

The Great Depression is a significant time for United States history as it was one of America's largest financial crises, but was also the grounds for the most major long-term legislation to shape modern day America. There is no doubt that without Franklin D Roosevelt's policies, America would be along a very different path than what is present today. However, it is arguable if these policies were truly FDR's "greatest" achievement. In order to understand Roosevelt's legacy, his long term policies in regards to financial security must be contrasted with his short-term plans to raise America out of the Great Depression. Because FDR's early actions were relatively ineffective in fixing America, especially as compared to his major long term policies and their influence, it is clear that financial security is his greatest achievement.

Franklin D Roosevelt's initial policies were geared towards solving the crisis at hand rather than creating a more financially secure America for the future. In the aftermath of the Great Depression, he began to work towards securing the economy against continued free-fall. In understanding his reasons for early policies, it is conclusive that they were not geared towards a long term plan, but were born out of desperation to solve an immediate problem.

At the most desperate times of the Great Depression, FDR's policies and actions were primarily to ease the panic by implementing stopgap relief plans. At the time, the Great Depression brought in a wave of panic and terror that gripped the nation. As the Bonus Army marched on Washington in July of 1932, banks were failing- the most spectacular of which was in New York, where the Bank of the US collapsed and 200 million US dollars disappeared in December of 1931. Therefore, one of FDR's primary mandates was to alleviate the immediate pressure that the US economy was under. Under such pretense, he immediately moved to implement the Bank Holiday within 24 hours of taking office, and created the Emergency Banking Act in the first week. These early acts were not intended to fix economic problems; they

were analogous to a Band-Aid to stop the bleeding of money out of the US economy. In addition to the legislation that FDR implemented, he also began to calm the US people, mainly through his Fireside chats and his positive relationship with the media. All of these items demonstrate FDR's wit and ingenuity in solving the problem, but do not explain the long term effect that he had on the United States. Although many remember his personality and influence in beginning reform, these topics are not Roosevelt's greatest legacy.

Roosevelt needed to reboot the economy in order to get to a state where he could begin creating long term policies that would shape the American economy for many decades to come. It is evident that, although he had wide support in Congress, there was no ability to solve fundamental problems with the economy while the economy was still in free fall. In addition, there were too many issues to tackle at once, including the banks, the stock market, welfare, healthcare, and other issues. Therefore, it is understandable that as he came into office, FDR was focused on creating a cushion for the economy to gently land on, not policies that would change America for the long term. However, once the economy was initially stabilized, he began to introduce policies that would solve the problems of the recession and benefit America for the long run. These policies include the Economy Act, where he cut government salaries to create a balanced budget, and the many acts to create jobs in local areas. The Tennessee Valley Authority, the Civilian Conservation Corp and the Civil Works Administration were all plans in order to create temporary relief and jobs for people currently unemployed. Although these policies were the forerunners to the lasting changes that FDR would soon implement, the primary goals of these policies were still focused on the Great Depression, not on long term problem solving.

The immediate effects of Roosevelt's policies can be seen in the way that America responded to his innovative plans. Therefore, short-term analysis of his plans is very important to

understanding the legacy that he leaves to the US. In understanding his short term plans for recovery, it becomes evident that there was not enough strength in his recovery acts to truly lift the nation out of depression, while his long term goals began to prosper rather quickly after implementation.

FDR was not looking to create a new society, but rather to strengthen the existing capitalistic America with more regulation and protections. Although he is depicted as being radical for his time, his policies do not change or eradicate previous business practices in America. For instance, the Economy Act was created under direction from advisors who had previously worked for the Hoover administration. That is not to say that these policies made a huge impact in shaping the future of the American economy. The Social Security Act of 1935, the Glass Steagall Act of 1933, the Truth in Securities Act of 1933 and the creation of the Securities and Exchange Committee in 1934 all served to create United States departments that would allow for money to stay safe and for people to have savings. In creating Social Security, the FDIC and the SEC, FDR was making a promise to ensure continued American growth in the future. These institutions created new checks on old money, but were no more radically different than what America had done in the past with institutions such as the Bank of the US. Instead, they were intended to create a safer environment for Americans to prosper and to grow financially.

Although FDR succeeds in creating lasting changes in regards to making America financially secure, the effect of new policies were highly regional and were not distributed evenly across America. In implementing many of his policies, he chose to assist specific groups of people or specific areas of America without reaching out to solving the problems of the entire world. For instance, the Agricultural Adjustment Act allowed for assistance to farmers, which

was crucial to preventing hunger in America, but it ultimately only allowed a small fraction of large farms to prosper. The Tennessee Valley Authority was created under the plan to provide for rural electrification, but it was localized and did not show evidence of improving the lives of people along the Appalachian Mountains for many years. It makes sense to target smaller groups of people, as it is easier to solve their problems as compared to solving all of America's problems. However, it resulted in incomplete recovery for certain sections of America.

The Roosevelt Recession of 1937 show that FDR's policies were not enough to immediately create a stronger America, but that they represented a shift in American policies towards preserving financial stability. During Roosevelt's second term, the economy was becoming stable again, and there were cries to reduce government spending. However, as soon as money was cut from the Works Project Administration, the United States fell into another recession with an onset as rapid as the Great Depression. The fragility of the US economy shows that FDR's short term policies were not fully effective. It was only when Roosevelt reauthorized large government spending that the US economy began to improve again. This demonstrates that although Roosevelt had an impact in fixing the Great Depression, his policies are not truly effective. Therefore, his greatest achievement is not in leading America out of times of economic turmoil, but for laying the groundwork for America's future.

Roosevelt's policies in regards to long term reforms must be analyzed in terms of the reaction of others after enactment, which show a general acceptance of plans that improved America's long term financial stability. At the time that most of these policies were implemented, there was still a large amount of confusion due to the bleak economic forecast and the continued panic of the American people. But as the situation calmed down due to FDR's earlier policies,

the effect of his reforms are more clearly seen, especially by the response by the Supreme Court and the start of the Second World War.

Not everyone immediately accepted FDR's reforms, as the Supreme Court and other groups fought against them, but the policies that persisted remained a lasting positive impact on the American financial state. Because Roosevelt's actions were deemed as too radical for some time, many Supreme Court Cases began to strike down laws as they were deemed as a violation of the separation of powers. For instance, in the case of *Schechter vs. United States*, the Supreme Court strikes down National Industrial Recovery Act which wiped out FDR's plans to fix the labor union problem. There were threats that the Supreme Court would end all of FDR's legacy programs and stop monumental legislation, such as the Social Security Act. However, in 1937, the Supreme Court began to reverse its decisions, starting with the *West Coast Hotel vs. Parrish*, where **STUFF HAPPENED HALP**. This shows that there was still a desire to see Roosevelt's reforms succeed for the future of America's financial prosperity. The fact that most of the original legislation is still in effect, providing Americans with a reliable financial system, is a testament to FDR's legacy in making a more financially secure United States.

The end of the depression was not directly caused by one of FDR's economic policies, but his policies allowed for the elevation of America to become the leading superpower of the 20th century. As discussed earlier, the end of the Great Depression was not truly brought up by policies designed to provide jobs. All of those organizations would only give temporary relief, and as soon as the work was finished, thousands flooded back to unemployment lines. However, the arrival of World War II brought about opportunities for real economic growth in America. It was the necessity to produce more goods and materials that allowed the economy's continued growth. Therefore, it is incorrect to attribute achievements such as ending the Great Depression

to Roosevelt's name. Instead, his greatest achievement was, as argued earlier, to create policies that would keep America financially secure during prosperous times.

The period after the Great Depression was some of the most abysmal times in US history, but under the guidance of Franklin D. Roosevelt, many policies that protect our current financial security were created and enacted. His legacy remains in our nation as the Social Security Act, the FDIC, the SEC, and numerous other programs that prevent such a free fall in the America from ever occurring again. Clearly, these long-term policies are his greatest achievements as they are much more effective than his actions in easing America out of the Great Depression.