

Why were the
presidencies of
gerald ford and jimmy
carter perceived as
weak and i...

[History](#)



Both the presidencies of Gerald R. Ford and Jimmy Carter were considered to be unsuccessful. They brought nearly no progress to the nation and their foreign and domestic policies achieved little. Both of these “ weak” presidencies were unable to bring about any long withstanding or significant changes to the United States. President Ford and President Carter often are viewed in negative manner because of their inability to bring about any lasting, positive changes in either domestic or foreign policy during their presidencies.

The domestic policies of President Ford reflected his conservative outlook. He did little to promote any kind of positive movement or any sort of welfare or public-interest measures. In fact, he vetoed a series of environmental, social welfare, and public-interest measures, that would have greatly benefited society. Jimmy Carter, on the other hand, never really developed a personal political philosophy. Though adept at working on specific problems, he struggled to maintain a clear larger political vision.

Congress ignored his proposals for administrative reforms in the civil service and the executive branch of government. His calls for a national health-insurance program, an overhaul of the welfare system, and reform of the income tax laws fell flat. His problems arose from his own political clumsiness but possibly even more from the limitations imposed by a conservative electorate. In foreign policy issues, Carter proved to be a little more successful than in domestic issues.

He urged increased attention to human rights and his secretary of state,

Cyrus Vance, worked to combat abuses in many countries. In Latin America, <https://assignbuster.com/why-were-the-presidencies-of-gerald-ford-and-jimmy-carter-perceived-as-weak-and-ineffectual-take-into-effect-domestic-and-foreign-policy-assignment/>

he sought improved relations with Panama and his administration even completed negotiations on treaties transferring the Panama Canal and the Canal Zone to Panama by 1999. In dealing with China and the Soviet Union, Carter sought improved relations. With China, though things were still rocky, the period of total hostility and diplomatic isolation was over.

With the Soviet Union, however, Carter was not as successful. After his SALT II Treaty with Leonid Brezhnev was condemned by many, support for the treaty dissolved completely and anti-Soviet policy arose and spread throughout. President Ford in his foreign policy acted to re-assert U. S. ability and prestige following the collapse of Cambodia and the humiliating Fall of Saigon in South Vietnam. On May 12, 1975, the American Merchant Marine ship, S. S. Mayaguez, with 39 crewmen aboard, was captured in international waters by Cambodian gunboats.

The ship was retrieved and all crewmen were saved, but at the cost of 41 American servicemen's lives. Detente with the with the Soviet Union under leader Leonid Brezhnev continued. U. S. -Soviet relations were marked by ongoing arms negotiations. They worked to enhance the SALT II treaty? to set new limitations on nuclear weapons (which failed to pass in Congress), the Helsinki agreements on human rights principles and East European national boundaries, trade negotiations, and the symbolic Apollo-Soyuz joint manned space flight.

Ford's personal diplomacy was highlighted by trips to Japan and China, a 10-day European tour, and co-sponsorship of the first international economic

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summit meeting. In addition, he received numerous foreign heads of state at the White House, many of whom came in observance of the U. S.

Bicentennial in 1976. Preventing a new war between the intractable Arab-Israeli opponents of the Middle East remained a major objective. “ Shuttle diplomacy” in the Middle East seemed to yield hopeful results.

By providing more aid to both Israel and Egypt, the Ford administration helped to persuade the two countries to accept an interim truce agreement which did not last. Both the Ford and Carter administrations had mixed results. Though each had its successes as well as its humiliations, overall, neither did anything lasting enough to affect the nation positively later on. The feelings that these two presidencies receive that they were “ weak and ineffectual” because they did little to better the nation or to stand out.