - many to America and many to other countries - and then Cambodia also fell to the Khmer Rouge, who proceeded to carry out horrible atrocities there. This left many Americans feeling guilty and with the belief that something had gone severely wrong.

So, for both of these reasons, the Watergate trauma, a domestic trauma, and the Vietnam trauma, a foreign trauma, the 1970s were years of disillusion in America. The 1960s, which had begun with Kennedy, were years of great expectations - the New Frontier, the Great Society, and all the rest of it - but the expectations had not been met, and people in the Seventies were at a loss as to how to proceed. I think the Ford and Carter Administrations can be seen, in a sense, as transitional Administrations, parentheses if you like between the era of Nixon, which ended in 1974, and the era of Ronald Reagan, which began in 1981; two very different kinds of Republican Presidents.

During the 1970s, it was very difficult for American Presidents to give the country a clear sense of direction. It had seemed to have that sense of direction under Kennedy and Johnson, then in a different way under Nixon, and later was under Reagan, but it did not seem to have it under Ford and Carter. I think that was not just due to the individual weaknesses of those Presidents, but the fact that Americans were seeking

conflicting things. They were, on the one hand, seeking this clear sense of direction, but on the other hand, they were also seeking to hamper the Imperial President and not allow him to carry out a policy; there was a mood against authority, a distrust of all politicians, and you cannot both distrust politicians and expect them to put forward a strong and clear line. The weakness of the Imperial Presidency was that it gave Presidents the power to do bad things, but if you want Presidents to do good things, you have to give them power, and it is a dilemma which perhaps has never been fully solved in the American Constitution. But certainly, the mood in Congress, and to some extent in the country, during the 1970s was suspicious of strong leadership, which had led to Watergate and to Congress being deceived about Vietnam, and, symptomatic of this, Congress was controlled when Ford took power by the Democrats, and in the 1974 Congressional Elections, which occurred just three months after Nixon resigned, the Democrats vastly increased their strength and position in Congress due to Watergate. The new Members, many of whom were very young, were known as the Watergate Babes in the House and the Senate, were vigorously opposed to anything that Gerald Ford might suggest. Ford, who was President for just over two years, issued no less than 66 Presidential Vetoes, which a record for such a short period. So America had, during the period of Ford's Presidency, a very weak and very divided Government. This made it impossible for Ford to give a lead in foreign policy, nor to educate public opinion on any domestic policy. Indeed, following the Vietnam trauma, as I have called it, the consensus about American foreign policy was disintegrating.

What Nixon had tried to do was to get away from traditional, moralistic views about foreign policy, and to play a very subtle geopolitical game, by which America could balance China against Russia. China and Russia of course were both Communist powers at that time, but bitter enemies of each other and, in a sense, more opposed to each other than they were to the United States. Part of the reason for Nixon's opening to China had been to give America much more leverage by saying to the Russians if you don't agree with us - our nuclear weapons and nuclear treaties and the like - we will then come closer to China, but then he could do the same with China, and say, look, we'll get closer to Russia if you don't help us end the Vietnam War. So it was a very subtle game which was perhaps very difficult to explain to the country.

The Democrats took the view, understandably in the light of Watergate, that Nixon's policy was amoral, that it relied on secret diplomacy, the balance of power, and so on, and really what you needed was a much more open form of foreign policy. The view on the left of the Democratic Party, held particularly by the Democratic Presidential candidate in 1972, George McGovern, heavily beaten by Nixon, but nevertheless, he said that America should 'withdraw from unrealistic commitments'. Many on the left of the Democratic Party actually welcomed the loss of South Vietnam; they said it was a corrupt dictatorship and not the sort of country America should be defending, and the Democrat majority in Congress began to cut the defence budget as soon as they had the power to do so.

Nixon's foreign policy was not attacked only from the left, but also from the right, because people on the right said the whole policy of détente with Russia and the whole policy of the opening to China was utterly amoral because these were wicked dictatorships. They thought that America should have as little to do with them as possible and certainly should not pretend they are great powers on the same basis as America. The leader of this position on the right was actually a Senator on the right wing of the Democratic Party, called Henry Jackson, who represented Washington. He was not alone in this view because many people supported and began in the Democratic Party but they moved across later to the Republican Party. They are often called the Neo-Conservatives. Many of them were to make their name, in one way or another, under the Administration of George Bush when it came to the attack on Iraq - people like Richard Pearl, who worked in the Reagan Administration, and then for the Bush Administration, and Paul Wolfowitz, now Head of the World Bank, who also was an aid to Henry Jackson, but gradually moved over to the Republican Party. These Neo-Conservatives are perhaps a sign of the way America was going, because their stream of thought was to gain great influence under Reagan and the second Bush, the current President. They were opposed to détente, 'don't come to terms with Communism - defeat it!' and they shared the view that Ronald Reagan was later to make popular when Reagan called the Soviet Union an 'evil empire', which was language that Nixon certainly would not have used.

The main representative of this Neo-Conservatism stream of thought was in fact Ronald Reagan, who began life as a Roosevelt Democrat but switched over gradually to the Republican Party, and, in 1966, had been elected Governor of California. It was not noticed much, but throughout the 1970s, his power was growing very considerably, and in 1976, he challenged Gerald Ford for the nomination - a remarkable thing, to challenge a sitting President - and almost wrested the nomination from Ford. But Ford just got home by about 100 votes out of about 2,000 at the Republican Convention. This was a sign of the future, a

reaction against the type of centrist Republicanism represented by Gerald Ford and Richard Nixon, that that was going to be, as it were, outflanked from the right. It is remarkable in a way, because if you looked at America in the early 1970s, you would say there is this trauma in America and it will result in America shifting to the left. If you were looking at your television sets, you would see student revolutionaries, protests against the War in Vietnam, protests against Richard Nixon from very powerful Democrats in Congress, cutting the defence budget and so on, and you would say probably what America is going to do is withdraw from her commitments, to become perhaps a bit more isolationist and in general move to the left. But in fact, the real revolution, less noticed, perhaps because it was a more respectable revolution, by people in suits as it were, was a revolution from the right, which heralded the Republican dominance from the time of Ronald Reagan's election in 1981. So it was that from 1981 to 2009, you had Republican Presidents, with just one break, which was Bill Clinton from 1993 to 2001. I think that would have surprised people in the aftermath of Watergate. In the aftermath of Watergate, if you had said that the Republicans would have this dominance, I think people would have been very surprised, because obviously, after Watergate, in the Congressional Elections, they had reached their nadir and were really in a pretty terrible state.

In the 1976 Presidential Election, Richard Nixon asked if he could help, but the reply from the Republican National Chairman was, 'We think you've done enough already!' and so that was rejected.

Gerald Ford had very few domestic achievements to his credit because of the primarily Democratic Congress. His one achievement was a bill on energy conservation, which was broadly consensual. In foreign policy, his main achievement, denigrated at the time I think, but seen in perhaps a rather happier light since, was a European security conference at Helsinki which agreed in cuts in strategic armaments and nuclear weapons, but which, more importantly, mentioned human rights for the first time in such an agreement, at the insistent of dissidents in Central Europe, such as Vaclav Havel, later to become President of Czechoslovakia, and Lech Walesa, later to become the President of Poland. It was criticised at the time because they said this was really bogus and the Soviet Union had no intention whatever of granting people human rights, but it in fact had the effect of putting the Soviet Union on the defensive, because although people questioned America, they did not question the fundamental commitment to human rights, because of course the Soviet Union was very much now on the defensive. It was extended by Ronald Reagan when he became President. So I think that was an achievement.

Ford narrowly lost the 1976 Presidential Election to his Democratic challenger, Jimmy Carter. Ford had been President for just 865 days. He is a slightly underestimated President, in my opinion, who did a great deal to heal America after the serious trauma of Watergate.

Jimmy Carter, who became President in early 1977, was the first of the new breed of politicians in America. He came from Georgia, the Deep South. Lyndon Johnson was from Texas, which was not quite the Deep South as it was not as deeply segregationist as Georgia. He was the first President to come from the Deep South since 1848. To show how deeply segregationist Georgia was, one of his predecessors, from the early 1960s, was a man called Lester Maddox. Governor Maddox also owned a chain of restaurants in Georgia, and when the Supreme Court said that you could no longer have segregated restaurants, Governor Maddox issued axes to white people in those restaurants so that they could keep the blacks out of them. It was a deeply segregationist state.

Carter - typically of his ambiguity - he stood for the Governorship of Georgia in 1966 and lost, and he stood again in 1970 and won. When he became Governor, he said 'The time for segregation is over,' but during the campaign, he had appealed to conservative Democrats who were mainly segregationists. He defined himself during the campaign as a local Georgia conservative Democrat, basically a redneck, and that was thought to be code for 'I won't disturb things too much'. He made a campaign stop at a whites-only private school, he called Lester Maddox 'the essence of the Democratic Party', and said that he would invite George Wallace, the segregationist Governor of Alabama and third party candidate in 1968, to address the State Legislature of Georgia. This, I think, sums up Jimmy Carter. He was, truth be told, if not too unkind, a bit of a sham, because Carter said the key to reviving the Democratic Party was to avoid these squabbles between left and right that were seemingly splitting the Party deeply. He said the key was not issues or ideology, but character, and he said he had that character. In 1976 he said, 'I can give you a government that's honest and that's filled with love, competence, and compassion,' and he said, before he came to office, 'I promise you that I will never lie to you.' This was his promise, and it was a product, in a sense, of the post-Nixon, post-Watergate trauma, that he was going to give you the honest and moral government which America had not had before. So this is the first point about him: he was a new kind of President because he was the first President from a segregationist state since 1848.



If you wanted to be kind to him then you could say that he had to adopt these postures to get elected, but once he was elected, it is fair to say he was a liberal desegregationist Governor. Although it is also the case to say, given that black voting power was now fairly strong in Georgia, anyone who wanted to govern in Georgia successfully would have to be fairly liberal.

The second remarkable thing about Jimmy Carter was that he came from nowhere and no one had heard of him. In the national opinion poll in January 1976, just 11 months before he became President, he was known by only 2% of Americans. The way he achieved his position, was that he fought in all the state primaries. That is commonplace now, because every state has primaries and everyone has to fight in them, but it was not so commonplace at this time, and Presidents tended to be chosen by the National Convention and there were only a few primaries. One of the first people to establish his reputation through primaries was Kennedy, and he had done it because he needed to show that a Catholic would not be a vote loser, and so he had established his position in the primaries. Lyndon Johnson had not and relied on his position in the Senate, which was a mistake. Unlike Carter, Kennedy was at least a Senator and a known national figure; he was on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee; he had written a book which had won a national prize (or, at least, he had allowed a book to be published under his own name which had won a national prize). Carter was in no way a national figure; he was a complete unknown. Indeed, it is said that when he told his mother that he was intending to run for President, she replied, 'President of what?'

Carter had been educated at the US Naval Academy. He said his family were too poor for any other education, but the truth is otherwise because they were of modest income as his father was a small businessman. Then, after that, he had become a peanut farmer in Plains, Georgia, which was a very small town where he lectured regularly, and I gather still does, at the Sunday School there.

He was the first person to run in every single state primary that there was, and he was winning a small number of the early primaries, the first in a field of 11, with a fairly small percentage of the vote. But when he won those primaries, he immediately became the front runner and began to get recognition. He won a very narrow victory over Gerald Ford, by 297 votes to 240 votes - 41 million to 39 million. It was the narrowest victory since 1916, and the turnout, perhaps following Watergate, was only 55%, the lowest since 1948. Carter ran strongly behind Congress, which remained overwhelmingly Democrat in the 1976 Election. So he was like Kennedy to this extent, that Congressmen and Senators did not feel they owed him any favours - they had run ahead of him, they were more popular than he was, and therefore they felt that Carter should be in debt to them, and not them in debt to Carter. Carter was not pulling votes in; he was rising behind his Party. He was, as I say, a product of the post-Watergate distrust of insiders. The very fact he was unknown, an outsider, no one knew who he was, was a great advantage, and this was to be, Carter himself said, the end of the Imperial Presidency. There were a number of symbolic measures he introduced when he became President to show that.

Firstly, during the Inaugural celebrations, instead of taking a car from the Capitol Building to the White House, he walked. Then he said that Cabinet Secretaries should have to drive their own cars, that they were not to have chauffeurs; they were to be men of the people. He invited ordinary citizens to call him by cellphone - half a million did! He found it very difficult to delegate decisions, so he micro-managed a bit. During the first six months of his Presidency, it required personal permission from the President to use the White House tennis court. He seemed unaware of where power lay in Washington or how to use it. He was a very provincial figure - I mean, Georgia is a modest sized state, at that time, a fairly insular state, and not closely connected with affairs in Washington in the way that New York or California would have been, and he seemed unaware of the way power should be used in Washington.

He made two very bad blunders as soon as he came there. One related to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, who of course is a very powerful figure indeed - they are not like the British Speaker, they are in fact the leader of the majority party in the lower house, and therefore very important. It was a man called Tip O'Neill, an Irish American from Boston, a very influential figure indeed and very used to granting favours and giving favours and so on. He asked Carter if he could provide extra tickets for the Inaugural ceremonies to some of his constituents in Boston, and Carter said that unfortunately there weren't any left over.

The second blunder was that Tip O'Neill said to Carter that he would be very glad to give him advice on how to deal with Congress, being a fellow Democrat. But Carter said he did not need that because he was very used to dealing with the legislature in Georgia, so he did not need any help. He brought in the Georgia Court House gang into Washington, also equally inexperienced, and one of them was rather proud

that he never returned calls to the White House from Congressmen. That was in great contrast to the Lyndon Johnson regime, when he instructed that all calls from Congressmen had to be returned within ten minutes. So Carter began by immediately alienating people in Congress with what seemed like an arrogant approach.

Carter said he was going to 'hit the ground running', and he looked at the record of two previous, very successful, Democrat Presidents, Franklin D Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson. He said that Roosevelt had had 100 days of really dynamic legislative activity and Johnson, after he had won the 1964 Election, similarly had brought in massive legislation on civil rights and other social matters, and he said that he was going to do exactly the same. He produced a huge, but somewhat uncoordinated, list of major reforms for Congress to deal with: seemingly random reforms in energy, health and social security legislation. Little of it was implemented. Almost all got bogged down in Congress because Congress said that Carter seemed to have no priorities and no explanation of what he was doing.

Carter's analogy of what had happened with Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson was very deeply flawed. This was because Roosevelt had come to power in 1933, in the middle of a terrible Depression in which people were very frightened indeed, when the banks were closing and there was a lot of fear in the country, and people were therefore terrified and so they were prepared to let Roosevelt take whatever executive actions he needed. Roosevelt had won a near-landslide against Herbert Hoover, who was seen as inactive, and so people were prepared to give him all the powers that he needed.

Lyndon Johnson, in 1964, had come with a very large majority, against an extremist on the right. He had won a landslide victory and people felt great guilt at the fact of Kennedy's death, and they felt that the best way to assuage that guilt was to continue with Kennedy's agenda as they saw it, of civil rights, social welfare reform, and the like.

But perhaps even more important than that, both Roosevelt and Johnson were experienced politicians, who had understood, over a long period of time, how to deal with Congress. Roosevelt had been an Assistant Secretary in Washington during the First War, Assistant Secretary of the Navy; he had been a leading figure of the Democrat Party throughout the 1920s; and as Governor of New York from 1928 to 1932, a major state, unlike Georgia, he had implemented social welfare, New Deal, programmes of the kind he was going to implement at federal level. Lyndon Johnson had been Majority Leader in the Senate since 1955. He knew every Senator by name, the nuances, almost what they had for breakfast. He spent his time cajoling and seducing Senators. Whereas Carter was an outsider who understood very little of that, and these analogies were totally flawed; he was quite unable to secure any rapport with Congress, and his domestic policy was a disaster, with hardly any legislative achievements at all.

In foreign policy, Carter had two major achievements to his credit. The first was the Panama Canal Treaty, which solved a problem that had been a running sore in American foreign policy for many years; and the second major achievement of his Presidency, possibly the only one for which he will be remembered, was the Camp David Agreement between Egypt and Israel in 1978, by which Egypt became the first Arab state to recognise Israel, in return for Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai Desert, which they had occupied in the 1967 War. Camp David also provided a framework for further agreements and also for agreements with the Palestinians, who refused to recognise Israel, but the Camp David Agreement said that provision should be made for at least Palestinian autonomy if not Palestinian statehood. This was a great achievement on Carter's part, to bring together these two warring countries, although perhaps equally great credit ought to go to Egypt's President Sadat, who had broken the ice by himself making a visit to Israel and actually bringing the Israelis in from the cold, if you like, in the Middle East, but still, it is to Carter's credit.

Carter's difficulty was that his inexperience encouraged countries hostile to America to take risks. He tried to continue with the Nixon-Ford policy of securing agreements with the Soviet Union to reduce nuclear weapons. He did achieve a second Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty ('SALT') agreement with the Soviet Union, but in the Christmas of 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. The Russians actually had no more success in subduing Afghanistan than the West is now having, but still, at the time it was seen as a great act of aggression, and it meant that the Senate refused to pass the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty. It strengthened the right wing in the Senate, the Henry Jackson wing if you like, who said that the Soviet Union is an immoral power and you should not have these treaties with the Soviet Union.

Even worse in some ways, from America's point of view, in 1979, the Shah of Iran, of Persia, who was a traditional friend of America, was overthrown by a radical Muslim regime led by Ayatollah Khomeini, and later in that year, American diplomats were taken hostage by a radical grouping. It is not clear whether

they were authorised by the Government or not. The radical grouping is thought to include the present leader of Iran, Mr Ahmadinejad. They held 52 American diplomats hostage from the summer of 1980 through until Ronald Reagan became President in 1981. This was a terrible humiliation for America, again supposedly the greatest power in the world, with a radical revolutionary regime holding its diplomats hostage, and America seemingly able to do nothing about it. Carter did try to get the people released, through a rather daring raid involving helicopter jumps in the desert and so on, and through great bad luck, that collapsed. There was a crash of the helicopter and I think about eight Americans were killed, and it failed. His Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, resigned as a result, and this seemed a further humiliation because everything America seemed to be trying to do went wrong: that the Soviet Union was attacking seemingly where it pleased; people were thumbing their noses at the Americans in Iran; Vietnam and Cambodia taken over by Communists, seemingly with very repressive policies.

All this, together with the failure of his domestic policies, ended Carter's Presidency. It was a failed Presidency, in my opinion, and I think Carter was the least effective Democrat President in modern times. He was the first one-term President since Herbert Hoover in the midst of the Depression. When he was defeated - he lost to Ronald Reagan - Ronald Reagan got 51% of the vote, Carter got 41% of the vote, and an independent candidate, John Anderson, got 8% of the vote. It was a rebuff exceeded only by four previous incumbent Presidents in American history; it was a crushing and heavy defeat - it was the fourth greatest loss of any incumbent in American history, so he was heavily repudiated by the American people.

The failure, I think, of the Carter Presidency lies in his unwillingness to grasp the political nature of the presidency and the fact that it requires you to deal with a Congress, even if Congress is on the same side. Unlike in Britain, where you can rely on whips to get things through, Congress has a will of its own and you therefore have to be very skilful at cajoling or dealing with its Members - you have to promise them things, seduce them into thinking that their interests are the same as yours, and so on. The great American Presidents, people like Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson, were very skilled at doing that. Even I think Eisenhower, facing a hostile Congress for much of his time, realised that you had to be political. The Carter view was something of a technocratic view. I think it is no accident that, like Hoover, he was trained as an engineer - he was in the Navy as an engineer. I hope no engineers are offended by this, but if you are an engineer, you think that problems have definite technical solutions, but in politics, getting the answer is only the beginning of the solution; the solution is to persuade other people to accept what you regard as the right solution, and it was that that Carter could not do. He had some wonderful ideas for health reform, social security reform, energy reform, all the rest of it, but he was totally incapable of persuading Congress to follow his ideas, partly because he was unaware of who the powerful figures in Congress were. He was not fully aware that Tip O'Neill, whom he had so offended, was a really influential and powerful figure, probably perhaps the third, fourth or fifth most powerful person in the country, one of the most powerful people in Congress, and he was completely unaware of that and thereby of where power lay in American Federal Government.

It is also fair to say that he had a lot of bad luck, both in Iran but also domestically, because America was at that time sliding into a depression. Whereas Gerald Ford had taken the Republican view that the important thing was to squeeze inflation out of the system, Carter could not make up his mind whether inflation was the main enemy or whether unemployment was the main enemy, a bit like the Governments in Britain at that time, the Heath-Wilson-Callaghan Governments, who ran into the same problem. Their attempts to lessen unemployment actually made the problem worse by making inflation worse.

Ronald Reagan, who was Carter's opponent and won the Presidency from him in 1980, said that America was sinking into what he called 'the Carter Depression'. Carter replied, very typically for him, that if you looked at the statistics, it was not a depression but a recession - which was technically right! Ronald Reagan replied, 'You're hiding behind the dictionary!' Which he followed by saying, 'If you're looking for definitions, I'll give you some,' and this was the first sign of the Reagan style. He said, 'A recession is when your neighbour loses his job. A depression is when you lose your job.' There was then a long pause, and he said, 'Recovery is when Jimmy Carter loses his job!' Jimmy Carter did lose his job in 1980 to Reagan, massively repudiated by the American public, because Reagan, whatever one thought of him, offered a clear sense of direction. Some people at the time thought, rightly, that this was the beginning of a new era in American politics; after the failures of the 1970s, someone at least was offering a clear sense of direction. Tip O'Neill, the Speaker of the House of Representatives at the time very wisely said, 'A tidal wave has hit us,' and for the Democratic Party, that proved correct.