

BDOHP Interview Index and Biographical Details

Sir Peter John Westmacott, GCMG 2016 (KCMG 2003; CMG 2000); LVO 1993

Biographical Details with (on right) relevant pages in the interview:

Entered Diplomatic Service, 1972	p 2
Middle East Department, FCO, 1972-73	p 3
SOAS, 1973-74	pp 4-5
Tehran, 1974-78	pp 5-11
Brussels, 1978-80	pp 11-13
1 st Secretary Economic, Paris, 1980-84	pp 13-17
European Union Department Internal, FCO, 1984	p 17
Private Secretary to Minister of State, FCO, 1984-87	pp 17-22
Head of Chancery, Ankara, 1987-90	pp 22-25
Deputy Private Secretary to Prince of Wales, 1990-93	pp 25-28
Counsellor for Political and Public Affairs, Washington, 1993-97	pp 28-35
Director Americas, FCO, 1997-2000	pp 35-38
Deputy Under-Secretary for Wider World, FCO, 2000-01	pp 38-41
Ambassador to Turkey, 2002-06	pp 42-52
Ambassador to France, 2007-11	pp 52-59
Ambassador to United States, 2012-15	pp 59-79

BRITISH DIPLOMATIC ORAL HISTORY PROGRAMME

RECOLLECTIONS OF SIR PETER WESTMACOTT GCMG LVO

RECORDED AND TRANSCRIBED BY CATHERINE MANNING

Today is 8 September 2017. This is the first interview with Sir Peter Westmacott for the British Diplomatic Oral History Programme, Catherine Manning recording. Peter, I am going to start by asking you how it was that you came to choose diplomacy as your career.

PW: I was one of those people who didn't have the faintest idea what the Foreign Office was, or diplomacy, or an embassy abroad. If I'm really honest, I think I would say I was influenced by people I met at university, by the very nice man who was headmaster of the school I went to in Taunton in Somerset, and by the head of my college at Oxford. Probably there were one or two other friends who said you'd be well suited to this, give it a go. When I left university in the days when so much smaller a proportion of the population got a degree, people were almost queuing up to offer us jobs. It's much harder now for people graduating, because so many more people go to a university of one sort or another. In my case, back then in the late sixties, I found myself choosing between an investment bank, an insurance firm, and the Foreign Office. I really wasn't too sure, but in the end my calculation was well, if I don't like the FCO, I can probably ditch it and try life in the private sector, whereas if I turn the government down now and come to them a few years later saying I've changed my mind, they'll probably say you've missed your chance. Of course, that was wrong, but that's what I thought. The retired ambassador who was the head of my college in Oxford, said, 'I think you ought to try joining the Foreign Office.' He was Sir William Hayter, who'd been Ambassador in the Soviet Union and was a dear man. I was President of the Junior Common Room and so got to know him quite well. He said in rather Hayter-like way, 'I don't think I'd better write you a reference, because they'll think it's special pleading and I do a bit too much of that sort of thing.' Then he added, 'You might want to check whether they pay you a salary, Peter. In my day, they expected you to have a private income, but I hear they now pay you something. I don't know whether that's important for you or not but you might want to check.' Well, guess what, it was rather important to me, as I had absolutely no income of my own.

Middle East Department, 1972-3

So I gave it a go. I arrived and was overwhelmed by the talent and the niceness of the extraordinarily able people I found myself working with in Middle East Department - all of whom went on to great things, in different ways, in the Foreign Office.

So I had a very fortunate start, as Assistant Desk Officer for Oman and South Yemen. I think I remember we had a couple of weeks of some sort induction process. Not much to be honest; they do a bit more of it now. We didn't even used to train heads of mission. Now we do try and share the experience of having been head of mission with people who haven't done it before. The general view in the Foreign Office was that you learn on the job and from other people. Actually, I think that coaches and mentors now would still say that eighty per cent of learning is on the job and only twenty per cent from formal training. I learned a huge amount from the people I watched doing the job so much better than me.

CM: Did that first year in Middle East Department attract you to that part of the world?

PW: It did. One of the fun things we did, which was nothing to do with the Middle East, was that a group of us took part for almost a week in a young diplomats' trainee programme with the French and some of the other EU member states. We went to Wilton Park and we got to know other people who had just joined their own foreign service. I thought that was fabulous and one of my modest achievements when William Hague was Foreign Secretary was to get him to re-introduce the same programme of sharing experience, joint training, with young diplomats from fellow EU countries. To some extent it was about building relationships, but it was also about understanding how others saw things. Invaluable experience. But it was being thrown into the deep end of the Middle East that gave me an interest in that part of the world.

When I took the language aptitude test, my first choice for hard language training was Persian, even though I wasn't a desk officer for Iran. Iran sounded interesting and exotic but I was also for once making a strategic calculation, rightly or wrongly, which was that if I learned Arabic, like almost everybody else in the department, I would spend my entire career on the treadmill of the Arabic-speaking countries and I didn't think I wanted to do that. I wanted to hedge my bets, to choose a language which was only spoken in one or two countries and that would leave me open to do other things, in other parts of the world. This soon proved a good choice. I started my Persian training in October 1973. On Christmas Eve

the Shah tripled the price of crude oil and made Iran even more of a critical partner in the region. By March 1974 I was out in Iran learning to speak what I had learned in the classroom.

SOAS, 1973-74

CM: What did your Farsi language training consist of? You went to SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies).

PW: I went to SOAS for two terms, taught by the formidably intimidating Professor Anne Lambton, who was *sui generis*. She must have been over seventy when she took on my class. I was one of those who played squash with her (and invariably lost). She would cavort around the court in long tweed skirts, playing with great precision, and occasionally have us to her extremely Spartan flat for a simple supper. Not introverted, but rather shy; a private person of incredible courage and intellect. She had disguised herself as a man and ridden horseback across the Shah's Iran and written books about land reform, which did not go down well because they were not entirely in line with the official Iranian narrative. She was said to have reduced Special Forces hard men to tears because she was such a difficult task master. I did that for two terms, and it was fun. We were a tiny class of about half a dozen people. There were one or two military, a couple of academics, and maybe one other from the FCO. During those two terms we did the grammar, because the author of the only existing Persian grammar book in English at that time was, of course, Professor Anne Lambton. She had a couple of native Persian speakers who took us for conversation class. I learnt many years later, from one of her colleagues who delivered the eulogy at Nancy's memorial service, that the man she considered the best Foreign Office language student she ever taught was at the time ambassador in Paris – and that was me! After SOAS, following the usual tradition, I went and spent a few months on the ground in immersion in Iran. I went to Shiraz, a beautiful city in the south, and got a room staying with a family – which had to be Christian, because Muslim families wouldn't take in an unaccompanied male infidel. They were very modest, very sweet, and very kind to me. I tried teaching them a bit of English; they talked to me in Persian. I did some classes at the local British Council and I spent a lot of my time hanging out with the carpet sellers in the bazaar, learning about Qashqai tribal rugs, or going out with the tribes at the weekends, witnessing their nomadic existence; or going to visit some of the extraordinary archaeological sites of Sassanian and Parthian civilisations which were all very close to Shiraz. And quite often helping the Ambassador up in Tehran to deal

with VIPs who, of course, if they came to Iran wanted to go to Isfahan and Persepolis, and Persepolis was just down the road. So it was a wonderful few months. I think they only let me stay for three or four. By June 1974 they'd got me back in Tehran, cutting short by three months the year's language training I was supposed to receive. I scraped through the Higher Exam - I think my Farsi was adequate, but not brilliant. But given that I had had a few months less than expected, I was pretty pleased with the progress I had made. In June 1974 I became formally Third Secretary in the Chancery of the British Embassy in Tehran.

Political Officer, British Embassy, Tehran, 1974-78

We had a small political team. We had a Defence Attaché, because there was a lot of defence co-operation going on - we were selling tanks and we were helping to train the Shah's army and doing a lot of stuff that today you'd call counter-terrorism. We had a pretty substantial commercial operation. And we had a visa operation.

CM: A number of people have said to me that though you start at the bottom of the heap as a third secretary in an embassy, because you had language skills you got involved in all kinds of interesting things that were above your pay grade. Did you find that?

PW: I think that's right. You think you're the most junior member of the whole outfit and you'll have nothing to do except make the coffee and crank the photocopier. But it was much more interesting than that. There were a number of people in the Embassy who didn't have the advantage of having learned the language, who weren't doing this rather fun political work - there were some colleagues doing commercial work, which was fine, but I think my work at that time was more interesting than theirs! .

My Ambassador, I think, was the man who in all my Foreign Office career I most respected, who happened to be the man who chaired the Board that let me into the Diplomatic Service, happened to be my first Under Secretary and then happened to be my first Ambassador. This was Sir Anthony Parsons, a man of immense integrity and decency and kindness and brilliance. I think it was about day one that he said, 'I've got a job for you, Peter.' He put me in his Rolls Royce with two silk carpets which had been given to him by an extremely wealthy industrialist and said, 'Your job is to go and see him, to come back without the carpets, but with my personal relationship with this very important gentleman intact.' So off I went. I reported back to him saying, 'I enjoyed the ride in the Rolls Royce, Ambassador, and I have half succeeded. I've come back without the carpets, but I am afraid I probably

have caused considerable offence to the donor.’ Because in the Middle East, you don’t return gifts. He knew that. This was a little challenge for me on day one to see how I got on.

He was wonderful. I learned a huge amount from Tony Parsons. Today when you write something, you may dictate it straight into a machine, and you can fiddle around with it on the computer - you can amend stuff. In those days you couldn’t. There was a draft sheet and if you wanted to amend it, the whole thing had to be retyped. Parsons was the sort of man who would sit down and say, ‘I think it’s time we sent a dispatch about the internal situation in Iran,’ and then would dictate it to his secretary. He would then show it to the rest of us for comments. There would be an ‘and’ changed for a ‘but’ or a comma added, but otherwise it would be word perfect. I thought: how would one ever reach such a command of the English language to be able to dictate straight off something so faultless. Actually, over the years we all do develop something approaching that level of skill. But I was hugely impressed - and a bit intimidated.

CM: You mention travelling in Iran as one of the things you remember from that first posting.

PW: Yes, I would get in my car and drive. I reckoned that my job was to go off for four or five days at a time and visit corners of the country that diplomats didn’t really go to, to sniff the air, see what was going on, wave the flag a bit for Britain. For me it was an educational experience. What sort of country is this? How does it work? I did quite a lot of it on my own. I was a speaker and I thought that was what I had learned the language for.

CM: Were you received well or were you regarded with suspicion in these far flung corners of Iran?

PW: Iran in those days was full of a lot of bright young twenty-something merchant bankers and other people seeking their fortune, because the rest of the world economy was in dire straits in the middle to late ‘70s. Foreigners always assumed I had to be a spy, because why else was I learning the language, travelling the country and trying to see what was going on? You just let that sort of roll off your back. Iranians were more relaxed about my role. I was very well received and I remember being very struck that even in remote little towns you’d find asphalted roads and beautifully built schools and tidy children wearing uniform. There would usually be a local mayor, or the professor of the university or even the governor

of the province, ready to receive me, pleasantly surprised because I could speak a bit of the language.

CM: You were there at a crucial time, leading up to the Revolution of 1979. I know Tony Parsons wrote a book about being in Iran before the Revolution. Looking back on it now, knowing what happened, how do you interpret the time you were there?

PW: A couple of points about how we managed that and a little bit of interpretation. I think Tony Parsons was very hard on himself; that was the sort of person he was, extraordinarily honest. He was an Arabist; he wasn't a Persian specialist. He didn't really have much background in the country. He saw the Shah regularly and he saw the senior ministers, the Minister of Court, the Prime Minister and so on. But he didn't go around the country sniffing the air, and, critically, during 1978 which was when the seeds of the Revolution were really began to grow, he went on leave for more than four months. In those days, people took their long leave every two years. He had a number two who frankly didn't know anything about Iran and almost prided himself on not knowing anything about Iran.

In September 1978 after I had left Tehran I ran into Tony Parsons in Whitehall and asked rather directly, 'Why are you still here?' This was after there had been a fire in Abadan, killing 450 in a cinema in deeply suspicious circumstances; and there was a lot of trouble in the country. He said, 'Good question. We've thought about this and we've concluded that if the British Ambassador cut short his leave and went back early, that would suggest we had no confidence in the Shah's ability to survive.' Tony had been away since May, I think. He went back in October. He went to see the Shah and that night he wrote a cable saying the game was over; this guy is not going to survive. Tony's political nose was extraordinary, but of course he'd been out of touch. The Embassy, and it was not alone in this, did not see it coming as quickly as the end came in part because the Shah considered the role of friendly intelligence agencies was simply one of liaison with his own people. I, as the junior political officer, would send messages in a forked stick to some of the dissidents in late '77 and early '78 because I wanted to find out what was going on they were too scared to talk on the telephone. Did I learn much? A bit, but I was probably the only person in the Embassy, I am afraid, who was chatting to some of these people.

At the very beginning of '78 I wrote a little piece which I had forgotten until a colleague reminded me of it years later. The FCO carried out a post mortem of how we got the Revolution wrong. In those days you didn't have everything on email, and you only sent

some of what you wrote to London. The rest of it stayed on the files locally and in Tehran was burned as a precaution when the Revolution began. So a lot of the material got destroyed, but they found something I'd written shortly before I'd left, and had been copied to London, which essentially said that there are five or six things that are going wrong in this country: he's alienated the bazaar; he's despised by the students; there are dissident lawyers who want human rights; there's growing corruption within the royal family; the monopolies of the sugar and rice importers have been broken and, critically, and foolishly, the regime has started blaming the Shia hierarchy for the political problems in the universities. And by the way the Shah no longer has anybody in his immediate entourage in whom he has confidence or who has got the courage to tell him what is going wrong. Rather naively, I suppose, I concluded, 'I don't wish to sound alarmist, but if these different elements came together we might find that the Peacock Throne is less stable than we think.' That was what they focussed on in the post mortem, a) because it was the only evidence they could find of anybody saying that there might be something wrong – this was about a year before the Revolution - and b) because my rather diffident, 'I don't wish to sound alarmist' was taken to be an indication of an Embassy culture that didn't really want to see what was going on in front of its eyes. It wasn't really that, it was more me not being sure of my own judgment, but wanting to flag something that I thought people should be looking at after I'd gone. So I think we were not great at reading the runes of what was going on, but we did flag some of the mistakes that were being made, particularly I recall an article on 17 January 1978, in Ettela'at newspaper, clearly inspired by the government, blaming the exiled Ayatollah Khomeini for the trouble in the universities. I remember thinking this was insane. So we saw some of it coming. Overall, though, people didn't want to rock the boat. It was a hugely important market and we didn't want to upset the Shah, because his word was what determined who signed which contract. That was the mood at the time.

CM: Did you ever meet the Shah or his wife?

PW: I did, but only fleetingly. I was too junior to go to the banquets when senior visitors came. I have seen a certain amount of his widow since reconnecting when I was Ambassador in Paris (she was a friend of my wife's). The former Empress, Soraya, used to come to the residence for dinner and we would reminisce about the old days or even about the days of Mossadeq in the 1950s - when she was keen to remind me that it wasn't at her husband's request that the elected prime minister was forced out! But when I was there as a junior

diplomat, no, I had virtually no dealings with the senior royals. I saw some of the senior ministers, who were unfailingly nice, even to junior and unimportant people like me.

CM: Very often one has a particular attachment to one's first posting because one has put all that psychological effort into learning the language; it's your first experience of being a diplomat abroad, and you were allowed that latitude to go roaming around the country. Do you have a particular affection for Iran? You've never been back there since.

PW: You would normally expect to go back once or twice more if you'd invested in the language, and others did. But what with the Revolution, Embassy closures, and other problems between the UK and Iran, it wasn't possible for me. I would have loved to have gone back, as many of my contemporaries who spoke the language did. Yes, I felt very fond of that country. It could be infuriating and irritating and some of the people there were pretty nationalist-chauvinist, but I thought it was a hugely civilised country. I loved the history. It has an Indo-European language; it has an Indo-European culture. Today I like to ask people – especially in America - who go on about how Iran is the source of all evil, supporting terrorism the world over - and Iran is indeed doing a lot of bad things in the region - how many Iranians were there driving planes into the World Trade Centre on 9/11? They were all from our good friends and allies Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Yemen. Iranians didn't do that stuff. They don't do suicidal jihadism. They can be difficult and intolerant and now they are the butt of a great deal of hostility from an unlikely alliance of Americans, Egyptians, Saudis, Israelis, Emiratis, who have all decided they want to kill the nuclear deal we negotiated in 2015. Iran behaves badly today in part because the West handed Iraq to Iran on a plate when the US and UK invaded in 2003. Iran then took advantage of Syria and the mess that followed. In Yemen, the Iranians are no more to blame than the Saudis for the horrible civil war that's going on. The Sunni Arab countries have become much more scared of Iran, whose ambitions were contained in one country but is now hugely influential across what they call the Shia Crescent or the Shia Corridor: Iran, large chunks of Iraq with its Shia majority, large chunks of Syria, plus Lebanon with Hezbollah.

We should remember too that after the Iranian Revolution, however vile it was, the West was busy encouraging Saddam Hussein to invade Iran and even providing him with weapons. The Ayatollahs and those who have been in charge of Iran since the Revolution are fully aware of that. The American Navy shot down an Iran Air Airbus, killing almost 300 people and the captain of the ship was promoted. Modest compensation was paid but there was no

apology. When they want to be paranoid, and sometimes they do, Iranians go back beyond Mossadeq to 1925, when we helped the Cossack Reza Shah take over from the Qajars and 1941 when we sent Reza Shah into exile and put his son on the throne.

So, lots of history and lots of baggage. But to my mind, for all that history, there's something of a love-hate relationship with the UK. They know that over a long period of time the *English Among the Persians* - the title of a book by one of the earlier British ambassadors, Denis Wright - loved the place. Many of them were sent out by the British East India Company, because our diplomacy east of Constantinople was run out of India rather than out of London until after the Second World War. So deep relationships, quite a lot of expertise, a lot of scholarship and a certain amount of affection at least among the more educated Iranians who went to school or university in the UK; a language which is structurally much closer to French or the Romance languages than it is to Turkish or Arabic; and of course a civilisation which goes back thousands of years and of which most Iranians are justifiably proud. I often tell people that what young Iranians want today is not jihadism and mass slaughter. What they want is to get a green card and make millions of dollars in California. Iran, despite all the sanctions, is the second most advanced country in terms of technology in the region after Israel. I was very struck, talking to the new American Ambassador last night, Woody Johnson, who has just arrived, to discover that this emissary of Donald Trump not only shared my passion for Turkey, but also thought it would be marvellous if we could somehow get Iran opened up and part of the community of nations again. From an American ambassador at a time when everyone on Capitol Hill and in the Trump White House is busy saying, 'Iran is terrible, Iran is evil; let's see if we can have another war with Iran. It will be good for our image, good for the region, good for our Israeli friends.' I think this is not a good idea. I think it would just make the region more unstable, quite apart from what is right or wrong, or legal or illegal.

So yes, a long answer to your question. I'm very fond of the country. Two of my children were born there. I met my present wife there, before we lost touch for twenty years. She's American-Iranian. I think it's an amazing country and I would be thrilled if in one way or another we could rediscover Iran and bring it back into the family of nations. It'll take a long time and the problem is that it is a country in which there are many different power centres and they've all got a different agenda. If you were dealing solely with the elected President and Foreign Minister and a number of the other people who are in government, we wouldn't have much trouble. But we're not. We're dealing with an extremely hard line, very

corrupt Revolutionary Guard organisation which runs military and terrorist interference in other countries and a bunch of ayatollahs who, unlike the Shah whom they replaced, will stop at nothing to stay in power. The Shah actually lost his throne in part because he wasn't prepared to turn the tanks on his people.

CM: After your first posting in Iran, you came back to Europe and you were seconded to the European Commission. Can you explain how that came about?

Seconded to the European Commission 1978-early 1980

PW: I came back around Easter '78 and for a few months I fiddled around in a couple of departments in London. Then I went to Paris for what we called the short ENA course (Ecole Nationale d'Administration). Some people were lucky enough to spend a whole year doing ENA, which was fantastic for your French, while also showing you how the French administrative system worked - excellent preparation for people who were going to work in the British Embassy in Paris. There was a shorter course which only lasted about six weeks, where about thirty supposedly senior British government officials, from all sorts of different government departments, did a similar but much shorter exercise and I tagged along with that. I had a wonderful time and found the six weeks extremely helpful in getting a grasp of how the French government functioned. From there, in spite of my having told the HR people, as we call them now, Personnel Operations Department as they were then, that whatever I did next I didn't really want to go and work in a European institution, I did just that. My view, I was told, made little sense and they had a very nice job lined up for me in the European Commission.

CM: Why were you reluctant to go to Brussels?

PW: I suppose I thought it would be boring and bureaucratic. Instinctively I was, even then, more interested in bilateral diplomacy, which is what I have done all my life, deliberately. I never wanted to go and work at the UN either. I even turned down a job at one point in the Cabinet Office, probably wrongly for my career, because it struck me as essentially a bureaucratic exercise round a table with twenty other people drafting documents, re-amending and seeking consensus on bits of paper which were unlikely to serve any useful purpose. It wasn't really me.

But off I went to the Commission. I was sent as a *fonctionnaire en échange*. This was a scheme for new member states – we'd been members for five years then – to get an idea of

what the Commission was like. Then, and indeed right up to now, the United Kingdom has been significantly under-represented in the Commission and in the other institutions of the European Union. So they wanted to get people in. I spoke French and I'd done the short course at ENA, so there was some logic to the secondment. I was put into what was called DG8 which was International Development. I got so fed up after the first year of doing absolutely nothing that I started saying to the Foreign Office, 'You're wasting your time and mine here and I'm getting very bored.' But in the end it became quite fun and I manufactured a job, as an honorary member of the *Cabinet* of the Commissioner for International Development, Claude Cheysson - who subsequently became French Foreign Minister, brilliant mind, difficult character, but always very nice to me. Well known for having on one occasion been sent a long, six-page cable by a learned ambassador of France, and replying himself. Instead of signing off a draft telling the ambassador how brilliant it was, and how interesting his observations were, he replied: "*En effet. Cheysson.*" That was it. He knew how to do putdowns.

I introduced something rather bizarre, which was a note of conversation, because I was a British bureaucrat and it seemed to me that if I was in the room when interesting things were being said, and no-one else was doing so, I might as well take the record. Cheysson liked the result, and read every word. I started to travel with him a bit around the Mediterranean countries. I went to Lebanon; I went to Jordan; I went to Morocco; I went to Tunisia. I went to Malta to a conference. Not always accompanying the Commissioner, but interesting all the same. Of course just as the role began to acquire some value, guess what, because I'd been complaining, the Foreign Office rang me up and said, 'You say you've got nothing to do. We've got a job for you. Somebody has been medically short-toured in Paris. Would you like to go to Paris?' And I said, 'You know you sent me here for two years. I've been here eighteen months. I've finally got a job to do and I'm beginning to enjoy it, so I think I'll stay.' 'Well, they said, that's very interesting. Let's put it this way: you can either go to Paris down the road from Brussels, or you can go to Kinshasa.' So off I went to Paris, packing up my wife and three small children. In the end, bizarrely, I was almost sad to leave. The spell in Brussels taught me how the Council and the Commission and the *Service Juridique* and the rest of it worked. My next door neighbour was a lovely Belgian, a lawyer who also worked in the Commission. We had supper together regularly as families, and went skiing together. The joke in those days was: how many people work in the European Commission building in Berlaymont; answer: about 10%. Unkind, unfair, but there was something in

it. Hugely long lunch hours. Not a lot of work done in some areas. The *cabinets* worked madly, manically and brilliantly, as always in the French system.

While there, I wrote a paper about DG8, which dealt with International Development and was one of the big spending departments, spending a huge amount of money on African, Caribbean and Mediterranean countries which just happened to go mainly to French companies. The finance director was a Frenchman and the head of projects was a Frenchman. There were some Italians around, but the Brits were essentially nowhere. Because we came late; we came late to the party and the rules and the procedures and the hoops you have to jump through to get the business had all been established by then. And Brits on the whole, British business people, are not that good at foreign languages. I remember being told by one of my French friends, saying, ‘You know, Peter, your language is one of the official languages of the Commission. You don’t have to do everything and write everything in French.’ I did it instinctively. For the first six months I thought I had to, because I was living and operating in a French culture. So I wrote a paper which went down extremely badly with my colleagues in the UK Representation in Brussels because it was implicitly critical of their efforts, but I got a very kind and encouraging note from a man called David Hannay, now Lord Hannay, who was the Under Secretary in charge of European Affairs, another brilliant Foreign Office mind. As always with David Hannay, it came back immediately with a lot of very interesting points, which made me feel I’m glad I bothered. And perhaps it made one or two other people think that there is stuff we need to do here in the European Union if we in the UK are not going to remain in the slow lane, left behind by the others and failing to pick up on the business opportunities which are there for British firms.

CM: The new job was First Secretary Economic in the Paris Embassy covering trade, energy and industrial policy. What were you actually doing?

First Secretary Economic, Paris, 1980-84

PW: It wasn’t an easy job. I had a very good friend who was in the Chancery foreign policy section, who said, ‘I wouldn’t take this job. It’s not terribly interesting and it’s not as much fun as what we are doing across the corridor.’ I took it because I came under pretty heavy pressure to do so. It was a little bit of a backwater initially. I arrived there in 1980, a year or so before Mitterrand was elected President in 1981 and life had become politically interesting. It was towards the end of Giscard’s time and the whole business of industrial

policy, interventionism, Colbertism, picking winners, the state as an economic actor was becoming quite a big subject and so I found that was in a sense me. I wasn't the guy selling widgets in the Commercial Department, but I was the guy who was trying to explain protectionism and energy policy and strategic stocks. There were oil crises going on all round the world. Defence co-operation - how were we going to be able to sell stuff into the closed French market? What about the French saying that all those Japanese cars that we were beginning to build in Britain - because we were not very good at building purely British cars any more - weren't really European? It was part of my job to try to address that and to ensure we were perceived to be good Europeans and that what was built in Britain was a European product. I didn't write analyses, thank God, on the state of the French economy - somebody else ground those out once a month in the office next door. But I was doing quite fun stuff: the future of the steel industry - which was a huge issue for all of us then, with overcapacity in all the western industrialised nations. Who's cheating, who's not cheating? The early days of Airbus and getting aerospace co-operation functioning across the Channel between Britain and France. So, although initially I thought, hmm, I'm not quite sure what this is all about, I began to enjoy it. I developed some good relationships with people working in the ministerial *cabinets*. Many of these very able young *énarques* were politically engaged and the young 'socialists' were dying for change. When they went moonlighting, I would go out at night and join my mates sticking up posters for Mitterrand - '*la force tranquille*' - at two o'clock in the morning. It wasn't my job, but it did mean that I had a window on what was going on at that stage inside the Socialist party.

I very much enjoyed my time there. I travelled around France a bit, not much on business but a huge amount for pleasure

CM: Who was your ambassador?

PW: I had two. First of all I had Sir Reginald Hibbert; secondly Sir John Fretwell.

CM: Tell us a little bit about Sir Reginald Hibbert. He was someone who left a reputation behind him. Did you suffer?

PW: Yes, but not nearly as much as others. What I noticed was that one or two other people, particularly a delightful man who was the Counsellor for Press and Public Affairs called Michael Weston were bullied by Sir R. Hibbert. Oh, yes, I would get my drafts scrawled and be told how absolutely hopeless they were and to go and start again. First secretaries got

that; counsellors got that. It was normal. Generally speaking I think I was too far down the food chain to be one of his main targets. I don't think it was a happy embassy at that stage, though there was a great camaraderie amongst our gang. I had some very nice friends at the same level, but doing different work, and we saw each other as families and enjoyed life. We had a number two there, Peter Petrie, who was married to a very grande dame, a Belgian aristocrat, who had good French and who probably used to annoy his ambassador by having former President Giscard d'Estaing round for dinner, which as the number two was quite an achievement. He was very well connected, not particularly effective, but very skilful. He managed to take himself off for three weeks on an official journey to New Caledonia and the French Pacific territories, on the grounds that the number two at the British Embassy in Paris needed to know what was going on in those parts. I thought, good for him, secretly admiring the cheek of it.

After that we got John Fretwell, who'd been the number two in Washington and came on a pretty big promotion - British Ambassador in Paris, straight from Washington - who was very different, calm, low key and pleasant. Not a man who set the world on fire, but who I think ran a much happier ship.

Can I tell you one little story of Paris times? Being in Paris there were lots of high level visitors and we used to have Margaret Thatcher coming over as Prime Minister. There was one time she came over for a Franco-British summit with most of the government. She liked to come to the Residence, sit down with a whisky and have a pre-dinner briefing session with everybody in a circle round the room. There was one of these occasions when there were I don't know how many permanent secretaries and ministers in the room, but a lot. She was seated in a chair like this, and she was going through the agenda. Why are we doing this? Why are we doing that? What are we trying to achieve? Then we got to a really obscure part when she had been told to raise something to do with the acquisition of a British automotive firm called Lucas by a French firm called Valeo – I think it was an acquisition, I can't remember the details. She said, 'What's that all about? Why have I got to raise that with the President?' There was silence. I was sitting in a little corner on the floor, as the most junior person in the room; I don't know why I was even there. So I said, 'Well, Prime Minister,' and I summarised the story, why it was important, what the British interest was and then she said, 'Thank you, Mr Westmacott.' Then she raised her finger and pointed round the room. 'I have here one, two, three, four, five, seven Cabinet ministers and umpteen different permanent secretaries, and not one of you was able to answer this question and I have to rely

on a first secretary from the British Embassy in Paris to tell me what is going on. What is the matter with you all?’ After which, Charles Powell, her Private Secretary, came up to me and said, ‘Good job, Peter, well done. Don’t let it go to your head. This is the way she is. She was using you to score points off her ministers. You played the game, but don’t think this is about you. This is about the way she is dealing with the rest of them.’ But Charles has never forgotten the story. He reminded me of it when introducing me as a speaker at a breakfast some 30 years later. On another occasion Margaret Thatcher became so fed up with a very long, black tie dinner that she left the banquet, went to Villacoublay and got on her plane leaving several members of the delegation behind in their dinner jackets. We all had to put them up for the night.

CM: Mitterrand’s election was a big event in France. It was the first time that the Socialists and the parties of the left had come to power for many years. He started off with a very left wing economic policy and then after a year and a half or two years he did a U turn. So you were there for this severely Socialist period.

PW: Before the election - elections are on Sundays in France – the Friday beforehand, Reg Hibbert chaired a meeting round the embassy’s conference table and asked, ‘Who thinks Mitterrand’s going to win and who thinks that Giscard is going to win?’ I was the only one who put his hand up for Mitterrand. I wasn’t the political officer but I had spent a lot of time with people sticking up the *affiches* for the Socialists and I had got into the buzz of it. There was certainly a sense of momentum and change around the place. I usually get these things wrong. I didn’t see President Trump becoming President, but I think on that occasion I did actually see Mitterrand coming. Yes, it was bizarre. There was a huge programme of rather clunky nationalization which cost the French taxpayer a lot of money and bailed out a few firms which might otherwise have gone bust. Frankly, they got very good deals, especially one or two of the banks and the other industrial conglomerates which were not very competitive. Then later on Mitterrand decided nationalisation was a bad idea, not good for the French economy and began a programme of re-privatization, so the guys who were re-privatized did very well out of it again, thank you very much. But in the early days, it was a good old-fashioned state ownership programme. Our own government didn’t like it very much, but I don’t think our own economic interests suffered too much. There were one or two firms in which there was a strong British shareholding, but it was not very significant for our interests.

CM: You obviously made good friends during your time in Paris. Were there people among them whom you picked up with again when you went back twenty three years later to become Ambassador?

PW: There were a few and that was great fun. Each time I bid for an ambassadorship I deliberately only applied for jobs in a country I had served in before, because I thought that there were relationships and a knowledge of the country which I could deploy to help me hit the ground running. I certainly made it my business to renew contact with people that I had got on well with in the old days. Some of them had become frightfully grand people in very important positions, and didn't really want to be reminded of the past. But others - we just picked up where we had left off. It was very useful and very enjoyable.

FCO, London, 1984-87

CM: After four years in Paris you returned to London and you spent a few months in European Union Department Internal. What were you doing there?

PW: Yes, that's right. Because the job I had done in Paris was essentially EU business, and despite my having said over the years that I didn't want to do European Union work, they put me into this department. My desk was Budget and Agriculture, which I hated.

CM: Was it really a waiting room?

PW: It was waiting for me, because I had decided that I wanted to go off and be a private secretary for a minister. So for me it was not long term, but it was a substantive job. It was very frustrating because on both Budget and Agriculture, although the FCO was formally in the lead in the conduct of EU negotiations, we were very much dependent on the guys in the Treasury who determined budget policy and told us what we should and shouldn't say. The people in MAFF also had very strong views on aspects of the Common Agriculture Policy - CAP reform and budgetary costs and wine lakes and butter mountains and all that sort of stuff. The department was a very long-hours brief-writing machine for the European Council meetings. There were some wonderful people like Stephen Wall, who worked all hours that God gave, churning out and refining the raw material the rest of us would give him but he too was essentially drawing on material provided by other Whitehall departments. I personally didn't find it terribly rewarding.

CM: Your first Private Secretary job was to Richard Luce.

PW: He was a scion of the Luce family. There'd been Admiral Sir David Luce, First Sea Lord; there had been Bill Luce who had been one of the last Political Residents in the Middle East, a great Arabist and former Governor of Sudan, I believe. Richard Luce had been a Minister before and had resigned along with Lord Carrington in 1982 over the Falklands War. Margaret Thatcher brought him back as Minister of State at the Foreign Office a few years later and I joined him in '86. He was responsible for the Middle East, East Asia, including negotiations with China on Hong Kong, and Arms Control and defence policy. A wonderful man, terribly nice, extraordinarily courteous and decent. He had very good relationships in the Middle East, partly because of the name: the family name Luce was quite something around the Gulf States, because they were all very fond of Bill. So it was a delight going round those places with a Minister whom the locals knew and loved and who liked going back. We had some pretty acrimonious and difficult trips to Hong Kong and China, because this was during some of the difficult moments over Hong Kong with Zhou Nan and others in the Chinese government, who kept us for hours in smoked-filled rooms and subjected us to endless banquets with toasts of (to my palate) undrinkable mao-tai. Hong Kong of course was dealt with at several different levels, and was a hugely delicate issue. We played a part in the negotiations and then had to brave the ferocious Hong Kong press, because you could never go to China without reporting back to Hong Kong and when you were in Hong Kong you had to give a press conference. So there would be a hundred journalists who knew every detail of the negotiation and were always looking for a rat, for some sign that they were being sold out by the British. Really tricky stuff. I did my best to support both Richard Luce and subsequently Tim Renton in this ordeal. The most interesting part to me was that in minister of state work there is not so much direct involvement in policy in London, because there's the Foreign Secretary, taking advice from senior officials, and there's No. 10 who usually take a pretty close interest in key foreign policy things. So junior ministers, with rare exceptions, don't make a big difference on policy, unless there is a specialised area where they know their stuff and the Foreign Secretary has delegated them authority. What's their real role? Their real role is to spread the burden, so that the Foreign Secretary doesn't have to see every senior visitor who comes to town; and to travel, to go to countries that the Foreign Secretary can't go to as often as he and they would wish. So that's what we were doing.

My most memorable visit with Richard Luce? Probably going up and down the Jordan valley with Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan. I remember also sitting on the tarmac in Rome when

we were changing planes and we were going to be late arriving in Oman and Richard, who had chronic back pain, got so fed up with waiting that he ordered me to go and tell the pilot to take off. I said, 'I think they're changing the engines, Minister.' 'I've had enough, tell them to take off.'

Richard Luce moved on to be Minister for the Arts and was succeeded by Tim Renton who had been the Parliamentary Under Secretary before. Old Etonian, very pleasant; lived in a beautiful house on the South Downs called Mount Harry House; deceptively intelligent. Some of the bright spark, sharp-elbowed old Etonians we had in the Foreign Office, who fancied themselves as the cleverest boys in class – I remember them looking at Tim Renton, thinking he wasn't very bright; he probably hadn't been a member of Pop or hadn't been a scholar. Then just occasionally he would put them down very skilfully making absolutely clear that he knew what was going on and he was nobody's fool. I was very lucky with those two ministers; they were extremely nice people. Renton went on to be Minister of the Arts, too, I think, and then Chief Whip. We went to Indonesia; we went to Hong Kong; we travelled around south-east Asia quite a lot on behalf of British business; we went to the Middle East and the Gulf States.

I think probably the episode I best remember with Tim Renton was when we went to Israel and the Occupied Territories for the first time. The Israeli Ambassador said 'Welcome aboard, Tim,' because he was a founder member of Conservative Friends of Israel; his wife was a descendant of Balfour of Balfour Declaration fame; and the Israelis were confident that their policies would be validated by 'their' minister of state. We went to Israel; we did the rounds of the Palestinian Territories and we went to Gaza, the first British Minister to go there since Winston Churchill in 1921. I think it is fair to say that Tim was horrified by what he saw in Gaza, which felt like one great big open sewer. Of course, there was an Israeli Army jeep bristling with antennae parked outside the house whenever we talked to any of the locals. When we came back, he was invited to speak to a couple of the Anglo-Jewish associations. On one occasion, he essentially said: I am a life-long friend of Israel, devoted, but what I saw appalled me and this cannot go on. Then he left the stage because he had to go and vote and I was left behind with one of the other Foreign Office officials to field questions from an irate and disappointed audience. The idea that this devoted friend of Israel could possibly be critical about an aspect of Israeli government policy rather shocked them.

As a Private Secretary I got into the habit of doing a lot of work, dictating straight off, under pressure, against the clock. It might have been writing speeches, it might have been writing records, it might have been writing drafts for the Minister to sign off. But it taught me - perhaps I was a slower learner than others - how to write decent English, without having to agonize over how to structure each sentence. I think it equipped me for a lot of things I did later on, so I was very grateful for the opportunity. And also, when you're Private Secretary - this dawned on me rather late in the game - because you're a gate keeper for the politician, for a political master, all sorts of senior people pay you much more attention and listen to what you've got to say than if you were simply any other common or garden first secretary. You have got to be rather careful about that. You've got to be careful not to catch private secretary-itis, and become too grand for your own good or your minister's good. You had to balance the wonderful opportunities the job offered with the necessary degree of humility, and remind yourself you were only really getting this attention because of whom you worked for, not because of the brilliance or originality of your own contributions.

I would not go off on a Friday with the Minister to his constituency, which is political, and therefore distinct from the FCO and the private office. Ditto with many of the minister's evenings devoted to fund-raising, schmoozing constituency supporters and party donors or whatever. We didn't get involved in that. There was a clear distinction between the role of the apolitical civil service and the political life of the ministers. Where it all came together was in our Parliamentary work. We had Foreign Office Questions once a month. There were debates; there were short notice questions: if the Minister had to give a speech at short notice he would need not only a text but also all the material for supplementary points that the Members of Parliament would raise with him. We were right in the thick of that. We had to help him anticipate what were the likely lines of attack. You work with the Whips; you work with the Parliamentary Private Secretaries and you go and sit with him in the Officials' Box in the House to help him explain, defend, or even change British government policy. So in that process, you saw politics live. But what I enjoyed too was developing your own relationships with a lot of the other ministers and MPs, many of them became life-long friends. It was fun, getting a personal feel for how important Parliamentary work was to our ministers.

CM: In your notes you also mention the breaking of diplomatic relations with Syria. Can you recall for us why that happened?

PW: This was when I was working for Renton. There was a would-be terrorist attack on an El-Al airliner out of London airport. There was a guy called Hindawi who was eventually convicted of putting his pregnant girlfriend on the plane with a bomb in her hand luggage. Fortunately the El-Al security people – this would have been 1986 – picked it up. Then there was some extremely nimble footwork by police and the agencies and it became clear that Hindawi, in order to disguise his appearance, had gone back to the Syrian Embassy to have his nails clipped or his hair dyed or something like that. In other words, the trail pointed back very clearly to Syrian Embassy involvement. We weren't sure which way the trial was going to come out, and in the Foreign Office we had to prepare various options. The morning the verdict was announced, Mrs Thatcher took a ministerial meeting to determine the government's response. Renton was present. In front of her was an editorial from *The Sun*, which advocated breaking diplomatic relations with Syria if Hindawi was found guilty. It so happened that Bernard Ingham, the PM's Director of Communications, had had lunch with the editor of *The Sun* the day before - which meant that those in the Foreign Office who advocated a calibrated response reflecting Britain's interests in the region had lost the argument before the debate had even begun. In the discussion *The Sun* was very clear which way it wanted the government to go, and the Prime Minister was very clear which way she wanted it to go. Those combined forces were irresistible.

CM: Your notes say 'Why I never ran for office.' Did you ever think of stepping out from behind the scenes as a civil servant and diplomat and to become an elected politician?

PW: I remember Tim Renton saying to me once, 'Why don't you run for Parliament? You'd be good at it. I'd like to see you there.' I said, 'Thank you, Minister, for the vote of confidence, but my problem is that I am really not sure what party I would join, because there are elements of what your party believes in and does which I think are right, and there are elements in what the other lot do which I also like, so I would be a little conflicted.' And he said, 'Don't worry about that. We all are.' But I didn't really entertain the thought, because I didn't then like the idea of being a public figure, having things thrown at me, and beastly things written about me and my family in the newspapers. It never really appealed. Even today, when I do quite a lot of media stuff, when the story spirals out of control because somebody's taken it the wrong way, or I've said something a little too controversial, I don't enjoy becoming the story. There are other people who love it, for whom the only thing worse than bad publicity is no publicity. I'm not one of those. And I don't think in those

days I had sufficient confidence in my own ability to make hundreds of speeches that people might actually want to listen to.

CM: Some people have said that they had considered becoming a politician but rejected the idea on the grounds that they had more chance of making policy as a civil servant than as an MP in Parliament. There are, after all, long periods when your party is out of power, for both parties.

PW: I don't think I got as far as making a calculation about power. Back then we all looked up to ministers, even people who today are dismissed as unimportant as the focus is relentless on politicians of cabinet level. What the minister thought made a difference. Actually, as I was saying just now, below the level of Secretary of State, ministers of state and parliamentary under secretaries, rarely affected policy. With hindsight now, having done forty three years in the Foreign Office, I think I would say that there are a number of positions I held where I probably was more able to influence policy as an official than I would have been, certainly as a junior minister, if not as a foreign minister. Part of the fun of those roles was the ability to work, sometimes very closely, with senior politicians to try to make what they wanted happen. It was always easier if you too believed it was the right thing, rather than a lousy idea. Either way it was enjoyable and stimulating. Officials and elected politicians working together could be extraordinarily effective. That's how it should be.

Head of Chancery, Ankara, 1987-90

CM: After three years as a private secretary your next job in 1987 was Head of Chancery in Ankara. Was this something you very much wanted to do, or was it just the job that came up at that moment?

PW: No, it was a very conscious choice on my part. I had driven through Turkey on my way to Iran as a young diplomat, and stopped off at one or two of the amazing natural and archaeological phenomena in that country, and thought I should go back one day. I think there must have been something in my DNA which made me take to that part of the world. I was never very interested in the Arab world, but I ended up spending twelve years of my professional life in non-Arab, Middle Eastern countries, in Iran and Turkey and it was absolutely my own choice each time. By the time I was due to go abroad again, Head of Chancery in Ankara had plenty of appeal. Head of Chancery is a job that doesn't exist

anymore - a combination of head of political section, head of HR, right hand man to the ambassador, shoulder to cry on, and much else, a wonderful job in most embassies. It got abolished mostly because it left the formal number two, who often wasn't Head of Chancery, with little to do. But in those days it still very much existed, so I thought let's go and give Turkey a go. I was also influenced by its proximity to Iran - and the country and region had got into my blood stream.

CM: Was it at this stage that you learned Turkish?

PW: Started to, tried to, yes. I had a few months of very much part-time tuition here in London. I went miles out to East London, to Mile End, to a delightful lady who did her best to teach me Turkish, but it took a couple of hours to get there. I lived in Kent at the time and I had small children and we were busy packing up the family and getting ready to go abroad. It wasn't like immersion. It wasn't as if you could empty your mind of everything else that was going on. And I knew, or I thought I knew, that this was a one-off for two or three years and I would never go back to Turkey.

Turkish was a far more difficult language than Persian. I wasn't going to get the opportunity to get into the weeds of it, so in a sense, knowing I was never going to get to a high level of proficiency, I just thought I'll settle for a modest level of ambition. And that is what I did. If I'd known then that I was going to go back as ambassador, I like to think I'd have made a better fist of it. I passed Intermediate, rather to my surprise. But it was very difficult and I am afraid I never got to the stage that I could do serious business in Turkish. I could make little speeches; I could chat. Whereas in Persian I eventually got to not far short of bi-lingual. Oddly enough today, even though I go back to Turkey a lot, I still understand everyday chatter of Persians speaking to one another better than I do Turks. When I went back to Turkey later as ambassador, I was at least able, with Susie's help because she took the lessons, to go and call on governors and mayors as we travelled round the country and quite often we would stand down the official interpreter because we could do better on our own. We managed.

I loved being in Turkey. It was complicated for our family life, because I had three small children and in the end we left all three of them behind in boarding school. I had not intended to leave the youngest, but right at the last minute, the FCO doctor said this child has a history of respiratory disease and a collapsed lung and you can't take him to the most polluted city in the world. Probably today at that point I would have either ignored the

advice or cancelled the posting, but in those days you did what you were told, so we left Rupert behind. He was seven years old and it was awful - agony for my then wife, his mother. At least he was in a nice family-friendly co-ed prep school with his elder brother and sister. But it was very difficult family-wise though when they came out for holidays we made a point of going to wonderful places and they adored it. All my children still love going back to Turkey, and two of them were married there.

At the time, in 1987, Turgut Özal was Prime Minister. Turkey was very polluted, fairly backward, a bit rough; human rights was a big issue. But oddly enough we could travel perfectly happily to the far east of Turkey, the Kurdish areas, Lake Van, climb amazing mountains, and feel totally safe, in a way that you can't now, because that was a period when it was a pretty stable and calm and terrorism-free country. This was a period of almost no violence from the PKK terrorist group, which is unfortunately still very much in business today, thirty years on. It was a wonderful country to travel around. It was also stimulating to work with very good people in the Foreign Ministry, the Interior Ministry and the Prime Minister's Office and so on. I was doing quite a lot of work on Cyprus, quite a lot of work on NATO, the Aegean and foreign policy issues. I did some work on what was happening in Turkey domestically. I wrote a paper at the time: *Could the Iranian Revolution Happen In Turkey?* Might the Islamists take over this secular bastion of NATO, our eastern flank? I concluded no - at that time at any rate - and I still think that was the right judgment, even if I wouldn't have written the paper in quite the same way now; but I wrote it for fun really, because I thought it was an interesting subject and we should be constantly thinking about the legacy of Iran and what we didn't see coming. But I only did a little over two and a half years there before coming back to London.

CM: Who was your Ambassador?

PW: Timothy Daunt, who stayed almost seven years. A very good Turkish speaker. His wife spoke Turkish too, Patricia, a lovely person, alas now stuck in a wheel chair after a terrible accident falling off a horse in Jordan. They were great, fun people. It was a happy mission with some very bright young Turkish-speaking second secretaries. I was the Head of the Political Section and took an interest in consulates around the countryside, what was going on in Istanbul and so on. With the UK still a guarantor power of Cyprus, that probably was the biggest single issue that I spent time on. Cyprus wasn't yet inside the European Union but wanted to be, which gave us some leverage. So of course did Turkey. So the UK

did what it could to try to persuade Greeks and Turks, and Greek and Turkish Cypriots, to come to terms.

CM: Two and a half years in Ankara and then you came back in 1990 for a complete change.

PW: Yes. While I was doing the Head of Chancery job, I spent a lot of time looking after visiting VIPs. Lots of people came to Turkey, including the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, royalty who took their vacations in Turkey, and lots of other very interesting and high level people. As a result of that, when my time was beginning to be up, towards the end of my third year, the FCO asked me if I'd like to be a candidate for a Foreign Office private secretary position in the Prince of Wales's household.

Private Secretary, HRH Prince of Wales's Household, 1990-93

CM: You'd met the Prince and Princess of Wales in Turkey?

PW: Only the Prince. He had come on a couple of private trips and I think he came for Gallipoli official ceremonies. Back in Iran one of the fun things I did as the Persian-speaking junior secretary was help look after visiting royalty. It might have been the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, or the Duke of York or the Queen Mother. I remember organising the Queen Mother's visit to Isfahan when my parents were invited to stay in the same Shah Abbas Hotel and the Queen Mum made a big fuss of them. I also used to enjoy taking royalty to Persepolis when I was living in Shiraz. So, when the Palace job was mentioned, I thought, 'Well, I'll go for the interview and see what happens.' So I did and they offered me the job and yes, a big change.

CM: You were there for the break up of the marriage. And for the divorce?

PW: No, the divorce was after I had gone. I was there for the separation.

CM: Peter, what can you tell us? First, tell us what you were doing for the Prince of Wales.

PW: Well, you will understand that there's quite a lot I can't talk about. Unlike being private secretary to a politician, it was a completely different role, because a politician, when he is a minister, is a minister during the daylight hours, four days a week, is a constituency MP on a Friday and goes home to his family, or whatever else he chooses to do with his own time, at the weekend - except of course when we were on overseas trips. There was a clear distinction between when you were on duty and when you were off duty for a political

master. With royalty it's 24/7, because for them it's 24/7. The phone would ring at any time of day or night, on any day of the week. I went for two years and I stayed for three. During that time there was barely a day when even the broadsheets, never mind the red tops, did not have a Charles and Diana story on page one. It was brutal and it was very high stress - for the principals of course but also for their staff.

I got involved with a lot of non-FCO issues that HRH was engaged with: architecture, the English language, Shakespeare, volunteering, the Prince's Trust, the business community and so on. It was fascinating, riveting stuff, a million miles removed from foreign policy. On trips abroad Ambassadors wanted the Prince to be given the keys of the city, attend lots of receptions and shake lots of hands while he - and the Princess - wanted to make a difference, engage with business people, promote environmental projects, address inner city issues, set up local versions of volunteering, and so on. My role was to try to get everybody else to understand what HRH's agenda was, and to make him feel that his time was being well spent as well as doing what HMG needed him to do. So a lot of scope for diplomacy there - sometimes quite delicate. But very interesting, and covering a range of different subjects.

I got very involved in educational affairs, young offender issues, volunteering and inner city schools; including once seeing the extraordinary results when we took RSC actors to teach Shakespearean theatre to kids aged 4 in the middle of Manchester. It was a very stimulating life, but it was full on, because I would get phone calls at all hours of the day or night. Of course, being highly visible members of the Royal Family, the Prince and Princess had extraordinary convening power. If you want to take a new initiative, or make a speech about an important issue, you can more or less ask the five biggest experts in the country, if not in the world, 'Would you come to Highgrove to dinner with His Royal Highness and discuss?' and they'll say, 'Sure' and they'll turn up. It was a real privilege to be with some of these unbelievably talented and committed people, all of whom were ready to do all they possibly could to support HRH - or to use him to drive forward their own agenda!

The convening power and the impact of what the Royals do or say, which coming from any of the rest of us would be totally meaningless, makes people pay attention. That meant that everything had to be very carefully calibrated, but it also meant that the monarchy was an instrument for affecting public opinion and sometimes changing policy and even reality on the ground, from rain forests, to architecture, to volunteering, to employment and employability for young offenders who had no hope of anything else.

While I was at St James's Palace, we did some extraordinarily important work, going to Czechoslovakia and Hungary immediately after the Berlin Wall fell, when tens of thousands of people would crowd the squares for Charles and Diana - visiting rock stars. Democracy breaking out and the Soviet Army on its way home. Diana photographed holding hands with the wife of the interim President of Hungary, Mrs Goncz. I did a long trip to Canada, which was different, not really traditional foreign policy at all, but valuable in terms of understanding the role of the monarchy in the Realms, because the Queen is after all head of state of seventeen different countries. On top of that, she is head of a Commonwealth with more than fifty members.

Visits to Realms were organised totally separately from the British government, in fact British High Commissioners hardly got involved. My liaison was with the local government, which was tremendous fun as they had their own ideas of what they wanted the heir to their throne to do while on their territory. On many occasions he did really valuable work on environmental issues, corporate social responsibility, and in Prague (which I went back to many times on behalf of the Prince of Wales) he established a conservation fund to help raise money for the restoration of the cathedral and Charles Bridge - causes that had often been neglected in communist times and for which local people were mad keen to have the patronage and support of someone who cared so deeply about conservation and beautiful buildings as the Prince of Wales.

Those were three very formative years for me and actually at the end of them I wasn't going to go back to the Foreign Office. I had been underwhelmed by the reactions I'd had from colleagues and a number of heads of mission with whom I had had fights on behalf of my royal employers. I had become rather devoted to them both and to the issues they were addressing, and learned just how important they were to British interests around the world and to public opinion. So I began thinking of doing other things with my life, but just as I was coming to the end of my time I got a very nice phone call from the Ambassador in Washington, Robin Renwick, who said, 'Why don't you come and join my team here?'

I had been thinking of the private sector and I had also been thinking of - it sounds ridiculous really given my lack of qualifications - getting involved with education. I'm not a teacher; I've never been taught to teach; but I like education and I think preparing the young for their future is hugely important. Maybe this was something I could do? In the event, nothing came of it and I went off to Washington in the summer of 1993.

INTERVIEW 2 WITH SIR PETER WESTMACOTT 12 SEPTEMBER 2017

Today is Tuesday 12 September 2017. This is the second interview with Sir Peter Westmacott for the British Diplomatic Oral History Programme, Catherine Manning recording.

CM: Peter, when we finished last time, we were talking about your period working for the Prince of Wales as Private Secretary. That ended in 1993 and your next posting was as Political and Press Counsellor in Washington DC.

PW: Just before I go on to that, I want to add a couple of words about the Prince of Wales, because, you're right, my time with the Prince of Wales did finish in the spring of 1993, after those three years, but it wasn't as if I then totally lost contact. Over the years after that, whether it was in Washington, where I would see both the Prince and Princess Diana, whether it was in Paris, or Washington in later years, when the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall came to stay with us, in Washington later on, or in connection with other things HRH cared about, I stayed in touch. That was a great source of pleasure. Sometimes it was just the Prince of Wales being nice enough to say, 'Why don't you drop by for a chat?' Sometimes there was the odd thing that I might be able to help with. As a little indication of the sort of person he is, when, at the end of 2016 - so fast-forward a quarter of a century - I had an accident in Switzerland and was flat on my back in a Swiss hospital for a couple of weeks, who should ring me up from Scotland to see how I was, to wish me well, and make me laugh - a little bit painful because I had a lot of broken bones - but His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales? No reason why he should do that, but somebody had told him that I had had an accident. It is typical of the man that he does stay in touch even with people who are not close friends, but with whom he's got a relationship, or have worked for him.

When my time at the Palace finished in 1993, I went more or less straightaway to Washington and took over a job which was then called Congressional Counsellor. It was a slightly bizarre job. I thought it was going to be Head of Chancery, a function which I have described before, and which doesn't exist anymore. When I arrived, that role had largely gone, and the *primus inter pares* role had been handed to another counsellor. To be honest, my new role was not really a full-time job and, fortunately, others agreed. Fairly soon, we began a process, which has continued since, of stripping down the numbers of senior members of staff in Washington. By the end of the year, I found that I was called Counsellor

for Political and Public Affairs; I took over the press and public affairs role, as well as supervision of the Embassy's internal and bilateral political work while retaining the congressional liaison responsibility. That was a more substantial and satisfying portfolio.

Counsellor Political and Public Affairs, Washington, 1993-97

CM: Sir Robin Renwick and Sir John Kerr were ambassadors in Washington during your time there, two Foreign Office stars. Compare and contrast. How did they lead in their different ways?

PW: They were very different people. Robin, very intellectual, very precise, had his own policy issues that he pursued with vigour. He was very focussed on Northern Ireland and the White House; didn't really pay much attention to Congress; was often not there in the afternoons - he was out either playing tennis or writing his book or whatever. He was a very efficient user of his precious time. Like all the ambassadors who've ever been there, he gave some wonderful parties; sometimes it was his wife's birthday party, sometimes it was something else in the Residence. He had a real profile there. A brilliant intellect, and as with the other ambassadors I've served, I learned a good deal from working with Robin.

As for the other one, who came straight out from Brussels where he'd been UK Permanent Representative to the EU for five years: he bristled with energy, was a marvellous raconteur, great speaker, loved giving witty speeches at dinners, and was rather fun to work with. A very severe task master, he wouldn't send out any cables that weren't well written. I learned a lot from him: how to write plain, concise English that people enjoyed reading, rather than having to read three times to understand what you were trying to say. He set himself a target of getting to know every single member of the United States Senate, all one hundred of them, so a massive briefing operation went on, preparing John for these trips. Off he would go, usually on his own, and then write long records of everything he had learned. I think he did this in part because he realised that much of the bi-lateral business was done by visiting firemen from London. Of course, there was the travelling around the country, which he did a lot of as well, making speeches and meeting mayors and governors. But he decided that Congress was an area where the resident Ambassador could make a real difference, and he sure did. He developed relationships with pretty well all of them, and many Senators turned out, surprise, surprise, to be really useful on a number of difficult policy issues.

I found my job rather trying at the beginning, because fundamentally the problem is that to go and see important, or self-important, members of the House or members of the Senate, as a mere counsellor in a foreign embassy - even the British Embassy which has a certain status - is not that easy. Even as Ambassador, sometimes, you didn't find it that easy to see the people you wanted to see. The problem being the Congressional Counsellor was that you weren't the expert in any particular policy area that interested these people. So sometimes the person who dealt with the Middle East, China, Russia or trade policy would be more marketable on Capitol Hill than the person whose job it was to co-ordinate the Embassy's relationships with Congress. So I found it a little bit difficult. I did my best. I did develop some relationships and fairly soon, both on Capitol Hill and more generally, for example, when dealing with the White House, which was part of my brief, I found the whole Northern Ireland peace process, and the continuing terrorism of the IRA and others, was quite an important part of my conversations with people. That gave it substance, but I was also able to talk about other parts of the world that I knew something about. Once the relationship gets going you can cover all sorts of different subjects, but at the beginning it wasn't that easy.

CM: Northern Ireland has been a long-term, thorny subject in British-American relations. What were the main issues in your time and who was able to help you?

PW: I think there are two main things that stand out from my time there. The first was during my attempts to make friends of members of the Senate and House of Representatives. I inevitably focussed on a number of those who were interested in Northern Ireland and almost by definition, the vast majority were either Irish-American or Republican sympathisers, with the notable exception of one or two people, like Speaker Tom Foley, a wonderful man of great integrity who was the most senior man in the House of Representatives and a staunch supporter of the British Government's opposition to terrorism. We became good friends. One of the more interesting conversations I had with Bill Clinton, when back in Washington as Ambassador, was when we were both at Tom's memorial service, a fairly small event on Capitol Hill which he and I and a few others attended. Clinton reminded me that Foley had agreed to support his ten-year assault weapons ban but had predicted that it would cost him his seat as Congressman for Spokane, WA, in the 1994 mid-terms. Clinton had replied that as Speaker there was no way Foley could lose his seat. But he'd been wrong and Foley right: the power of the gun lobby

meant that he was defeated - and was subsequently sent to Japan as ambassador by the President.

When I arrived in DC, I found a number of the Irish-American activists were more polite with me than I had expected given their attachment to the Republican cause. Of course they would not admit to supporting terrorism, but they were fundamentally Sinn Fein and IRA-sympathisers (which I do not believe would have been the case if all this had been after 9/11). I discovered one of the reasons why they were rather diffident, rather nice to me, was that – I hadn't quite grasped this until I arrived – one of the great *causes célèbres* of the whole IRA relationship was that there was a guy called Joe Doherty who was a well-known leader of an IRA group, called the M62 Gang, which was thought to have killed seventeen or eighteen different people, including a number of British soldiers. He had been arrested and imprisoned in the Maze Prison in Northern Ireland and, while awaiting trial, had escaped and fled to America. It took the British government almost nine years to get him back, not to face trial, because in the end he was convicted *in absentia*, but to complete his sentence. The one person whom he was actually convicted of killing was Richard Westmacott, who was my cousin, a young Grenadier Guardsman, working at the time in the SAS. He'd been undercover with some of the IRA people - a fairly dangerous, high risk activity. He was shot during a raid on a safe house inhabited by a group of known IRA gunmen. I think there was a hint of embarrassment among some of the congressmen with whom I was talking about the peace process, that they had themselves opposed the return, or extradition, of Doherty, initially on the grounds that he wouldn't have a fair trial, and then arguing that his life would be in danger in jail. We all knew this was nonsense, absolute nonsense, but this was the power of the Irish lobby. In an odd sort of way, that got us off to a good start, because I didn't hold this against any of them. It was just a reality of political life and it did allow us to begin a conversation about what we might do to bring an end to the violence, which became quite an important part of my job.

The second point that is in my memory about Northern Ireland during my first time in Washington was the fateful decision of the Clinton administration to grant visas to Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness before the IRA had renounced the use of violence. This drove the John Major government and my Ambassador of the time wild, because the White House didn't consult us; and they didn't tell us what they were going to do. This was the effect of – we were told at the time - the Four Horsemen: Senator Edward Kennedy, Senator John Kerry, Senator Chris Dodd and Senator Joe Biden, all either ethnic Irish or Irish-

American sympathisers who put pressure on the White House, led by Tony Lake, the National Security Advisor, and a friend of mine, Nancy Soderbergh, who was very close with a lot of Republicans, both in the Republic and in Northern Ireland.

Clinton decided that this was a roll of the dice in favour of peace which he would make, even at the risk of annoying the British government, which was desperately trying to get these people to renounce the use of violence for political purposes. He tried to ring John Major after the decision to grant the visas, but for the best part of a week there was no phone call. Major was in Australia or New Zealand or somewhere. The newspapers wrote that he was so furious that he wouldn't take Clinton's call. A lot of four letter words were shouted round the corridors of the British Embassy at the highest levels. I remember a friend of mine who was a mid-ranking member of the NSC, Jane Holl, telling me twenty years later when she was a Deputy Homeland Security Secretary: 'The only time in my life that I ever heard you shout, Peter, and the only time you shouted at me, was over that.' 'Me? Shout? In the White House? Surely not.' I replied. We were all pretty fed up about it. Even though in an interview for a book written by an Irish-American journalist who covered this stuff very closely, called *The Greening of the White House*, I said I thought, with hindsight, the fact that it had so infuriated the British government was in a sense not a guarantee, but a bet for peace which had a reasonable chance of success. Because McGuinness and Adams knew that since the White House had gone out on a limb for them, there could be no going back on the commitments they had given that they would stop killing people. And that therefore, precisely because it annoyed us so much, it was a step in the right direction which would have given them the cover to start engaging in a serious way on a peace process. Which I think it did. In a sense, even if we hadn't been enraged, we would have needed to seem so in order for the game to play out. But in fact we were.

CM: You've mentioned Speaker Foley. Were there any other interlocutors who were important to you?

PW: Yes, I did use to talk to Senator Edward Kennedy who was statesman-like but fundamentally sympathetic to the Republican cause, and whose sister was then Ambassador in Dublin, Jean Kennedy, and pretty unhelpful to the British government's position. Chris Dodd also, one of the senior senators who became a friend in later years, was not always tremendously helpful. Curiously, Joe Biden and John Kerry both became close friends during the time I was Ambassador; Joe Biden was by then Vice President; John Kerry was

Secretary of State, a fantastic Secretary of State, in my judgment, hugely courageous and hard-working and optimistic, never-say-die, resilient; a great diplomat.

Back then I didn't use to discuss Northern Ireland with him. In the White House, yes, it was Lake and Nancy Soderbergh who were the point people for a lot of this stuff. Anthony Lake was a very nice man, gave very high priority to the Northern Ireland peace process, tried to play a helpful role. But I had less to do with him than the Ambassador did, because that was the way things worked. The National Security Adviser was after all a Cabinet level appointment.

CM: In your notes, Peter, you have written 'Why working in Washington is so important for British diplomats.'

PW: When I went there I had done a few visits as bag carrier for politicians and royalty, but I didn't really know America. I hadn't done a university degree there, and I hadn't gone round the country, 100 days for \$100, on a Greyhound bus. What I think I learned from being there, was how this special relationship, as Winston Churchill called it, functioned, and how absolutely critical it was to know how the Washington machine works, and know what US policy was on all the international issues that the British government cared about. Not knowing how Washington works is a severe disadvantage if you are doing foreign policy in London at a senior level. I found also after I left and I was travelling the world as a Director for the Americas, which took me all over South America and Central America, or as Deputy Under Secretary for the Wider World, which took me to Asia, Australia and New Zealand, Africa, India, Russia, Japan, all sorts of places, time and again I would ask to go and see the American Ambassador, which I probably wouldn't have done if I hadn't done time in Washington. I always found this useful. They were always interesting and open and receptive and helped me understand what was going on. Of course, I would see the British ambassador as well, but talking to the Americans was invaluable. I think, even then, in the mid to late nineties, it became pretty clear to me that the British government's default position on a difficult international issue - and many of them came up by surprise, otherwise they probably wouldn't have been crises - the default position was, 'What do the Americans think?' And so knowing what the Americans thought or knowing how to find out was a vital skill. I think it also informed a lot of the policy judgments that I was making back in London about whether we could or couldn't make progress on Argentina and the Falklands, or whatever we wanted to do about South America or the Caribbean Overseas Territories, or

what are we going to do in the Middle East. Knowing how and where America is, how the lobbies work, what Congress thinks, what the checks, balances and pressures are in the US system, is something which – even though I recognise it's an opportunity not open to everyone - is a huge advantage to somebody who is going to make a career out of British foreign policy.

CM: Can you remember an issue where British interests ran into conflict with American policy on a particular subject?

PW: Two examples. The first thing to remember is that for all the talk of the special relationship, and for all the fact that we are America's closest and most instinctively go-to ally most of the time, and America is by a million miles our biggest trading partner and most important foreign investor, all that stuff - we share a language; we share television programmes and movies and actors – America ultimately does what is in America's interests. It doesn't do us favours, unless it is in its own interest; nor should it. That's what the American government's there for and anyone who thinks otherwise is smoking something. So my two little examples. Even when I was Ambassador there, right up to the beginning of 2016, it was not possible to persuade the US government to formally endorse the principle of self-determination for the people of the Falkland Islands. So there was this British territory with some three thousand inhabitants. We'd gone to war to get the islands back after they were invaded by the Argentinians in 1982. The Americans in the end were quite helpful during the conflict, though not at the outset when they wanted to be more neutral. But ultimately, for all the talk of self-determination, in all sorts of statements to the United Nations, they would never formally say "we believe that the people of the Falkland Islands have the right to determine their own future, and therefore to remain British". This was tedious because in the Organization of American States, which is an international body of which the US is one of many members, and a very influential player, time and again Argentina was able to play to the fact that the OAS supported the principle of dialogue on sovereignty rather than the principle of self-determination and the Americans wouldn't budge on this. I tried pretty hard in the late 1990s, and later as ambassador, but neither I nor my predecessors were able to shift them on that one. It's about America; it goes back to the Monroe Doctrine - non-interference by foreigners in our backyard, America looking after its own interests in Latin America, rather than getting involved in somebody else's territorial or end of empire disputes.

Second example. Time and again, there was a kind of activism in the British Foreign Office to try to do more on the Middle East. The Camel Corps, as the newspapers used to unkindly call the Foreign Office Arabists, always wanted to see if the rights of Palestinians to self-determination in the Occupied Territories couldn't somehow be resolved. Wasn't there another initiative we could take to get the Israelis and the Palestinians to come together, or promote an Arab League initiative, or something? And every time the Foreign Office would dust down yet another initiative because it was the right thing to do, because ultimately in the Middle East there will either be a two state solution or there will be a one state non-democratic Jewish solution. But every time we ran up against either a lack of interest or the extraordinary influence of the pro-Israel lobby on Capitol Hill and/or the administration. So much so that a number of my predecessors as Ambassador would see their role as warning London not to use up any more valuable political capital to no effect.

CM: And as Press Councillor with the American press?

PW: No really difficult issues that I remember. The difficult moments at the British Embassy were more often with the British press corps than with the American press corps. I had my own relationships there. I had a wonderful Press Secretary, Peter Bean, who alas died of a heart attack not very long after he left, and so we had a pretty good operation. I would talk off the record with British journalists, as I later did as Ambassador, partly because even the good ones didn't have very good access to the Administration and so they were always grateful for on the record if possible, off the record if not, guidance as to what was going on and where US Administration thinking was headed. So I think that between us, we would be able to help the journalists do their job as well as, of course, put across what the British government was doing in as constructive a light as possible. Now and again I had a few run-ins with the US press on Northern Ireland, when I was briefing people or when they wrote something that was thoroughly unhelpful. But not too often. I did a little bit of television. I did CNN's *Crossfire* and one or two other interviews. Usually they wanted me to talk about Northern Ireland one way or another, but on the whole it was not too difficult.

FCO London, Americas Director, 1997-2000

CM: After four years in America, you went back to London as Americas Director in 1997. That was a promotion. You arrived just a bit before the 1997 election. Did the arrival of the Labour government in 1997 change things?

PW: I think it did. It was quite a moment, the 1997 general election result, when poor John Major, who somehow survived seven years as Prime Minister and got a certain amount of stuff done with almost no majority and with a lot of backbiting within his own party, was turned out. People had got a bit tired of weak and divided government. Then, a breath of fresh air: New Labour - not old Labour, not a loony-left sort of Labour Party - which had learned the lessons of past failures, arrived with big beasts and a big majority. Some of them I knew because they had been out to Washington; Brown had been out; Blair had been out; I am sure other members of the team had been out. So after just a few weeks working with the tail-end of the Major administration, there they all were, new ministers, full of ideas, many of them quite delightful people. Many of them became and have stayed friends. As Foreign Secretary there was Robin Cook, who was quite difficult at the beginning, but we became good friends, to the extent that he tried to advise me, in a very nice way, not to go off as Ambassador to Turkey at the end of my five years in London.

By then I was a Deputy Under Secretary and a member of the FCO Board. 'You can do better than that', he said. 'You're a board member. I'm sure if you wait a little longer there'll be something more important.' He didn't like Turks or Turkey: probably human rights and history and Midnight Express legacy, and maybe a thing about Kurds. He wasn't particularly sensitive to the Armenian story. But he certainly didn't like Turkey or the idea of it being in the EU. He was very nice about it all: 'Look, it's up to you. Who knows, I may not be Foreign Secretary much longer.' (In fact he had lost his job before I even got to Turkey.) 'You must make your own choice. But I like having you here.'

As I mentioned in an earlier discussion, we had got off to a difficult start over a visit to Argentina by the Prince of Wales when I had been the accompanying senior official. He'd also been a bit annoyed by some of my handling, as Director Americas, of the detention of the former President of Chile, Pinochet, who was arrested in London on the orders of a Spanish judge and detained for about fourteen months while the courts decided whether or not he should be extradited to face trial. Jack Straw was Home Secretary and therefore responsible for the legal aspects of the case. Robin Cook was the Foreign Secretary. Both were scrupulously careful not to get involved in an inappropriate way with what was essentially a quasi-judicial decision. At one point we'd given some wrong information about immunity on a Friday afternoon to the Police. I rang up and corrected it. Robin was very cross with me. He said, 'You never, ever admit, even orally, to the Police that you're wrong

because it'll get leaked immediately and get used against you, or me.' I said simply that I thought it would have been wrong to do nothing once I realised I had misled fellow officials.

I wrote Cook a letter, by the way, after the Argentine episode with HRH explaining what had happened and apologising for having caused him embarrassment - against the advice of one or two senior officials who said Robin doesn't appreciate the personal approach, no point in doing it. But I did. I don't think I offered to resign but I certainly wrote. A few weeks later, we were at a reception somewhere in London and Robin came up to me, put his hand in his pocket, pulled out the letter and handed it back to me. He said, 'I was very touched that you should write, but bygones are bygones. Thank you for what you said and for your reiteration of support for me. Let's put it behind us.' He could not have been more gracious - not remotely vindictive.

As Director Americas, I was involved in a number of interesting policy initiatives. I conducted a review of our small posts in Central America (and decided we should keep them). I got involved with Robin Cook with a rather important document which was a White Paper about the future of what were then called Dependent Territories but which we then rechristened Overseas Territories. These included many small sovereign British territories in the Caribbean (which have been hit by the hurricanes these last few days) and the Falkland Islands, Ascension Island, St Helena, even Pitcairn which was going through a ghastly child abuse case concerning the tiny rather incestuous population that was living there. I didn't have Gibraltar and I didn't have Hong Kong, but was responsible for all the other overseas territories - some of which had massive problems of governance, narcotics, even physical security, like Montserrat which had an erupting volcano - a place I visited three times.

I worked quite a lot on Latin America, because ministers, generally speaking, didn't have a lot of time to go there, so I went to every Latin American country as the responsible senior official. I didn't speak any Spanish, so I took myself off to language school and immersion with a local family in Granada for a week. Not long enough but better than nothing. It meant I could say a few words of Spanish and I could understand some conversations. That was fun. We did some valuable work with Colombia on counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics. We did some quite useful commercial work in parts of Latin America including Brazil.

One of the most interesting things I did at the time was construct a private dialogue with very senior officials in the Argentine government about the seemingly intractable division between

us on the Falkland Islands. We had some extraordinarily civilised and friendly and constructive conversations which in the end went nowhere on the bigger issue, but did allow us in '99 to at least have the elected representatives of the Falkland Islands and the Argentine Foreign Minister and the British Foreign Secretary in the Locarno Room of the Foreign Office signing an agreement, a tri-lateral agreement, which provided for air links and some sporting and cultural contacts to be established between the Islands and the mainland. Argentine relatives of the war dead from the war of '82 were also allowed to visit. So we broke the ice in the relationship which had been largely frozen since the war of 1982, about seventeen years later. That stood us in much better stead politically and at least meant that the Falkland Islanders were no longer isolated from the rest of the world. It kept us going for a number of years. President Menem was there, advised by a wonderful man who was the Argentine Foreign Minister, Guido di Tella, who alas died a few years later. We really did make a difference. Then it all began to fall apart with political change in Argentina. My friends in Buenos Aires and I in fact came close to making real progress on sovereignty. by agreeing to park the issue for another 30 years, but the powers that be in London didn't want to risk it.

Part of my role as Director Americas was of course to manage the resources and budgets for our diplomatic effort in the Western Hemisphere. I would say now, in 2016/2017, how I am struck when the job of consul general in Boston or San Francisco, or Los Angeles or Chicago, comes to the Board, you've got fifteen or twenty highly credible applicants. Because young and ambitious diplomats now want to get the experience of being their own boss and learning to manage budgets and people and doing commercial work. There is far more demand for those jobs today than there was then, when the bright, young things with the same sort of ambition and level of talent wanted to be in the political section or the foreign policy section in the Embassy in Washington. But by the time I was leaving Washington in 2016 - perhaps because I was a lousy ambassador there - it was striking that there was very little demand for the jobs that a few years earlier had been absolutely key to a successful career; and much more interest in the outward-facing roles of consul general. Twenty years earlier I had found a number of those consuls general over-graded and frankly not up to the job.

Deputy Under Secretary, Wider World, 2000-2001

CM: Another promotion in 2000 to DUS Wider World.

PW: It was a strange job, which no longer formally exists, although in recent years people have begun to think of re-inventing it. Essentially, it was a job with no functional responsibility, not economic or consular or security or defence, just geography. It didn't do Europe, because Europe was covered by the European directorates, or the NATO stuff which was covered by the Defence people, but it did everything else outside Europe. So it gave me a licence, not only a licence but a responsibility, because in that role I was the person not only visiting places ministers couldn't get to but writing the annual appraisal on all the senior ambassadors outside Europe. It's very, very hard to write an appraisal of an ambassador when you haven't been to see what he does. Only occasionally did I have to do that, and it never really worked. In addition to going on what I would call pastoral visits, which were always fun and, I like to think, even appreciated, to places like China, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, and Malaysia, I went to Angola - which nobody ever went to - to talk to the President and the oil companies and the political people about whether there was some way of stopping the terrible civil war, which was funded by 'blood diamonds' on one side and oil revenues on the other.

A lot of people were dying and there were landmines everywhere. Most international oil companies - but not BP - were perfectly happy to hand over the oil revenues with bribes but with no transparency, so they were, indirectly, along with those who supported the rebels through blood diamonds, fuelling the war. I wanted to try to do a little bit of work on that. I would go to Sudan where there was also horrendous civil conflict in Darfur. And I occasionally went back to Latin America, not nearly as much as I had gone as the Americas Director. I tried to go to countries which were far away, not often visited by ministers, where I could make a difference for British business. I went three times to Indonesia, for example, because we had huge British investments there in mining and coal and gas and the ambassador wanted me to visit regularly, and twice to Sierra Leone and Pakistan. I would go to see the President and senior ministers. Going to some of those places, one often had very good access. It was going to parts of the world that others didn't visit, which made for an enjoyable and interesting eighteen months.

CM: As DUS you were sitting on the Foreign Office Board.

PW: That was interesting, quite difficult to feel that you were making a difference. When I came back from Washington in 1997, John Kerr, my second ambassador in Washington who only did two years in that job, also came back to be the Permanent Under Secretary, so he

was the chairman of our Board. I knew him obviously pretty well. When I was promoted to the board after three years as Americas Director, John was still PUS but was soon replaced by Michael Jay, who had been Ambassador in Paris.

I think John Kerr transformed the Board, which in previous times had been very much a group of the great and the good who looked at interesting policy papers on foreign policy. I would say that on John's watch, it became much more a Board of management than a policy making board. That in a sense was the job of ministers and the Foreign Secretary. They didn't really need the Board to chew the cud on learned papers, though now and again we had some sort of disruptive, out of the box thinking to make us question ourselves, a little bit of challenge, which was healthy. We did a lot of stuff on budgets and staffing and appointments and structures, and whether or not we needed to outsource certain services. There was always pressure to spend less; there was an interest in doing better, in considering whether we had the right structures, the right way of doing things.

Around that time, we had something called Foresight, which was a 'let a thousand flowers bloom' exercise of the bright and the young. What do you think about this place? How do you think we should make it more interesting, more valuable? How do we make the young feel they are less part of a machine which writes something that gets re-written sixteen times before it arrives on the desk of a minister? That came up with a lot of bright ideas. I was quite involved with some very talented people like Matthew Gould, who is currently a Deputy Secretary in the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. Robin Cook was very supportive of this fresh thinking about the fuddy-duddy old Foreign Office and how could we do things differently and better. Were there ways of modernising methods of working, giving the young rather than just the top dogs access to ministers so that they could have their say and take part in discussions and take part in the end product of the stuff that they were initiating at a junior level? There was a lot of change going on. John Kerr introduced a crèche so people could bring babies to work and didn't have to give up their career in the Foreign Office if they had young children, which was very popular. I think the place became rather more fun and it began to change the culture. And we became more a board of management than a policy board.

CM: You've always said that quite deliberately you always bid for places that you'd been in before. With Turkey you had the language, you knew people.

PW: It was partly that. It was also that in the job I was doing right up to 9/11 in late 2001, it became clearer and clearer - and this was before the invasion of Iraq - that Turkey was a pivotal country in a very unstable and difficult region. We'd had a certain amount of terrorism and extremism. We'd had a bit of al-Qaeda, but not a huge amount targeting the UK. Bad things were going on in different parts of the Middle East. I was fascinated by the whole issue of can you somehow get this non-Arab, Middle Eastern, secular democracy, which certainly for the previous two or three hundred years had been regarded as European, the Sick Man of Europe, up to the starting line of membership of the EU. Was there something we could do with the Turks about their difficult neighbours, which were Iran, Iraq, Syria, Russia, Greece, Bulgaria, Armenia, Ngorno-Karabakh and Cyprus, to name but a few? And whither Turkey? What convinced me to apply for the job was in fact a couple of days when I went out to Ankara for some policy discussions. The Ambassador then, a very nice man called David Logan, gave the kind of working dinner that an ambassador does for a visiting senior official, and guess what, half the people round the table were my old friends from a capital which I had left eleven years earlier. I thought: I know these people, I can do business with them. Literally on my way back from Ankara, I said to myself I am going to put my hat in the ring for this job.

Amusingly, a friend and colleague of mine, John Sawers, who was at the time Foreign Policy adviser at No. 10, was also in the market for another job and decided that he was going to apply for Ankara too. We were beginning to talk about what they would call in today's jargon a bake-off, or a competition, which John was sure he would win, because he was coming out of No. 10 with the Prime Minister's endorsement. I thought: I've been in Turkey before and know a bit about the place, so of course they should choose me. In the end, there was no contest. Unexpectedly, the Ambassador in Cairo resigned and went off to do a very nice, well paid job in one of the Gulf States. John was an Arabist; Cairo was hugely important, so he went off to be Ambassador in Cairo and I went off to be Ambassador in Turkey. So we went our separate ways at about the same time in early 2002.

I had a sense that there was an important job to do in a country which was important for the UK. We were guarantor powers of the Cyprus mess. I knew a bit about it from my earlier time in Turkey. There was a difference to be made.

Ambassador to Turkey, 2002-6

CM: I'd like to start with a point you've touched on already, the EU/Turkey relationship. The British always were promoters and encouragers of EU membership for Turkey. Was this grossly hypocritical on our part?

PW: It's a great question. I don't think so. I would say that wouldn't I, as Mandy Rice-Davis might have said. Here's why. There were two big policy strands for the UK in the European Union at this point, as Tony Blair reminded us last weekend. One was the creation of the single market and breaking down the barriers to trade, business, investment and the movement of people, and the other was the enlargement of the European Union to consolidate the gains for democracy of the collapse of the Warsaw Pact. We had, as a matter of principle, always been supportive of enlargement, as a means of stabilising Europe, bringing prosperity and democracy to those countries which had lived under the yoke of Communism for so long. In a sense, extending it to Turkey did not necessarily reflect the same logic of Cold Warfare, but Turkey was after all a member of NATO, a member of the Council of Europe, and of the European Convention of Human Rights, European each time, and in our judgment, if it met the criteria for membership, had the right to be considered a European power. There were people in France who would say only 4% of Turkey's territory is on the European side of the Bosphorus and that Turkey is therefore not part of the continent. Well, OK, but Cyprus is much further away geographically from the European continent, and was deemed to be fit for membership of the EU. As I say, we had always regarded Turkey over the centuries as part of Europe. The Ottoman Empire was run out of Istanbul; it was vast, stretching all the way down to the Persian Gulf, but it was regarded as a European power. Our view that if it met the criteria, there was no reason why Turkey should not join the European Union, wasn't therefore hypocritical.

Did we think it was going to happen? Well, the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, the Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, and I certainly worked very closely on that issue, with strong support from the UK Permanent Representative in Brussels, because that was where a lot of the EU negotiations were conducted, and I believe that all of us did this because we believed in the cause and we wanted Turkey, as long as it met the criteria, to have the right to join. It might or might not choose to do so, but in my mind, as I used to say even then, the journey was every bit as important as the destination. If Turkey could get itself to be a country that ticked all the boxes for membership, it was going to be an inestimably better, more prosperous,

more stable and more democratic country than if it didn't. So in a sort of each way bet, I personally hoped it would happen but wasn't too worried if it didn't, if Turkey still made the necessary progress.

Do I think today it's going to happen? I think it's much, much less likely that Turkey will ever join the EU than it was then, but I certainly don't exclude it. It was something I believed in and worked for. And so I believe did the British government. A lot of Europeans, especially those in France, Germany, Austria in particular, who don't believe in it will accuse us of having been hypocrites or worse, but I think that's wrong.

CM: So it was something that we supported, knowing that it was never going to happen, so we could get the kudos ...

PW: No, it wasn't as cynical as that at all.

CM: You were there at a very important moment, when Erdogan arrived on the scene. Had he come to power when you arrived?

PW: When I arrived there, at the beginning of 2002, there was still a coalition government in place, led by a man called Bülent Ecevit, who was the Prime Minister, a rather nice old-fashioned, intellectual Socialist, in partnership with a couple of other political parties. Turkey was at the end of a pretty bad decade. It had just been through a huge financial crisis, followed by an economic crisis. A lot of banks were shut down; the place went virtually bust; the currency went through the floor; they had to re-capitalise or close a lot of banks in '99-2000. It was all pretty predictable, borrowing foreign exchange cheap and lending it for big interest rates domestically, borrowing long and lending short and then getting yourself in a muddle, without proper capital ratios in the banks. A wonderful guy, who was previously at the World Bank, Kemal Derviş, was brought back as Finance Minister to sort things out, which he did with great skill. That was in the last year or so of the coalition government. It collapsed in August of 2002 and at the very beginning of November of that year the AKP, the new party created by Erdogan, was swept to power and won an absolute majority, but with only 34½% of the votes - that was just the way the system worked. They've been in power ever since. We were there for the AKP's first four years in charge. I watched the AKP coming into existence, born from the ashes of a couple of Islamist parties which had been shut down by the Constitutional Court for being anti-secular, which was a very important part of the Turkish constitution. The military didn't like them

either and the military were still pretty powerful in those days. The AKP set themselves up as a sort of social democrat party and very cleverly appointed to senior positions a number of people who were demonstrably not Islamists and not members of the old Islamic parties. So they looked inclusive, even if a lot of the Turkish secularists would say, 'You'd better watch out, because this is just a wolf in sheep's clothing.' They ran a very successful campaign and poor Mr Ecevit, a decent man, saw his party pick up just 1½% of the vote. It was a wipe out for the outgoing coalition.

CM: What about Erdogan? You met him; you had access to him. What did you think of him?

PW: I saw a certain amount of him while he was campaigning and while he and his cohorts were quite interested in making the rest of the world think positively about him. I also saw a lot of him after he became Prime Minister. He didn't actually become Prime Minister when they won the election because he was still banned from holding political office, because he had been convicted of anti-secular activity for reciting a poem all about minarets and domes being the swords and the shields of Islam. He had done ten months in jail for that and was then banned from political office, so the law had to be changed to let him become an MP or a minister. Although the AKP won the election, as I said, on 3 November 2002, that ban was not lifted until 7 March of the following year, so for the first three months it was Abdullah Gul who was the Prime Minister, then Erdogan took over and Gul stepped aside to become the Foreign Minister.

I wish my Turkish had been better to really have proper conversations with Erdogan without the help of interpreters, but it wasn't that good and his Turkish is pretty hard for foreigners to understand. That said, I remember sitting down and talking to him about the fact that he was an avowed Islamist and asking how he reconciled that with the constitutional requirement of his country for government to be secular and distinct from religious activity. At the time he had perfectly good answers to all those questions. Quite reassuring really.

CM: How did you assess him then and how do you see him now?

PW: I've written a bit about this in a little booklet I published a month ago, called *Turkey's European Journey: A Ringside View*, under the auspices of the Atlantic Council. It's only about sixty pages long, but I've gone through a certain amount of this in that book. I thought I might as well write it as I'd kept some notes.

At the time it seemed to me that the right response was to judge him by his actions; not to be too affected by what we might think of as his Islamic instincts and faith. He had been Mayor of Istanbul where he had done a very good job and he had not promoted in an active manner Islamicism. In the early days as Prime Minister he was very committed to the whole European process, to reform, to the opening of markets, to freedom of expression, and the modernisation of the economy. He had some good initiatives he took to try to end the conflict with the Kurds in the south-east. He even started opening up Armenian and Greek churches so Armenian and Greek clerics could hold services there, which hadn't been done for donkeys' years.

He took an initiative, alas too late, to solve the Cyprus problem, which would have given us a Cyprus settlement. I was very heavily involved in all that, working with the military and the politicians and the Foreign Ministry and the media, to try to get the Turks into the right place. They did the right thing, but in the end the Annan Plan, as it was called, which was signed by the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriot leaders at a place called Bürgenstock in Switzerland in March 2004, died because the Greek Cypriot leader campaigned against it in the subsequent referendum and the Greek Cypriots rejected it while the Turkish Cypriots supported it. That was a great shame because, as Erdogan had warned, one week after that referendum Cyprus, along with nine other accession states, was due to join the European Union with full membership. Even though they rejected the reunification plan the Greek Cypriots were still let into the European Union as the sole legitimate representatives of the island of Cyprus. This meant that they never again had any real incentive to do a deal, other than the fact that they live in a divided island. It was a shame. The Turks did the right thing, but they did it, as we had warned them, too late to make a real difference, unless the other side was going to play. All the way along, the Europeans, despite Erdogan's warnings about the views of the Greek Cypriots, had thought that the Turkish Cypriots would be the obstacle. Denktaş, the TC leader, was indeed the main obstacle for many years. He was finally marginalised by all the elements of the Turkish state and establishment, but alas, too late. Erdogan was then proved right about the obstructionism of the Greek Cypriots, which the Europeans had discounted.

CM: Did you see signs of the more autocratic side of Erdogan which is in evidence nowadays?

PW: We saw a number of signs of annoyance and impatience. I was right in the middle of a couple of very important European Council meetings where we were trying to get the accession process begun. Tony Blair asked me to go along to the European Council in Brussels at the end of 2004 when we finally agreed a date for negotiations to begin and I was involved in a further drama when we (just) managed to open negotiations on 3 October 2005. On both occasions the Turks were threatening to walk away, because they were dissatisfied with some of the commitments that were being asked of Turkey. On what? On Cyprus. Always about Cyprus rather than about the other issues. Erdogan was difficult, but Blair handled him with great skill at the December 2004 European Council. I did my bit with Abdullah Gul and with Erdogan himself at some of those critical meetings and British diplomacy – I say it myself – was quite effective, because very few member states wanted us to succeed.

The negotiations opened in October 2005 during a British Presidency so we were able to make quite a difference. Only at the very last minute - details in my booklet! - did I get the Foreign Minister to get on the plane to Luxembourg for the opening of the negotiations proper on 3 October 2005. These were heady times. The Turks were on board; and Turkish public opinion was supportive. But scratch a Turk and you find a certain sort of nationalism which is not always easy to deal with. But we did the business. The Turkish economy by then was bustling along, foreign investment was flooding in and there was a lot of progress being made in a lot of areas, including internal security and the Kurdish question.

CM: What was the effect of 9/11 on Turkey and on its relations with America?

PW: Before the Iraq War the Turks were very wary of military action on their doorstep and they feared instability. They feared more rather than less jihadism. They thought that the war in Iraq was a distraction from what they thought was legitimate coalition military activity in Afghanistan after 9/11. 9/11 military strikes began in the autumn of 2001, but by 2002, early 2003 we were already gearing up for what to do about Saddam Hussein. They thought this was unnecessary, given that Afghanistan was a job unfinished. In the course of 2002 my main foreign policy role was to persuade the Turks to take a leadership role with ISAF, the International Security Assistance Force of NATO in Afghanistan, which they did. They did rather a good job in Afghanistan and played their role as NATO allies very well. Then towards the end of '02 and the beginning of '03, it turned into one of enlisting Turkey's support for the need, if necessary, to take military action against Saddam Hussein if he failed

to deal with the WMD (weapons of mass destruction) which the British and other governments believed he had. I personally was not convinced about the WMD, and thought it wiser to base any military action on failure to comply over several years with UN Security Council resolutions. The Turks were fine on Afghanistan, they were doubtful about Iraq and my job by the end of 2002, 2003, morphed into one of persuading them, along with the American Ambassador, to allow us to open up a northern front, in the event that there was war in Iraq, taking our soldiers and material through south-eastern Turkey and down through the Kurdish north of Iraq, so that there would be a sort of pincer movement on Baghdad. The critical decision of the Turkish Parliament on this coincided with the arrival of the AKP in power, when they were on the one hand wrestling with summit meetings about Cyprus called by Kofi Annan, the Secretary General of the United Nations, and on the other trying to get Erdogan back into politics as Prime Minister. The vote of the Turkish Parliament on whether or not to allow the British and the Americans to send their forces and their equipment through Turkey was on 1 March 2003 and Erdogan wasn't allowed back into political life by the change of law for another six days. So it was a difficult moment. Oddly enough, the Turkish Parliament voted in favour, but then it was decided that it needed to be a bigger majority, because of the nature of the decision, so although it was a yes, it wasn't a big enough yes. The Turks then sucked their teeth and said, 'Well, what do we do about this?' and the Americans said, 'Ask the question again.' There were some very scratchy bits of diplomacy, including the Turkish Finance Minister and Foreign Minister both going to the White House and reportedly saying, 'It'll cost 92 billion dollars for us to let you go through our territory,' and getting a flea in their ear from the Americans.

They didn't quite say that, but they did say: there will be a massive economic cost to our economy if this war takes place and what are you going to do about it? The Americans had put 6 billion dollars of aid on the table, which was then reduced to 1 billion dollars, for various reasons. By the time Erdogan was Prime Minister and they really did put the question back to the Turkish Parliament – and I remember going to see him and saying, 'Time is running out. If you're going to do this, you've got to move' – the American ships had sailed from the Gulf of Mersin and gone to the Persian Gulf. They'd given up on the northern route and the moment had gone.

CM: Is that what the Turks secretly hoped for, if they just played it long?

PW: Hard to tell. Erdogan was not the Prime Minister at the beginning; Gul was. They were just finding their feet; they had a lot of other things on their mind. They didn't really think this war was a frightfully good idea; they were worried about the Kurdish question and what did it mean for the Kurdish autonomous region in northern Iraq. I don't think they were actually playing for time. They put it to Parliament. Parliament voted yes and they were going to take as a result a substantial amount of military and other economic assistance from the Americans. They were offered a pretty big role in the whole strategy of reconstructing Iraq after Saddam, because the Americans were very clear to them that there would be a post-Saddam Iraq. Quite what form it would take, no one was very clear, but they did offer them a major strategic role as partners. To the distress of the American Ambassador and Washington, they didn't take the deal. Washington also got annoyed with the Turkish military who were, I think rightly, suspected of having sat on their hands more than the Turkish military normally do when an issue of national importance is at stake. Normally they put out statements and tell people what's what. This time they said nothing. There was a legitimate reason which was that the government was in a state of formation and was about to change prime minister. But I think the military didn't really want to take sides.

CM: Once the invasion of Iraq had taken place, how did it affect things for you in Turkey?

PW: It was difficult, because I had been saying to the Turkish government, not "we are going to have a war in Iraq and we want to take our tanks and soldiers through your territory"; what I was saying, which was what Jack Straw had been saying, and we both believed to be the British government's policy, was that the best chance of avoiding war was to have a really credible military build-up, which shows Saddam Hussein that it's not worth fighting - he'd do much better to comply with Security Council resolutions. Various American neo-cons who were coming through Turkey were saying something different. I remember saying at a conference in Istanbul in December 2002, if you want us on board it'll have to be legitimate - approved by the Security Council - and legal, signed off by the UK Attorney General. One of the neo-cons replied: 'You'd better go and find a new job, Mr Ambassador, because your Prime Minister has already told our President that he is with us in our war, come what may. You're out of line.'

Actually they were right. I wasn't in the right place. I think I was in the right place in terms of where the Foreign Secretary was, but I wasn't quite right in terms of I think the relationship and the conversations that had taken place at that point between the Prime

Minister and the President. After military action began, we obviously had to explain why it happened. Even though we hadn't had our famous second vote authorising military action in the Security Council, the British government regarded this as legitimate and legal and the Attorney General had thought about it again and concluded that it was after all OK to go ahead. So the answer was to make the best of it, and would the Turks be as helpful as they could be? Actually they were pretty good. There was an awful lot of Kurdish stuff. There were things across the border. But they came to terms with the idea of an autonomous Kurdish region much more quickly than I had expected.

When I first got to Turkey as Ambassador, you could hardly even use the word 'Kurd' and you certainly couldn't talk about 'Kurdistan' – it was 'northern Iraq' – but they moved quite fast as reality dawned and as the KRG (Kurdistan Regional Government) came into existence and the Barzanis and the Talabanis would come to Ankara. Turkish business started doing lots of business in the north, especially after things had settled down in that area. The Turks never had any time for Saddam, but they were apprehensive about whether military action was the right way forward. And they were fretting that the Turkomans, who were their kith and kin in Iraq, were going to be on the losing side and the Kurds were going to be rewarded with too much. Generally, we had a very extensive dialogue with them, and now and again it was tricky but on the whole, the Turkish authorities were not unhelpful.

CM: The really terrible thing that happened when you were there was the terrorist attack in Istanbul.

PW: That was also in 2003, six months after the invasion. I don't know that there was a link. The people who carried out this attack – there were four suicide bombings in the space of five days in Istanbul, two against synagogues, one against HSBC and one against the British Consulate General. They were all carried out by a small group of Salafists, not very distant from the Wahhabist tendency, from a town in eastern Turkey. They had put two and a half tons of explosive into a truck, driven it down to Antalya, because they thought they were going to blow up an Israeli cruise ship. The Israeli cruise ship wasn't there, so they drove it all the way back to Istanbul and looked around for a target. They looked at the American Consulate and decided it was too well defended; they looked at the Israeli mission and came to the same conclusion. They looked at the British Consulate and decided that they could probably ram their way through our gates. We were chosen as a kind of target of last resort, because we were vulnerable. Or was it reaction against British participation with the

Americans in the war in Iraq? Possibly, but I think it was more of a general view that we and the Israelis and the Americans were fundamentally against the radical Islamist tendency, not yet called ISIL or Da'esh, but al-Qaeda sympathisers. The Wahhabist tendency out of Saudi Arabia and its Salafist equivalent in other countries, including in Turkey, were sympathetic to that cause. I think if we hadn't been associated with America - and after all there was only us and the Americans in Iraq - there is a reasonable chance that they wouldn't have come after us, but I don't think I ever saw any evidence that we were chosen specifically because of Iraq.

CM: Where were you at the time?

PW: I was in Ankara, just going into a meeting, as it happens, with Jalal Talabani, one of the leaders of the main Iraqi Kurdish factions, at the Italian Embassy. It must have been during the Italian Presidency. There was a phone call to say that there was a bomb in Istanbul at HSBC and I thought, 'That's bad news.' Five minutes later another phone call saying a bomb also at Pera House, so I left straightaway and got on the plane to Istanbul. The Minister of the Interior came too. Lots of grumpy fellow travellers because the plane had been delayed while we got to the airport and they didn't know what had happened. So I got to our Consulate on 20 November 2003 about lunchtime, some three hours after the bomb attack. It was a scene of total devastation: two and a half tons is quite a lot of explosive. Fifteen people had died, twelve of them our employees, three of them passers-by. It had been very, very traumatic for those who were there at the time. There were very few injuries. People were either dead or just shocked, but some of those who died of their injuries did not die immediately. It was horrific. The rather elegant, Victorian brick gatehouses which we had on either side of the entrance to Pera House, which is a magnificent, Barry-designed, 1870s structure, were just vaporised, nothing left at all. One or two people were saved by an ugly reinforced concrete wall next to them, close to the canteen. The big house, which was set back, was lifted from its foundations and then dropped down again. It was in the middle of a refurbishment. It had a big courtyard in the middle and a new glass roof which had been put on the top. The roof was lifted off its mounting by the explosion and then dropped back, so that had to be redone. Of course they also rebuilt the gatehouse, but in a different part of the compound.

It was a horrific sight with a huge amount of damage and terribly, terribly shocking and difficult for the staff to handle. The Consul General was killed; his PA was killed. They had

been in an office in the gatehouse on the external perimeter because the office in which they would have been just fine in the main building was closed because the building was being refurbished. Most of the other people who died were local staff. I took the decision of asking my deputy and my senior management officer to go to Istanbul to take over, because there wasn't a consul general, because they knew the place and the people. They were two of my very best staff and a few other people went in and out to help as appropriate. After moving first of all to the old US consulate, which we then discovered was not safe, we moved to temporary quarters in the Hilton Hotel, and took over half a floor there for several months, which was very unsatisfactory. There was some resentment among the Istanbul staff that I had sent people from Ankara. What's wrong with us they asked? They needed help but understandably didn't really appreciate my decision. There were some elements of the team there who felt a bit responsible, some who felt guilty that they had survived and people they knew well had died. There was anger. Why was this allowed to happen? There were people who were not injured but made trouble, saying, 'We were here too; we're entitled to extra treatment, extra holiday, extra car hire,' which was distressing, especially in front of the widows of some of the local staff who had died. It brought out the best and some of the worst in people. A new consul general, Barbara Hay, who had been Consul General in St Petersburg, was appointed but it took a long time to sort things out. I don't think we've ever had so much loss of life in a direct attack on a British diplomatic mission.

It took place on my son's birthday. He too was somewhere in Turkey (Susie was back in America but came straight home). He was shocked because the first news that was broadcast on the international airwaves was that Britain's top diplomat had been killed in Istanbul: he thought his father was dead. A lot of people thought I was dead because some of the reporting implied that the ambassador had been killed. Then lots of people started ringing Oliver on his mobile phone to check in - so he got a bill from the terrorists, indirectly, for hundreds of pounds of roaming charges. Not much of a birthday present. I still can't remember whether I reimbursed him. I fear not.

We did almost five years in Turkey. We went in January '02 and left in October of '06. I stayed on a bit longer than scheduled, waiting for Paris. In the end we had to live out of a suitcase for a few months, because my predecessor in Paris, who ended up staying five and a half years, didn't move out until he had found another job. We hung around with suitcases in expensive short-term accommodation in London and elsewhere while we waited. We eventually got to Paris in March 2007. Before that I took myself off for a French course with

Susie and did a few other courses to pass the time - spending some time too in SW Turkey where we had bought a holiday home which had to be rebuilt.

Ambassador to France, 2007-2012

I arrived in Paris in March and presented my credentials to President Chirac in the days when it was one Ambassador, one President, a nice chat and a glass of champagne. Sarkozy his successor hated that and he used to do them in batches of twenty and made them wait for months and months, because he thought it was a terrible waste of his time. I did the ceremony with Chirac before Sarkozy was elected in May. Sarkozy believed that Tony Blair had given him very helpful advice on how to win and they were good friends. So Blair came across immediately afterwards to congratulate him and we had an extremely jolly time sitting in the garden of one of those great ministerial mansions in Paris which had been allocated to the President elect while he waited for his inauguration. We sat in the garden and there were just four or five people, totally off the record, very amusing, everybody on a high, Sarkozy on cracking form; a really, really strong bi-lateral relationship. But Tony Blair had by this time, May 2007, agreed to hand over to Gordon Brown, which he did the next month, in June. He came back again for a farewell visit, to see Sarkozy and for a very nice valedictory bi-lateral. Blair, typical of the man, made a point of saying to Sarkozy, 'Peter is the Ambassador I have chosen to come to Paris. Be nice to him. He's here to help. I've sent him here because I think he can do a good job.' He did the same thing a few years later when he came to stay and went to see Hillary Clinton in the US Ambassador's residence next door. By this time he was doing Quartet business in the Middle East and we knew that I was going to Washington next. So he said, 'I've got a meeting with Hillary. Why don't you come too? It'll help you get started in Washington when you arrive.' So we went over. I'd met her before in Washington when President Clinton was in office, but Blair was fully aware of the way in which he could help officials do their job. Not all politicians, even if they are aware, are prepared to act like that, to do what was necessary. I appreciated it and it helped me do my job.

CM: Did you have good personal relations with Sarkozy?

PW: OK, I would say. Perfectly correct, sometimes very amusing. By the time I got to Paris it was March. The election was in May and I had to play catch up on the campaign. I knew there was no point in asking for meetings with the candidates, so I went to some of the rallies which they were holding - Sarkozy, Segolène Royale, François Bayrou, somebody else, I

can't remember who. I remember going to hear a speech that Sarkozy was giving in Nantes, I think. I had a friend who was part of his entourage. I introduced myself, 'Oh, you must come and meet the candidate.' You fight your way through ten thousand people. And there was François Fillon, who later became the Prime Minister for the next five years, who couldn't have been kinder. 'Of course you must come and meet Nicolas' and made it happen. I went back stage and there was Sarkozy, drenched in sweat after a barn-storming speech, hoovering up a box of chocolates, getting his energy fix. Very nice, very amusing, welcoming and that was of course before Tony Blair had said, 'Be nice to this guy.'

By October we were in financial melt-down, so in October almost every week Gordon Brown was over in Paris. There was a French Presidency going on. I think they were presidents of the G7 or G20 as well. Gordon Brown, according to Sarkozy was the only one who got it, who realised that the immediate remedy was to re-capitalise the banks. There was an extremely good relationship between Gordon Brown and Nicolas Sarkozy during those critical months. I worked out in the end, that by the time he left - Brown lost the election in May 2010 - he had paid seventeen official visits to France on my watch, some for an hour or two, some for a day or two. So there was a fantastic amount of contact. I was almost always there, despite the Cabinet Office team sometimes 'forgetting' to let me know when meetings were fixed at short notice.

I didn't really know Gordon Brown before. He didn't come to Ankara at all, and didn't go to embassies as Chancellor. From my point of view he was rather a pleasure to deal with. I would go out to Villacoublay to meet the little plane bringing in the Prime Minister and his team almost every week. You could tell by the state of the staff who came off the plane first whether furniture had been flying, or whether it had been a felicitous journey. Usually it had been ghastly. Quite often Gordon would arrive in a foul mood. He particularly hated being kept waiting in the car in the Faubourg St Honoré, outside the Elysée, waiting for the President to be ready to receive his guest. He hated that and I was always in the car with him, so I had to placate him. One of the things that struck me on those occasions, when you would go into the Elysée courtyard and drive round and come to the steps, was that Gordon Brown couldn't see who was on those steps. I got used to all that, quietly saying, 'The President is there,' or 'It's not the President, it's the Head of Protocol on the left.' Because I think it is very easy to forget how difficult it was having no sight in one eye and the other eye not working very well. I think that was why he was often ill at ease in small groups: he couldn't see what was going on or who was there. In the end, I thought he did a tremendous

job at that really difficult time. We once had a very nice weekend when he and Sarah and the two boys came to stay just for fun and Sarah took them off to Disneyland while Gordon and Tom Fletcher, his Private Secretary, stayed in the garden to do some work and we then had family supper together. It was very nice, and considering I hadn't known him at all before he started to coming to stay in the Residence, that relationship was a pretty substantive one. I suspect one of the reasons why Theresa May decided she would hold an early election in 2017 was that she wasn't going to make the same mistake as Gordon made. If you remember, Gordon came close to calling an early election in the autumn of 2007, when everyone thought he would win, didn't do so and then lost in 2010.

CM: In the middle of your time in Paris, in 2010, you had a change of government in the UK and a change of Prime Minister. How did that work out?

PW: So then we had David Cameron who came in. I think the chemistry was pretty good from an early stage. David Cameron was a very different sort of person, back-slapping, bonhomous, outgoing, very articulate – but didn't speak any French. There was an early working dinner in the Elysée very soon after he succeeded Gordon Brown which went well. I wouldn't say Cameron and Sarkozy were bosom pals like Blair and Sarkozy - there was a real chemistry there. But they got on perfectly all right. The difficulties we had were on European Union issues, where Sarkozy had an outstanding team in the Elysée with whom we had very good relationships, but our own Cabinet Office people, some of whom were holdovers from Gordon Brown's time, were busy wrestling with all sorts of stuff to do with opt outs and the Eurozone, leading up to the unfortunate moment early in 2013 when David Cameron committed to a referendum on EU membership, if he won the next election.

CM: David Cameron was the person who told his party to stop banging on about Europe. From your perspective, how far was David Cameron already having to placate the Eurosceptic wing of his party?

PW: It had begun even before he became leader of his party. If you recall, the Euro-sceptic wing of the party, including particularly Liam Fox, said to David Cameron and to David Davis, who were the two candidates, "In order to get our support you have to commit to leaving the EPP", the European People's Party, which was the Conservative Grouping in the EP (European Parliament). David Davis refused to give that commitment and David Cameron did give it. I don't know whether he understood what he was doing. He's clever so he may well have done. But when he did pull the plug in 2009, before of course

becoming PM, he was strongly advised not to by Sarkozy. He said, 'This will remove your influence from the European Parliament.' Sarko in fact had many of the same concerns that we have about national sovereignty and the European institutions. There was much closer - apart from the Common Agricultural Policy - there was much closer identity of views between the Brits and the French on so many of these things, including European defence, than many people like to think.

So Cameron was warned and went ahead anyway. He felt the commitment to leave the EPP was necessary to become the leader of the Conservative Party and he was duly elected. It all began then. A bit like when he promised the referendum in his Bloomberg speech in January 2013, he hoped, wrongly, that by throwing a bone to the right wing, the Euro-sceptics, it would keep them quiet. It never was enough; they always wanted more. That January 2013 commitment was a continuation of a process to which he had been moving irrevocably. If you remember, he had made a big song and dance in December 2011 about 'I have vetoed treaty change,' which he hadn't actually, but just managed to ensure that a decision which would have been agreed by all the member states was only agreed by the inner core, leaving the UK out of it. I think he was poorly advised at the time. He mishandled Mrs Merkel by giving her a list of what he wanted but with no notice, and then expected her to back him at the key Council meeting. I think Cameron constantly underestimated the extent to which the Europe-haters, and he was pretty Euro-sceptic himself for a while, could be bought off by gestures which either weren't enough or opened a can of worms which caused real difficulty and eventually led him to promise a referendum which he probably hoped or thought he would never have to honour because he didn't think he was going to win in June 2015.

INTERVIEW 3 WITH SIR PETER WESTMACOTT 24 November 2017

Today is Friday 24 November 2017. This is the third interview with Sir Peter Westmacott for the British Diplomatic Oral History Programme, Catherine Manning recording.

CM: Peter, when we finished last time we were talking about your period in Paris as Ambassador. I wondered if we could just round off what you said with my asking you what did the French think of us, the Brits?

PW: I think it is one of those questions which everyone who is Ambassador in Paris has to try to come to terms with. Shortly before I went to Paris, there was this very good book called *That Sweet Enemy* by the Tombs, Mr and Mrs, both of whom are academics at Cambridge.

(*That Sweet Enemy: Britain and France, The History of a Love-Hate Relationship* by Robert and Isabelle Tombs.) Half the time they could not agree between themselves on who was right and who was wrong and what was the significance of this or that event that had taken place between the British and the French over the last 1000 years, and that's why it's a tremendously good read. But it is also symptomatic of the problems that I think we sometimes have. We are all affected by individual episodes in our lives which probably weren't that important at the time, but they stick in the memory and they are part of something that subsequently you decide was important. In my case, and in answer to this question, I recall a conversation at a very nice dinner Susie and I were invited to at the Opéra by, amongst other people, Pierre Gadonneix. Pierre Gadonneix was a man who'd been a contact and a friend of mine when he had been Directeur des Charbonages, I think, at the Ministry of Industry when I was first in Paris, which was then a very important ministry. By the time I got there as Ambassador, he was head of EDF, the electricity utility which, of course, supplies lots of electricity and gas in the UK. We were having this very jolly dinner, after a very jolly corporate night of opera, with some extremely nice and interesting people, and out of the blue, as people would often do at a dinner table in Paris, the host says, 'Now, M. l'Ambassadeur, can you just answer a question that's been on my mind for a while? Why is it that the English hate the French so much?' Boom! In front of all these very grand people. I hadn't been Paris very long. I was rather shocked because I had never thought, I had genuinely never thought, either that the British people did hate the French or that the French felt that the British hated them. I was taken aback for a moment, and even perhaps lost for words. I probably said something along the lines of, 'Well, I don't know where you're coming from, Pierre, because that just isn't how I see it.' And it wasn't. Why would I have wanted to go to France if I had thought that the English hated the French – or perhaps I would have done as a kind of challenge. My very simplistic view is that a lot of British people, as they say, adore France, and think they don't like the French because they don't understand them or they don't speak the language or they've got an intellectual inferiority complex. As a French friend of mine says, '*S'y peut rien; la France rayonne.*' We are culturally different. We are neighbours, but we aren't the same. And there's something in what Pierre was saying to me. A lot of French people do think that the Brits have got it in for them and don't like them, for whatever reason. Is it a little islander mentality? Is it the anti-continental sentiment which underlies the Brexit vote? Is it the old rivalry? Is it the Cartesian way in which French people think, especially the best educated, who seem to be so much better educated than people are in the United Kingdom? They are theoretical; they've

got their constructs; they know what their ideas and their theories are. They know their Montesquieu; they know their Rousseau; they know their history. Whereas the Brits, on the whole, learn on the job, muddle through, develop a pretty pragmatic way of thinking about things and solving problems, which is extremely different to the way in which the *Grandes Ecoles* in Paris teach their best and their brightest to address big issues. I think that intellectually there is also a difference. The sentiment which underlay that question shocked me and I've thought about it quite a lot since then. For many British people the French are duplicitous - they did us down in this war or that war. De Gaulle was a *salaud* - which he was in many respects. He treated Churchill badly - lots of different bits of history, lots of half formed ideas. Yet while the French feel that we dislike them, I don't think that the Brits think that the French dislike us, and I certainly do not feel that the French dislike the British. They can be annoyed by our coldness, by our arrogance, by the distance that we take, by the superiority that we seem to affect sometimes to all foreigners, including the French, even though paradoxically we sometimes feel intellectually inferior to them. This cultural mismatch is one of the fascinating parts of the relationship. Having some understanding of that was, I think, very important in trying to do the job of ambassador there. Understanding where these wonderful people whom I dealt with every day of my life in France were coming from, but also understanding some of the baggage that existed in the relationship and why so many people in the UK, including some of the very senior officials that I was dealing with in the Cabinet Office and in the rest of the British government held a default position that the French are wrong, the French are bastards, the French are lying or are trying to pull a fast one.

CM: Rather sad.

PW: Rather sad, so as Ambassador, or indeed as diplomats at other levels, part of the challenge for us was to try to change some of those stereotypes; to try to reassure people that wasn't really how it is. I do think it's changed. The French have done a lot to make it easier. When you and I were first in France, if you remember, even those French people who could speak English, wouldn't, just as a matter of principle. When I went back as Ambassador, I expected all my conversations to be in French, as before, but I was very struck how the default position had become English. Any visitor from the UK - because almost none spoke any French - was greeted in English without even having to go through the ritual of saying, 'What language shall we speak in?' It was just axiomatic that the conversation

would take place in English. It must have gone against the grain a little bit, because the French must have said to themselves, 'Why should we make the effort and the Brits don't?' But they did and they do and we don't. The politics also make a difference. The fact that there was a very close relationship between Nicolas Sarkozy and Tony Blair made the politics easier; Sarkozy-Cameron was pretty good; Sarkozy-Gordon Brown actually was very good too, because President Sarkozy firmly believed, still believes, that Gordon Brown's idea of recapitalizing the banks was what actually saved our bacon in 2008 when the financial crisis broke. I think a number of things came together and we began to do a number of different things together as countries, as governments, which helped us begin to address some of those old prejudices.

Then one other thing, briefly: little examples of how difficult it sometimes was to deal with this. As Ambassador in France there were many difficult celebrations, commemorations, speeches, memorials that you had to attend. Some were very edifying: celebrating the brave little guys in their canoes who went to blow up the submarine pens in Bordeaux, which we did every year. Or going to the commemoration at Valençay every year, which Princess Anne came over for, of the courage of men and women of Section F who used to be dropped behind lines, some of them French, some of them British, during the dark days of 1941-42. That was a wonderful reminder of how much the British and the French have done together, in a common cause. And yet, I also remember having to go to make a speech at the 70th anniversary of the sinking of the French navy at Mers el Kebir in Algeria by the Royal Navy, because at that difficult time, early 1940, the French navy had refused to hand over their ships to the UK. We were on our own after the fall of France in May 1940, just after Dunkirk, so we said, 'You've got to hand over these ships, or you've got to give us the keys,' so that they couldn't fall into the hands of Germany. And they wouldn't do it. We sent somebody to talk to the Commander of the French fleet, which had gone to Oran in Algeria, otherwise known as Mers el Kebir. Actually, as in so many of these tragic moments in history, there was a failure of communication. We sent an officer of the wrong rank; he didn't convey the entirety of the message and all the conditions and the French Admiral, being addressed by this naval captain, either didn't reply or didn't reply in the right terms, and then the Royal Navy more or less regarded these ships, bottled up in a small harbour, as target practice and fired far more shells than was necessary to destroy all the ships. Twelve hundred French sailors and officers were killed. In the meantime we took possession, sometimes by force - bullets were fired - of some French naval ships which were at the time

in various British ports, like Plymouth and Portsmouth, because the captains of those ships had not received the orders to scuttle or to mothball or to hand over those ships. Mothball might not have been enough. Mercifully, doing my own research for that speech, which was the first time, I think, any British Ambassador had spoken on such an anniversary, because it was so delicate, I did come across - no thanks to my naval section in the Embassy - a statement from de Gaulle a few days after the Royal Navy destroyed a big chunk of the French navy, saying this was one of the most difficult decisions Winston Churchill had to take, but 'if I had been in his shoes, I would have taken the same decision. I sympathize therefore with what he did.' That immediately made it so much easier to explain. Churchill himself, of course, described it as one of the most hateful political decisions he'd had to take during his time as Prime Minister. Nevertheless, it was a raw nerve and it has been for all that time. For some reason, I think rather foolishly, we haven't made as much of the statement, which was really very helpful, which de Gaulle gave just three days after the event, in order to de-dramatize it. As we all know, whenever you've got to make a difficult speech, statement, representation, you've always got to do your homework; you've always got to read the history, and you can't always rely on staff to have done it for you!

Ambassador to the United States of America, Washington, 2012-2016

CM: After Paris, your next posting was to Washington. That transfer from Paris to Washington is not one that's been made very often. Nico Henderson went, but I can't think of any other ambassador who's gone in either direction since the War. It's very interesting to have achieved both these postings. Nico went after he had retired; his was a political appointment by Mrs Thatcher when he was over 60. I haven't actually worked out how old you were when you went ...

PW: I was just over 60 as well, because we had changed the rules.

CM: Yes, the rule that you had to retire on your 60th birthday no longer operated, so that meant that you still had the time for another posting. So you went, like Nico, at just over 60 to be Ambassador in Washington. I am sure you've got all kinds of things to say about your time in Washington and I shall leave you to talk freely, but I just want to ask about the comparison between being Ambassador in Washington and Ambassador in Paris.

PW: They are of course two very different jobs. In one sense that's inevitable because of France, French culture and the neighbourliness and the rivalry and the hostility and friendship between the two neighbours, Britain and France, whereas America has a totally different history and is that much further away. It is also because of the geographical nature of the countries and the importance of the capital cities. Paris is the capital of everything that is French, the culture, the opera, the business, the finance, the politics, the media: everything is in Paris. Washington is a government town. Washington has got Congress; it's got lobbyists; it's got the Administration; it's got quite a lot of media, but it hasn't got business (increasingly it's getting some); it hasn't got the culture that New York has got. It hasn't got all those things which exist in that extraordinary diversified way amongst the rest of the fifty states of the Union, in such a huge area. The job in Washington is a more narrowly defined one than being the ambassador in Paris, but you make up for it by travelling. You've simply got to get outside the Beltway in Washington, if you're going to be an ambassador to the whole of the United States rather than just to Washington. I think that is the biggest single difference: the nature of the two capitals and therefore the role that you play in those two cities. The second point that I would just make is that you are of course a prisoner of the relationship. With the French things might be going well, they might be going badly; there may be some row going on about European affairs; there may be some row bi-laterally. Over the years there's frequently been some surprise which the media have revelled in, enjoying the Brits and the French falling out, *perfidie Albion*, dastardly French. With the United States it is rather different, because, even if there are a few disagreements, on our side anyway, we have rather clung to the Churchillian concept of the 'special relationship' – not a phrase I used myself, because '*the special relationship*' is somewhat arrogant, somewhat exclusive, and America has special relationships with a lot of other countries, not just us. But, politically, it matters to a lot of our politicians and Americans themselves would use it to cheer us up, and make us feel better about things, when they'd got some important politician or member of the royal family paying a visit. But it wasn't a relationship that was prone to the vicissitudes of the Franco-British one, and so it was different and perhaps a bit more stable. I would add one more general comment: with the United States government, except on one or two issues, the role of a foreign ambassador, and the role of a British ambassador, in terms of influencing US policy is pretty limited, because you've got the separation of powers. You've got Congress, usually powerful; in Congress you have two houses, a Senate and a House. You've got the Supreme Court, which is separate again, and you've got the Administration. Even a very effective White House, with its own majority in Congress, is not

a free agent and able to do whatever it likes, or to do whatever No. 10 Downing Street would like them to do at any given moment, however good the personal relationships happen to be. You have to come to terms with the fact that although you are endlessly in contact with people in different parts of the Administration, the ability of the British ambassador to make that much of a difference is, to be honest, limited. Sometimes you really could. Sometimes you hit the jackpot, as I felt I did in persuading Congress not to kill the Iran nuclear deal in 2015, but it was pretty difficult sometimes. Whereas, on a daily basis when you're dealing with the French government, especially when there is so much going on on the European level; you had to take account of the other person, because so many decisions were determined by consensus that if you couldn't come to terms, then there wasn't going to be a decision taken. So in a very every-day manner, we were doing business all the time very effectively with the French government in a way that, paradoxically given the proximity of the relationship and the fact that we speak the same language and have a shared history, wasn't always the case with the Americans.

CM: You were in Washington in President Obama's second term. How did you find him as a president and head of state?

PW: I arrived there in January 2012, eighteen months after David Cameron had become Prime Minister. One of the very first things that happened was that the White House gave what they called a State Visit - even though I kept saying, 'You can't have a State Visit except for the Queen' - to the British Prime Minister. We got off to a flying start because in March of 2012 the White House pushed the boat out: a fantastic reception in the Rose Garden. Spring was early; the magnolias and roses were all in blossom; thousands of school children waving Union Jacks. They'd put up a huge marquee in the garden on the South Lawn, a big banquet for David Cameron. They really did make a big effort on his behalf, and that set the tone for the bi-lateral relationship for quite a while. How did I find Obama? I would say great charm, not a huge amount of warmth; accessible, certainly; happy to chat, but keeping his distance; very cerebral - he is, after all, a constitutional law professor from Chicago, who's made his way in a pretty hostile and difficult environment and achieved what nobody's done before: a black man getting into the White House. He keeps his counsel, and keeps his own, rather small group of people who are close to him and whom he trusts, who were, by the way, extremely accessible, all those people whom he was close to. I found him perfectly civil; his wife, Michelle, was extremely friendly - hugs and kisses and so

on. Obama himself was quite amusing; didn't mind a few put-downs, but he would do that to his own people too, and in my time there, we quite often would have pretty direct conversations on policy issues where he thought the British government was just doing the wrong thing. Very direct. In a sense, that was fine. He was such a pro that he knew jolly well that if he scrubbed my head on some issue, like NATO spending and Britain's 2% commitment to defence spending, that message would be fed back to No. 10 and that's why he was telling me what he thought. Sometimes there would just be an irritation about something else. He got very upset about the manner and the content of the British government's decision to be a founder member of something called the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. One of his staff rang up the Editor of the FT and said, 'This is outrageous. This is not how our closest ally is supposed to behave.' The British government was totally unrepentant. The British government at the time was having a big love-in with China. The Chancellor in particular was keen to do everything the Chinese wanted and they did decide that if they were going to set up an infrastructure investment bank, it was the right thing for the UK to be in there at the beginning, to influence the way in which it was conducted, to ensure that the quality of its lending was good, to ensure that there might be an element of business there for the financial services industry of the UK and also for infrastructure companies. I don't think it was a bad thing and many other governments followed us, but to be honest, we didn't handle it very cleverly. We weren't very transparent about it and it caused immense irritation in the White House and further afield. Although, the more I talked to the US Treasury Secretary and to USAID and the State Department, and even some of the National Security Council officials, the more I discovered that although there were a few who were furious with us, there were a lot of others who said, 'Actually, what you did made perfectly good sense, but you didn't handle it very well.' I suppose what I am saying is that with Obama I felt I had a perfectly satisfactory relationship; he was very friendly, but not the sort of President who would just come round for supper at the drop of a hat, like some presidents have in the past with British ambassadors. Very straight forward to do business with, lots of charm, great big smile, fantastic orator, made very good speeches about the United Kingdom when necessary, but not particularly warm and fuzzy to deal with.

CM: Just to parallel Paris again, what about perceptions of Britain in America, Washington or more generally in the country?

PW: In Washington and certainly the people President Obama appointed were, by and large, very well disposed towards Britain and towards the British government. Many of them worked very closely with their British opposite numbers, especially the Intelligence agencies, the Defense Secretary. Commerce was a little bit more problematic; there's always been issues about commerce and protectionism and whether or not we're free traders, and so on, but a number of them were really very helpful. I dealt with the Attorney General; I dealt with lots of different people and that was all fine. I think that they thought that the UK's Coalition government was generally speaking, pretty good. They thought, as I thought, that having a coalition in fact meant having some of the sharper edges of what would otherwise be Conservative policy were smoothed off, and some of the dafter ideas that the Lib Dems had run on in the election turned out to be not realistic, so some of their policy positions had to be parked as well. You put the two together, you had a pretty decent, centrist form of government, which I think worked quite well. We certainly saw after that coalition collapsed in the 2016 general election how important it had been, because then all hell broke loose with everything to do with Brexit - and not only to do with Brexit. I think the US government was well disposed. On a couple of policy issues we got ourselves into an unfortunate position. One was this issue when it took a while to get the right commitments from the Chancellor and the Prime Minister about Britain's commitment to 2% of GDP being spent on defence: we solved it but it took a while. One was this Asian Development Bank point that I mentioned just now. What else did we disagree about? We would talk a lot about Middle East policy and initiatives, but we didn't really fall out on that. We worked extremely closely with the Obama administration on Iran and the nuclear deal which went through Congress in the summer of 2015. The other issue of course on which the US government thought that we were completely barking was Brexit. They, like the French President who told me so in terms, thought that first of all David Cameron had been very unwise to pull the Conservative Party out of the Conservative grouping in the European Parliament, EPP, which was a condition for Cameron to become leader of the Conservative Party. They then thought it was unwise to make the commitment to hold a referendum, which perhaps Cameron thought he wouldn't have to implement. He wouldn't have had to of course if there had been a coalition after the election in 2016; but he won, somewhat unexpectedly, a small majority, and then had to honour the commitment that he'd given before the election to organize a referendum. President Obama thought that was very unwise; Secretary of State John Kerry thought it was very unwise and once the referendum had been triggered, in their own ways, they both, and other members of the Administration, did what they could, without wanting to

interfere too much in British domestic politics, to express the US view, which was that we think that Europe is stronger and Britain is stronger if you stay in, and by the way, you matter more to US interests within the EU than if you are outside it. Some of that was helpful and the US Trade Representative also warned that anyone who thought it was going to be a nice easy-peasy free trade agreement the day after we left the European Union was smoking something. They said that loud and clear, because there were plenty of people in the Brexit camp who were arguing the opposite, totally unrealistically, I think. You can argue that some of what Obama said was a little bit overdone and therefore counter-productive. He did go a little off message; he went further than he had been briefed to go in saying that Britain would be at “the back of the queue” for free trade agreements if we left the EU, but he was very firm in his own view that leaving the European Union was a bad idea and I do think that he held the Prime Minister, David Cameron, not unreasonably, responsible for the fact that we had got ourselves into what he regarded as a pickle: having the referendum and then getting the wrong outcome from America’s point of view. Those were all real issues.

Travelling the country, and I did more than a hundred official visits beyond the Beltway, outside the Washington bubble, I continued to find, to my surprise really, fantastic depth of feeling of benevolence and good will towards the United Kingdom. Whether it was about Downton Abbey or Winston Churchill or Margaret Thatcher or World War II, whatever it happened to be, we did still get a huge amount of credit all across the United States of America as being the closest and most reliable ally. You felt that more strongly outside the Washington Beltway than inside it.

CM: In your notes you mentioned the business relationship. Do you want to say something about that?

PW: I’ll say a couple of things about that. First, the business relationship between Britain and the United States was, of course, hugely important and I never tired of saying, both in America and in the UK, that the UK was the number one foreign investor in the US economy and vice versa. That is a big deal, because foreign investment is so critical to economic growth and jobs in both countries. Secondly our bi-lateral trade with America in my time, and it’s not very different now, was more than twice as much as Britain’s bi-lateral trade with its next most important partner, which is Germany. If you put visible and invisibles together it was not much less than a couple of hundred billion dollars a year, so a hugely important

trading relationship. That's why so many British companies are established in America; that's why we had a very big trade promotion team across the country in all the consulates. Did they make a big difference to those figures? You can argue that. That's a separate issue, but we had a lot of people because it is our single most important commercial partner and market. That's my point one. My point two is to say despite all that, and despite the good will that existed towards the United Kingdom, when British companies got into trouble with US regulators, of which there are loads, some of them in individual states and some federal, the good, positive, political relationship which was there counted for nothing. America can be a very protectionist country in lots of ways. The regulators are there not only to apply US law but often have people at the head of these different organizations who are scalp-hunting, so they can point to their success in seeing off some dastardly foreigner who has transgressed American rules, in order to run for office as attorney general or governor or whatever. One of the things that drove British companies that I dealt with was that when an American regulator would complain that a British bank had broken some sort of sanctions and done business in Burma or Cuba or Iran or Korea, it never actually got to the courts, because it was so easy for the regulators to say, 'Ah, if you don't want to sign us a cheque for six hundred million or two billion dollars tomorrow morning at ten o'clock, we'll suspend your licence to trade in dollars. Of course, no British or European or Japanese bank worth its salt could afford not to be able to do business in dollars, so they caved. There was a process of extortion rather than justice and that created a lot of ill will. It was often unreasonable and the administration would never weigh in to help out. It wasn't only in the financial services industry. It happened in pharmaceuticals, and of course the biggest single one that I spent a lot of time on was BP who spent five years dealing with the consequences of a tragic accident in the Gulf of Mexico, when eleven people were killed, and hundreds of thousands of barrels of oil leaked into the Gulf of Mexico. Just to put it in context: BP ended up, at the end of all this - and I was deeply involved with the US Attorney General, the White House, BP themselves, and the Environmental Protection Agency - BP ended up signing off about fifty seven billion dollars in payments. When Exxon had something similar, with an oil tanker which went aground and caused a much more environmentally damaging oil spill in Alaska, they got away with less than one billion, having gone to the Supreme Court and got the initial penalty quashed. Now, the law was changed on the back of that, so it was always going to be harder for somebody who did an oil spill later, but BP were penalized for being good corporate citizens, admitting responsibility, putting money on the table to help those who had genuinely suffered damage and to help the

clean up. All that money was taken, much of it fraudulently, by some extremely bad actors in one of the most corrupt states of the Union, which is Louisiana, with the full support of some dodgy people in the prosecution business. Then, separately, BP were hit with some enormous penalties by the Department of Justice. I was involved in trying to mitigate the effects of that and to ensure that the Administration and the judiciary gave BP credit for having admitted responsibility and not litigated but frankly, they got no credit whatever. That was a very bad message to good corporate citizens. Essentially what it said was, 'Never admit, never accept responsibility, always go to court, always lie, always deny.' That's what American corporates do. That's what Union Carbide did in India when they killed a couple of hundred people; they got away with that without any penalties at all. BP thought they would be honourable and they got screwed for it. That seared me and it seared them and I think it seared a lot of other companies who might be thinking about investing in certain elements of the US economy. American justice is very hit or miss. Of course, it goes wider than that. The number of people sitting on death row who've got unsound convictions, including some British citizens, is absolutely unacceptable and yet nobody cares. They're sitting there; their lives are rotting. Sometimes they get put to death; sometimes they don't.

CM: Peter, you've also listed defence and intelligence links as something you'd like to talk about. It is true to say, is it not, that the British-American defence-intelligence relationship is a remarkably close one. Is there one that's comparable?

PW: No, I don't think there is. The agencies work more closely together now than they ever have before. When I say 'the agencies' that means NSA-GCHQ; it means CIA-MI6 and it means MI5, the FBI and what is now the Department of Homeland Security. Now you've got a number of things like the National Counter-Terrorism Centre and the National Cybersecurity Centre, so we've got several different areas where organized crime or just old-fashioned intelligence gathering, or dealing with threats from hostile powers, bring the experts from the United States and the United Kingdom closely together. In the last few years the CIA and MI6 have even begun doing - which they never did because they didn't quite have the relationship that made it possible - joint operations. So that's pretty remarkable. That relationship is very strong. At the defence level, I would say that it's very strong between the Services. It often depends on how well the Chiefs get on individually, like President and Prime Minister. There is also a wonderful degree of intermingling

between the Royal Navy and the United States Navy, the British Army and the US Army, the Air Forces too. The first pilots flying British F35s (which is the airplane that we are now building together) the first pilots of the British planes will be Americans. And probably the first F35s that fly off the new British aircraft carriers will be American F35s. So they are almost interchangeable. If you look at our Trident nuclear deterrent and the missiles that we've put in our submarines to provide Britain's independent nuclear deterrent, we make the war heads but the missiles come from a common supply which we share with the Americans. Our submarines go into an American naval base, which we help finance, for the servicing and installation and check up and all the rest of the mechanics of having submarines carrying ballistic missiles. That doesn't exist between America and any other country in the world, nor between us and any other country. That's extremely close. The bit that is a little bit tricky is that not only at the level of the politicians, as I mentioned just now, but also at the level of very senior US military commanders, there has been real concern about the decline of British military capabilities, as our spending goes down and as the way in which we spend the money is adjusted. A week ago I was talking to a former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs who was saying to me, 'Peter, I am still very worried. I was told that your Army would never go below 82,000. It's already below that.' Which it is, and that is far too small. 'What kind of capabilities can you offer? Your aircraft carriers won't have any airplanes at the beginning – well, we know about that. You didn't have any maritime surveillance – well, we've sort of filled that gap. Now you've got frigates that can't work in the hot waters of the Gulf.' All our latest generation of frigates are either in mothballs or unserviceable in Portsmouth at the moment. All of them. Our American partners do notice these things. So the military capabilities is the negative bit in what is otherwise a very strong, positive story.

CM: You made a note about Congress, the Iran nuclear deal and AIPAC. In Britain, people tend to think that if the President is in agreement and wants something to happen, it is a done deal. They don't understand about the separation of powers and the lobbying you have to do on the Hill. Was this an area where you had to be very active? Were there particular issues where you had to go out and really work the Hill?

PW: Yes, there were. It is usually the case that there is something going on where either Congress itself has strong views or the Administration, the President and his team of Secretaries, want to do something and need Congress to give its approval. Sometimes we are directly affected. Back in Margaret Thatcher's day, it was all about whether or not we could

provide British-built gas turbines to bring gas from Siberia to meet Europe's energy needs. Reagan was against it; Congress was against it, because the Russians were bad guys and it was before the fall of the Berlin Wall. There are other times when Congress has taken very strong views on subjects which damage the interests of the United Kingdom. It might be the application of sanctions; it might be about technology transfer. I had a real problem, which was partly about Congress, but also about the Administration, over the British defence industry's desire to sell military equipment to Middle Eastern countries. Believe it or not, even stuff that is made in Britain, whether it's by a subsidiary of an American company, which it often was, or by a British firm, if it's got any component that is made in America, it's subject to US export licensing. We ran up against all sorts of barriers. This was designed to try to ensure that sensitive technology from America wasn't allowed to get into the wrong hands. In our case, we were up against something else again which was that the US has got a law, which I would like to think we would never have agreed in this country, which gives Israel a veto over any export of anybody else's military equipment which includes US components. So it is not just the US government, it's the Israeli government. We were trying to sell some stuff to the Saudis which the Israelis had an effective veto over and Congress was not prepared to stand up to them and say, 'Not your problem. It's up to us.' Even though, at that very same moment, US manufacturers were selling almost identical equipment, and even though the French were as well, because they were making comparable equipment that didn't use US components. Now, there is a big issue there: is it intelligent for the UK defence industry to be so reliant on US components that we are subject to US laws, many of which we think are ridiculous, or unreasonable, or protectionist? But if the result of stopping us from selling stuff made by American companies in Britain is either that the French sell it, or that the Chinese provide it, or even that a different American firm gets through because they are lobbying effectively, that's pretty unreasonable. I had to take this up at the very highest levels, endlessly, and I got lots of sympathetic hand-wringing from Cabinet secretaries, the Secretary of State, the Defense Secretary, the White House. 'Yes, Peter, it's intolerable.' But they would not actually tell the Israelis to get lost because of the importance to America. That was a very interesting indication of the strength of the Israeli military-political lobby. Ultimately it was Congress that decided, but you couldn't even go to Congress unless the State Department agreed that the application could go forward, so we had to deal with both.

And then we had to work very hard on Congress over free trade. There was a big negotiation going on on the TTIP, (the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership) which if the negotiations had ever been completed would have required Congressional approval. We did a lot of work on that and it went really rather well. We, of course, had a legitimate interest as the UK, America's number one European trading partner, but also as a great proponent of free trade within the EU.

Perhaps the subject on which I got most involved was that in the middle of 2015, after years and years of tortuous negotiations, the five Permanent Members of the Security Council plus Germany did finally reach an agreement with Iran which meant that Iran was not going to be able to build nuclear weapons. The very specific limitations on getting rid of their stockpile of enriched uranium, and closing down the plutonium route to a nuclear weapon lasted for a limited period, by and large fifteen years. But the inspection regime, which the Iranians agreed to, under protest, essentially means that there are permanent provisions in place to ensure that the Iranians can't restart a military weapons programme. There was huge opposition to this deal on Capitol Hill, mainly led by the Prime Minister of Israel, Bibi Netanyahu, but also by the America-Israel Political Action Committee, AIPAC. It was very well-funded, with lots of money from very wealthy Jewish Americans, and some from the Israeli government, which was opposed to this deal, on the grounds that it would be better to have a war with Iran instead. The Administration was clear that this was the best deal available. Congress wanted to kill it: all Republicans were against it, as were a lot of Democrats who either had strong Jewish constituencies or were under heavy influence from donors and from AIPAC, or from Bibi Netanyahu, who was ringing up individual senators by the day, saying, 'Kill this deal,' which considering Israel wasn't a signatory of it, was a bit rich. Israel itself, by the way, has an undeclared nuclear weapons programme, which is not subject to any international inspections. But it would be politically incorrect in America to talk about that alongside Iran's (far less developed) nuclear programme. Because of all that, the Administration's word was deemed to be suspect. By the time we got to 2015, President Obama was so fed up with the way the Israeli Prime Minister had treated him, lobbied against his re-election and tried to undermine his policies in the Middle East, that the Iran deal was far from sure to survive Congressional scrutiny. Certainly all the Republicans and indeed some Democrats tended to dismiss the Administration's argument and listen either to their own donors or to the Evangelicals, who by and large follow the Israeli line or, indeed, to the arguments from the Israeli Prime Minister. It was quite useful, therefore, that the

representatives of the other signatory governments, the French, the Germans, the Brits, the Russians and the Chinese, and the EU Representative, would march up to Capitol Hill and say, 'You know what, we think this is a good deal too. If you guys kill it, that deal will die and instead of not having any Iranian nuclear weapons for at least fifteen years and probably ever, you're going to have them in six months' time. Is that really a better outcome?' It was helpful to the Administration that we were doing this, because I, in particular, had the relationships with a lot of members of the Senate and the House, and I was sort of the team leader of the ambassadors going up on the Hill. I think it was an area where we were able to make a real difference both to Administration policy, which happened to be exactly the same as the British government's policy, but also to the Administration's efforts to ensure the deal was not going to be disowned by Congress. We got directly involved in domestic American politics which the opponents of a deal thought was unacceptable, but which I was very comfortable with since that was what I was there for. This was about defending the British government's interests and it was also about trying to ensure that the Middle East was more peaceful than it would otherwise be. But it was a relatively rare example of how we got directly involved in the whole business of the way Congress and the Administration have to interact and are totally separate power centres within the American political system.

CM: Let's hope Mr Trump doesn't throw it away.

PW: He wanted to, but so far he hasn't. I think Congress is not going to take up his invitation to destroy that deal in the near future. For the moment we're OK.

CM: What about travel? It's a very important part of being Ambassador in the United States, with all those consulates general out there, situated in all the important centres of the States. I don't know whether you lost any.

PW: We'd got rid of Dallas shortly before I got there and we had reduced one other city, Denver, to one and a half people. We added one in Seattle, which was a one person operation, which I was very pleased about, which was an antenna, if you like, of the much bigger operation we had down the road in San Francisco. We needed a presence in Seattle because there are so many very big American companies with interests in Britain, Boeing, Microsoft, Starbucks and people are all there. Lots of business there. Otherwise all the consulates are still there; some of them are a bit smaller than they were. Their emphasis is

very much on contributing to the commercial relationship. They do rather less in the way of political reporting, except during election years when they would be tasked by the political team in Washington to do some specific assessment or make introductions for members of the political team from Washington when they were travelling round the country.

CM: In your cycle of travel, did you have a preferred city that you particularly liked going to?

PW: I think I had one or two that I liked going to. My view was a different one from some of my predecessors. I didn't believe in going on a kind of royal tour for ten days, going to two or three States the other side of the country, especially in an era of instant communications when prime ministers and others, if something were blowing up, would want to know immediately, what do you think? Or what does the White House think? Or talk to whoever happens to be the Secretary of State. I didn't like being away for very long, unless I was firmly on my summer holiday and then I'd put somebody else in charge. I tended to do quite a lot of short trips of just two or three days, sometimes even less if there was a specific event to go for, with my own objectives. I went where there was a need. I went to some areas because nobody had been there for ten or twenty years at ambassadorial level and I thought it was right to go and wave a flag and I'd persuade somebody to give me a speech platform, or I'd go and see the governor or mayor or local industry. What did I most enjoy? I loved going to Seattle. I thought it was a really good use of my time. There was lots going on there and there were a number of US business people who had big investments in the UK and were always pleased to see us. There was stuff to discuss with them. It might have been cyber security with the Google people; it might have been Starbucks and their tax affairs; it might have been Boeing and the UK content in the aircraft that we were buying from them and trying to make sure that they played fair with us, which they haven't always done in the past, or whatever. I always thought that was useful. San Francisco was always fun and productive too. There was Silicon Valley and all those internet service companies, the hardware and the software people were either in Seattle or in San Francisco. And for reasons I can't easily identify, I liked going to Chicago. I thought it was a fun, buzzy place, with interesting things going on. Though I have to say, although there was the head office of one or two very big pharmaceutical companies, and Ford's head office was there, I tended to talk to Ford usually in Seattle where they had big manufacturing plants, and Chicago wasn't really a place where all that much happened. There was the Commodities and Futures Trading Commission which was important, and some wonderful cultural institutions. But it

wasn't a place where all that much that mattered to the UK. I liked to go to Boston. I went to Boston quite a lot: very important tech relationships, university relationships, a big Irish-American community. It's also a place where so many very successful Democratic politicians in America cut their teeth, and come of age in one way or another, in the Senate or the House or governor. There were always interesting politicians to talk to there, up and coming or in some cases been and gone, but still important to us. Of course, I found myself going to New York, I should think on average once a month.

CM: You mentioned the Irish American community in Boston. For many of your predecessors over many years the Northern Irish question was a thorn in the flesh, a very sensitive area of discussion with the US. Presumably, during your time this was no longer an issue that troubled you?

PW: No, it wasn't. When I was first in Washington as a political counsellor, I probably spent half my time on Northern Ireland, with the White House, Congress, Irish-American communities in the big cities where they were very present, Chicago, Boston, New York in particular, a bit of Los Angeles. All the politics of the peace process and the Good Friday Agreement, and whether or not to give visas to Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness, all that happened when I was first there in the 1990s. By the time I was there as Ambassador everyone was just delighted that things had moved on and it wasn't really an issue. Some of those people with whom we'd had difficult relationships in the Senate and the House back then, were all thrilled to spend time with us, because they were so pleased to feel a certain responsibility for the fact that things were so much better. One of the many problems we've got with Brexit is that of Northern Ireland. I think it is more likely to be bureaucratic and customs-based with border posts, rather than something that leads to a resumption of sectarian violence, but who knows? Because it is still fragile and the Northern Ireland government hasn't been working properly for the last year.

CM: And people you met in America? Politicians, or people in any other area, who stand out?

PW: Oh, yes. Several people who I think were a big part of life then and who remain quite an important part of my life today. In no particular order: I do think Mike Bloomberg, the former Mayor of New York, is a big personality. I stay in touch with him; I was with him ten

days ago, because he and his philanthropies board went off to the Olympic village in East London where I am involved in helping to bring an economic and cultural dimension into one of the last remaining empty spaces. Sadlers Wells, the V&A, the Smithsonian Institution, and all sorts of other people, the British School of Fashion: they're all going to be there. The BBC. All very exciting, but a bit of joining up is required and it was marvellous that Mike spent a good deal of Remembrance Sunday with his business colleagues doing a tour of the site and looking at it, because he has provided some technical support from Bloomberg Associates for that. He has a soft spot for the United Kingdom; his first wife was British, Welsh actually. He has two houses in Chelsea and of course Bloomberg has just opened a massive new corporate HQ with thousands of jobs in it, in the heart of the City of London. He came very close to running for President last time. He chose not to run because if he had done so, he would have run as an independent rather than seeking to win a primary and he reckoned that he would not have defeated Hillary. If Hillary had not been the Democratic candidate, I think we might well have had Bloomberg as a candidate and perhaps President.

CM: But the independent candidate always splits the vote on one side or another. The classic case is George H. W. Bush who lost in 1992 because of Ross Perot.

PW: If it had been Bernie Sanders, or someone like that, whom he thought couldn't win, perhaps not. At the time when he took his decision Bloomberg thought, Well, I can't beat Hillary and she should win, so I'll tuck in behind. But I wouldn't rule out Bloomberg thinking again, even though he is now mid-70s. He's got plenty of ideas, plenty of money, and plenty of real concern about the state of his country. He's also extremely concerned about Brexit: he thinks we're mad to have done it, and says so quite loudly. So I think Bloomberg is a big figure. In the Obama administration, we've talked about the President himself and I think with hindsight he looks better and better. Even if there are elements of foreign policy where he might have been overcautious, the way in which he brought the country together and chose the right words and the right tone when horrible things happened, usually around guns, for example, I thought was extraordinary. He did very important work on climate change and making America into a responsible member of the community. And he and Hillary between them – I became very fond of Hillary Clinton, too – I do think did a very good job of making the world like America again after the divisive days of Bush. In his team he had a lot of good people in his Cabinet. Some of them were British educated,

Rhodes scholars, Marshall scholars and so on, that was great. I developed huge respect and affection for John Kerry, the Secretary of State, the second one; his first one, of course, was Hillary Clinton, then Kerry got the job, even though Obama's first preference, it seems, was Susan Rice who became his National Security Adviser, because she couldn't have got confirmed. Susan was implicated, however unfairly, in the whole Benghazi nonsense, and she had detractors. He gave her a very good job as National Security Adviser instead. Kerry who had a Rolodex going back twenty five years and was a former Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, knew everybody and had a masterly grasp of most of the big hot-button international issues and had this indefatigable energy and optimism that there was no problem that couldn't be solved if you applied goodwill and relationships to fixing it. Of course, it didn't always work like that. If it was that easy, we wouldn't have had so many dramas and crises, but my word, I thought he worked very, very hard and he was sensible and considerate and always thinking things through from the other person's perspective. He was the single biggest contributor to the Iran nuclear deal, even though there are other people who claim some credit for it, Kerry was the guy who made it happen. He came pretty close to making progress on Israel-Palestine. The fact that it didn't work, I myself don't believe was his fault, although possibly it might have been better for him to have laid out an American blueprint rather than wait for the others to come up with one of their own. But one could debate that interminably.

I developed a strong relationship with the Attorney General, Eric Holder, even though he wasn't much help to us in the end on the BP deal. He and I came quite close to coming to terms on behalf of BP, but it didn't happen because ultimately he couldn't deliver all the relatively sovereign littoral states of the Gulf coast who had to sign it off as well, otherwise BP's shareholders would have thought it was a madness. That was sad. I think he was well disposed, but he wasn't really ready or willing to get stuck to the extent of knocking heads together and drawing a line under this thing, which was bad for foreign investment in the American economy, certainly in the energy sector.

We saw a lot of the Clintons, inevitably, and found them hugely impressive. Hillary, we know the campaign and what happened there, but a very decent, solid and honourable person. The first thing I would say, before we get carried away in believing that Trump won by a landslide, which in electoral college terms he did, is that she did win three million more votes than he did. He is only President because eighty thousand people in three critical

Midwestern states voted the way they did. It wasn't as if the American people embraced Trump. More of them embraced her; we need to remember that. Why did she not become President? I think there were several elements: because she was Hillary Clinton, she managed to convey unwittingly a sense of entitlement – it's my turn. People, for all the love of the Kennedys, have a bit of an issue about dynasties, or self-appointed dynasties, which I think could be a problem (Mr Trump had better think about that before he puts his son in law and daughter into too many important positions). Secondly, I think she ran a very orthodox campaign. She outspent Trump by four or five to one, but she and her campaign put the money into buying television ads and paying for rock stars to go on stage with her. This doesn't work anymore. Social media, much cheaper and much more effective and the Trump people were much better at it. I think he was miles ahead in terms of that. The third thing is what most of us failed to grasp, was that out there in America were an awful lot of people who no longer had a political home, in terms of a party that they felt represents their interests and did not feel that there were politicians who spoke their language or represented their concerns. Trump for all the bogus nature of this man of the people stuff, and for all the fact that he is a billionaire who's gone bankrupt and screwed all sorts of small businessmen over the years, managed to convey that he was on the side of the little guy. Nothing could be further from the truth, but he spoke their language and the more outrageous behaviour and his comments, the more the base liked it. He defied all the normal laws of political gravity in an election campaign and won. I think he touched chords that perhaps we didn't fully understand and we certainly didn't think that the way he did it would rebound in his favour, which it did. I do think that the decision of the FBI Director, James Comey, to announce that on reflection he was investigating her for the legality of her private emails nine days before the election really did her significant damage. He then said, five or six days later, oh well, there's nothing there after all. There was nothing there from the beginning. Why did he do it? It wasn't to screw her. It was because he had been criticized previously for not putting everything out at a press conference and he wanted to cover his own backside, but it was a spectacularly bad judgment. Especially when, guess what, at the same moment he was already investigating Donald Trump's links to the Russians, but he said nothing about that. Hillary thinks that was the biggest thing that cost her the election. She could well be right. The two other things were Russian information warfare: I am very clear in my own mind about the importance of Russian hanky panky through social media, false stories, spreading the robotic messaging which was full of lies, just as they did around the Brexit campaign, and in the French election campaign and as they have done in Germany. This

costs nothing, but Russian direct interference in the political processes of open Western democracies is a real story. It's not a fake fact; it's true. I think that helped Trump and I think we may yet discover that there was a degree of collusion between the Trump team and the Kremlin that hasn't yet come out. And if we do, then I think that Trump could be in real difficulties, but we haven't yet got anything resembling a smoking gun. I think those elements were important and then there was the broader stuff: the same sentiment as there was around Brexit. In addition to people feeling that political elites have lost touch, there is a very dramatic increase in income inequality in America, even worse than here. When you think that the wealthiest 0.1% of Americans own as much as the poorest 90% of society, there's something gone seriously wrong in terms of who's got the goodies and who hasn't. That creates a sense of resentment, as does the knowledge that none of the guys who gave us the meltdown of 2007-8 for which hardworking taxpayers are footing the bill have gone to jail. They've all just got richer and richer. I think that linked to fears of free trade: the Chinese are eating our lunch, robotics, automation, globalization, all these things which in the past have been felt to be benefits for society as a whole were increasingly perceived in America, and also to some extent here, as being something that favoured the rich and left the little guy in bad shape. Plus, something that isn't often written about, as with Brexit, apart from the blue collar workers who were feeling angry and resentful, racist and anti-immigrant, there is a small number of very rich people, on the whole old and white and male, who supported Trump, just like they supported Brexit, because they want tax cuts and less regulated business so they can get even richer. There's an elite, despite the anti-elitist part, there's an elite in both countries of people who are at the peak of their lives, many of them tremendously rich, in our case sovereignty-obsessed, in America's case regulation- and anti-government-obsessed, who were part and parcel of going along with the Trump message. Of course, once he had become the Republican candidate, Trump had the entire Republican machine on his side, even though large numbers of Republicans didn't really regard Donald Trump as one of them. Those are the reasons he won and she lost. In a way the odd thing is if you line up those different considerations, you do find yourself saying, if it's that clear now, why didn't we see it at the time? But it wasn't quite so obvious at the time. Hillary could have won; she very nearly did. Trump didn't think he'd won on the night, so why should the rest of us have expected him to?

Other individuals that I would say were outstanding people: there's a delightful guy called Duval Patrick, former Governor of Massachusetts, whom I got to know very well. A little

too much another Obama; Harvard Law, black, East Coast liberal, but he certainly toyed with the idea of running for President but I think, rightly, concluded that straight after Obama it would have been a mistake. He's gone into the private sector now but probably hasn't totally given up. Incredibly nice to deal with. On Capitol Hill, I am very pleased to see since I left that the two principal Republicans who have come out against Trump when he is behaving really badly are two pretty right wing Republicans with whom I used to fight over the Iran nuclear deal but nevertheless became good friends: John McCain and Lindsey Graham. Wonderful people, very amusing, Lindsey Graham in particular is a real comedy act; he has a future life as a stand up comedian, or a sit down comedian. And McCain is just an all American hero, a man of short temper sometimes and strongly held views, but hugely principled. I was very pleased to get to know those two, as well as many other members of the Senate. Diane Feinstein, Chair of the Intelligence Committee, 85 now, 86, may yet run again, Californian, Jewish, prosperous, fabulous public servant, unimpeachable integrity. She looked at the intelligence carefully, valued the relationship with us. I spent a lot of time talking to her about very delicate difficult issues. She was a real class act. Then I would say, looking to the next generation because in answer to the question: Do you think Trump will get a second term? part of the answer has to be: who will be the next generation of Democrats who run against him? There are some very talented younger Democrats. There were three ladies, who we were talking about when I left, one of whom Elizabeth Warren, who is a very feisty, almost anti-capitalist, left winger, academic, very plausible. There's Amy Klobuchar, from Minnesota, who's fun and lively and might want to have a run, and there's the talented and personable Kirsten Gillibrand from New York who's made quite a name for herself on issues of sexual violence on campus and in the military - now of course a very hot topic. Rather unwisely, she has said recently that Bill Clinton should have resigned over the Monica Lewinsky affair; I personally don't share that view. She's a very bright trade lawyer who took Hillary's New York seat in the Senate when she became Secretary of State. Another figure with real personality, to watch for the future. I always enjoyed talking to Jerry Brown, twice the Governor of California. He came, he retired; he came back. He too is eighty something, still a tremendous live wire and very good company. Part of the fun of travelling around the country was that you would run into plenty of tremendous people. Governor Hickenlooper in Colorado I always enjoyed spending time with. Then there's Gina Raimondo who's Governor of Rhode Island. Very, very high quality. Can a governor of Rhode Island actually run for president? Probably

not. Too small a state, too Eastern, too liberal, but some really good people like that who are out there and who will be fun to watch in the years to come.

CM: Peter, I can't resist asking this. Which did you prefer being Ambassador in Paris or Ambassador in Washington?

PW: I think I would say that Paris was more fun, in that you're in the middle of the city that is everything that is French, so your life and your social activity was not always dominated by politics and governance. If I was going out for the evening, I would often just be going to a very scintillating, interesting dinner, with fabulously good food and drink, with people are part of the Parisian scene, or captains of industry, or presidents of banks, or head of an insurance company, or the head of the cross-Channel railway, or whatever it happened to be. There was lots of bi-lateral business that you could transact like that. I had some very good relationships with many of the Cabinet ministers. I think I am right in saying that we had three times more Cabinet ministers paying official visits to Paris than we did to Washington, because it was so easy - you just jump on the train. So we were awash with high-level visitors. Sometimes more officials than we wanted, although that was probably more the case in Washington. Every policy maker in the British government, if he or she didn't quite know what to do, would jump on a plane to Washington: let's go and see what the Americans think. It was rather pathetic sometimes and they would often arrive with frankly nothing to say. They were just on a fishing expedition. But if they came to Paris, it was usually because there was a real need for co-ordination on something to do with defence or the European Union or business: the future of Airbus; repayable launch aid for the next generation aircraft, real nitty-gritty stuff that we had to work on together. Then of course we had the financial crisis of October 2008 when Gordon Brown came over once a week. There was a huge amount of intense high level contact of great complexity. So that was interesting. And travelling round France was always a delight, such a beautiful country – but then I enjoyed travelling around America too. It was just more complicated, because the journeys were so much longer. Dealing with the language and the cultural differences between the French and the British, I loved doing that. I found it utterly stimulating and very enjoyable. You always got a response. Sometimes you ran into problems and road blocks and bits of baggage from some piece of history, or resentment, but generally speaking, I found that in France people really did respond well to an ambassador who was trying to address all that complexity of a messy and difficult relationship.

In the United States there was loads to do; sometimes I thought, with the exception of one or two of those episodes I've mentioned on Capitol Hill, I was more of an observer than a doer, if I'm really honest. Yes, I could go and lobby and talk to the White House. Earlier it was Northern Ireland; latterly it was Iran; sometimes it was about international trade policy. We did a lot of work on that. But quite a lot of the rest of the time, although we were the close allies of the United States, we found ourselves observing their machine grind itself around in circles. They would have umpteen meetings and then they would tell us what they had decided. They didn't really consult us upstream in the way that we would have liked as such close allies. I used to complain a bit to Obama and his people about that, and say, 'Look, when you've finally decided, you pick up the phone and say, "Are you with us tomorrow night to go and drop bombs on Syria?" Why don't you tell us ten days earlier, "We're moving in that direction. Are you up for it?" They never did that. It wasn't the way they operate; it's not the way the consultation machinery of the National Security Council works. That could sometimes be frustrating. But another thing, that was rewarding, in Washington, was the incredible talent pool of media commentators, political analysts, and people who had been in a previous administration and were biding their time in a think tank waiting for the next one. So many interesting people to talk about every subject under the sun. More than there was in France. In the French system, like ours, career professionals do the job; move on, move up, move out. We don't have people sitting waiting to go back into government here like they have in America. You have a few ex-ministers, I suppose, on the back benches of the House of Commons and in the Lords, but you haven't got that panoply of talent that America's got, whether it's sitting in Harvard, or in think tanks or in Washington wanting to return. I think, if you wanted to understand what was going on in the world, if you wanted to have a grip on the big international security, foreign policy, climate change and other issues, Washington gave you a great deal more understanding and authority than being in Paris. But in terms of fun, Paris was the place to be.

CM: Peter, your glittering career came to an end in 2016 and you went off to Harvard for a few months. Did you write something there?

PW: I started. I went because some of my friends in the US government suggested I would enjoy it and I had had a little bit of that thought in my mind anyway. I didn't have a firm plan; I didn't even have a home to go back to in the UK at that point and it struck me as

something that would be a very stimulating form of soft landing at the end of my time as Ambassador. They very kindly moved extremely quickly. I only filled in the form in early December, left Washington in January and by the end of the month I was there, after two weeks of wonderful holiday in Hawaii with Susie. I did two things while I was at Harvard. I was a Fellow of the Institute of Politics, one of a group of six people, usually former US public servants from all over the country who go there for a semester. They didn't normally have a foreigner doing that. You do some teaching, some writing, what they call office hours, which is one on one mentoring. You run a course of study and in my case, I was a sort of free good for any other society or group in Harvard who wanted someone to come and speak to them. I did a lot of Brexit stuff when I was there. Separately, I was a senior fellow at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, which is a very prestigious foreign policy part of the Kennedy School, run by a guy called Graham Allison. Very high-powered people, lots of them busy writing books, and a very lively forum for discussion and presentations over breakfasts, lunches, dinners. I got quite hoarse in the end by the amount of speaking I did there. Did I write something? They gave me a little office. I did start tapping away. I started writing what I thought was going to be a diplomatic memoir, but a diplomatic memoir on its own I think is of no real value. It's got to have an angle, or a purpose, or a message to it. I started working on this, without, it has to be said, extensive background notes to check my facts. The point of it would have been, and may yet be, something around the theme of whether in an era of instant communication between capitals and over the airwaves, you still need local expertise on the spot in the form of diplomats. Do we still serve a purpose or are we an expensive anachronism? Discuss. I thought that was quite an interesting subject to look at and under that umbrella I could tell quite a lot of stories about what I'd done. Mixed in with it is my belief, which I have discussed with you before, that even though at the moment the United Kingdom is somewhat withdrawing from the world stage, as it absorbs itself with the Brexit negotiation, we do have a very talented diplomatic service and we do have a lot of people with a great deal of knowledge of the culture, language and history of many different parts of the world, some of which we used to run, and we still do have a fairly deep pool of respect and sometimes affection, as well as annoyance and irritation about what we have done in the past. Losing all that at a time when our government is imploding I think would be sad, especially as the world is somewhat dangerous and unpredictable at the moment. In practice, I didn't get very far with my typing, but I did at least do enough on one sub-theme of that story which was my experience in Turkey, around primarily Turkey and the European Union and what had gone

on in Turkey since my time as ambassador there. I published a little booklet – it's only sixty pages - under the auspices of the Atlantic Council, shortly after I left Harvard, but I think if I hadn't had the time to sit and write it there, I probably would never have done it. While some of those impressions were still fresh in my mind, it was a wonderful opportunity. If I was ever asked to do it again, I would absolutely seize the opportunity.