

An Analysis of the Presidency of Jimmy Carter

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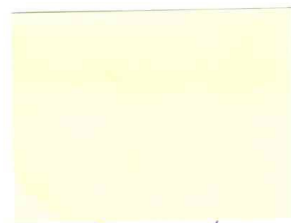
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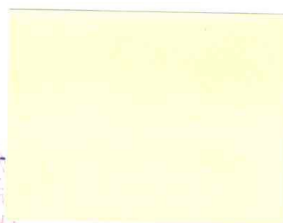
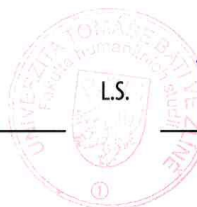
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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce analyzuje působení Jimmyho Cartera v roli 39. prezidenta Spojených států od roku 1977 do roku 1981. Když na začátku 70. let vyšly najevo nelegální aktivity a nečestnost bývalého prezidenta Richarda Nixona, byl Jimmy Carter Američany vnímán jako správná volba. Ačkoliv si Prezident Ford vedl dobře, stal se obětí tzv. [pendulum] efektu, který je často spojován se střídáním dvou politických stran. Amerika vyžadovala změnu a tu, evangelík z Jihu a Washingtonský outsider, Jimmy Carter představoval. Neexistovalo však nic, co by Cartera ochránilo před bouřlivými událostmi z konce 70. let. Tato práce hodnotí úspěchy a neúspěchy Carterové prezidentury a zjišťuje, proč nebyl znovuzvolen. Ačkoli jeho prezidentura byla silně kritizována a do značné míry považována za neefektivní, Jimmy Carter by měl být respektován za to, že se vždy snažil ze špatné situace vytěžit maximum.

Klíčová slova: 70. léta, Dohody z Camp Davidu, Gerald Ford, Iránská krize rukojmí, Jimmy Carter, Panamský průplav, [pendulum] efekt, prezident, Ronald Reagan, Spojené státy

ABSTRACT

This bachelor's thesis analyzes Jimmy Carter's role as the 39th president of the United States from 1977 to 1981. When the illegal activities and dishonesty of former President Richard Nixon became clear in the early 1970s, Jimmy Carter began to appeal to Americans as a virtuous alternative. President Ford did well enough, but he became a victim of the pendulum effect often associated with a two-party system. America desired a change, and Carter, an evangelical southerner and Washington outsider, was it. Nothing, however, could protect Carter from the turbulent events of the late-1970s, which undermined his presidency and led to him being the first consecutive one-term president. This thesis assesses the successes and failures of Carter's presidency and determines why he was not re-elected. Although his presidency has been heavily criticized and largely considered ineffective, Jimmy Carter should be respected for making the best of a bad situation.

Keywords: The 1970s, Camp David Accords, Gerald Ford, Iran Hostage Crisis, Jimmy Carter, Panama Canal, pendulum effect, president, Ronald Reagan, United States

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I hereby declare that the print version of my bachelor's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

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INTRODUCTION

In the mid-1970s, Jimmy Carter seemed to be, for many Americans, the right choice for president. Following the Watergate scandal and the Vietnam War, many voters were distrustful of and dissatisfied with the political establishment. Carter, being a born-again Christian, Washington outsider and Democrat, represented change.¹ Once elected, he did his utmost to recover the trust in government and heal the wounds of the last decade, regardless of political repercussions. Events hampered his best efforts. Of course, he had some successes, including the Panama Canal Treaties, the Camp David Accords, the protection of Alaska lands, energy legislation, the SALT II Treaty, and rapprochement with China. However, such successes were outweighed by his many failures: a worsening economy with soaring inflation, high unemployment, an energy crisis, and the Iran Hostage Crisis. It was these events among others, and his general lack of solutions to them, which led to his failure to win reelection in 1980. Since then, his presidency has been strongly criticized and rated mediocre at best. According to Kaufman, Carter has especially been faulted for his lack of direction, lack of leadership, and for not cooperating well with Congress, as he promised in the 1976 election.² This thesis challenges such low opinions of Carter's presidency, arguing that it was not the man but the impossible political circumstances in which he found himself that led to him being a one-timer. Carter made the best of a bad situation, and he should be honored for so doing.

¹ Shouse, *Presidents from Nixon through Carter*, 145.

² Kaufman, *The Presidency of James Earl Carter, Jr.*, 1-3.

1 THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

To fully understand Jimmy Carter's presidency, it is necessary to place it in its proper historical context. The decade of the 1970s was turbulent in part because, for the first time since the 1920s, three presidents held office in one decade: Richard M. Nixon, Gerald Ford, and Jimmy Carter. Although these three presidents were divergent personalities with different policy goals, they faced similar problems stemming from an increasingly worsening economic situation and the Cold War.³

1.1 The Watergate Scandal, Nixon's Pardon, and Other Critical Events

Watergate clouded the view of many Americans towards their democratically elected government.⁴ In order to secure a win in the 1972 presidential election, the Committee to Re-elect the President (CREEP) illegally entered the Watergate complex in Washington, D.C. to set wiretaps in and steal confidential documents from the head office of the Democratic National Committee. Although initially successful, they were caught by police when they returned to the crime scene to repair malfunctioning wiretaps. Nixon tried to stop the FBI investigation of the burglary and offered hush money to the burglars. Even so, he was able to convince the American public that he was not involved in the illegal CREEP activities, enabling him to win re-election. Afterwards, though, it was uncovered by journalists that Nixon was a culpable co-conspirator in the Watergate affair.⁵ Moreover, as Watergate was being investigated, Nixon's involvement in other illegal activities came to light, e.g., the secret U.S. bombing of Cambodia or eavesdropping on President Johnson in the Oval Office.⁶

Faced with impeachment, Nixon resigned in August 1974, and his vice president, Gerald R. Ford, took office. Ford quickly pardoned Nixon of any crime he might have committed while in office, receiving widespread public condemnation for so doing.⁷ Then, South Vietnam lost the war, and American personnel were forced to make a hasty and embarrassing helicopter retreat from Saigon. Worsening matters, Middle Eastern countries issued an oil embargo on the United States in retaliation for the American support of Israel. This embargo led to a nationwide fuel shortage and long gas lines. All of this led many

³ Shouse, *Presidents from Nixon through Carter*, 1-6.

⁴ Shulman, *The Seventies*, 43.

⁵ "Watergate Scandal," History.com, accessed 13 February 2021, <https://www.history.com/topics/1970s/watergate>.

⁶ Shulman, *The Seventies*, 43-44.

⁷ Shouse, *Presidents from Nixon through Carter*, 98-99.

Americans to feel a distrust in their government and an increasing sense of despair.⁸ This distrust in Washington made Jimmy Carter, an outsider of supposedly strong moral character, look like an attractive choice for president in 1976.⁹

1.2 The rise of the Sunbelt

A century had passed since the South's defeat in the Civil War before the end of Jim Crow segregation and the codification of civil rights caused a significant shift of people, money, and job opportunities to the South. The North simultaneously lost money and influence. The so-called “rise of the Sunbelt” changed American demographics and shifted political power southward, to states like Georgia, an emerging economic power situated in both the Cotton Belt and Bible Belt. Jimmy Carter, a Christian farmer from rural Georgia with political aspirations, found himself, through a combination of skill and luck, properly positioned to become part of America’s new elite.¹⁰

1.3 The Final Decades of the Cold War

The Cold War began after World War II as a result of soaring tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union, the world’s two remaining superpowers. In a bid to reduce these tensions, U.S. president Richard Nixon and Soviet premier Leonid Brezhnev decided to take military action off the table via the SALT I treaty of 1972, which limited the prospects of nuclear war.¹¹ President Jimmy Carter and Premier Brezhnev further decreased nuclear armaments in 1979 with the SALT II treaty. American motivations aside and unbeknownst to them at the time, Brezhnev likely signed both treaties because the Soviet Union was in decline, both economically and militarily, and simply could not maintain its nuclear arsenal in the face of increasing domestic problems. Tensions rose again, however, when the Soviet Union entered into a conventional war in Afghanistan in 1979. American president Ronald Reagan, a Cold War warrior, in cooperation with British prime minister Margaret Thatcher, responded to this renewed threat to the Truman Doctrine by increasing military and economic pressure on the Soviets, thereby forcing their hand.¹² The result of this increased

⁸ Shulman, *The Seventies*, 48-49.

⁹ Shouse, *Presidents from Nixon through Carter*, 145.

¹⁰ Shulman, *The Seventies*, 106-114, 121.

¹¹ “Cold War History,” History.com, accessed 13 February 2021, <https://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/cold-war-history>.

¹² “The Second Cold War,” Llewellyn, Thompson, Alpha History, accessed 13 February 2021, <https://alphahistory.com/coldwar/second-cold-war/>.

pressure, combined with continued domestic issues within the Union, was *glasnost*, *perestroika*, and ultimately the fall of the Iron Curtain.¹³

¹³ “Cold War History,” History.com, accessed 13 February 2021, <https://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/cold-war-history>.

2 BIOGRAPHY OF JIMMY CARTER

James Earl Carter Jr. was born on October 1, 1924, in Plains, Georgia. When he was two, the Carters moved to the nearby community of Archery, which was predominantly black at the time. Jimmy's father, a farmer, instilled in him respect for hard and diligent work. His mother taught him a love for reading. She worked as a nurse, so Jimmy and his younger siblings, Ruth and Billy, were cared for by a black nanny.¹⁴ Jimmy graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in June 1946, just after World War II.¹⁵ One month later, he married Rosalynn Smith, his sister's childhood friend. Jimmy served as a naval officer from 1946-1953, during which he and Rosalynn had three sons: Jack, Chip and Jeff.¹⁶ After his father's death in 1953, Jimmy decided to leave the Navy and move his family to Plains, Georgia in order to take over the family farm. While Jimmy worked the soil, Rosalynn did the paperwork, and the business flourished.

Because Jimmy had grown up among blacks, and was taught by his mother that all people, regardless of skin color, were God's children, he was against segregation.¹⁷ When the issue of racial integration came to the fore in 1954, the Carters supported it. In this stance, they were in the minority, for most of the whites of Plains were against it.¹⁸ This stance led Carter into politics. After 4 years as a state senator,¹⁹ Carter ran for governor, but lost to a segregationist.²⁰ This loss led to soul-searching, resulting in Carter becoming a "born-again" Christian.²¹ Propelled by his new-found faith and by his continued belief in integration, Carter ran again for governor in 1970 and won. As governor, he successfully spearheaded jobs initiatives for blacks.²²

2.1 The 1976 Presidential Election

With increasing support from Democrats at the national level, Carter declared in December 1974 that he would run for President. His major rivals within the Democratic Party were George Wallace, the paraplegic segregationist governor of Alabama, and Teddy Kennedy. The Chappaquiddick tragedy forced Kennedy's withdrawal from the race, leaving Wallace

¹⁴ Smith, *Jimmy Carter, President*, 13-15, 18.

¹⁵ Slavicek, *Jimmy Carter*, 24-26.

¹⁶ Lazo. *Jimmy Carter: On the Road to Peace*, 24-28.

¹⁷ Lazo. *Jimmy Carter: On the Road to Peace*, 20.

¹⁸ Smith, *Jimmy Carter, President*, 16, 30-43.

¹⁹ Smith, *Jimmy Carter, President*, 46-50.

²⁰ Wheeler, Leslie. *Jimmy Who?*, 37-43.

²¹ Flippen, *Jimmy Carter*, 25-26.

²² Balmer, *Redeemer*, 29-36.

as Carter's main opponent for the Democratic nomination.²³ Carter travelled around the country, campaigning vigorously,²⁴ on a platform of racial liberalism and economic conservatism. He was anti-abortion and pro-amnesty for Vietnam War draft dodgers.²⁵ He also talked about restructuring the national Government.²⁶ However, the heart of his campaign was his personal character. He believed, after Watergate, that Americans would elect an honest man.²⁷ He even went as far as to say, “if I ever lie to you, if I ever make a misleading statement, don't vote for me. I would not deserve to be your President.”²⁸ The electorate valued not only his honesty (buttressed by his born-again Christian faith) but his Washington outsider status. He also had the strong support of fellow evangelical Christians and blacks.²⁹ This support led him to win 17 of the 31 Democratic primaries, including in the critical northern states of Pennsylvania, Ohio, and New Hampshire.³⁰

With the nomination secured in July 1976, and the battle with President Gerald Ford looming, Carter chose Walter Mondale as his vice-presidential running mate, a popular choice affirmed by a 17-point lead in the national polls. This lead, however, dissipated when Carter made the tactical error of telling *Playboy* magazine that he had “looked on a lot of women with lust” and “committed adultery in [his] heart many times.” Such a statement alienated his evangelical voter base and greatly narrowed the polls. Luckily for Carter, Ford made his own mistake, demonstrating foreign policy weakness. Ultimately, the national election was close, but Carter won it with 50.1% of the popular vote and 297 electoral votes, 57 more than Ford.³¹

²³ Carter, *White House Diary*, 3.

²⁴ Wheeler, *Jimmy Who?*, 110-113.

²⁵ Wheeler, *Jimmy Who?*, 121-122.

²⁶ Shogan, *Promises to Keep*, 30, 33-34.

²⁷ Wheeler, *Jimmy Who?*, 115.

²⁸ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 65.

²⁹ Flippen, *Jimmy Carter*, 7-8.

³⁰ Wheeler, Leslie. *Jimmy Who?*, 117-132.

³¹ Balmer, *Redeemer*, 59-72.

3 JIMMY CARTER AS A PRESIDENT

Already at the beginning of his presidency, on his inauguration day of January 20, 1977, Carter showed his distinction from his predecessors and his confidence by walking down from the Capitol to the White House through Pennsylvania Avenue with Rosalynn by his side.³² Jimmy Carter took office with the message that “his presidency would be different,” and it was. Until the end of 1978, his presidency is considered to be successful, without significant disappointments. However, many crucial circumstances of the 1970s led President Carter to failure. It was argued that Carter was a weak and incompetent president, but, in fact, Carter is an exceptionally intelligent man with high potential. Even so, after two years, his presidency went wrong.³³

Carter studied the career of his predecessors. His most favorite President was Harry Truman, and later, he revealed they had a lot in common. Not only for their honesty and courage, but they faced to same issues, and those were, for instance, the Middle East and human rights. They had disputes with the Democratic liberals, and the career of both was evaluated better over time. Jimmy Carter stated, “It was my dream not only to be elected President, but to be a good President. However, I did not wish to go down in the history books as a 'great' leader of America who had finally won a war I myself had started. I wanted to maintain peace and meet successfully the challenges our nation would have to face, so the major thrust of my transition effort was toward inventorying the country's problems and determining what should be done about as many of them as possible.”³⁴

Based on the previous events in the 1970s, it was sure Americans would watch Carter even more critically. To reduce these suspicions, Carter started his presidency with a series of changes. For example, he made government operations clearer and easier to understand, decreased White House staff by two-thirds, and ordered the regulations written in simple English. Due to Carter's antipathy to politicians, no wonder his advisors were from the South. Among the most important ones were Hamilton Jordan, Charles Kirbo, or Jody Powell. Carter had also appointed to office Andrew Young, thanks to whom he won the majority of blacks during the 1976 nomination and election, further, secretaries Cy Vance, Brzezinski, Blumenthal, or Brown. Among Carter's first bold acts during the presidency was giving a pardon to war resisters. Carter's orthodox view lacked the inexperience in Washington,

³² Balmer, *Redeemer*, 76.

³³ Zelizer, *Jimmy Carter*, 2-4.

³⁴ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 65-66.

which early at the beginning of his term led to the refusal of Carter's proposal to cancel water projects in favor of fiscal austerity.³⁵ Furthermore, he halted the production of B-1 bombers, whose development had been discussed over ten years. The differences from B-52 bombers were the higher speed and the ability to fly lower. The reason for President Carter's opposition to the replacement of B-52 bombers by B-1 bombers was the fact that B-1 bombers were unnecessarily expensive. He made Congress angry because they rejected the cancellation of the bomber's production two days before. As a result of this decision, Carter was considered stubborn.³⁶ After three months in office, Carter's popularity was at 75%, which seemingly demonstrated that Americans were regaining confidence in government. But at the beginning of 1978, it dropped below 50%. However, to ensure confidence in the government, it was necessary to cooperate well with Congress, which was after Watergate and "Koreagate" even more difficult. The "Koreagate" scandal was revealed in 1976 in which Tongsun Park, a South Korea lobbyist, bribed a number of Congress members for enacting beneficial legislation.³⁷

Carter repeatedly presented his trustworthiness and honesty, and Americans mostly trusted him. However, in the case of some members of the White House staff, they did not. Hamilton Jordan was accused of using drugs. Budget director Bert Lance had to resign due to his suspicious dealings with loans, and a Secretary of Treasury Blumenthal was accused of financial frauds. Although later these accusations proved to be untrue, they irretrievably hurt Carter's reputation. Generally, Carter did not get along well with the press. It had always presented him negatively.³⁸

Carter as a man and as a president is known for his strong faith in God. He let his life and decisions be led by faith. Never distinguishing faith and politics. If you do not understand Carter as a man, you will not understand him as a president.³⁹ While being in the office of President and after it, Carter continued teaching the Sunday school. His faith influenced his presidency to a large extent, particularly then foreign policy: the establishment of peace in the Middle East and the Panama Canal treaties.⁴⁰

³⁵ Carroll, *It Seemed Like Nothing Happened*, 208-212.

³⁶ Kaufman, *The Presidency of James Earl Carter, Jr.*, 48-49.

³⁷ Carroll, *It Seemed Like Nothing Happened*, 210-212.

³⁸ "Jimmy Carter: Domestic Affairs," Robert A. Strong, Miller Center, accessed 24 March 2021, <https://millercenter.org/president/carter/domestic-affairs>.

³⁹ Berggren, "I Had a Different Way of Governing!: The Living Faith of President Carter." *Journal of Church & State* 47, no. 1 (Winter 2005): 43-61, <https://DOI: 10.1093/jcs/47.1.43>.

⁴⁰ Smith, "Jimmy Carter: A Progressive Evangelical Foreign Policy." *Review of Faith & International Affairs* 9, no. 4 (Dec 2011): 61-70.

However, as president, it was not always easy to come to decisions, mainly in the case of abortion, homosexuality, and equal rights for women because of his faith. Being traditional and conservative, Carter appreciates family values and is against divorces and illegitimate children. The issue of abortions may be considered one of the most difficult for Carter. As a Christian, he is not a supporter of abortions, with the exception of pregnancies as a consequence of incest, rape, or in case of endangering a mother's life. Feminists held the view that the abortion issue should be a mother's choice instead of a government. Rather than banning all abortions, Carter preferred the Hyde Amendment approved by Congress in June 1977. Such an Amendment referred to not financing abortions by federal funds. At least, he tried to decrease the number of abortions by implementing sex education, simplifying the procedure of adoption, and supporting the continuing programs WIC and Family Planning that served as food and financial support for infants, children, and poor women. Another matter for Carter was homosexuality, he did not consider it a normal relationship. Nevertheless, he insisted that all people should have their rights no matter the sex preferences and should not be disparaged. Furthermore, Carter stood for equal rights for women by proposing Equal Rights Amendment. Carter was not the first person proposing this kind of amendment. Alice Paul or Dwight D. Eisenhower endeavored it, but it has always been postponed for decades. Only after the second-wave feminism, Congress in 1972 decided to endorse the amendment. The amendment could not enter into force until it was ratified by 38 states. Despite all Carter's efforts, it failed. Still Carter was the first president in whose administration were appointed more women. However, Carter's attitude to these issues was criticized by conservative evangelicals. Another problem for them was Carter's point of view of race and his opposition to racial segregation, followed by the rescission of the tax exemption for schools that distinguished people based on their race.⁴¹

3.1 The Economic Situation and Other Domestic Proposals

As far as domestic policy record is concerned, it is mostly criticized. Carter called for a considerable amendment in the system, in domestic policy by, for example, welfare reform, job creation, and health reform. Carter entered the presidency when the economy was at the beginning of recovery from the recession. During the election, Ford was criticized by Carter for his economic actions and an unemployment rate of about 7.5%, which Carter wished to

⁴¹ Balmer, *Redeemer*, 93-98; "Jimmy Carter, State of the Union Address 1981," The Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, accessed 11 March 2021, <https://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/assets/documents/speeches/su81jec.phtml>.

decrease to 4.5% by the end of his term.⁴² Despite the fact, Carter was conscious about money and did not want to throw money around, he planned to invest in social programs. It can be reported that during the first years of Carter's administration, the economy prospered, but unhealthily. The initial lower unemployment and the growth of the real income per capita were accompanied by soaring inflation, the depreciation of the Dollar, and lastly, the recession in 1980.⁴³ The stimulus package for 1977 was created in order to reduce unemployment and increase the real GNP, with the lowest possible impact on inflation. The package, among other measures, included a tax cut for taxpayers through fifty-dollar rebate, which Carter finally decided to withdraw and found inflation to be the biggest threat to the economy. In fact, he even did not want the stimulus package but was not courageous enough to go against his advisors. Nevertheless, Carter's inconsistency, not only in the case of fifty-dollar rebate, seemed to be damaging to his administration.⁴⁴ Moreover, he prevented Chrysler Corporation from bankruptcy by granting them a loan. Otherwise, the bankruptcy of Chrysler Corporation would cost high unemployment and other costs.⁴⁵

Americans, still affected by the 1930s Great Depression, experienced the Great Inflation in the late 1970s. Money had been losing its purchasing power. Not only the cost of living but also the prices of food or heating oil rocketed. Meanwhile, interest rates rose to 20%. Most conservative Americans, looking at how their hard-earned money on the account was losing their value, turned to stocks as speculators or investors, which led to a considerable amendment in Americans' attitudes toward money. The Great Inflation caused Americans to increase their usage of credit cards and started to borrow more money.⁴⁶ Being a fiscal conservative, Carter considered inflation as a consequence of disproportionate government spending, which he intended to decrease. The high inflation rate was not caused only by the increase in OPEC oil prices but also by the growth of money in circulation caused by the Federal Reserve System, which firstly led to more loans, shortage, and lastly, inflation. Although Carter's policy came up with the anti-inflation programs, finally, it was the great recession that decreased inflation.⁴⁷ What can be ranked among Carter's achievements were the increase in the minimum wage, the temporary decrease of unemployment to 5.8% in 1978, and the provision of more job opportunities. Carter strove

⁴² Abernathy, Hill and Williams, *The Carter Years*, 13, 35-36.

⁴³ Schulman, *The Seventies*, 129-130.

⁴⁴ Hargrove, *Jimmy Carter as President*, 88-93.

⁴⁵ Carter, *A Full Life*, Chapter "Saving New York and Chrysler."

⁴⁶ Schulman, *The Seventies*, 131, 135.

⁴⁷ Hargrove, *Jimmy Carter as President*, 69, 96, 106.

for a balanced federal budget, which he managed to reduce in his first two years, however, at the end of his term, it returned to \$60 billion.⁴⁸ During the forum in Nashville in October 1980, Carter stated that his biggest mistake in the case of domestic policy was insufficient attention to inflation. However, nobody could know the upcoming events like the energy crisis, which strongly affected his actions.⁴⁹

Although Carter devoted a lot of time to energy, the welfare reform was a promise he intended to achieve. He considered the original welfare system wasteful and illogical. Therefore, he called for an extensive program, which would highlight workfare or prevent divorces without costs increase. President commissioned Joseph A. Califano Jr. to draw up a plan until May 1, 1977, so Carter could bring it for consideration. Despite the effort, there was no way to develop a plan that would not increase costs. The completed Program for Better Jobs and Income was finally proposed three months later, with an increase in the expenses of \$2.8 billion. Although senators' only reservations were the costs and total amount of people who would be concerned, it did not pass Congress. The three reasons for a failure were insufficient communication between the secretary of HEW and the White House, emphasis on deadlines, and lastly, the cost calculation. At least, the Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA) was restored. Other Carter's promises from the 1976 election, which led to failure, were the National Health Insurance and related hospital cost-containment. At that time, Carter concentrated mainly on the economy and energy instead of the health plan. Other troubles were the disagreements with Kennedy, with whom the relations went wrong since the election, and lastly, the incompetence to enforce it to Congress.⁵⁰ The health plan would cover care for people with low income, pregnant women and infants, the budget of medical expenses for seniors and disabled, and the insurance paid by an employer would cover the high medical costs for employees with families. Carter, inter alia, unsuccessfully strove for health care cost control to reduce the inflation in this sector. And last but not least, the Child Assurance Program would benefit children, juveniles, and pregnant women with low income.⁵¹

In terms of education, in March 1978, Carter proposed to set up an independent Department of Education and detach it from the Department of Health, Education, and

⁴⁸ Hargrove, *Jimmy Carter as President*, 83.; Abernathy, Hill and Williams, *The Carter Years*, 43-44.

⁴⁹ Biden, *Jimmy Carter's Economy*, 11.

⁵⁰ Abernathy, Hill and Williams, *The Carter Years*, 19-23.

⁵¹ "Jimmy Carter, State of the Union Address 1981," The Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, accessed 11 March 2021, <https://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/assets/documents/speeches/su81jec.phtml>.

Welfare (HEW). The bill, which was passed by the Senate in July the following year, was altered from the original one. Therefore, the Department of Education, put into operation in May 1980, was basically an old section of HEW with the addition of several programs.⁵² In addition to the above mentioned, Carter's proposal to deregulate the airline industry passed the Senate, which meant fewer government interventions into the industry and enabling more competition.⁵³

3.2 Congress

Congress in the United States plays a crucial role. If the president is unable to cooperate with Congress, some of his programs may not be realized. Jimmy Carter, considered an outsider, could bring different views of issues. The dependency on the approbation of Congress is mainly for domestic issues rather than foreign policy issues. However, any treaty, regardless of whom the contract is to be concluded, must be signed by Congress.⁵⁴

The United States apparently needed to solve many issues that had been avoided by Congress for a long time. One of Carter's pledges during the election was to cooperate well with Congress. It seemed promising at first because of their previous meetings and the promise of support by several Democratic leaders. However, as they started to discuss crucial matters, they mostly did not support him.⁵⁵ The reason is that several members of Congress ran for president, too, but they, as Democrats, did not succeed in the fight for the party's nomination. The second reason was probably that Carter was more conservative than liberal, and some members of Congress considered him in various matters more as a Republican.⁵⁶ What was important for Carter was not attractive enough for Congress. Congress preferred what was advantageous, whereas Carter preferred what was right. That was the third reason for repetitive battles between them.⁵⁷ Carter failed with the enforcement of his proposals in many cases. Even despite that, 75.4% of his proposed legislation were voted by Congress in his first year of presidency. During the next years, the percentage of adopted legislations ranged from 75.1% to 78.3% compared to his predecessors Gerald Ford (58.2% in 1974) and

⁵² Abernathy, Hill and Williams, *The Carter Years*, 23-24.

⁵³ Shouse, *Presidents from Nixon through Carter*, 161.

⁵⁴ Smith, *Jimmy Carter, President*, 88-96.

⁵⁵ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 66-69.

⁵⁶ Smith, *Jimmy Carter, President*, 89.

⁵⁷ Domin, *Jimmy Carter, Public Opinion, and the Search for Values, 1977-1981*, 71.

Richard Nixon (74% in 1969). On the contrary, 29 bills were vetoed by Carter, 16 more than Johnson and 21 more than Kennedy.⁵⁸

3.3 Energy

Probably the biggest challenge for Carter's administration in the case of domestic policy was the energy crisis.⁵⁹ From the 1973 oil embargo to 1977, the amount of imported oil had grown from thirty-five percent to fifty percent, approximately 9 million barrels of oil per day.⁶⁰ During the 1976 election, Carter called for a firm energy policy in order to decrease foreign oil dependency. The severe winter of 1977 was a direct result of a lack of natural resources, particularly natural gas, which led to Carter's proposal of the Natural Gas Act, passed by the Senate shortly after Carter took office.⁶¹ The President was aware of the energy crisis, therefore, called the public for cooperation. He let install solar panels on the White House to encourage people to energy conservation by using alternative sources.⁶² In a speech to the nation in April 1977, Carter entitled the energy crisis as the “moral equivalent of war” and two days later introduced his energy plan to Congress. Jimmy Carter considered energy conservation as the cheapest option to reduce consumption. On the one hand, his energy plan would favor those who used solar power and, on the other hand, penalized those who waste energy.⁶³

In January 1979, the second energy crisis occurred due to the unfavorable situation in the Middle East. Iran struggled with demonstrations that led to overthrowing Mohammad Reza Pahlavi by Islamic fundamentalists, followed by OPEC's enormous price increase of foreign oil, which meant, among other things, the rise of prices at the gasoline pumps and unbearable lines of waiting for a refuel. Above that, in late March 1979, there was a contamination of rivers by radioactive substances caused by a disaster at the nuclear power plant at Three Mile Island. Carter faced the question of solving the energy crisis while simultaneously not hurting the economy, which would fall into recession and the inflation would increase. In the meantime, the inflation rate ranged among 12%, and the gasoline prices rose by 55%. In June, the public polls showed that the energy crisis strongly harmed

⁵⁸ Abernathy, Hill and Williams, *The Carter Years*, 165-166.

⁵⁹ Carroll, *It Seemed Like Nothing Happened*, 216.

⁶⁰ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 91.

⁶¹ Abernathy, Hill and Williams, *The Carter Years*, 14.

⁶² Balmer, *Redeemer*, 79.

⁶³ Carroll, *It Seemed Like Nothing Happened*, 216-217.

Carter's popularity, which decreased below 30%, the same popularity Nixon faced after the revelation of the Watergate scandal.

Based on the energy crisis, Jimmy Carter gave a speech (later referred to as “malaise”) to the American nation on July 15, 1979,⁶⁴ which fell on the third anniversary of his acceptance speech. The speech, in which President Carter talked about the problem America faced, was not only about the reliance on foreign oil and the worsening economy but much more. He called this problem “the crisis of confidence,” caused by the Americans' loss of faith in government and the future. He was nearly blaming the Americans for the crisis. Additionally, mentioning the reasons for the public distrust caused by the previous events, such as Kennedy or Martin Luther King's assassinations, and the trauma caused by the Watergate Scandal or the defeat in the Vietnam War. Carter realized the necessity of long-term involvement and called on the Americans to face the crisis together as one nation.⁶⁵ Albeit initially, it seemed the speech reaped success, two days later, it changed, and his popularity dropped again by the influence of Carter's reorganization. Carter made five staff members resign, including Joseph Califano (Secretary of HEW), James Schlesinger, who was in August 1978 appointed as a Secretary of Energy, Griffin Bell, Michael Blumenthal, and Brock Adams.⁶⁶

Carter's energy policy ranks among his main accomplishments even despite the fact the “malaise” speech irretrievably undermined it. Although he did not get so much recognition for it within his term, he succeeded in lowering the consumption of foreign sources, took effective actions in nuclear energy policy, and set up the Department of Energy. Finally, his energy packages had gotten through Congress.⁶⁷

3.4 Pursuing Human Rights and Democracy

Carter came to the office without any international experience. Even so, he was able to set his own objectives, which mainly concerned the encouragement of human rights. As his foreign policy aides, he appointed Zbigniew Brzezinski and Cy Vance. Carter criticized some countries of the Central and South America for disrespect of human rights. Carter's involvement in human rights was undermined by the Republicans and several foreign

⁶⁴ Horowitz, *Jimmy Carter and the Energy Crisis of the 1970s*, 12-13, 16.

⁶⁵ “Jimmy Carter, Energy and National Goals: Address to the Nation,” The Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, accessed 2 March 2021, <https://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/assets/documents/speeches/energy-crisis.phtml>.

⁶⁶ Horowitz, *Jimmy Carter and the Energy Crisis of the 1970s*, 25-27.

⁶⁷ “Jimmy Carter: Domestic Affairs,” Robert A. Strong, Miller Center, accessed 24 March 2021, <https://millercenter.org/president/carter/domestic-affairs>.

leaders, who considered him naive and weak because of his commitment. Carter decided to move peacefully toward democracy and human rights, however, sometimes it needed stricter measures. So, to punish the countries, he suspended any foreign policy aid. For doing so, conservative Republicans criticized his decision to cut off the connections with American allies. However, within 10 years, most of the South and Central American countries became democratic.

Moreover, the United States condemned the Soviet Union for the infringements of human rights. Nevertheless, Carter was forced to take back such an accusation to get along well with the Soviets during the still ongoing Cold War.⁶⁸

3.5 Negotiating the Panama Canal Treaties

Concerning Carter's foreign policy accomplishments, it is necessary to mention Panama Canal Treaties, signed on September 7, 1977, by Carter and Omar Torrijos. In Spring the following year, the treaties were scarcely ratified by the Senate. The original treaty, called Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty, from November 1903, was signed with Philippe-Jean Bunau Varilla. His involvement in signing the treaty was later questioned by Panamanians due to no official agreement with government and even not being in Panama for several years. The whole situation resulted in disputes and disrupting the diplomatic relations between Panama and the U.S. due to raising the flag of Panama in the Canal Zone.

Neither Ronald Reagan belonged to the treaty's supporters, which would give Panamanians the control over the canal, nor Carter during the presidential election. Nevertheless, Carter's point of view had changed, and with Linowitz and Bunker, as co-negotiators, began to negotiate with Panamanians.⁶⁹ On the one hand, the reasons for so doing were to enhance the relation not only with Panama itself but the whole of Latin America and, on the other hand, to apologize for the injustice relating to the original treaty from 1903. Carter's predecessors, from Kennedy to Ford, strove for approval of the treaties. However, despite the efforts, the treaties had not been passed by the Senate.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ "Jimmy Carter: Foreign Affairs," Robert A. Strong, Miller Center, accessed 31 March 2021, <https://millercenter.org/president/carter/foreign-affairs>; Carter, *A Full Life*, Chapter "Human Rights and Latin America."

⁶⁹ "The Panama Canal and the Torrijos-Carter Treaties," Office of the Historian, accessed 6 February 2021, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1977-1980/panama-canal>.

⁷⁰ Smith, "Jimmy Carter: A Progressive Evangelical Foreign Policy." Review of Faith & International Affairs 9, no. 4 (Dec 2011): 61-70.

The problem had occurred with the Senate again. In order to increase the chances of ratification by two-thirds of the Senate, two treaties, which would give Panama ownership and control over the canal since December 31, 1999, were introduced. On the other side, the U.S. had to be permitted to use the Canal and defend it.⁷¹ Ronald Reagan, fundamentalist Christians, and political conservatives not only opposed the ratification of the treaties but considered Carter's plan as pro-communist, illegal, and questioned Carter's efforts to meet personally with almost all senators to convince them. Finally, in March 1978, the neutrality treaty was passed by the senate and the second treaty the following month.⁷²

3.6 Camp David Accords

“You are not a realist unless you believe in miracles”⁷³ – Anwar Sadat

In terms of the Middle East peace process, the Camp David Accords rank as one of Carter's most significant achievements. The United States under President Carter signed the treaty together with Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat, the President of Egypt, in September 1978 after thirteen days in Camp David, Maryland. The purpose of the Camp David Accords was to ensure peace and build up diplomatic relations between these two countries, which had been in long-term military and diplomatic disputes.⁷⁴ The 1967 Six-Day War, in which Israel won, even deepened these tensions when Israel started to occupy lands that belonged to Egypt - West Bank and the Sinai Peninsula. Although Sadat and Begin were initially willing to negotiate, the problem occurred in mutual communication and compromises, which almost resulted in halting the dealing.⁷⁵ The terms of the agreement were Israel's withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula and West Bank. On the other side, Israelis were permitted to use the Straits of Tiran and Suez Canal. The whole negotiating resulted in the signing of the Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty in March 1979. For which both representatives received the Nobel Peace prize in the same year.⁷⁶

⁷¹ “The Panama Canal and the Torrijos-Carter Treaties,” Office of the Historian, accessed 6 February 2021, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1977-1980/panama-canal>.

⁷² Smith, “Jimmy Carter: A Progressive Evangelical Foreign Policy.” Review of Faith & International Affairs 9, no. 4 (Dec 2011): 61-70.

⁷³ Burns, *America in the 1970s*, 75.

⁷⁴ “Camp David Accords,” History.com, accessed 11 February 2021, <https://www.history.com/topics/middle-east/camp-david-accords>.

⁷⁵ Burns, *America in the 1970s*, 75-78.

⁷⁶ “Camp David Accords,” History.com, accessed 11 February 2021, <https://www.history.com/topics/middle-east/camp-david-accords>.

The reason for Carter operating as an intermediary between Israel and Egypt during processing peace was his religion and convictions about Israel and its connection with the bible and Jesus himself. It was a personal matter to ensure peace there. As Carter stated during the interview with James Wall, peace would not be achieved without the religion of those three representatives.⁷⁷

As a result of making peace between Egypt and Iran and promoting peace even after leaving office, in 2002, Jimmy Carter became the third US president who received the Nobel Peace Prize.⁷⁸

3.7 SALT II Treaty

SALT is an acronym for the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, whose purpose was to limit the amount of nuclear weaponry to 2250. According to the survey, the reasons for public support of SALT II were the hope of reducing the threat of nuclear war and the fact that there would be more military and defense spending without the treaty. However, the public's primary issue was the distrust toward Russians and the worries they would not keep any treaty. SALT I treaty was signed in 1972 by Carter's predecessor Nixon and an arms control agreement signed by former President Gerald Ford in 1974.⁷⁹

One of the first threats of the SALT II negotiation and Détente during the Cold War in the 1970s was the Soviets' involvement in the conflict between Somalia and Ethiopia in Africa. Somalia invaded the Ogaden region, which belonged to Ethiopia but was inhabited mainly by Somalis. During the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie, Ethiopia was supported by the United States for a long time. However, as soon as he was replaced by a pro-communist leader Mengistu Haile Miriam, the support ended, and Ethiopia turned to the Soviet Union. Despite the treaty between Somalia and the Soviet Union, the Soviets decided to support Ethiopia financially and militarily, which led to the withdrawal of the treaty and ousting the Soviet soldiers from the country. Meanwhile, Somalia asked the U.S. for aid. Although the United States did not respond crucially to the Soviet intervention in Africa, the U.S. was deeply concerned about it, which was later even followed by the intervention in Yemen, Cuba, Zaire, and lastly, Afghanistan.⁸⁰ In June 1979, the SALT II treaty was signed at the

⁷⁷ Berggren, "I Had a Different Way of Governing': The Living Faith of President Carter." *Journal of Church & State* 47, no. 1 (Winter 2005): 43-61, <https://DOI: 10.1093/jcs/47.1.43>.

⁷⁸ Slavicek, Jimmy Carter, 10-13.

⁷⁹ *Office of the Chief of Staff Files, Hamilton Jordan's Confidential Files*, Container 37, folder "SALT, 1979."

⁸⁰ "Buried in the Sands of the Ogaden': The Horn of Africa and SALT II, 1977-1979," Office of the Historian, accessed 14 February 2021, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1977-1980/horn-of-africa>.

summit in Vienna by Leonid Brezhnev and Jimmy Carter. Albeit the treaty has never come into force due to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, both countries decided to keep one's word.⁸¹

3.8 China

Besides negotiating with Panama and the Middle East, Carter deserves credit for the rapprochement with the People's Republic of China. The first intention to normalize the relations between these countries occurred in the 1970s when former President Richard Nixon visited the People's Republic of China in 1972, which resulted in the Shanghai Communiqué. However, Nixon's effort to make progress led to failure due to Watergate. The communiqué made a significant contribution to the establishment of diplomatic relations seven years later. The attempt to improve the relations did not fall on the fertile ground even when Gerald Ford was in office, mainly due to the political conservatives' objection and the Vietnam war. When Carter took office, his goal was to build up a diplomatic rapport with the People's Republic of China while maintaining good relations with the Soviet Union. On December 15, 1978, Deng Xiaoping and Jimmy Carter officially notified the nations that on January 1, 1979, there would be a beginning of diplomatic relations between them, and the Embassies would be opened two months later. In order to reach that agreement, the U.S. had to renounce diplomatic ties with Taiwan and admit that only one China exists. Albeit the United States maintained unofficial relations with Taiwan, the relation with the People's Republic of China has improved. Moreover, they held the same view in the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan with the United States and joined the Olympic Games boycott.⁸²

⁸¹ "Jimmy Carter and Leonid Brezhnev sign the SALT-II nuclear treaty," History.com, accessed 17 February 2021, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/carter-and-brezhnev-sign-the-salt-ii-treaty>.

⁸² "China Policy," Office of the Historian, accessed 17 February 2021. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1977-1980/china-policy>.

4 LAST YEAR OF HIS PRESIDENCY

Carter's final year as a president was simply a series of disappointments and crises. As a result, the press completely turned on him, portraying him negatively.⁸³ Such portrayals might have been justified. The economy during Carter's final year in office was in recession, with high unemployment and inflation rates, and steep declines in the housing and automobile industries. For Carter, the priority was to reduce inflation, but his policies had the opposite effect, increasing it, and unemployment along with it. In one year, eight million Americans lost their jobs. Meanwhile, the gross national product dropped. Besides that, Congress undercut Carter's authority by denying his efforts to implement an oil import surcharge of 5 dollars per gallon. Such unfavorable economic conditions were advantageous to the Reagan presidential campaign, which promised to reduce government spending and cut income taxes by 30%.⁸⁴

To make matters worse, Jimmy Carter's brother Billy supposedly committed a crime by borrowing a considerable amount of money from Libyans and not registering himself as an agent of the country. Jimmy Carter defended his brother, but in doing so lost in the court of public opinion.⁸⁵ Even nature conspired against Carter, in the form of a rabbit attack of which the press was quick to make light.⁸⁶

4.1 Iran Hostage Crisis

In Iran during the winter of 1979, a pro-American government led by the Shah was overthrown, and Ayatollah Khomeini gained power. Furthermore, when the Shah was allowed to enter the United States for medical treatment, Iranians demonstrated in the streets, demanding his extradition.⁸⁷ These demonstrations culminated on November 4, 1979, with the invasion of the U.S. embassy in Tehran and the capture of 66 American embassy staffers. Fourteen were released in short order, but the remainder were to be held until Iranian demands were met. Carter responded to the Iranian hostage crisis by declaring an embargo on Iranian oil, freezing Iranian bank accounts, and expelling Iranian illegal immigrants from the United States. However, he did not extradite the Shah, despite repeated Iranian requests

⁸³ Rozell, *The Press and the Carter Presidency*, 157.

⁸⁴ Congressional Quarterly, *President Carter 1980*, 4-11.

⁸⁵ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 546-550.

⁸⁶ Zelizer, *Jimmy Carter*, 3.

⁸⁷ Shouse, *Presidents from Nixon through Carter*, 217.

to do so.⁸⁸ And, in a symbolic gesture that many criticized as a publicity stunt, Carter decided not to switch on the lights of the national Christmas tree until the hostages were freed.⁸⁹

With no progress made, in April, 1980, President Carter, despite objections from some members of his cabinet, arranged and authorized a secret attempted rescue of the hostages.⁹⁰ On April 24, eight helicopters from the USS *Nimitz* and six planes from Oman were sent to Iran. Nothing went according to plan. After three of the helicopters and one of the planes were lost, Carter cancelled the operation. It was the Bay of Pigs all over again. The following day, Carter informed the public of the mission's failure and took full responsibility. Americans were shocked, and more of them turned against Carter, further damaging his reelection efforts.⁹¹ A review board analyzed the failed mission and found multiple mistakes. NATO also criticized the effort. Embarrassed, and in a last-ditch effort to save his presidency, Carter renounced his Rose Garden Strategy and fully engaged in the campaign.⁹²

In his last months in office, Carter and his cabinet worked to free the American hostages from Tehran. In mid-December 1980, with Algerians acting as intermediaries, the United States agreed to pay Iran 24 billion dollars, eclipsing the assets frozen by Carter the previous year. According to the deal, when planes transporting the hostages exited Iranian airspace, the Iranians would receive the funds, which were then being held by the Algerians. The event was scheduled for Reagan's inauguration day, January 20, 1981. With Reagan's permission, Carter fly to Wiesbaden to welcome the hostages upon their arrival, a symbolic act that ended their 444 days of captivity and his presidency.⁹³ In hindsight, Carter blamed the Iran hostage crisis and the subsequent failure of the rescue mission for his loss to Reagan. Even so, he stands by the belief that he made the right decisions in regard to the crisis.⁹⁴

4.2 Afghanistan and the U.S. Boycott of the 1980 Olympics

As the commander and chief, President Jimmy Carter had to face various challenges, make crucial decisions, and enforce the peace. The White House learned on Christmas eve, 1979, of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.⁹⁵ The Soviets claimed that they invaded Afghanistan based on the Afghan Government's request for assistance in repressing anti-communism.

⁸⁸ Congressional Quarterly, *President Carter 1980*, 21-22.

⁸⁹ Jordan, *Crisis*, 87.

⁹⁰ Glad, *An Outsider in the White House*, 263-269; Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 511-514.

⁹¹ Jordan, *Crisis*, 254-255, 263.

⁹² Glad, *An Outsider in the White House*, 263-269.

⁹³ Jordan, *Crisis*, 362, 372, 375-389.

⁹⁴ CNBC, "Jimmy Carter: 'I Could Have Wiped Iran Off the Map.'" YouTube video.

⁹⁵ Shouse, *Presidents from Nixon through Carter*, 206.

The invasion threatened the U.S. Senate's ratification of the SALT II treaty, so To punish the Soviets for the invasion, Carter took the use of military force off the table and instead chose to break his 1976 promise to American farmers and impose a grain embargo on the Soviet Union. This decision was widely condemned by politicians, farmers, and the general public. Senator Ted Kennedy commented that “a weak foreign policy can't be redeemed by suddenly getting tough on farmers.”⁹⁶

Because the Soviet Union failed to comply with a U.S.-imposed February 20 deadline for Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, Carter announced a U.S. boycott of the 1980 Summer Olympic Games in Moscow. Although American politicians generally supported the measure, the media and athletes accused Carter of mixing politics and sport.⁹⁷

As a direct result of the invasion of Afghanistan and the Iran Hostage Crisis, during the State of the Union Address on January 20, 1980, President introduced Carter's doctrine. It highlighted that the United States would use military forces against the Soviets to prevent any threat in the Persian Gulf, one of the most oil-producing regions. Carter also intended to increase defense spending.⁹⁸

4.3 The Second Run for the Presidency

On January 17, 1979, Hamilton Jordan wrote a memorandum pointing out that Carter should worry about his party's re-nomination. At that time, Carter's popularity was at an all-time low, with only 30 percent of voters viewing his presidency favorably. Democratic Senator Ted Kennedy, on the other hand, was extremely popular. Ultimately, Kennedy did decide in favor of seeking the nomination, as did Governor Brown of California. Brown was knocked out of the running by poor results in the Wisconsin and New Hampshire primaries, but the Kennedy campaign moved ahead, strengthened by increased criticism over Carter's handling of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iran hostage crisis.⁹⁹ Weakening Kennedy's campaign was enduring questions about the Chappaquiddick tragedy and his cliché response as to why he wanted to be President.¹⁰⁰

Due to questions over Kennedy's character and qualities, Carter led in the polls in early 1980. Carter then undertook what is now referred to as the Rose Garden Strategy, suspending

⁹⁶ Jordan, *Crisis*, 87-89.

⁹⁷ Shouse, *Presidents from Nixon through Carter*, 206-214.

⁹⁸ Rozell, *The Press and the Carter Presidency*, 160.

⁹⁹ Abernathy, Hill and Williams, *The Carter Years*, 135-137.

¹⁰⁰ Jordan, *Crisis*, 14.

his personal campaigning until such time that the Iran Hostage Crisis was resolved. Despite this questionable strategy, Kennedy could never overcome questions about his character, and Carter won the Democratic nomination with almost 53 percent of the vote.¹⁰¹

Although Carter had won the nomination, the biggest contest awaited him with John Anderson and Republican Ronald Reagan. The percentage of people's satisfaction with Carter's presidency decreased to 22%, mainly due to the economy. Unemployment increased by 1.5% to 7.8% from February till July 1980.¹⁰² Moreover, during the campaign, Carter's criticism of Reagan hurt him rather than helped him. Carter accused him of being a racist and claimed that people choose war instead of peace by choosing Reagan.¹⁰³ In order to increase the chances of winning, Carter wanted to participate in the political debates with Reagan. However, Reagan refused participation in debates until John Anderson was involved. The participation of a third candidate has caused that several liberal Democrats preferred Anderson instead of Carter. Approximately three weeks ahead of the election day, the public polls showed that Carter has about the same chance of winning as Reagan. During the first and the last debate between both of them on October 28, Carter pointed out the words of his 12-year-old daughter worrying about nuclear weapons and international problems overall, but Carter's speech did not turn out as well as he expected. Albeit Reagan was at an advantage, polls showed that there was still a big chance to win.¹⁰⁴ The results of the 1980 election were known on November 4. In the order of the 40th President of the US became Ronald Reagan with 51% of votes, ten more than Jimmy Carter. John Anderson ended with 7%. Based on a survey by ABC News, Carter would not have a chance to win even if John Anderson did not run for President. Carter would be received only 216 electoral votes, in fact, 167 more than he received. In comparison to Reagan's 489 electoral votes.¹⁰⁵

4.4 Why Was He Not Re-elected?

One of three reasons that became critical for his re-election and caused his defeat was the dissension between liberal and conservative ideals inside the Democratic party personified through Kennedy and Carter. Although Kennedy agreed with many of his proposals, their opinions disagreed on the Democratic party's direction issues. The relationship even worsened when both ran for President. Another reason was Iran's ongoing hostage crisis and

¹⁰¹ Abernathy, Hill and Williams, *The Carter Years*, 137-138.

¹⁰² Glad, *An Outsider in the White House*, 270.

¹⁰³ Kaufman, *The Presidency of James Earl Carter, Jr.*, 201.

¹⁰⁴ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 554, 561-565.

¹⁰⁵ Glad, *An Outsider in the White House*, 274.

related daily cutoff of approximately six million casks of oil from Iran, which caused unbearable rows of cars at gas stations. Based on the hostage crisis, movies depicted different scenarios of seizing Americans were made, which later even more undercut Carter's presidency. Unfortunately for Carter, the anniversary of the beginning of the Iran hostage crisis fell on election day. Nevertheless, in the poll containing the question of who would better resolve the crisis, only 39% of voters would decide for Raegan, whereas 33% of voters would decide for Carter. The last reason was the deteriorating economic situation, especially in terms of rising inflation and unemployment. At the beginning of the year, the percentage of inflation ranged between 18 to 20%, most since the 1950s.¹⁰⁶ Although inflation decreased to 7% by the time and resolving the Iranian crisis looked hopeful, there was disappointment again. And what more? The day before the election, the news broadcast nothing but a series of stories about the hostage crisis. Once people realized that the hostages would not be freed, most people, who had not yet decided, voted for Reagan.¹⁰⁷

Although Carter lost his re-election, he still had two and a half months ahead, in which he enacted two environmental bills. The first one was the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act in order to protect over one hundred million acres of Alaskan nature and its wildlife. And the second one was the "Superfund" Bill, whose purpose was to fund the cleanup of the environment from released toxic chemicals.¹⁰⁸

4.5 Carter's Legacy

"I am the only President in the history of the country who didn't make a single Supreme Court appointment."¹⁰⁹

Although in 1976, Americans welcomed Carter with open arms, in 1980, the paradigm shift of the voters resulted in his overwhelming defeat to Ronald Reagan.¹¹⁰ Once Carter lost the re-election, his presidency was highly criticized mainly because of what happened in the last year: aggravated economy, holding the hostages in Iran, and poor relations with the Soviets.¹¹¹ Several historians consider Carter's presidency a failure only because of his defeat

¹⁰⁶ Biven, *Jimmy Carter's Economy*, 1-4.

¹⁰⁷ Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 563-568.

¹⁰⁸ Slavicek, *Jimmy Carter*, 77.

¹⁰⁹ Jordan, *Crisis*, 374.

¹¹⁰ Brinkley, "The Rising Stock of Jimmy Carter: The 'Hands on' Legacy of our Thirty-ninth President," *Diplomatic History* 20, no. 4 (Fall 1996): 505.

¹¹¹ Bloodworth, "The Program for Better Jobs and Income: Welfare Reform, Liberalism, and the Failed Presidency of Jimmy Carter," 135-150.

in the election. According to Kaufman, who considers Carter an average president, Carter's failure also lies in the inability to lead a team. In 1990, Iran specialist Gary Sick accused Reagan of dishonest dealing during the 1980 election. Reagan supposedly dealt with Iranians about the postponement of releasing the hostages to secure his victory in the election in return for supply of weapons. Although Sick was probably right, nothing was proved due to the lack of money for investigation, and Sick's accusation was considered a rumor. However, during the Carter's meeting with Yaser Arafat, then President of Palestine, in 1996, the truth came to light. It is not clear whether Carter would have won in the election, but he certainly would not be so underrated.¹¹²

Nevertheless, Carter's post-presidential career, including the establishment of the Carter Center and the widespread of peace and democracy throughout the world, is admirable. Some scholars claim his post-presidential career is more appreciated than his presidency.¹¹³ By the influence of Carter's post-presidential career, people started to look at his presidency from a different point of view. Nevertheless, many critics, who still exist, did not consider that Carter would not have had such an admirable post-presidential career without being a president first.¹¹⁴ In the Late Show with Stephen Colbert interview, Carter, in his 93 years, was mentioned as an author of a couple of autobiographies. A man whose involvement in Carter Center and Habitat for Humanity made him the first president of the 20th century with such a career. As it was already mentioned, Carter promised to be honest to the American nation and, during the interview, he revealed his only lie called "little white lies" of using the expression "glad to see you."¹¹⁵ During his presidency, Carter decided to put the military operations off the table except for Operation Eagle Claw to rescue the hostages and in 1978 to help Zaire. Compared to his predecessors and successors, mainly Bush, Reagan, and Clinton, Carter preferred to solve situations peacefully and diplomatically. Although Carter's reputation has got better among Americans during the years, among a series of scholars and historians, Carter's presidency is still considered below average.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Brinkley, "The Rising Stock of Jimmy Carter: The 'Hands on' Legacy of our Thirty-ninth President," *Diplomatic History* 20, no. 4 (Fall 1996): 511-512, 514, 527.

¹¹³ Bloodworth, "'The Program for Better Jobs and Income': Welfare Reform, Liberalism, and the Failed Presidency of Jimmy Carter," 135-150.

¹¹⁴ Brinkley, "The Rising Stock of Jimmy Carter: The 'Hands on' Legacy of our Thirty-ninth President," *Diplomatic History* 20, no. 4 (Fall 1996): 526, 528.

¹¹⁵ The Late Show with Stephen Colbert. "President Jimmy Carter is Still Praying for Donald Trump," YouTube video.

¹¹⁶ Berggren, "I Had a Different Way of Governing': The Living Faith of President Carter," *Journal of Church & State* 47, no. 1 (Winter 2005): 56-61, [https://DOI: 10.1093/jcs/47.1.43](https://doi.org/10.1093/jcs/47.1.43).

Based on the survey conducted in the years 2000, 2009 and 2017 by C-SPAN, it is evident that the score of Carter's presidency has gone better over time, but still, he was ranked at the bottom half of all the Presidents. In 2017, only at two out of ten categories, he was ranked at the top half, even at the 5th place in the case of "Pursuing Equal Justice for All" and the 14th place of being the "Moral Authority."¹¹⁷

There are many assumptions, either positive or negative, about how people will remember his presidency. For example, James David Barber, the presidential historian, claims that people will connect Carter with the period of no wars or riots.¹¹⁸

According to Stuart Eizenstat, a member of Carter's White House staff, Carter's presidency was not a failure at all, but exactly the opposite. The problem was that Carter's accomplishments were accompanied by real issues such as the hostage crisis, inflation, disputes with liberals, and lastly, the overwhelming defeat. Stuart Eizenstat claims Jimmy Carter did very well in his only term, considering his achievements and the fact that approximately 70% of his proposals were approved. He laid the basis for today's energy security. During the Council on Foreign Relations, Robert Strong, a political scientist, and Stuart Eizenstat refute the criticism that Carter was inexperienced or naive. They highlighted Carter's negotiating with the Middle East. Even though his advisors opposed the risks, which the uncertain negotiation of peace could bring if it failed, Jimmy Carter decided to take the risk and succeeded. Carter's strength laid in challenging himself with hard tasks and their successes. Still, the main weakness was that he did not realize that to be a president, it is necessary to be both a commander and a politician who needs to have good relations with his party.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ "Presidential Historians Survey 2017," C-SPAN, accessed 15 March 2021, <https://www.c-span.org/presidentsurvey2017/?page=overall>.

¹¹⁸ Brinkley, "The Rising Stock of Jimmy Carter: The 'Hands on' Legacy of our Thirty-ninth President," *Diplomatic History* 20, no. 4 (Fall 1996): 508.

¹¹⁹ Council on Foreign Relations, "The Legacy of the Jimmy Carter Administration," YouTube video.

CONCLUSION

This thesis analyzed Carter's presidency based on his accomplishments and failures throughout his one term in office and determined the reasons for his defeat in the 1980 election, while simultaneously placing his presidency in historical perspective especially in the context of the Cold War. All three presidents during the 1970s endeavored to stick to the *Détente* during the Cold War by restricting nuclear weaponry. The South gained power over the North, which also meant the South had more power in policy than before. Meanwhile, the nation was traumatized by its defeat in the Vietnam War and the corrupt government under President Nixon, which led not only to his resignation but more to public distrust in government.

The thesis proved that Carter was not infallible, but human, and human beings make mistakes. During his presidency, Carter encountered many complications, from a worsening economy, public dishonesty, and energy crisis to holding hostages in Iran. Even so, he was able to negotiate with the Middle East, China, and Panama. Carter would be remembered as a man who promised never to lie, a man who accepted faith as an essential part of his life and let God lead his life. A man who came from the farm to make America great again, and whose character and background helped him to win the 1976 election. However, both his advantage and disadvantage were Carter's dislike of politicians and his inexperience in Washington. Having disputes with the Democratic liberals, notably Teddy Kennedy, and not getting along well with Congress, was one of the reasons for defeat and for rejecting many of his proposals. What next undermined his presidency and the chances to win the election were the difficulties with handling the Iran Hostage Crisis, which lasted for fourteen months, and the economic situation at the same time connected with the energy crisis.

Although many scholars consider Carter's presidency inefficient, based on the pros and cons of his presidency, the thesis tried to prove that Carter ranks among the good U.S. presidents. He never started a war by himself, instead, he strove for peace and democracy. His accomplishments during the presidency and even post-presidency significantly affected the world as it is now. Although he did not win the re-election, his post-presidency is often evaluated even better than his one term in office. Everything happened for a reason, and in the 1970s, Carter, for his character, was what the United States needed. Nowadays, Carter's presidency is still a controversial topic. For some, Carter's presidency is still remembered as a failure, whereas for others, a success. Although the public opinion over his presidency has improved over time, according to statistics, in comparison with his successors and

predecessors, Carter is still below average. Based on the evidence presented by in this thesis, however, Carter's presidency was not a failure. He was just unlucky with the events he had to face, which affected his actions to a large extent.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CREEP – Committee to Re-elect the President

SALT – Strategic Arms Limitation Talks

CETA – Comprehensive Employment Training Act

HEW – Health, Education, and Welfare

WIC – Women, Infants and Children