

With Strong and Active Faith



Collectivism in the age of FDR
1933-1945

Master's Thesis in history didactics

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*The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundances of those who have much.
It is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.*

-Franklin Delano Roosevelt

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Abbreviations:

Dramatis Personae:

FDR – 32nd President Franklin Delano Roosevelt

ER – First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt

TR – 26th President Theodore Roosevelt

JFK – 35th President John Fitzgerald Kennedy

LBJ – 36th President Lyndon Baines Johnson

DNC – The Democratic National Convention

GOP – ‘The Grand Old Party’, The Republican Party

SC – The Supreme Court of the United States

UK – The United Kingdom

USSR – The Soviet Union

Programs of the New Deal:

AAA – Agricultural Adjustment Act

CCC – Civilian Conservation Corps

NIRA – National Industrial Recovery Act

NRA – National Recovery Administration

NYA – National Youth Administration

PWA – Public Works Administration

SSA – Social Security Act

TVA – Tennessee Valley Authority

WPA – Works Progress Administration

Wartime Abbreviations:

CiC – Commander in Chief

G.I. – U.S. Servicemen nicknamed *General Issue* or *Government Issue*

JCS – The Joint Chiefs of Staff

OSS – The Office of Strategic Services

UN – The United Nations

1. Introduction:

1.1 Power and language:

We will lead not merely by the example of our power but by the power of our example.¹ These words were taken from the inaugural speech of Joseph R. Biden, the 46th president of the United States of America. Since 2020 the Covid-19 pandemic has largely paralysed the world economy. America, the cultural, economic and military superpower of the world was among the countries most severely inflicted in manner of death count, and in the form of economic and industrial paralysis. This has caused the most dramatic increase in sudden unemployment and poverty, since the Great Depression, which lasted for the duration of the 1930s.

When president Biden invoked the legacy of the example of American power in insuring peace, progress and security, the ideals are almost of legendary status, as perhaps imagined by Ronald Reagan as he likened America to the shining city upon a hill. More down to earth it becomes it is largely a question of social policies. By invoking the American ability to always recover, whether from epidemics, natural disasters, civil war or economic depression, there is one president he aims to intertwine his agenda with. Invoking the power of the American example, is to remember the role expanding role of America, within and without its borders during the great depression and the second world war, and to remember the architect behind the prosperity which followed it, Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Seemingly just as boring as Biden, with a long tenure in American politics and no record of ever truly seeking to challenge the status quo prior to his presidency, the promise of a new age of experimental collectivist social policies forces Americans to remember the age of FDR, and the America he inherited from a Congress which until recently had been controlled by the Republican party (GOP) and a republican president. Common for presidents Hoover and Trump, and their colleagues in Congress, was an unshaking belief in the economy, and in the stock market – beyond the international crisis – to rectify itself. A belief misplaced then as it was now when measuring it against the general welfare of Americans.

It is quite a different America Biden invokes, but the roots of that America, the basis for its origins are uncannily similar. Invoking the memory of the age of FDR, makes it clear what

¹ "Inaugural Address by President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.," The White House, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/01/20/inaugural-address-by-president-joseph-r-biden-jr/>.

type of president Biden aims to be.² And like the last president who truly embarked upon a period of extensive social legislation, Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) – who also likened FDR to a father – FDR yet again hangs as the central portrait in the oval office across from the resolute desk, serving as a memory of the reach of the presidential powers and his voice.

Rewinding 76 years, while recovering before the large United Nations Summit in San Francisco, FDR was working on a more trivial address to be held on Jefferson Memorial Day. The intent of the address was to remind the American people of the impact and influence president Thomas Jefferson had had on American foreign policy 150 years earlier. Despite the rather unison belief held by the Founding Fathers that relations with the Empires of the old world was better left to mercantilism, bringing about the age of isolationism only recently revoked by FDR himself, he presented the workings and legacy of Jefferson as directly preceding his own political endeavours. With very few words he had justified the war effort, the United Nations, and participation in the future occupation of the defeated nations of the Axis Alliance.

The final line FDR edited by hand, and he must have smiled to himself when he revoked the timeless words of his inaugural address held twelve years earlier: ‘the only thing we have to fear is fear itself.’ A sentence that alone sounds like nothing more but a statement of the obvious, but through them he justified the legislative action which he set forth with, vested with an awesome, and in some aspects, a terrifying power which America rarely had seen or experienced the full potential of earlier. In this final line, the last he ever wrote and never got to utter, he was to remind Americans of something quite different. ‘The only limits to our realizations of tomorrow are our doubts of today. Let us move forward with strong and active faith.’ Uniquely Rooseveltian in their outlook on the challenges ahead, and uniquely un-American in their fundamental outlook on American endeavours, both personally, but also politically, economically, militarily and ideologically. Such is the power of words, and few were the equal of FDR in using the influence and power vested in them in such an effective way to be the driving force for change.

America was a fundamentally different country at the time of his death compared to his first inauguration. Government had taken on physical form, in which I mean, people knew that the seat of power was in Washington D.C, and that from the White House FDR actually

² "Unemployment rates lower in January 2021 in 33 states," United States Department of Labor, 2021, <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2021/unemployment-rates-lower-in-january-2021-in-33-states.htm>.

governed. With enormous influence and an ability to raise his voice over the noise of Congress, FDR was able to clearly lay out his vision of America. This largely depended on the American public's ability to embrace collective social policies, long forgotten by the average American, purposefully ignored by the elected in the Capital.

But what, we might ask ourselves was the motive behind his desire to connect his own politics with that of Jefferson? Reviewing his legislative history and his agenda as the world war came to a close, what were the result of his actions? And to what end did his language contribute to change the moral foundation necessary to achieve his goals? What were the effect and the acts performed as a consequence of what FDR said? According to Quentin Skinner of the Cambridge school of the history of political thought, the catalyst in every instance of society when setting out to create change, is to first transform a neutral term – in the case of my thesis, collectivist social policies – into a favourable term, and applying it in the virtue of its extended meaning to describe the course of action FDR set out to achieve.³

How did he set out to achieve this? Was it through comparisons benefitting his agenda and political vision? Did he simply challenge the compatibility of the current status quo, through what grew and became a carefully constructed vocabulary? FDR would in any case present his own ideology as the better solution, while any given opposition was left to admit their own shortcomings in preference to the status quo.

This rhetorical strategy is by Skinner considered the most important form of ideological argument, and he gives several examples of its usage throughout history.⁴ I will use this while uncovering the developing language of FDR with focus on the collectivisation of America over the course of his presidency.

1.2 An Evolving Republic:

The United States of America is a young country. Although proclaimed during the days of Enlightenment it is also the country with the oldest constitution in the world. Only Norway, which signed its own at the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1814, has a constitution that also stems from this era of late enlightenment. The American federal state was fashioned in such a way as to safeguard its citizens, giving them the representation they sorely lacked under British dominion, while also limiting the power and reach of Government to enforce its citizens – a mantra and tradition not easily challenged. The first great test came with the War

³ Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 1. P.151

⁴ Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 1. P.153

of 1812, in which the United Kingdom sacked Washington D.C. and set the newly constructed Executive Mansion, today known as the White House, ablaze. The minutemen tactic that worked during the war of independence failed to save the early Union, though no victor was formally declared.⁵ It was in 1861, with the secession of South Carolina and most of the other southern states, that Abraham Lincoln challenged the economic and military conceptions of America and the boundaries of the presidency. He won the war, and kept the union from disintegrating, securing for himself an everlasting legacy. With his assassination in 1865, the legacy transformed into legend, as the first great American martyr president. The executive powers he held in wartime, as the government had expanded to cope with the domestic crisis, which not unthinkably would have proven practical as the country prepared for peace, faded away as well.

An era of industrial growth almost without equal in the world, and an economic boom, only temporarily paralyzed by a couple of depressions, hampered this *gilded age*. Vital to this growth was the lack of government and regulations. Tycoons, barons and businessmen fought for monopoly, in what can only be described as a capitalist free-for-all. As a consequence, the government in D.C. became even more invisible than during the era of Manifest Destiny or the Era of Good Feelings. From 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, the president seemed more like galleon figure, as the power lay on Capitol Hill, and perhaps even more so as time passed and the new century dawned, on Wall Street in New York City.⁶

It was only when Theodore Roosevelt (TR) entered the ‘bully pulpit’ as he called the office of the presidency, that industrial barons were challenged. He challenged Congress and the elite and expanded the role of the president in peacetime properly for the first time since the days of president Andrew Jackson. The progressive torch was nevertheless not carried on in either party. After Woodrow Wilson failed to convince the American people to join his own brainchild, the League of Nations, he spent his last year in the White House, partially paralyzed after the strain of the Great War – amongst his cabinet members, a young FDR was horrified to see Wilson in such a state, isolated and alone in the White House.⁷ The progressive blocs of

⁵Hans Olav Lahlum, *Presidentene, fra George Washington til Barack Obama* (Oslo: Cappelen Damm, 2016). p.62

⁶ William Leuchtenburg, *The FDR Years, On Roosevelt & His Legacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995). The First Modern President. P.6

⁷ William Leuchtenburg, *The American President: From Teddy Roosevelt to Bill Clinton* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015). P.115

each party were restrained as the 1920s roared by, the power of the presidency neglected and unutilized, until Black Tuesday, paralysed New York, and then the world.⁸

It seems to me that president Herbert Hoover was the wrong man in the wrong place as the magnitude of the crisis revealed itself to the elected in the capital. The faith in the markets ability to recover by itself was misplaced, and in 47 out of 48 states, no initiative to help the starving and homeless that grew in number as the weeks and months and years passed by appeared. A social paralysis of apathy swept over America. It was only in New York state where FDR, recently elected governor, started the *charity* of relieving those who no longer were able to care for themselves.⁹ Unamerican to even some of those who starved, no doubt, but a burgeoning idea was taking hold in the governor – though he would deny it fervently during the coming presidential campaign – the idea that the individual was no more important than the group as a whole, and that even the poorest had a right to decent feeding, clothing and housing, was, to put it mildly, provoking in the early thirties.

1.3 Problem statement:

When I write political history, particularly in the period encompassing the Great Depression and Second World War, what I aim to examine is what I essentially determine to be change. Namely the developing change in the language of FDR. I am able to analyse this change in his public papers, his speeches, presidential orders, messages to congress, letters and the like. Common for it all is that it is written in the guise as a man holding public office. Thus, my thesis, on the basis of the theories of presidential power and the nature and philosophy surrounding American individualism and collectivism, will contain research of a qualitative method. I will analyse the developing language of FDR and determine in what sense his view on collectivism evolved, and whether he was the driving force behind the collectivisation of America and the moral virtue with which Americans regarded the social policies associated with collectivism. FDR's impact on the country and the world is by no means unrecognized, but what I seek to more comprehensively understand, is his own political view on the matter of social- and welfare policy, as there appears to be several arguments surrounding whether he was a true liberal at heart. It helps to understand that the radical party since the 1850s had been the republican party; Woodrow Wilson was the first president to run on a progressive ticket as a democrat. To simply say that FDR's policies spoke for himself

⁸ Arthur Schlesinger Jr., *The Crisis of the Old Order*, 3 vols., vol. 1, *The Age of Roosevelt*, (New York: Mariner Books, 1957). P.253

⁹ Franklin Delano Roosevelt, *1928-1932 The Genesis of the New Deal*, 13 vols., vol. 1, ed. Samuel I. Rosenman, *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, (New York: Random House, 1938). P.330-331

would be to take it a step to far, the presidency employed several thousand, and the Supreme Court and Congress must be taken into account as well – not all that America is and embodies is manifest in the president. It becomes a matter of influence as well as of character in this study. An analysis in this sense is by no means absolute, but then again, that is what makes this study qualitative.

To properly examine the primary sources, it is not simply a case of reading them matter-of-factly. The time separating me from the age of FDR is approaching a century. My interpretation of the source material is dependent upon me understanding the context of, and the conditions of the days of the Great Depression, the world war, and the political landscape of America.

What becomes the question in this sense is to what regard FDR was a collectivist, and how can this be determined? As he was president through 12 years, his developing views as the years progressed would be the most extensive by default. How did the language of FDR surrounding collectivisation evolve over the course of his presidency? Is there a basis to state that as president FDR used his presidential powers to *collectivise* America? An analysis of his language whether orally or in writing in this regard is long overdue.

Several lesser questions spring to mind as I try to account for the vast amount of material encompassing this period of time. The New Deal began as nothing more than a phrase during the 1932 election, and the idea blossomed into several programs – some small, others huge in their scope. Not all came to be under the New Deal. Some of the programs were adopted legislation left behind by his predecessors, others were the ideas of others that required the approval of the president. I therefore find it necessary to ask whether, and in what degree FDR personally embraced and was the driving force behind collectivist social legislation as a means to control the political agenda. To do so I need to better understand the influence of the presidency and the power that the office carries. To measure this there will have to be change evident – when discussing social policy, I would also for the remainder of the thesis liken it to *progress* – visible, in the language of FDR and upon the people of America whether it be changing moral values or a personal approval of collectivist policies. The thesis will therefore be limited to FDR's years as president (1933-45). I will fuse the theories of professors William Neustadt and James Barber as I define presidential power to get a more wholesome set of criteria that will make it easier for me as well as the reader to understand how FDR was able to take full advantage of constitutional interpretation throughout his twelve years.

It is also important not to forget that this progress would be impossible to achieve for one man alone in a nation governed by the principle of distribution of power. I will have to take into account the fact that the president had help, but just as important, he also had adversaries in opposition. To his advantage or to spite him, they contributed to influence FDR's actions in some form or the other.

Secondary to analysing the language of FDR I will present certain events that I, in the manner of Daniel T. Rodgers' *Age of Fracture*, which explains the rise of reactionary neoconservatism as a fracture in political ideological thinking, will apply the same principle to explain how collectivism in the age of FDR was a fracture of an even greater scope. This is to the benefit of the structure of the thesis as a whole and for the overall analysis of the subject matter. The events were key moments in a manner that affected FDR's presidency that they too however a small or a large degree, defined his presidency and his legacy. Of course, FDR over the course of his presidency presented several new aspects to both government, military and civilian life and faced off with several adversaries both domestically and abroad. The events I will focus on that I have deemed to be of collectivist significance to his presidency, will help as I see it to more clearly define his developing view on the virtues of social policies and the reach of his powers with implementing them upon America.

These certain events could be likened to fractures in American political history considering collectivist social policies are several, but for this thesis they will largely surround four key events.

The passing of the Wagner-Act which amongst other things also saw the passing of the Social Security Act (SSA).

The controversy surrounding the scheme to pack the Supreme Court after it challenged the constitutionality of several New Deal Programs.

The Four Freedoms and the virtues that FDR came to consider a right more than a privilege in the prelude to the second world war.

The G.I. Bill of rights, often also called the Second Bill of Rights, which laid the foundations for the creation of the modern middle class.

In summation the primary task of this thesis will be to answer the following question: How did the language of FDR surrounding collectivism evolve over the course of his

presidency, and is there a basis for stating that there was a change in American views of the moral virtues of the social policies which was FDR's agenda?

How did conflicts with the Supreme Court affect FDR's collectivist vision as evidenced in his language and argumentation choices?

How did the vision FDR had for a post-war world free of fascism and colonial imperialism affect his choices domestically?

1.4 Source material:

Most important to my thesis are the collected public papers of FDR. They give an insight into FDR's workings as governor in New York state, as the first volume deals with the Albany years and his presidential campaign (1928-1932). Along with this 'prequel' volume, the subsequent four volumes encompass his first term, the second set his second term. Not until 1950, five years after his death, were the war year papers published.

The volumes contain the complete dictated press conferences (all 900 of them), his speeches – from the fireside chats to the ten State of the Union addresses he delivered – and executive orders as well as letters to ministers of the cabinet and members of congress. These documents were written with the knowledge that they one day would be made available to the general public.

The primary sources are chosen exclusively out of a need to better understand how the moral virtue of terms like collectivism, communism, socialism, and the welfare state – already the widespread fundamental form of government in Europe the decades past – were viewed in America with its unique focus on the individual. Through analysis of how FDR communicated his social agenda I can more clearly see how FDR read and interpreted the American public's view in how he formulated himself regarding collectivism.

With the source material accounted for, the question remains how I will study these pages. The methodology surrounding political historical study is dependent upon several instances. With the problem statement making it clear that the character and power of FDR is essential, they will have to be studied with this in mind. As important is the theories surrounding American collectivism and individualism. Therefore a clear definition of collectivism and individualism is also important to properly understand the heart of the political study.

What remains is the methodologic approach to the source material and literature that this thesis will build upon. The method of research will also apply to when I read secondary

literature, in which the intertextuality in the works of other historians and authors must be understood in the context of their times and the views held then.

Quentin Skinner's methodology explained in *Visions of Politics* is fundamental to my theoretical approach to the presidential papers, and I consider this thesis aligned with the Cambridge school of intellectual history. This will be all the more evident in the analysis chapter. The idea of collectivism as a philosophy and ideology in the vocabulary of FDR, and that his agenda was to change, or at the least, evolve the view held by Americans about the moral virtues of collectivism, will hopefully be proven in the analysis and final conclusion. To do this, as Skinner puts it, the nature and range of words such as *collectivism* or *socialism* or combined terms such as *general welfare*, or *Individualism* and *charity* carried in the 1930s and 40s need to be understood. What did the words signify, what did they truly describe in American society? It is when I understand this that I understand the true use of the word in the context that I apply it in this thesis.¹⁰

1.5 Literature and previous research:

More has been written about FDR than any other president. Mostly because there is no equal to the twelve years he spent in the White House. This has presented me with pros as well as cons. Firstly, there exists an extensive library about his years, some of it positive, some of it negative, equal for all that has been written about him is the fact that FDR in some form or another heralded a new age in American, as well as in world history.¹¹

I have amassed quite the library consisting of literature that mostly deals with the presidency of FDR in one way or another. An understanding of what his life and presidency signified is necessary to properly know and also to better understand the man and the president he became. The library spans all the decades after his presidency, and thus I have for the most part a complete coverage of the academic sentiments directed towards his legacy. A couple of scholars stand out of the still growing mass of literature, analysing, deconstructing, and understanding the age of FDR. Most notably my bibliography looks to the varied works of William Leuchtenburg, professor emeritus of history at the University of North Carolina, whom since the early 1950s all the way through to our own times, continues to shed light on the different aspects of FDR's presidency. He is by many hailed as the foremost scholar on FDR.

¹⁰ Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 1. P.161

¹¹ Considering the foundation of the United Nations, with its headquarters in New York City, and the birth of the United States as the only nuclear superpower for a time, and the western hemisphere falling under the protection of the US as the 'leader' of the *free world*, competing with the USSR for hegemony, ideologically.

The earliest of his works I turn to is his book *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal* (1962) where Leuchtenburg takes a stand against the new generation of historians who tended to downplay the significance of the changes introduced in the 1930s¹². Including the widespread legislation, the federal programs, their impacts, whether failures or successes, all the way up until the end of his second term in 1940. Along with this book, I also include his collection of essays spanning the entirety of the FDR years, fittingly titled *The FDR Years* (1995), where he looks in retrospect on his work assembled from the almost half a decade that has passed with a fresh set of eyes, vividly remarking and looking back on the days of the presidency himself, as he grew up, and witnessed the change as it happened.¹³ Leuchtenburg is a formidable scholar, but the developing views held by FDR regarding the American welfare state is something he omits from properly covering. My thesis will therefore ‘fill’ these holes and, in a way, build on Leuchtenburg’s own work, rather than directly contradict any of his.

Lastly credited to Leuchtenburg, is his book on the Supreme Court, which mainly deals with an important aspect of my thesis, namely FDRs struggle with the Supreme Court during his second term. *The Supreme Court Reborn* (1996) is a collection of articles published between 1962 and 95, and a series of lectures he held at various universities in Texas, Illinois, Montreal, Virginia, France and Luxembourg. His main objective, which is much to my advantage, was his own desire to better understand the Court Packing controversy of 1937.¹⁴ He also gives a brief history of the Court, its role and impact in the daily governing of the Country, which will be essential to know, to better understand the struggle between FDR and SC.

Along with these extensive works, I almost felt obligated to turn to the works of former historian and presidential advisor Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. In his trilogy *The Age of Roosevelt* – the books released between 1957 and 1960 – although it will not be evident in my thesis, he mainly contemplates the importance of the man, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and how he in office was the driving force of the changes during the thirties, more than the economic or social struggles of that time. He exemplifies this most strongly in the conclusion of his first volume, *The Crisis of the Old Order*, during the interim period before FDR was sworn into the presidency, and almost became the victim of an assassin’s bullet in Miami. He enhances his belief in the theory of the *Great man* when he reiterates the events fourteen months earlier when a British politician wonders how he was not ‘*crushed like an eggshell*’ after being hit by a car,

¹² William Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal 1932-1940* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1963). Preface p.XII

¹³ Leuchtenburg, *The FDR Years, On Roosevelt & His Legacy*. Preface p. XIII

¹⁴ William Leuchtenburg, *The Supreme Court Reborn* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). Preface p. I

while crossing Fifth Avenue in New York City. That politician was Winston Churchill.¹⁵ As his works only cover his first term, it will only remain relevant to the early years of FDR and his first term.

Though Leuchtenburg and Schlesinger Jr. both states their wish to present FDR in a neutral light, they have both contributed to the favourable view held today by historians. This is fascinating when taking into account the fact they both state, that the view taken on leading figures experiences waves of popularity, and they started their academic work at a time when FDR's memory experienced an all-time low. They both wrote works that have since become almost canon to the FDR scholar, amateur as academic. The view that FDR permanently signified a change in the way the country is governed is universally acknowledged, but that the presidency in a fundamental way changed the country is more heavily up for debate. Paul Conkin, professor emeritus of history at Vanderbilt University, would have been called a contemporary by Leuchtenburg and Schlesinger who disregarded the presidency of FDR. In Conkin's book *The New Deal* (1967) Conkin wishes to demythologize the New Deal to clear the way for a fuller and fairer understanding.¹⁶ He casts light on the shortcomings of the presidency in a way that is hard to find in the works of Leuchtenburg and Schlesinger. Though he admits to being harsh on his elders, the book is written with what at some instances – at least to me – might seem as the naivete of youth, as he in some instances completely botches the efforts of several programs and disregards them as nothing more but half measured temporary solutions to programs presented by Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) in the 1960s, which he claims also solved nothing.¹⁷ Though he is harsh, Conkin represents an important perspective when studying FDR. No president in the twentieth century was loved and loathed more than FDR, and Conkin argues soundly on several shortcomings of his presidency, and thus contributes to give me a more comprehensive view on his presidency. To me it presents an essential view in the fact that he not only denies the fact that FDR contributed to the American welfare state, but that LBJ in his own way also contributed little to nothing. It is hard while processing such statements not to consider these to be nothing more than pseudohistory, but his sources and criticisms were relevant in the 1960s and remain absolutely relevant today.

All the works presented until now, have been written by scholars close enough to the 1930s and 40s that they had living witnesses and memories of their own to count upon. The

¹⁵ Jr., *The Crisis of the Old Order*, 1. P.466

¹⁶ Paul K. Conkin, *The New Deal*, 3rd ed., The American History Series, (Wheeling, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, Inc, 1967). Preface p. X

¹⁷ Conkin p. 82

biography *FDR* (2007) by Jean Edward Smith, professor of political science at Marshall University, differs slightly in this regard. Though Smith was born less than a year before FDR's inauguration, his biography was published more than 60 years after Roosevelt's death. He remarks upon the difficulty of writing a biography after all that time, for FDR had by that point truly ascended to be recognized as the great president of the twentieth century; now regarded as one of the three great presidents along with Washington and Lincoln, and thereby remembered more as a mythic figure, *looming indistinctly out of the mist of the past*.¹⁸ Smith thereby underlines the need to revisit his legacy, as the America of today is in so many ways a very different one than the country FDR departed from in 1945.¹⁹ He gives what I have come to call an important *Post-Reagan perspective* on FDR's legacy, as the 1980s were the decade that saw America break with the legacy of the New Deal years. His biography is widely praised and features heavily in the biographical chapter.

As almost the entire third – and the few months he lived of his fourth term – encompassed the American participation in the Second World War, it was natural for me to better understand the role of CiC. The only set of books, exclusively encompassing FDR's role as a wartime president and the extraordinary changes that occurred both within and without the presidency, are the war biography trilogy written by British historian and biographer Nigel Hamilton, professor of History at University of Massachusetts. Renowned for his official biography of famed British war hero, field marshal Bernhard 'Monty' Montgomery, Hamilton has a deep understanding of the importance of the bureaucratic machinery supporting the warlords waging war. In the books *The Mantle of Command* (2014), *Commander in Chief* (2016) and *War and Peace* (2019), Hamilton seeks to rectify what he considers one of the major wrongs in the aftermath of the war. Stalin lived on to bask in the total victory his Red Army inflicted upon the German Wehrmacht, and Churchill received a Nobel Prize in literature for his biographical account of the war. FDR on the other hand, never lived to be able to tell his part.²⁰ The role and duties of the CiC are detailed, and the impact of FDR's wartime powers upon the country and the world are broadly expanded, as Hamilton himself states, the negligence of Roosevelt's true role in the inner politics of the UN and America, and how he paid for it all with his life, has been recognized, but never to the fullest.

¹⁸ Smith, preface p.XII

¹⁹ Smith, preface p. XVIII

²⁰ Nigel Hamilton, *War And Peace, FDR's Final Odyssey D-Day to Yalta, 1943-1945*, 3 vols., vol. 3 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2019). P.XIII

The theoretical books are also of major importance to this thesis. I consider the books presenting the theories that will help me more clearly define presidential power especially important. Richard E. Neustadt was a political scientist and professor emeritus in government studies at John F. Kennedy school of Government, Harvard University. Before his academic career he worked in the White House staff of president Truman, and thus observed the active presidency first hand. He remained an advisor to all the presidents who followed until his death in 2003.²¹

He wrote *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents* in 1960 where he analyses and examines the position of the president. The main focus of the book's subject matter deals with the decision-making at hand within the various offices of governments and the president's ability to exert power through his influence. He also presents a theory defining presidential power, or what presidential power more clearly is, remarking the lacking definition set in the Constitution.

To counter Neustadt, and to a certain degree fill out the voids I feel Neustadt leave behind I turn to James W. Barber. He was a political scientist at Duke University, and a consultant to NBC Nightly News for several years. In 1972 he wrote his book about presidential character, some of it directed as criticism towards Neustadt's focus on the office itself, less than the person *inhabiting* the office. It makes a difference who inhabits the oval office, argues Barber, and his questions about what to look for in a president remain up for discussion, controversial as they are for considering the two-party system, in addition to the controversies surrounding recent president Donald Trump.

Quentin Skinner, a leader of the so-called Cambridge school of the history of political thought, his book *Vision of Politics* (2002) is essential to my methodical approach to the source material. Skinner explains that his goal is to contribute to the understanding and defence of interpretation of historical texts – he underlines the need to treat them intertextually, in the sense that we understand and see the belief of authors, whether long dead or alive, from their point of view.²² Even more importantly is his chapters regarding political discourse, rhetoric and language which will be important to the analysis of the language of FDR.

Essential to this thesis is the idea of the developing collectivism of the 1930s that defined the life and ideology of the American citizen. To this day the welfare state as we know it in

²¹ Richard Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents* (New York: Free Press, 1991). P.XXIII

²² Skinner p.VII

Europe, and most of the rest of the world, continues to be absent in America. Though this collectivism of the 1930s and 40s was a step on the way, it is in its own sense a very uniquely American thing. To better understand the difference this collectivism made, I read the book *Age of Fracture* (2012) by Daniel T. Rodgers, professor of history at Princeton University. The book deals with, as the title hints at, the end, or collapse if you will, of this way of living, and how the collective society as a whole, had to give way to the individual, and their absolute right of choice.²³ Rodgers discusses how this was a result of the, ironically enough, collective efforts of conservative intellectuals, and their sponsors to fundamentally change the terms of the political debate, and the mechanics of production itself in the latter half of the twentieth century.²⁴ This new reactionary intellectual right that Rodgers write about gives in a certain way also a clearer view into the workings of the old political right of the 1920s. The re-emergence of the narrative that government can be hostile is an old classic and can be traced all the way back to president Thomas Jefferson. In this sense the book's theoretical definition of the fractures in American political society is essential to understanding the true impact of the collectivisation of the FDR years.

Along with Rodgers' work I have also read several articles to better grasp the philosophies surrounding collectivism, individualism and the tradition of individualism in America compared to Europe. The oldest article *The American Tradition of Empirical Collectivism*, published in *The American Political Science Review* (1952) by Currin V. Shields, professor of political science at UCLA, and member of the Democratic party, argues that the idea of America as the stronghold of individualism is exaggerated and that the American collectivism is more unique and nuanced than one would think.²⁵

In *Paradoxes of American Individualism*, first published in *Sociological Forum* (2008) Claude S. Fischer, professor of sociology at the University of California, Berkley, breaks individualism down to numbers, and through statistics challenge the work of individualist scholars of the past. He demythologizes the *lone cowboy* image that has dominated the romantic idea of the frontier society as the ideal American society, and demonstrate how Americans despite viewing government as an obstacle and a threat, Americans also are among those most

²³ Daniel T. Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012). Prologue p.6

²⁴ Rodgers p.7

²⁵ Currin V. Shields, "The American Tradition of Empirical Collectivism," *The American Political Science Review* 46 (1952), <http://www.jstor.com/stable/1950765>. p.104

willing to defend the nation itself, even if it is in the wrong.²⁶ Fischer explains how the individualism on a political level works differently compared to for example from a religious or military perspective.

To cover individualism and collectivism has only made me question the lack of a proper socialist base in America. To answer the question why this political movement, which in so many ways and forms has shaped the political landscape in Europe and the rest of the world, I read *Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?* by Eric Foner professor of history at Columbia University, published in *History Workshop* (1984). He argues that a classless society – excluding slavery as a contributing factor – has made the need for a socialist movement to represent the lower working class, obsolete.²⁷ His take on the American political system that it is closer in spirit to classical republics of the ancient world than to the democracies of Europe helps to explain the lacking endorsement of socialist movements in times of great economic need as the Great Depression certainly was. This article appears to have certain shortcomings with regards to the ideological and political differences when it comes to separating for example Marxism, Stalinism and communism from the base political socialism. Nevertheless it makes several points about the American political two-party system and the fact that a political axis in certain instances is not needed as a result of the *chameleonesque* abilities of the Democratic and Republican parties to be what is required of them to remain relevant to the American citizen. This makes me realize that the social state as we know it in Europe in this regard, never truly has been even remotely relevant in America.

2. Presidential power – a theoretical background:

When I think about the power vested in the presidency, the struggles that follows for the president, which forces action and thus allows the power to manifest as something tangible, I think about how FDR at his death was leading the mightiest military alliance in history. The UN dwarfed the efforts of the entente of the previous world war, while FDR domestically reigned supreme over the industrial powerhouse of the world, containing half of all the world's industrial production. The power and the means are of a scale, not truly seen since the days of the Roman Empire. And the man with which this immense and terrifying power rested, was practically powerless himself. Our own king Harald V, then only a boy prince, remembering back to his days in exile during the war years remarked that 'he was

²⁶ Claude S. Fischer, "Paradoxes of American Individualism," *Sociological Forum* 23 (2008), <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1573-7861.2008.00066.x>. p.366

²⁷ Eric Foner, "Why Is There No Socialism in the United States," *History Workshop* 17 (Spring 1984 1984), <http://www.jstor.com/stable/4288545>. p.57

paralyzed from the waist down and needed help with everything.’²⁸ The president who could not walk, was tasked with leading the nation, first out of a crippling depression, and later to victory in a world war, remaining physically powerless himself, and fading slowly away as the years passed by.

Though of course his paralysis had no real impact on FDR’s presidential power whatsoever, the symbolic picture, of the paralyzed president, sitting between Winston Churchill and Josef Stalin during the summit at Yalta the winter of 1945 becomes all the more powerful, knowing FDR had become so weak at this point that the braces, that throughout the last twelve years, had contributed to the illusion of a healthy walking president, had become too heavy for him to carry, and that the leaders of the UK, and the USSR in solidarity sat down along with him, to play along with the charade he had performed to all those outside the corridors of power.²⁹

To outsiders, the presidential power may seem as something that is matter-of-factly, something that follows with the office they have elected the president to, but at closer inspection it is both more and less at the same time. ‘The executive Power shall be vested in a president of the United States of America.’³⁰ These are the opening words of Article II, Section 1. In section 2 the executive power is explained to mean that the president

‘[...] shall have power, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, to make Treaties, [...] and he shall nominate, and by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, shall appoint Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls, Judges of the supreme Court, and all other Officers of the United States [...].’^{31;32}

The president shall also ‘[...] take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed, and shall Commission all the officers of the United States.’³³

Though it is stated and written that the executive power rests with the presidency, it remains, at least to me, a problematic worry that the power almost to no further extend is exemplified or more carefully explained. For example, in Article 1 where the legislative power and the workings of the Congress is written, it is also stated in Section 7 that

‘every bill which shall have passed the House of Representatives and the Senate, shall, before it become a law, be presented to the President of the United States; if

²⁸ Harald Stanghelle, *Kongen forteller* (Oslo: Kagge Forlag, 2020). P.61

²⁹ <https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3a10098/>

³⁰ Philadelphia Convention, The Constitution of the United States of America, (National Archives, 1787). p.6

³¹ Philadelphia Convention p.7

³² As this is a transcription of the Constitution, the spelling and punctuation reflects the original of 1787.

³³ Philadelphia Convention p.8

he approve he shall sign it, but if not he shall return it, with his Objection to that House in Which it shall have originated [...] and proceed to reconsider it. [...]

Every order, Resolution, or Vote to which the Concurrence of the Senate and House of Representatives may be necessary [...] shall be presented to the President of the United States [...] shall be approved by him, or being disapproved by him, shall be repassed by two thirds of the Senate and House of Representatives [...].³⁴

This leaves room for interpretation, but the essence of these articles of the Constitution is that the president has certain privileges, when it comes to the passing of legislation. Where the privileges of the office become visible to the naked eye on the other hand is when considering the presidential duty as CiC.

Elected by the people through an electoral college, the president must abide by, and safeguard the constitution, and ensure that the federal laws of the Country are upheld by its member states. Another of his absolute privileges is the nomination of justices to the Supreme Court, an office held for life.

These are the concrete examples I am able to extract from the text of the Constitution. In a sense the examples gives an idea of the presidential power as something concrete that I can fathom, but it still does not explain how a president is able to forego the Congress and through executive legislation form several programs run by the federal government, which at first sight might seem to override the Congress, and secondly, override the governments of the individual states – a sentiment held by more than a few of governors in 1933 as the New Deal agencies sprung to life, faster than the leaves of spring.

Besides being the oldest modern constitution in the world still in use, it is also one of the shortest, based on its original draft. It certainly inspired the French in 1789 and Norwegians in 1814 as a new century dawned, and empires rose and fell. America remained happily untouched as the revolutionary year of 1848, forced reforms upon much of Europe, and served then as well as 50 years earlier as an example to strive for, the ever-shining city upon the hill, as the struggles of class, and dispute of kings and queens and emperors fared on as it had the past millennia. Constitutions were ratified as the nineteenth century passed by, and though they were newer, and in many aspects simply better, easier, and more clearly adapted to the democracies of the times, America remained the great beacon of freedom, further enhanced by the migrant waves that entered the country at ever growing rates after the Civil War. This despite the fact that legally, the constitution was dated and lacking only a few decades after its

³⁴ Philadelphia Convention p.4

ratification. It is difficult to reform, and there exists an entire own legal theory among the judges of the American courts which frequently discuss how it is supposed to be read and interpreted.³⁵

It is not unthinkable that the Founding Fathers hoped that president Washington would *create* the presidency as he went along; that his presidency would be one for those who were to follow would strive after him. It almost seems that Americans credit him with everything other great men of history cannot be, and what most clearly – and strikingly for that part – separates him from the likes of Napoleon Bonaparte, Alexander the Great and Augustus Caesar, was his willingness to leave office, to leave the power behind, in a time when the elected in congress as well as the people of the young republic would have granted him an office for life, probably without hesitation. He forsook the power of his own free will, knowing that the essence of democracy was the people's choice, more than it was his own. This is also much the reason why he among scholars who frequently rate the presidents, continue to place Washington among the three great presidents.

In this sense the Founding Fathers and those present at the Congress in New York would probably sigh in relief today. The myth surrounding Washington could seemingly appear to be just as important to the presidency as the legal framework of the constitution. Though, in an effort to make a sense of the power that FDR held, there is truly more to learn from the other incumbents of the office. Only 44 men have followed in the footsteps of Washington – 30 before FDR – and they have all contributed in a way to define the power residing within the office, for good and for bad.³⁶ Though only a few have rocked the foundation of the office to such a degree that the traces are evident to this day. The obvious example is the administrative quantum leap the presidency experienced as Abraham Lincoln who made the office less dependent upon Congress, in the decisions demanded by the civil war. It is therefore fitting that the man who created and fashioned our idea of the ideal presidency was Washington, the great president of the eighteenth century, and that Lincoln fought the civil war, while cajoling Congress, was the great president of the nineteenth century. Another example important in quite another respect is to find in the example of the wildcard and outsider, the famous general of the battle of New Orleans in 1812, Andrew Jackson, who defeated the British, and who governed as president, more through a cult of personality, than with any real influence in Congress or with the Courts.³⁷

³⁵ The main issue is normally if it should be read in the light of current times (2020), or if it should be read exactly as the Founding Fathers conceived of it during the eighteenth century.

³⁶ The president is often simply called by his numeral in the line of presidents, which as of 2021 is 46 (Joe Biden), but as Grover Cleveland was both the 22nd and 24th president, there has only been 45 presidents of the United States.

³⁷ Lahlum, *Presidentene, fra George Washington til Barack Obama*. P.102

All are they examples of various rays, if one would like it to if power was a prism that we contemplate the many aspects which sum up the presidency.

Despite this power not even in crisis will the president be able to wholly unify the elected officials in a unified front, whether it may be an insurrection, or a world war. Democracy rests upon the ability to compromise. In that regard it just is not logical to even conceive of a scenario where the president became absolute. The very fact that Lincoln was a deeply hated man – the civil war started with the election of that very man – and he was frequently called a despot and usurper, both by the separatists in Birmingham and by the opposition in Congress, which testaments this fact. A despot is simply defined as a ruler who holds absolute power, which was not the case with Lincoln, but he certainly challenged the conception of what was possible with regards to the *reach* of his powers.

With this in mind, to better understand the powers of FDR, I will firstly have to better understand what power in a presidential sense *is*. Explained in its most basic fashion, power is when one person makes another person do something that they would not normally do of their own will, despite opposition in any form.³⁸ In a *presidential* sense it encompasses so much more.

2.1 Neustadt:

One of the primary statements early in Neustadt's book takes into consideration the significance of presidential influence as an aspect of power. It is the president's ability to influence towards and make an impact on a result, and not action as a result in itself that most clearly defines the executive power of the president.³⁹ This translates to a president's ability to influence the cabinet answering to the departments, influence the elected in Congress, and influence the Courts.

For my thesis this would mean that the ability to influence and have an impact on the American bureaucracy, is an essential part of what would signify a strong and powerful presidency. This also aligns well with my current perception, broadly accepted as the usual stance that FDR's inauguration was the birth of the *active White House*, as the first hundred days that followed became the scale that all successors are measured by.

³⁸ Dag Einar Thorsen, "Makt," in *Store Norske Leksikon* (www.snl.no: University i Sørøst-Norge, 2019). <https://snl.no/makt>.

³⁹ Neustadt p.4

Because of the width of what is expected of a modern president, Neustadt underlined the necessity of a president to be more than simply an elected politician: He must be an administrative handyman; a businessman, priest, industrialist, farmer, fisherman, economist and so the list goes on. This is essential if the president would have any hope of controlling the political agenda.⁴⁰ Several aspects of FDR's presidency shine through here. The sailor, the lawyer, the newspaperman, the priest, the general, the spymaster, the gambler, the paralyzed, all are they aspects of the man FDR was, and/or appeared to be as he travelled the country far and wide, at rallies, watching military manoeuvres, listened to the plight of the poor in Georgia, the Deep South, or witnessed the derelict conditions of Black Bottom in downtown Detroit, or as he pitted his elected cabinet ministers up against each other, as they tried to win his favour.

Summarized it can appear that Neustadt's stance really is that the president's power really is rather limited. The *juice*, what makes a president *seem* powerful is really the power of persuasion in the upper branches of government, and the ability to control the political agenda above and before Congress.

2.2 Barber:

Though written in 1972, his theories concerning the character and demeanour of the incumbent president, has, after the fact, been credited with foreseeing the fall of Richard Nixon.⁴¹ In this regard Neustadt and Barber fall on opposite sides of each other with their conflicting views about where presidential power stem from. While Neustadt argues for an active presidency, Barber argues in a fashion against this, claiming that the active presidency has in truth, through the 1960s, developed to become an *imperial presidency*, in that the president has too much power. More than a theory on presidential power, Barber presents a theory surrounding presidential character, arguing that the being of the president is equally, and in some instances, the more important to examine and understand.

The presidency as a job is demanding physically and psychologically. Eight presidents have died while holding office, four of them were killed.⁴² Essential to Barber is the ability of a president to handle the strain demanded of him. For the role of America to be maintained domestically (and internationally as well after 1945), it is essential that the president's view is aligned with that of the Country, and that he has the clairvoyance and charisma necessary to

⁴⁰ Neustadt p.7

⁴¹ James David Barber, *The Presidential Character* (New York: Routledge, 1972). P.V

⁴² William Henry Harrison (1841), Zachary Taylor (1850), Abraham Lincoln assassinated (1865), James Garfield assassinated (1881), William McKinley assassinated (1901), Warren G. Harding (1923), Franklin D. Roosevelt (1945), John F. Kennedy assassinated (1963).

potentially bridge the polarizing gaps caused by the two-party system both within the bureaucracy of the Capital, but also among the division lines of its citizens.⁴³ The essence of the president's role then is to safeguard the citizens, carry their hope and protect them from fear. If this fails, then it is safe to say that the presidency, in a manner, fails. Then the president is by all accounts powerless.

According to Barber the president is more of a role model to the country than the election turnout would first hint at. Because of this the presidents every move, and every word – whether it is a stutter in a speech, or one wrong step caught on camera by chance – is carefully analysed, and taken to consideration according to what we might possibly know about the president's attitudes towards, and approaches to the grand – and the smallest schemes of things.⁴⁴ He is the face presented to the world, and has one of the few voices that does not get muffled by the unpopular bureaucracy that is Washington D.C. The potential in a voice that carries all the way home to individual Americans cannot be understated enough. One prime example that spring to mind is the banking crisis of 1933. It was the first major crisis faced by FDR's newly elected cabinet. After forcing shut the banks, he addressed the people via the radio and in a calm and reassuring manner promised them that their money was safer in the bank, than in their mattresses.⁴⁵ When the banks reopened, the people flocked to them with their savings, and again the banks had money and gold to circulate.

What makes this important for Barber to point out, is the fact that the Founding Fathers had no way of taking into account the character of those elected to the office of the president. This does in no way make it any less a part of the office. Much in the same way as the king of Norway, who has little to no say in the governmental workings of the country, his voice still carries far and is an influence to many who hear him. Because of this, it is not farfetched to think that certain offices demand a certain restraint from those who hold it. With regards to the executive role of the president, Barber warns about the influence a president can acquire, and argues that extreme sanity is necessary with the incumbent of the White House, perhaps more there than any other place on the globe.⁴⁶ The president's agenda is a determining factor in the policymaking of the term. The agenda is also in some way or form partly shaped by his being and character. I ask myself what the peace after the Second World War would look like if FDR

⁴³ Barber, preface p. XXII

⁴⁴ Barber p.X

⁴⁵ Franklin Delano Roosevelt, *1933 The Year of Crisis*, 13 vols., vol. 2, ed. Samuel I. Rosenman, *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, (New York: Random House, 1938). P.64

⁴⁶ Barber p.4

lived to face the peace, and the struggles that followed with it, from the peacetime rationing to the wave of strikes and the growing tensions internationally between the USSR and America as the nuclear arms race intensified? How would FDR's relationship to Josef Stalin influence the growing conflict in central Europe with the Berlin blockade, or the escalating tensions in Asia?

Or, to further enhance my argument, what if Ulysses Grant had been nominated for the third term, he sought in 1876 and the occupation of the South had been allowed to endure? More than mere speculation, this exemplifies the theory to a certain degree. It is not possible to simply say that the changes in what could have been different, would be minimal when considering the character of each individual president and the influence they hold in that executive office. The approach to each task would have been different in so many fundamental ways.

Summarized, the personality of the president shapes his behavioural approach to cases, whether large or small. His personality forms a pattern to follow with the means of understanding his character, worldview and values. Everything is collected in what Barber calls a *dynamic psychological package*, which allows us to better understand why and how a president act as he does. In the end it is the personality of the president that interacts with any given power situation and that in the end defines the expectations surrounding his ability to solve the situations in a manner that is advantageous to America as well as to the president himself.⁴⁷

Neustadt and Barber covers two aspects of the presidential power that complement each other. The influence of the presidency, the need for the agenda to stem from the White House is essential to a powerful president, but his character and ability to act with the best interest in a way that does not neglect the democratic traditions of the country or endangers the office in itself, is equally important. Where does this leave me with the dangers of power abuse? Every president has been accused in some form or fashion of having abused the power held while in office. Only three have faced the ultimate consequence, in the form of an impeachment, while one resigned rather than going through with the demanding process, knowing fully well what the outcome would signify for the office and the country as a whole.⁴⁸ Common for them all, guilty or not, is the fact that they were accused of not respecting the office and of bypassing the

⁴⁷ Barber p.x

⁴⁸ Andrew Johnson (1868), Bill Clinton (1998), Donald Trump (2020 and 2021) – Trump has the honour of being the only president indicted twice. Richard Nixon resigned in 1974 when he learned the Republicans would not vote to acquit in the coming impeachment trial.

limits of the office to such a serious degree that it bordered on criminal offense in violation with the articles mentioned in the Constitution. I ask myself if that is not a given that this very thing would happen from time to time, as the office of the president has expanded to an enormous branch of government, employing two thousand at the least, while taking into account that the office is still defined as is in Article II of the Constitution just as it was in 1789? Two-hundred years later the oath is the same, but the office and the Country are not.

This is not to say the constitution is inadequate. The constitution does not suit a dictator in the literal sense of the word, though it does leave room for dictatorial tendencies to arise. There is a fine line between the mandate president Truman received through the UN and the Congress as conflict escalated on the Korean peninsula in 1950 and the cunning used by LBJ to his advantage in the conflict dominating his presidency; the controversial Gulf of Tonkin Resolution was passed by Congress as LBJ withheld intel from Congress, to further his agenda, and allowing him to escalate the conflict in Vietnam at will.

The presidential power with regards to this thesis will be defined as a fusion of the theories of Neustadt and Barber. The president's necessity to set the agenda as, Neustadt states, is essential if the presidents influence is to bear any kind of political fruit instead of disappearing in the legislation passing through Congress. Equally important is it to understand the person elected to the office. His background, upbringing, and character makes it easier to understand his approach to the various tasks demanded while in office. This is the formula I will use when I present the presidency of FDR and examine his power to influence the change in the moral virtue of Americans regarding collectivist legislation

3. Individualism and collectivism:

3.1 Theory

FDR was one of the great speakers of the twentieth century. Between Hitler's intense speeches, always seeming to be on the cusp of rage, and Churchill's intellectual and flamboyant – although mumbling – articulation, we find FDR. He had no Agincourt moment of his own, compared to Churchill, when he swore that they would fight in the fields and the streets and never surrender. He never got carried away in patriotic fervour until it passed into the nationalism that was expected of Hitler, as when he yelled that in us Germany burns, and behind us Germany follows. What was unique with FDR, and what made him a great orator, was his ability to simply talk and explain in a fashion that not only allowed Americans to understand, but to also feel cared for. His prayer on the morning of 6 June as the armies of the

United Nations landed under heavy fire in Northern France was stripped of the bombastic language expected from his colleague in the UK. FDR hoped what every mother, father, son and daughter in America hoped: for the ‘pride of our Nation’ to be brave and return home safe.

It is a testament to the simplicity of his political language, that so many felt they knew the man and that he knew them as well. Though it is not above frequent mockery – he was never a literate man in the league of Churchill or some of his own predecessors, but above all, in studying the language of his speeches, letters and presidential correspondence, it is apparent that he was eloquent. That he wished to enlighten and educate, and thus gain the political base to cause change and reform, not to talk down opponents, hoping to outsmart them, as easily became the norm in the UK – this is not to say that FDR did not resort to banter or intimidation.

In this sense FDR’s way of articulating himself, when he talked about the need for social reform in America, is interesting. The word *individual*, whether referring to *you* as a single person, or as in *your individual rights*, is used by him frequently both in written and spoken form. It is used in several ways, amongst them in a reassuring manner, but also as a warning, that although the individual is sacred, it belongs to a collective unit, whether the individual likes it or not.

The fact that FDR articulated himself in such a way, makes it all the more interesting to truly examine his language and personal, and ideological stance on the matter of social policy, but before I delve into the source material, individualism and collectivism needs to be defined and explained as to what they mean in a theoretical as well as in a philosophical manner.

Currin Shields calls it a matter of fact that collectivism, and its counterpart individualism, has a long history in America, and that especially the American collectivism has simply been ignored by historians before the 1950s.⁴⁹ In an American sense the collectivist tradition is empirical in character – translated this means that collective action should only be employed when deemed absolutely necessary. Tilman expands on this by listing down in more concrete terms what the empirical collectivism of Shields encompasses: first, collective action should be employed to solve only bona fide public problems.⁵⁰ Second, collective action should be undertaken by the agent of the community best able to dispose of the problem. Third,

⁴⁹ Shields, "The American Tradition of Empirical Collectivism." P.104

⁵⁰ In earthly terms: Individual action is preferred, but in good faith, the state can be the solution as well.

collective action should involve minimal interference in the life of community.⁵¹ For example, if the worker cannot afford to buy milk, and his neighbours are out of milk, and he turns to the local community which has no way of securing funds to help him, then they would turn to the State. And if the State in no way could help or afford it, as a last resort, would they turn to the Federal Government, and from Washington D.C the worker would receive the funds to secure him milk. This is the most typical example of empirical collectivism. Shields argues it is as old as America itself, only to be approached as a means to an end if the individual or local community fails.

Why then, as the Great Depression decimated the American economy and caused mass unemployment and hunger, did still so many oppose the collectivist efforts of the New Deal? Why, as the markets collapsed and the grave consequences of the wall street collapse dawned on the elected, did they not intervene on a federal level, but instead patiently waited for the markets to stabilize themselves? Are the American scholars still in the wrong? Would helping millions of the poor and unemployed truly drain the *romance of life* from the American people?⁵²

Collectivism in sense and in form may have existed in the United States before the 1930s, but the New Deal is something very different than the three C's of Teddy Roosevelt's Square Deal, or Woodrow Wilson's New Freedom legislation which built on that of his predecessor. The sheer scale of the New Deal is what really set it apart from other social legislation on an administrative level. It fixed minimum and maximum prices for regulated industries. Enforced and tightened health and security standards in industry to regulate working hours and prohibit child labour. It subsidized and regulated agricultural output, through federal ownership to operate largescale industries like the Tennessee Valley Authority to enhance flood control, electrification and secured collective goods for public consumption.⁵³ In this sense the New Deal must be seen, according to Tilman, as the great adjuster and mediator of the conflict between the individual self-interest and the collective action.⁵⁴ Before the New Deal, before the Wagner Act, labour and capital would usually turn to violence to solve problems rather than mediating.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Rick Tilman, "John R. Commons, the New Deal and the American Tradition of Empirical Collectivism," *Journal of Economic Issues* 42 (2008), <https://doi.org/10.1080/00213624.2008.11507181>, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00213624.2008.11507181>.

⁵² Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal 1932-1940*. P.131

⁵³ Tilman, "John R. Commons, the New Deal and the American Tradition of Empirical Collectivism." P.830

⁵⁴ Tilman, p.834

⁵⁵ Tilman, p.837

Where then can we draw the line between what is *bona fide* and what can be solved by individual undertakings? According to Tilman we cannot. Empirical collectivism draws no line between what is public and what is private. The American State can only carefully manage the relationship between capital and labour if it stands to profit all partaking parts.⁵⁶ If this is unachievable, Tilman refers to the violence which preceded social reforms during the War of Independence, the Civil War, the major wartime strikes of the 1940s, and the Civil Rights riots of the 1960s. Violence on a large enough scale may force mediation, and Commons reassures us that it at all times would remain within manageable boundaries.⁵⁷

The reason why this new and extensive framework may have met opposition from both the higher ups of society, industrial barons, the press and the average working man as well, Tilman credits to the fact that the American worker was *job* conscious, rather than *class* conscious, as would more often than not be the case in Europe.⁵⁸

Not only was the centre of the industrial revolution in the England of the early nineteenth century, the feudal tradition of the European monarchies, existent since medieval times, lay the foundations for the growing class divide, which caused the massive differences in economic and social welfare of the masses. As the emigrating waves to the new world increased with each decade, the absence of an aristocratic upper class, and the class divide as a whole, made the idea of an American socialist movement superfluous.⁵⁹ Whenever society in America faced crisis all you had to do was pack up and move west with the frontier.

From an American perspective, the experiences of the life at the frontier, at the very edge of civilization, came to dominate in industrial America. The *frontier American*, though worshipped as the ideal individual, also lived with a strong sense of brotherhood, according to Shields, to his fellow settlers. He called the frontier societies *laboratories for developing and testing forms and techniques of collective community effort*.⁶⁰ Neither the Civil War, the gilded age liberalism, or the laissez-faire economic policy of the roaring twenties could contribute to forward the discourse surrounding the European form of social collectivisation, even as the American workers lacked unionization, and proper pension laws or restriction against child-labour – through all this the European social collectivism remained ‘*outlandish nonsense*

⁵⁶ Tilman, p.840

⁵⁷ Tilman, p.848

⁵⁸ Tilman p.831 Tilman refers here to the Commons-Perlman thesis, regarding the development of the labour movement since the civil war, in an attempt to explain the lack of unionization and social welfare among workers.

⁵⁹ Foner, "Why Is There No Socialism in the United States." P.58

⁶⁰ Shields, "The American Tradition of Empirical Collectivism." P.108

*unbefitting a practical people.*⁶¹ This in a sense explains why private ownership and enterprise is held in such a high esteem to this day.

Claude Fischer on the other hand when discussing works that came before, rejects the belief that American individualism emphasises individual personality above group identity and responsibility – that it is more nuanced than what might appear at first glance. Not only are Shields’ and Fischer’s work separated by over half a century, America is also in several ways a very different one. The American individualism Fischer presents is one consisting of numbers and statistics from the dawn of the new millennium. For example, Americans in a lesser degree than Germans, Italians and even Canadians, disagree that success in life is determined by forces outside their control.⁶² Americans also attribute poverty to personal traits or will, and endorse governmental intervention in economic inequality to a lesser degree than their European counterparts.⁶³ For now this further enhances the belief in the frontier American as Shields define him.

When it comes to the belief about right or wrong as defined by a personal conscience, Americans more easily overrule the individual, and do not condone the breaking of laws, state or federal, to follow said conscience.⁶⁴ Americans are also least likely to defend the individual against national interests. An American should in other words, support the United States even when the country operates in the wrong.⁶⁵ Suddenly the American individualism became more complex. It appears to me that the American individualism and collectivism appears to operate in very selective *spheres of influence*.

One of the more collective instances of American individuals is their faith. America is a Christian country, defined as such since the revolutionary war despite its foundations as a secular republic.⁶⁶ It is self-evident that when belonging to a church, the individual gives way for community and fellowship. This, according to Fischer, may also explain why right or wrong in America is not a matter of personal conscience.⁶⁷

In the same sense, the American willingness to defend and uphold the constitution as well as to fight for the country may seem paradoxical. Again, this may also be traced back to

⁶¹ Shields, "The American Tradition of Empirical Collectivism." P.108

⁶² Fischer, "Paradoxes of American Individualism." P.365. Poll taken in the year 2000. Americans at 65% compared to the Europeans which averaged around 38%

⁶³ Fischer, "Paradoxes of American Individualism." P.365

⁶⁴ Fischer p.366

⁶⁵ Fischer p.366

⁶⁶ Further enhanced in 1954 as the line '*one nation under God*' was added to the pledge of allegiance.

⁶⁷ Fischer p.367

the Frontier American, in that as an individual is a member of society you *volunteer* to be part of a larger whole – of an association.⁶⁸ As Fischer elaborates:

‘He or she joins out of free will and stays or leaves as a matter of free will; the individual cannot be drafted into or obliged to stay in a group. Voluntarism allows the individual to pursue personal goals through the voluntary association.’⁶⁹

This appears to me to be the essence of the paradox between American individualism and collectivism. So long as someone *chooses freely* to remain an American, they owe America loyalty in whichever endeavour the Country might commit its resources to, whether in the right or in the wrong.⁷⁰ The riots after the Kent State shootings and the demonstrations over American involvement in Vietnam comes to mind, as protestors in support of the war, carried signs stating ‘love it or leave it’ as the options facing those opposed the undertakings of the country, domestic and abroad.⁷¹

With American individualism defined as the people of American citizenry, with the obligation to uphold the laws, both federal and local, on the condition that personal freedom to willingly choose to be part of a larger whole remains sacrosanct, with minimum intervention from the state, only if deemed absolutely necessary for the survival of the individual, it becomes apparent that collectivism, in an American sense of the term remains the points as stated by Shields and Tilman: that collective effort and social legislation is an undertaking to be done at the least acceptable level of local government possible, with minimum infringement laid upon the individuals it may affect and/or concern as this has been the virtues given social legislation.

3.2 Views prior to and during the age of FDR:

The myth and romance of the American Frontier endures to this day, even as the fruits of Manifest Destiny has covered the North American continent with 48 states spanning from the Atlantic in the east to the Pacific in the west. The interstate highway system has shortened travel across the vast union of states from months to barely a day. The electrification of the rural areas of the Country was finished in the 1950s and even as the television with its several hundred satellite channels filled the household with an abundance of selected sources of information, still the self-sufficient frontier American remains the icon of good living. In a society sorely lacking the functioning social welfare society evident in other western countries,

⁶⁸ This excludes racial groups in the age of slavery, and later the age of Jim Crow and segregation.

⁶⁹ Fischer p.368

⁷⁰ Fischer p.369

⁷¹ <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/hard-hat-riot-1970-pitted-construction-workers-against-anti-war-protestors-180974831/> 27/10-2020

the fear of loss of freedom and self-rule continues to be the scare tactic of the opponents of social policies. As it is today, so it was also during and prior to the age of FDR.

One essential part of the problem surrounding collectivism prior to the age of FDR, was the fact that, compared to the nations of Europe, there existed no state. The average American turned to God before even considering Washington D.C., nothing more than a marshy southern town during the days of president Calvin Coolidge.⁷²

Even more, Leuchtenburg goes as far as calling president Herbert Hoover the bodily manifestation of anti-state, anti-institution and individualistic view.⁷³ The lack of an institutional foundation for a welfare state, also goes a long way to explain in some fashion the apathy with which Americans faced the crisis after the Wall Street Crack in 1929. British Mary Agnes Hamilton, whom had praised and visited New York City during the heyday of the *roaring twenties*, was shocked when she visited the city again prior to the election in 1932:

The American people, unfamiliar with suffering, with none of that long history of catastrophe and calamity behind it which makes the experience of European nations, is outraged and baffled by misfortune [...] Misled in the onset by leaders who assured it [...] that American institutions were immune to the ills that had laid the countries of the rest of the world upon their backs, that prosperity was native to the soil of the Union, and all that was needed was to wait till the clouds blown up by the wickedness of other lands, rolled by, [...] the nation now suffers from [...] despair [...].⁷⁴

Leuchtenburg also quoted another British traveller, who remarked, that *'To Americans, it seemed as if the bottom had dropped out of the world; they just could not believe it. France, yes, Germany, yes, England, why not? But America! Jeese!'*⁷⁵

And yet again, the myth of the frontier came to haunt and mislead Americans more than to inspire them to act in crisis, something which had been noted as a problem for the future as early as 1893.⁷⁶ America was no longer an exception to the troubles of the old world. One author also noted that 'Destiny' had 'ceased to be manifest.'⁷⁷ For the first time in American history the influx of immigrants was surpassed by emigrating Americans by several tens of thousands.⁷⁸

⁷² Leuchtenburg, *The FDR Years, On Roosevelt & His Legacy*. The "Europeanization" of America. P.284

⁷³ Leuchtenburg, *The FDR Years, On Roosevelt & His Legacy*. The "Europeanization" of America. P.284
Hoover had even written a book about American Individualism.

⁷⁴ Leuchtenburg, *The FDR Years, On Roosevelt & His Legacy*. The "Europeanization" of America. P. 286

⁷⁵ Leuchtenburg, *The FDR Years, On Roosevelt & His Legacy*. The "Europeanization" of America. P. 286

⁷⁶ Leuchtenburg, *The FDR Years, On Roosevelt & His Legacy*. The "Europeanization" of America. p. 287

⁷⁷ Leuchtenburg, *The FDR Years, On Roosevelt & His Legacy*. The "Europeanization" of America. p. 287

⁷⁸ Leuchtenburg, *The FDR Years, On Roosevelt & His Legacy*. The "Europeanization" of America. P. 287

FDR's New Deal was the first time Americans truly turned to Washington D.C. and saw more than a marshy southern town. For the first time FDR committed the executive office, backed by Congress, to lay the groundwork for what Europeans since the days of Bismarck had determined to be the basic tasks of the *state*. The GOP, which to a large degree had alienated its own progressive interventionist wing in the aftermath of TR's 'Bull Moose' campaign during the election of 1912, declared their open opposition to the experimental, collectivist nature of the New Deal early on.⁷⁹ In one of his fireside chats FDR answered them clearly:

They point to England. They would have you believe that England has made progress out of her depression by a do-nothing policy, by letting nature take her course. England has her peculiarities and we have ours, but I do not believe any intelligent observer can accuse England of undue orthodoxy in the present emergency.

Did England let nature take her course? No. Did England hold to the gold standard when her reserves were threatened? No [...] Is it not a fact that ever since the year 1909, Great Britain in many ways has advanced further along lines of social security than the United States? Is it not a fact that relations between capital and labor on the basis of collective bargaining are much further advanced in Great Britain than the United States?⁸⁰

Despite the rapid development of a state apparatus that the Federal State with the executive powers of the president at the helm used to fight the depression seemed like quantum leaps, they merely dragged America out of the nineteenth century. Despite the conservative fear of a potential governmental takeover, and the dictatorial tendencies they more than once saw in FDR's approach to the great depression, the simple fact that Europe already had collective social policies which protected its citizens from the worst ailments of the crisis, contributed to an image of FDR as too dynamic and too progressive, when he barely caught America up to Europe prior to the Great War.

From the point of view of a European *'[The New Deal] was a very belated imitation of [...] methods which the advanced democracies of the Old World had put through sixty or seventy years ago.'*⁸¹

The Reforms that seemed so startling to the American people [...] represent issues that have been, for such a long time now, part of the social structure of Scandinavia, Holland, Switzerland, Belgium, France, and pre-war Germany, where the first concessions were obtained

⁷⁹ Leuchtenburg, *The FDR Years, On Roosevelt & His Legacy*. The "Europeanization" of America. P.293

⁸⁰ Franklin Delano Roosevelt, *1934 The Advance of Recovery and Reform*, 13 vols., vol. 3, ed. Samuel I Rosenman, *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, (New York: Random House, 1938). P.421

⁸¹ Leuchtenburg, *The FDR Years, On Roosevelt & His Legacy*. P.294

as far back as under Bismarck, that it is impossible for a European to become excited. Indeed, the comment that rises most naturally to our lips is: “What! Do you really mean to say that you haven’t got those elementary regulations yet?”⁸²

Progressive mayor of New York City and Bull Moose republican Fiorello La Guardia was among republicans who embraced the New Deal, and he was also aware to the highest degree of the lagging state and social policy of America. ‘I am little as it is, but it made me feel very small when he was telling me what London did for housing,’ he reportedly said while receiving an MP in New York. The MP also stated boldly that if the New Deal achieved its every goal they would align with the British act of 1890.⁸³

4. The life and presidency of FDR:

4.1 Heritage, privilege and awakening 1882-1932:

The childhood of FDR was privileged, but in reading presidential history, there is nothing unique in regards to his upbringing. The Roosevelt’s were part of the New York high society, with clans in Oyster Bay, with its great patriarch TR, and its Hyde Park clan, led by the old adventurer and businessman James Roosevelt, who represented the Democratic branch of the family.⁸⁴

This is much in the same way as the privileged lives of the presidents among the founding fathers, largely stemming from the high society among the plantation owners of Virginia.

An apparent equal at first eyesight to FDR, was the recent 45th president Donald Trump, born to wealth and privilege in Jamaica Bay, also of New York State. The big difference, and what came to be defining character traits to both of them were their troubled relationships with women. Where Trump lived with a mother who was absent, FDR stands as an example of the result of a mother who cares perhaps too much.⁸⁵ Considering future endeavours, both in regards to the spending and investment of inherited wealth, and individual political outlooks that seems to differentiate on a fundamental level, despite their common heritage from the liberal state of New York, they both represent the privileged high society, and both as history has learned came to be regarded as traitors to their own class.

⁸² Leuchtenburg, *The FDR Years, On Roosevelt & His Legacy*. P.296

⁸³ Leuchtenburg, *The FDR Years, On Roosevelt & His Legacy*. The “Europeanization” of America. P.296

⁸⁴ Jean Edward Smith, *FDR* (New York: Random House, 2007). P.17

⁸⁵ Smith, *FDR*. P.31

Politically, his younger years were also, as has been the case for several rising political characters in America, built on a solid foundation made by those who preceded him. As with John Quincy Adams, the early swallow of American foreign policy, his last name and legacy was firstly not his own, but that of his more famous father, and second president John Adams.⁸⁶ More in common perhaps with FDR, who went to great lengths to distance himself from his more famous cousin TR, who became the first progressive president of the twentieth century, was the more recent presidency of father and son Bush. Where George Bush Sr. was a classical republican, moderate in his outlook, Bush Jr. was the political son of Ronald Reagan in all aspects of his ideology.⁸⁷ Despite likening himself to TR, as far as to wearing the same spectacle frame as his sight worsened throughout his schooling years, he was truly the political son of Woodrow Wilson, who perhaps quickly realised the publicity of having a Roosevelt in the navy department, as the young FDR already had traced the steps of his older cousin throughout the New York legislature.⁸⁸

That he would leave such a mark as he did, few would even have considered as he administered and modernized the Napoleonic administration of the fleets of the United States Navy almost singlehandedly, with an almost mnemonic sense and understanding of every fleet movement, from the smaller squadrons in the Caribbean to massive manoeuvres on the world seas. His administration was so effective at the American entry into the Great War that president Wilson remarked ‘Mr. Secretary, I’m very sorry, but you have cornered the market for supplies. You’ll have to divide up with the army.’⁸⁹

It was during these years in Washington D.C. and during his Albany years that he made acquaintances with capacities such as Robert Wagner and Frances Perkins of New York, who would come to be essential partners in forming the future collective policy of America. At this point in FDR’s career, they contributed rather little to shape his own rather lacking view on the issue of social policy, which he lacked real interest for.⁹⁰

His wife Eleanor Roosevelt, also his distant cousin and the favourite niece of TR was essential to opening the eyes of young FDR to the extreme poverty existing in his own state.⁹¹ This is more of an American problem, as described in chapter two regarding the outlook on

⁸⁶ Lahlum, *Presidentene, fra George Washington til Barack Obama*. P.79

⁸⁷ Lahlum, *Presidentene, fra George Washington til Barack Obama*. P.543

⁸⁸ Schlesinger, *The Crisis of the old Order*. P.334

⁸⁹ Smith, *FDR*. P.140 Whenever there was an issue related to the war effort ‘*See young Roosevelt about it*’ became a common catchphrase.

⁹⁰ Smith, *FDR*. P.81

⁹¹ Smith, *FDR*. P.47

poverty and its causes, rather than a character flaw from the part of FDR. Despite this his own character and moral was under close scrutiny, both from his political rivals and family. One cousin said of him that all he had was sexual drive, in all other aspects he was shallow.⁹²

This on the other hand was before his contraction of poliomyelitis. In 1918 he contracted the Spanish Flu while inspecting the battlefields of the western front, it was at his arrival back in the states that the extent of his sexual drive and womanizing was revealed to ER, when she uncovered his correspondence of love letters with her own assistant Lucy Rutherford. FDR's troubling relationship with women and his strange habit of surrounding himself with them has been the subject of several psychological examinations, and probably stems down to a need for constant approval and admiration, as a cause of his own isolated upbringing with only his mother as companion most of the time. This makes it practical for me to conclude that some of the reason for FDR's future need to be the sole man in control and with an overview of the whole picture and political agenda, as president both in peace and in war, was the simple fact, that as he grew up, he did not ever truly learn to overly rely on others than himself, only leaning on any female counterpart for admiration and love whenever this was a necessity.

The affair with Lucy Rutherford was a brutal awakening for FDR as he learned the consequences of his adultery and womanizing. His relationship with ER was renewed in its tumultuous aftermath, into one of a professional nature. Although he remained dependent on feminine company, he became more vigilant and focused it is described by Smith.⁹³ As a rising political star with a famous name he was quickly groomed for a future vice-presidency, but after eight years of the liberal presidency of Wilson, a reactionary Republican ticket with isolationistic foreign policy and laissez faire economic policy to counter the hefty regulation of the presidencies of Wilson and TR before them, won over the public. The twenties were to be a republican decade.⁹⁴ It was not long after the defeat in 1920 that FDR became sick while holidaying in Canada. The poliomyelitis struck him as a fever, and isolated on an island it was allowed to fester and wither away his entire lower body in an excruciating pain that he would fear and remember for the rest of his life. For a man of privilege who rarely had experienced hardships of a material nature, the loss of the ability to walk, the power of movement, and of

⁹² Smith, *FDR*. P.162 As described by Corinne Robinson Alsop.

⁹³ Smith, *FDR*. P.162

⁹⁴ Schlesinger, *The Crisis of the Old Order*. P.362

being independent must have been absolutely shattering. He not only imagined his political career, which many had invested heavily in, over, but also his life forfeit.⁹⁵

One advantage remained to FDR and he would benefit of it the rest of his life. The media of the day, consisting mainly of radio and the newspaper press was not as sensationalist as it is to this day. The need for FDR to remain vigilant at every hour of the day in case the press sought to uncover the true impact of his paralysis was non-existent. It was enough for him to bribe the doctor in charge of his rehabilitation to lie about the true extent of his paralysis.⁹⁶ In his future presidency the relations between the press with its photographers and the president improved greatly after straining relations with Calvin Coolidge, nicknamed *Silent Cal* for his introvert nature, and Herbert Hoover who while battling the Great Depression also struggled to maintain good relations with the press. For FDR the relations were good to the extent that the Secret Service simply asked the photographers not to film FDR during movements where his handicap could become obvious.⁹⁷ To continue the charade of his full recovery, heavy steel braces were constructed for him, which would lock him in place, so as to be able to, with the force of his upper body, heave himself from side to side and give the impression of walking, while leaning heavily on a cane, and usually one of his sons to lean on as well.⁹⁸

Characteristic to FDR was the chin held high, accompanied with a large grin, and a joyful eccentric personality. He was a tall man, and was called good-looking by most who met him. He not only covered the depression and grief over the loss of the power of his lower body, but he wore the optimistic persona like a cloak, shielding himself for all, including those nearest to him. Again, this is largely due to the formative years spent in isolation with few to no peers, and under the smothering of his own mother in a strict Victorian society.

It would be cruel to lay it all on his paralysis, but as he searched for the means to cure his own paralysis, he was faced with the poverty of the rural Deep South, as he invested his inheritance in a resort for victims of polio in Warm Springs, Georgia.⁹⁹ He would never recover, not even enough to wiggle his toes, but he never stopped believing that one day he might. This is essential to understand the nature of FDR's optimism in the face of crisis, whether in the form

⁹⁵ Schlesinger, *The Crisis of the Old Order*. P.369

⁹⁶ Smith, *FDR*. P.192

⁹⁷ *The Roosevelts: An Intimate Story*, episode 5, "The Rising Road," 2014, on PBS. 37:50

⁹⁸ Schlesinger, *The Crisis of the Old Order*. P.371

⁹⁹ Schlesinger, *The Crisis of the Old Order*. P.377

of financial depression or world war: ‘When you spend two years trying to wiggle your toe, everything else seems easier,’ he famously remarked later.¹⁰⁰

The silence surrounding FDR as he began his recovery, led many to prophesize not only the end of his political career but his life. Al Smith the Democratic star of the roaring twenties worked hard on convincing FDR to seek office in 1928. What finally convinced him to seek the governorship of New York we cannot be sure about, but again it was an office held by TR. Campaigning fiercely in the entire state he won a close race.¹⁰¹ From Albany he would be faced by a crisis that would force him to realign his social ideology, and reconsider the scope and reach of the power bestowed in him.

Tuesday October 29, 1929 the New York stock exchange experienced rapid decline. Brokers sold stock for whatever they could get, and as prices decreased it turned into economic carnage. Over 16 million shares were sold while the market lost one fifth of its total value. This was only the beginning of a rapid decline heralding the Great Depression.¹⁰²

Businessmen called it a market correction and a buying opportunity. President Hoover ensured the public that the market was ‘on a sound and prosperous basis,’¹⁰³ but the numbers did not lie. Farm prices that had fallen steadily through the 1920s collapsed, automobile production was reduced by half, paralysing Detroit, and the steel production by the same numbers saw jobless rates skyrocket in the states from Wisconsin in the west to New York in the east. The GDP declined with over \$100 billion and the unemployment rate passed 30%.¹⁰⁴

FDR, though initially agreeing with the prognosis for an automatic market correction, quickly realised the need for governmental intervention. As the first governor, and as the first office of its kind in America, FDR established a commission to stabilize unemployment. At the same time, he became the first governor to endorse unemployment insurance – a radical concept in America.¹⁰⁵

Despite the policies put in place to ensure the poor and unemployed, FDR still did not actively endorse social security policies or old age pension bills that would relieve the old and sickly while vacating jobs for the young and needy. He maintained that the Government was

¹⁰⁰ Lahlum, *Presidentene, fra George Washington til Barack Obama*. P.354

¹⁰¹ Smith, *FDR*. P.227

¹⁰² Schlesinger, *The Crisis of the Old Order*. P.159

¹⁰³ Schlesinger, *The Crisis of the Old Order*. P.163

¹⁰⁴ Schlesinger, *The Crisis of the Old Order*. P.248

¹⁰⁵ Smith, *FDR*. P.242

not one of charity, and that the individual needed firstly to rely on their neighbours and the locality. He did on the other hand invest heavily in public works as the only state, and organized soup kitchens and homeless shelters.¹⁰⁶

January 23rd 1932, FDR announced his candidacy for the presidency believing the time had finally come.¹⁰⁷ The campaign went better than planned from the get-go. FDR ransacked the universities for young professors to bounce ideas off of. These talks which prepared memoranda to better formulate clear solutions for severe problems, later developed into his famous brain trust.¹⁰⁸ At the DNC in Chicago the formal nomination was a tight battle despite the nominees from over 30 states and several of the overseas territories chanting they wanted Roosevelt. In the end the nomination rested in the hands of the Kingfish of Louisiana, the infamous Huey Long who cajoled and threatened the last hesitators among the delegates representing neighbouring southern states to nominate FDR.¹⁰⁹

To the shock and awe of the delegators, FDR as the first candidate in history, turned up at the convention himself to accept the nomination. He had flown from Albany the moment he won. To thunderous applause he spoke words that would come to define not only his presidency but America for decades to come: 'I pledge you, I pledge myself, to a new Deal for the American people.'¹¹⁰ *Happy Days Are Here Again* rang through the stadium.

The election was never truly a competition. FDR crushed Hoover in the greatest election victory to that date. He carried forty-two states, winning the electoral college with 472 votes. In the House of Representatives, the Democrats won ninety seats securing a 3 to 1 majority, and in the Senate, they won control with 60 seats against the republican 36.¹¹¹

4.2 Happy Days Are Here Again 1933-1940:

One Norwegian historian once called the presidency of TR a locomotive of a presidency. With this he referenced the energy, speed and noise radiating from TR as he set about following his own political agenda in the aftermath of the assassination of president McKinley.¹¹² If that was the case with TR, then FDR's presidency was a B-17 Flying Fortress. The momentum and the explosive impact in the immediate aftermath of his inauguration

¹⁰⁶ Smith, *FDR*. P.250

¹⁰⁷ Schlesinger, *The Crisis of the old Order*. P.284

¹⁰⁸ Smith, *FDR*. P.263

¹⁰⁹ Leuchtenburg, *The FDR Years*. P.77

¹¹⁰ Roosevelt, *1928-1932 The Genesis of the New Deal*, 1. P.659

¹¹¹ Smith, *FDR*. P.287

¹¹² Hans Olav Lahlum, "Verdens Lengste Intervju," interview by Mads Andersen, 2013. 22:01:00

marked a dividing line in American history and the final goodbye to an era where Government was more an idea than a physical presence. As FDR ensured the public from Capitol Hill that the only thing they had to fear was *'fear itself,'* he revoked the memory of the wartime years, and likened the Great Depression to that of a foreign foe invading America. With but a few words, FDR had materialised the economic crisis into something physical which needed to be fought, united behind a leader with vested powers to make results. Spiritual hope was born that day in March, the first of a hundred which would change the landscape of America, politically and physically.

The recent collapse of the banking system was his first great challenge, and that Sunday at primetime radio hours, he held a speech on the radio, reassuringly called a fireside chat, and plainly explained the crisis as it was, reassuring the tens of millions listening that their money was safer trusted to the banks than to their mattresses.¹¹³ FDR had yet again reassured the public with his optimistic character, and shown that he would use the power vested in him to the limits of its reach as he saw it.

The hundred days had begun: the most dynamic high speed congressional session in the history of the Republic. The crisis, paired with majority in both chambers and FDR in the executive office, paved the road for the New Deal. The banking bill, despite saving the US banking system, and capitalism itself as some said, did not employ the 15 million sorely needing income and protection. FDR's first major bills to pass through congress in record speed was the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) which took millions of young men 'of the road,' and relieved the cities.¹¹⁴ Following the CCC, the Public Works Administration (PWA), sought to transform America fundamentally, hiring the unemployed parttime to amongst other things pave highways and build bridges. Initially FDR opposed public relief programs but secretary of labour Susan Perkins, and Harry Hopkins who had led his relief programs in Albany, won him over.¹¹⁵

Even greater were the territorial endeavours FDR envisioned in the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), which aimed to transfer the natural energy inherent in the Tennessee River basin; it was in a way a massive social experiment. With huge multipurpose dams the TVA

¹¹³ Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal 1932-1940*. P.44

¹¹⁴ Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal 1932-1940*. P.52

¹¹⁵ Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal 1932-1940*. P.52

aimed to electrify the rural south, secure flood protection and ease inland trading on the river.¹¹⁶ It brought the deep south into the twentieth century.

The federal programs were revolutionizing, and brought the Country out of the immediate paralysis caused by the depression, but still more than ten million Americans were jobless. The National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA), was one of the more controversial bills FDR pushed through congress to opposition from forming blocs in both parties and from industrialists. Luckily the democratic party had largely agreed to bind itself to the FDR, agreeing to support the president whenever a majority voted to do so.¹¹⁷ NIRA was designed to regulate industrial competition, protect union rights to collective bargaining and enhance the security standards for workers.¹¹⁸

When congress adjourned June 16 one hundred days had passed. It was the most extraordinary days in legislative history, in which government had intervened actively in securing welfare for millions, and cooperated with big industries. The legislation and the presidential approach were experimental and ground-breaking in its far-reaching results. Most unique to FDR was his active participation: he delegated his cabinet but never gave them enough to make them independent of him. It was executive leadership at its finest, as only he sat with the full picture and scope of what the agenda he pushed towards truly was.

The enormous success and support in his first year had its backside. Despite the creation of a broad coalition of New Dealers within the Democratic party, the party was still largely dominated by the old guard of southern Democrats. What FDR had to show for a year into his presidency was largely endorsed by the conservative South, but did not impress Huey Long. Not because it was too much, rather because FDR did not take it far enough. With his Share Our Wealth program which aimed to levy steep taxes, confiscate personal fortunes and redistribute a yearly wage of \$2500 to every American, Long was, in a sense, both fascist and social democratic. And Long did not stop there. The elderly would be secured pensions, free college tuitions would be granted students, and veterans would be guaranteed their bonuses.¹¹⁹ FDR did not underestimate Long, and went so far as to call him one of most dangerous men in the country.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal 1932-1940*. P.55

¹¹⁷ Smith, *FDR*. P.309

¹¹⁸ Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal 1932-1940*. P.59

¹¹⁹ Smith, *FDR*. P.348

¹²⁰ Leuchtenburg, *The FDR Years, On Roosevelt & His Legacy. FDR and the Kingfish*. P.81

Even though the democratic majority barely moved in the midterm elections, FDR knew more was at stake as the primaries approached, and with no signs of full economic recovery on the horizon, and no longer able to fully keep the party in line, he had to respond in some form or fashion. At worst he contemplated sending the National Guard to clean out the *Longist* loyalists which with an iron fist reigned in Louisiana.¹²¹ More down to earth they isolated Long's allies sabotaging his efforts to field a capable opposition within the Party outside of Louisiana. Long promised 'that fucker in the white house hell.'¹²² He received from FDR a political killing blow in return during the Second Hundred Days.

More so than the first, the Second Hundred Days had a more everlasting impact on the country and were more focused in their social agenda. The legislation, though not everything was to the liking of FDR, would serve its purpose in 'stealing Huey's thunder.'¹²³ The Works Progress Administration (WPA) which largely replaced the dysfunctional NIRA built and improved 2500 hospitals, almost 6000 schools, 1000 airports and airfields and 13 000 playgrounds.¹²⁴ The National Youth Administration (NYA) gave parttime employment to 2.6 million youths not in school, and almost two million in college and high school.¹²⁵ This still did only cover roughly 30% of all unemployed and the minimum wage they received was not enough in itself. Nevertheless, it showed promise. Opposing but seeing the necessity, FDR asked congress for social security legislation which his friend Bob Wagner had been advocating. The Social Security Act (SSA) secured old-age insurance and retirement pensions, encouraging employees to partake, so that older workers could be laid off to the benefit of the young, while also setting up a federal-state system of unemployed insurance, which provided states the means to care for women, children, sick, and the handicapped, and finally for public health services.¹²⁶ Compared to the European welfare states the law was conservative and outdated, but a true historic landmark for America. FDR and the federal government had through the Second Hundred Days made an important stand regarding the role of government and its collective responsibility to its citizens. And as a final blow in the direction of Long, FDR forwarded a tax proposition aiming to more evenly redistribute wealth and power; Long swaggered in the senate as it was voted through, shouting 'Amen!'¹²⁷

¹²¹ Leuchtenburg, *The FDR Years, On Roosevelt & His Legacy. FDR and the Kingfish.* P.94

¹²² Leuchtenburg, *The FDR Years, On Roosevelt & His Legacy. FDR and the kingfish.* P.95

¹²³ Leuchtenburg, *The FDR Years, On Roosevelt & His Legacy. FDR and the kingfish.* P.95

¹²⁴ Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal 1932-1940.* P.127

¹²⁵ Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal 1932-1940.* P.130

¹²⁶ Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal 1932-1940.* P.132

¹²⁷ Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal 1932-1940.* P.152

A radical direction was staked out. And with Huey Long the victim of an assassin's bullet, the party unified behind FDR as November 1936 approached; so too did the people with the exception of Maine and Vermont, which were the only states Alf Landon, representing the GOP, carried. FDR painted America blue, winning with an unprecedented 60% and 4 million voters' margin.¹²⁸ What the 1936 election most significantly signified was the creation of the New Deal coalition, which to this day largely define the diverse alliance which make out the democratic voter base; in 1936 this meant big-city bosses, farmers of the deep south (which since the days of Jackson had been the core base of the democratic party), but added to the base were minorities; the party of Lincoln lost the black vote in 1936, which preferred FDR as their new political patron, along with Catholics, both Irish and Italians, and also Jews.¹²⁹

It was not all happy days on the other hand. Next to Congress FDR also had to take into account the judicial powers of the SC. Throughout 1934-35 the voting on New Deal legislation barely passed with several 5-4 victory margins. The Court then took a stance against the increasingly radical New Deal when it declared the Railway Retirement Act unconstitutional. FDR responded by actively seeking out options which would limit the influence of SC on constitutional questions.¹³⁰ The division between the executive office and the court became evident on what New Dealers came to call 'Black Monday' in May 1935; three 9-0 decisions invalidated two New Deal Programs, and most importantly National Recovery Administration (NRA), the keystone program towards industrial recovery.¹³¹

Despite its recent liberal history, FDR was furious at this Republican elected court. As is a frequent discussion to this day, as yet again there is a Republican dominated court, FDR considered expanding it, but decided against it. Instead, FDR planned in silence, against the advice of his friends and the New Deal Coalition, a court retirement bill, which lead to the court packing controversy. Despite vocal opposition in the party FDR remained confident as he saw it, with the people behind him.¹³²

When the progressive senators, despite feeling a sense of loyalty to FDR defected, the plan was stillborn. For the first time a true opposing bloc to FDR was becoming manifest in the Democratic party, and they did not hesitate to cooperate with the GOP in stopping the plan.¹³³

¹²⁸ Smith, *FDR*. P.373

¹²⁹ Smith, *FDR*. P.374

¹³⁰ Leuchtenburg, *The Supreme Court Reborn*. P.89

¹³¹ Leuchtenburg, *The Supreme Court Reborn*. P.89

¹³² Leuchtenburg, *The Supreme Court Reborn*. P.134

¹³³ Smith, *FDR*. P.384

The discussions surrounding SC did not stop it from continuing its own work. It was over something as trivial as a New Deal minimum wage law, with the eyes of the united press corps and government upon them the elderly judges voted in favour of the bill 5-4.¹³⁴ This was followed by three subsequent pieces of New Deal legislation passed unanimously. The nail in the coffin for the court packing plan was when SC deemed SSA constitutional.¹³⁵ FDR made one of his greater mistakes when he did not leave it at that. As is unique for the American political system for the two parties and the governmental branches to modify and adapt what is required of them at any given time in history, so did also the Court moderate itself. FDR pushed on only to see the Pension Bill refused on the Senate floor.¹³⁶ Historians are fond of pointing out that despite losing the battle over the Court in Congress FDR in the end won the war. In the immediate aftermath on the other hand, this did not save face for FDR. It seemed he had lost control of the party. Leading with a cult of personality is easier when able to show results than the alternative of hopelessly persuading allies in a battle fought for what seemingly is all wrong reasons. Conkin makes a fine argument that what made the New Deal a political success in 1936 ended up making it vulnerable in 1937.

Hurt by the loss of party unity, FDR also was threatened by a struggling industry. He considered workers strikes a natural part of the implementation of the SSA and did only encourage General Motors, the steel companies and all the other suffering strikes to recognize the workers unions.¹³⁷ It was a huge victory for the collective unions of America but public opinion in general did not overly sympathize with the unions; the violence which often followed factory strikes, although often orchestrated by industrialists with private goons, did not alter the fact that the picture presented to the public was overly damaging to the reputation of unions in general.

Despite an increased number of strikes, labour and industry could present impressive numbers in 1937: for the first time, pre-depression levels of production were reached and wages were increasing as unemployment shrank to 12% – only a third of the rate in 1933, and including those enrolled in the CCC, PWA and WPA meant unemployment was barely 4%.¹³⁸ Unfortunately yet again the hubris of FDR made him overplay his hand. Assuming the economic battle was won he slashed spending drastically, hoping to finally present a balanced

¹³⁴ Smith, *FDR*. P.387

¹³⁵ Smith, *FDR*. P.387

¹³⁶ Leuchtenburg, *The Supreme Court Reborn*. P.156

¹³⁷ Smith, *FDR*. P.394

¹³⁸ Smith, *FDR*. P.396

budget for 1938; this meant WPA was practically botched, leaving millions dependent upon emergency wages without a bright future.¹³⁹

The budget reduction was apocalyptic and when the New York stock suffered its worst day since 1929 it proved the economy was far from recovered. The Roosevelt Recession as the opposition called it, eliminated 2 million jobs almost immediately and seemingly threatened every gain made since 1933.¹⁴⁰ Few believed FDR when he said, as Hoover had in 1929, that ‘everything will work out all right if we just sit tight and keep quiet.’¹⁴¹ FDR finally turned to Congress and asked for \$3.4 billion to revive and kickstart the economy. One year later the economy had only regained half of the capacity lost.¹⁴²

The patience of congress with FDR and the shrinking New Deal Coalition was strained and his credibility had suffered a severe blow. Except from the Fair Labor Standards Act, which banned child labour and established a minimum wages hour, the congress achieved little else for the remainder of the session. FDR was disappointed and held serious grudges for the Party’s lack of total support in the court packing fiasco and subsequent recession. The waves of defection convinced FDR a purge was necessary, and he would wage a civil war of sorts within the party as the mid-primaries were held in 1938. Never before had a sitting president intervened with the aim of campaigning *against* party colleagues. The campaigning was in all aspects a fiasco, as electors FDR campaigned for lost in Michigan, New York, Texas, Pennsylvania and several other states; all the attempted purge contributed to, was further eroding the relationship between the executive and legislative branch of government.¹⁴³ Despite keeping control of both chambers in Congress it was not the New Deal majority FDR wanted. He had become a lame duck.

4.3 Commander in Chief 1941-1943:

As Tension grew between FDR and Congress, so did also tension escalate domestically. Never one for isolationist sentiment, FDR fashioned and operated US foreign policy much in the same way as the New Deal: everyone under FDR knew only fractions, leaving the agenda, for FDR to know alone. The greatest threats to America were Japan, which amassed an ever-growing empire in eastern Asia, and Germany, under the Nazi leadership of Adolf Hitler, who envisioned a world where ‘lesser’ races vanished as the ‘dominant’ Germanic people

¹³⁹ Conkin, *The New Deal*. P.98

¹⁴⁰ Conkin, *The New Deal*. P.96

¹⁴¹ Smith, *FDR*. P.397

¹⁴² Conkin, *The New Deal*. P.99

¹⁴³ Smith, *FDR*. P.415

conquered as was their destiny. FDR found the ideology utter perverse and damaging not only to Germany but a threat to the peace of the world, and here he had even fewer allies to lean on in his own party. FDR believed the best means was to contain Hitler, but as past historians have pointed out, undisturbed American isolationism was the handmaiden of the appeasement France and UK practiced when faced with Hitler's demands.¹⁴⁴

With future New Deal legislation practically dead in the water, FDR set upon a new endeavour that to his surprise and all others would secure him the support of a new coalition besides the remains of the New Dealers. Consumed with defence spending as the shadow of war loomed ever larger over Europe, a coalition of conservative Democrats and Wall Street Republicans rallied to FDR.¹⁴⁵ The economy was almost recovered as 1939 passed by, now it was a matter of proving that pre-depression numbers could be surpassed.

Even more importantly to FDR was the need to make Americans care about the crisis in Europe that fall when Germany invaded Poland and the Second World War erupted. Always ahead of public opinion, slowly cajoling it where he wanted it, FDR quickly announced in a fireside chat that 'this nation will remain a neutral nation.'¹⁴⁶ The isolationist bloc mobilised immediately opposed to repeal the ban on arms sales to the allies. FDR answered by recruiting from the republican leadership headed by his former opponent Alf Landon, and Bull Moose veterans Frank Knox and Henry Stimson, along with the entire academic establishment to support the repeal.¹⁴⁷

The war continued to escalate during the spring of 1940 and serious speculation began to arise surrounding a possible third term. Should we choose to believe FDR, he wanted nothing more than to retire. His health also had to be taken into account. He was only fifty-eight, but four years in Albany and eight years in Washington D.C. all of them engulfed in battling the Great Depression had taken its toll on the man. 'I am tired [...] I have to have a rest. I want to go home to Hyde Park [...] No, I just can't do it.'¹⁴⁸

Bound by duty or fearful to leave the task at hand in the hands of others, especially at a point in time where his own lasting legacy regarding the security of his New Deal and the potential standing of America in a post-war world, FDR in the end accepted the third

¹⁴⁴ Smith, *FDR*. P.425

¹⁴⁵ Smith, *FDR*. P.429

¹⁴⁶ Franklin Delano Roosevelt, *1939 War - and Neutrality*, 13 vols., vol. 8, ed. Samuel I. Rosenman, The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, (New York: Macmillan, 1941). P.463

¹⁴⁷ Smith, *FDR*. P.437

¹⁴⁸ Smith, *FDR*. P.441

nomination, but refrained from extensive campaigning, focusing on arming America. Domestically FDR slyly appointed republicans Stimson as secretary of defence and Knox secretary of the navy on the eve of the GOP national convention, making the divisions tearing up the party visible.¹⁴⁹ This forced the presidential candidate to take a stand on the international matter even before an election. The nomination of Wendell Willkie was in almost every sense of the word trivial. Had he not made it clear he ran for the GOP, he could easily have followed in the footsteps of FDR: he was liberal, progressive, approved of every piece of New Deal legislation, and did not oppose armaments support to the allies.¹⁵⁰ Despite being the closest election FDR had won, it was still an overwhelming victory, with continued solid majority in congress.¹⁵¹ With renewed mandate and the approval of the people behind him, America would embark upon what can only be described as a metamorphosis of arms and industry.

The words of president Wilson remained an important mantra to FDR: The United States would never fire the first shot. He did on the other hand secretly meet with Churchill outside of Canada. There he dictated the Atlantic Charter, making it abundantly clear that the age of colonialism was passed, the world they would map out would be one of free democracies.¹⁵² Being of one mind regarding Hitler and his henchmen, ideologically and on a human level they differed. A friendship would spire between them, but also bitter disagreements.

In 1941 the war entered yet another stage when Germany surprisingly and without any real strategic insight or wisdom invaded the USSR. Though Stalin proved Hitler wrong in that the USSR would collapse in on itself, the Russians were on the defensive, loosing enormous quantities of material and manpower; the men Stalin could replace easily, it was probably the material he grieved over the most. Thus, America became the supplier keeping life in two natural enemies, the colonial empire of the British and the communist state of Soviets. FDR was about to be consumed by the war in Europe. All along, it was from the far east the sudden blow would be delivered.

For decades Japan had dreamed of a vast empire to rival European and American colonizers. The fact that their war machine relied on American oil was thus a problem, which

¹⁴⁹ Leuchtenburg, *The American President*. P.193 Most interesting is the fact that Stimson and Knox both were integral to the last time fracture within the GOP were visible to such a degree, when Teddy Roosevelt ran as the candidate of the Bull Moose party, consisting of practically the entire bloc of progressive republicans.

¹⁵⁰ Smith, *FDR*. P.453

¹⁵¹ Leuchtenburg, *The American President*. P.197

¹⁵² Nigel Hamilton, *The Mantle of Command FDR at War 1941-1942*, 3 vols., vol. 1 (London: Biteback Publishing Ltd., 2015). P.36

could only be solved by securing the dominion of the Pacific, a theatre of war in which FDR was heavily invested.

December 7 an armada closed in on Hawaii, torpedoed warships and killed several thousand servicemen. Paralysis and humiliation stunned the White House as news kept ticking in. It was within hours apparent that the Pacific Fleet had been severely crippled.¹⁵³ FDR did not delay as he took the most important single steps of his life, as he alone heaved his way to the podium, terrified that the braces would give in and collapse, and asked Congress to recognize that war existed between Japan and America.¹⁵⁴

Churchill, while saddened by the loss of American naval power, was ecstatic over finally having an ally in FDR.¹⁵⁵ He sat sail for America immediately, so they could get each other up to speed on the course of the war, what was needed materially and more importantly to FDR than ever, what they were fighting towards. It was FDR more than Churchill that worked magic as he stayed with the president that Christmas: most famous and legendary was the night FDR supposedly rolled in on Churchill taking a bath, and proposed the idea of signing a pact of military cooperation to be called the declaration of the United Nations – a term and idea which would continue to grow in reach and scope in his mind.¹⁵⁶

Other than that, the belief that an allied force of American and British troops could swiftly invade Europe, relieve the USSR and defeat the battle-hardened Wehrmacht, as long as no industrial quota on the sheer number and scale of ships, warplanes, munitions and other sorts of supplies necessary were even mapped out was folly. This had to be the first step towards victory as FDR saw it, and quickly he presented a proposed *Victory Plan*. It was astonishingly clear in its assumptions and predictions of what it would take to defeat the Axis. Even should the British Empire collapse, FDR and his staff thought victory, as long as Japan was contained to the Pacific, achievable by 1946 – the demand for unconditional surrender was already set. More important was the quantity of American troops needed in Europe, Africa and Asia.¹⁵⁷ In his State of the Union speech for 1942 he made perfectly clear what he expected to be achieved

¹⁵³ Hamilton, *Mantle of Command*. P.65 Only a stroke of good fortune saved the force of aircraft carriers out on patrol missions.

¹⁵⁴ Hamilton, *Mantle of Command*. P.67

¹⁵⁵ Hamilton, *Mantle of Command*. P.100

¹⁵⁶ Smith, *FDR*. P.547

¹⁵⁷ Hamilton, *Mantle of Command*. P.107

by the collective workforce and industrial powers this year: 60 000 airplanes, 45 000 tanks, 20 000 anti-aircraft guns, 6 000 000 tons worth of merchant ships to supply the UN.¹⁵⁸

Another chief concern was that American war effort would not submit to the British in any aspect. despite more recent experience and the fact that Churchill had lead British war effort for two years, his resume when it came to strategic far-sight and tactical ingenuity on the battlefield, was not only sorely lacking, but frightfully embarrassing: the failure of the Gallipoli campaign of 1915-16 still haunted Churchill, and the last two years had seen the longest series of military disasters and defeats in British history.¹⁵⁹ This led to another unique aspect to FDR and his role as CiC. Yet again he leaned on own experiences from the previous war. Another carnage in trenches was what he feared most, and the main obstacle were the generals. The free reign they had between 1914-18 would never happen on the president's watch, as CiC he sought to fully take advantage of the powers vested in his office. The Second World War was in this aspect largely mapped out and planned from the Pentagon at the behest of FDR.

This was not for granted. Through the harsh battles of the Pacific, FDR still considered Germany the threat to be dealt with first, despite harsh opposition from the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS).¹⁶⁰ This culminated in what Hamilton describes as a *quasi-mutiny*: Marshall openly distrusted the British and with the joint chiefs behind him they confronted FDR with a memorandum arguing that focusing on Europe/Africa would threaten any gain made in the Pacific. They recommended switching operations decisively and definitively against Japan. More than anything the document left FDR disappointed. He simply turned the tables and asked Marshall and the Chiefs what their *decisive* and *definitive* plans were? JCS had been embarrassingly called by the president, forced admit that no such plans existed. FDR followed up that he suspected that a focus on Japan was exactly what Germany hoped for; for the US army to fight wholeheartedly over islands in the Pacific which by no means alone would alter the world situation by any large means over the coming years. He signed the reply simply 'Roosevelt, C-in-C.'¹⁶¹ Marshall and the Chiefs were humiliated, and after this remained fully in the fold of FDR.

¹⁵⁸ Franklin Delano Roosevelt, *1942 Humanity on the Defensive*, 13 vols., vol. 11, ed. Samuel I. Rosenman, The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1950). P.37

¹⁵⁹ Hamilton, *Mantle of Command*. 119

¹⁶⁰ Hamilton, *Mantle of Command*. P.319 More than anything they opposed FDR's plans for an invasion of North-Africa, seeing it only as a ploy by the British to safeguard colonial possessions, with no plans to uphold what they had agreed to in the Atlantic-Charter; even Stimson preferred an invasion of France at earliest convenience, even during 1942.

¹⁶¹ Hamilton, *Mantle of Command*. P.341

With the African invasion a success it marked the definitive shift, as America replaced the British Empire as the dominant power of the world. At 60 he was at the top of his game. With the Americans gaining ground and the Wehrmacht, still failing to break Russia at the banks of the Volga, the writing was on the wall. The war had shifted permanently in favour of the UN.¹⁶² The coordination of the countries constituting the Allies truly made them United Nations, and FDR envisioned so much more for the organisation. It would avoid the disasters of the League of Nations, through the cooperation and leadership of ‘four policemen’; UK, USSR, USA and China would after winning the war police the world through the authority granted them by the declaration of the United Nations.¹⁶³ The major challenge as FDR saw it was to bring Stalin into the fold. None had suffered or lost more in this war. Stalin did not however grasp the chance offered them to be part of the preliminary talks, and FDR had no intention of waiting around. The peace, as FDR saw it would not be made up of treaties easily broken.¹⁶⁴ There would be no sequel to Versailles at his watch.

The conference in Casablanca was an important step towards the new world order as they called for Germany's unconditional surrender. FDR was now the most powerful man in the world. None could compare with his ability to inflict his will or influence upon the globe; with JCS in Washington, the UN under his leadership and the fading British Empire and USSR dependent upon Lend-Lease weaponry and supplies, there simply were none to question his superiority. It is ironic how his health after Casablanca deteriorated so quickly. Excluding his paralysis, his only issue had been chronic sinus issues; no one knew how much FDR's efforts were straining his heart.¹⁶⁵ With the war consuming him he stopped swimming and exercising, his dream of walking again postponed indefinitely.¹⁶⁶ It did not help that his ‘Rooseveltian approach’ to being sick made him compare every bout of illness with his poliomyelitis.¹⁶⁷ It is a strange perspective to perceive, when thinking that FDR in the blink of an eye, went from being the centre of the universe to being left entirely alone, and still never being truly alone to grieve or process his own situation as it continued to worsen. The Secret Service, tripling security during the war, was near him at all times. They were there to pick him up when he slipped and fell out of his chair, or to clean him up when he accidentally soiled himself, but in

¹⁶² Hamilton, *Mantle of Command*. P.435

¹⁶³ Nigel Hamilton, *Commander in Chief, FDR's Battle With Churchill, 1943*, 3 vols., vol. 2 (London: Biteback Publishing Ltd., 2016). P.19

¹⁶⁴ Hamilton, *Commander in Chief*. P.23

¹⁶⁵ Hamilton, *Commander in Chief*. P.165

¹⁶⁶ Hamilton, *Commander in Chief*. P.167

¹⁶⁷ Hamilton, *Commander in Chief*. P.168

loneliness he was forced to accept that as he was perceiving of a post-war world, he himself was becoming all the more helpless.

Any serious health issue was secondary to FDR. When Stalin over the summer announced his wish to meet and coordinate with the UN, he could not miss out on such an opportunity made all the more important after British efforts to sabotage their agreements over the Atlantic Charter at the Quebec summit.¹⁶⁸ It was difficult to say what negotiations with a dictator such as Stalin would mean for the UN or the war effort in general, the only bit of advice FDR received was to be careful not to bind America to any social policies which potentially would hurt them in the 1944 elections.¹⁶⁹ FDR did not care about the election at this time, only seeking to secure the position he sought for America, as one of the four policemen. To this end, the Tehran summit would be a resounding victory for FDR.

His ability to not only remain the dominant power in the UN without resorting to dictatorial means, with both charisma and charm to befriend both a colonialist imperialist and a totalitarian dictator, is truly an extraordinary feat, unique to FDR. He knew Stalin could not afford to remain a third-party spectator on the sideline as the post-war world was dictated. FDR was thrilled by how approachable and at ease Stalin turned out to be.¹⁷⁰ The greatest achievement of the summit was the Soviet agreements to join the UN, agreements over German participation and the opening of a second front the spring of 1944.¹⁷¹

4.4 Ensuring peace, power and an everlasting legacy 1944-1945:

With the UN agreeing on the future of the war, FDR returned to an America in the midst of dramatic change. Wartime strikes were the most dramatic in American history, and despite earlier sympathy with strikers, the sabotaging of the war effort forced him to take a decisive stand against them.¹⁷² A stand which by the time of Reagan's presidency saw the dismantling of several important workers unions. On another note, FDR entered his final year in office, he would not let such an opportunity slip, with the political machinery of the capital united, to leave a final and everlasting mark on the social, economic and international policy of

¹⁶⁸ Hamilton, *Commander in Chief*. P.344 Churchills Victorian views on territorial possessions made his proposed military strategies seem all the more desperate. He proposed naval invasions not only against Italy, but also in Croatia, all to safeguard the Suez which they depended on as revolts in India intensified. He also began talks of a massive conference to be held in London after the war, where blame and punishments would be forced upon Germany, just as in Versailles.

¹⁶⁹ Hamilton, *Commander in Chief*. P.362

¹⁷⁰ Hamilton, *War And Peace, FDR's Final Odyssey D-Day to Yalta, 1943-1945*, 3. P.107

¹⁷¹ Hamilton, *War and Peace*. P.136

¹⁷² Hamilton, *War and Peace*. P.190

the future. He had nothing to lose. In his State of the Union, transmitted to Capitol Hill as he suffered a bout with the flu, he called for a 'Second Bill of Rights,' to pave the way for a new, post-war democratic society. He called it a need on the basis that 'security and prosperity can be established for all regardless of station, race or creed.'¹⁷³ The right to a job, to a decent living, of a decent home, freedom of competition, adequate medical care, protection from poverty, and of a good education, was pure Roosevelt, straight from his heart what he wished for America.

Domestically the quantitative superiority of mass production, and a giant workforce of unskilled laborers proved to beat the qualitative production of the Axis, and its highly professional workforce, which by 1944 was totally eclipsed. This also brought an unprecedented prosperity to America, emboldening FDR, inspired by the work of the hundred days as he contemplated the daunting task of converting the war economy and securing that returning servicemen had a future after the war. FDR wished for education towards high pay jobs, distraught over the poor level of education in some parts of the country. The returning veterans would level the playing field, as a means for him to introduce federal aid to education.¹⁷⁴ With the aid of veteran groups he also convinced Congress to embrace the idea of unemployment insurance, job counselling, medical care, and guaranteed low-cost loans for buying homes or farms. This was the essence of the G.I. Bill and its impact on the collective prosperity of post-war America cannot be overstated enough, it revolutionized America.¹⁷⁵ Internationally, what FDR feared most was the re-emergence of isolationism. 'Through [...] science the world has become so much smaller [...] we have to discard the geographical yardsticks of the past.'¹⁷⁶ The age when democracies fended for themselves was past in the mind of FDR, global collective collaboration was the future.

As D-Day approached the president's health continued to decline: Acute congestive heart failure was the diagnosis, and his diet, smoking, and workload was severely reduced.¹⁷⁷ FDR delegated what he could domestically, all that mattered was the war. He found some joy in that his rapid weight loss, would one day make it easier to walk, and that the strain on the steel braces would not be as it had been in his early presidency. The doctors on the other hand, considered the damage and strain caused to his heart to be irreversible; they did not tell FDR,

¹⁷³ Franklin Delano Roosevelt, *1944-45 Victory and the Threshold of Peace*, 13 vols., vol. 13, ed. Samuel I. Rosenman, *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1950). P.40

¹⁷⁴ Smith, *FDR*. P.584

¹⁷⁵ Smith, *FDR*. P.585

¹⁷⁶ Hamilton, *War and Peace*. P.185

¹⁷⁷ Hamilton, *War and Peace*. P.222

because he did not ask, but the fact was written all over his hollowed-out face and dark ringed eyes: the president was dying.¹⁷⁸

With solemn prayer, FDR, comforted Americans as Operation Overlord commenced June 6. The trial which FDR had bloodied Americans for in Africa was passed in the hedge mazes of Normandy. With a foothold in France, victory was only a matter of time. Domestically America prepared for its first wartime election since 1864, and the Democratic leadership aimed for power through to 1948, but FDR confided personal qualms involved: '[...] I just hate to run again for election.'¹⁷⁹ He openly stated his wish to retire, but could not get himself to do it before victory was secured and his vision fulfilled. He revealed plans to seek renomination early, as he felt it was his duty now to see it through to the end. This time though, he did not care the least who the DNC nominated as his running man. The democratic leadership took advantage of this to the fullest and nominated Harry S. Truman, senator of Missouri, mostly because he was 'nobody' and they considered him easier to control than FDR at any point of his career had been.¹⁸⁰ The rumours and belief among the DNC and the press, surrounding FDR's health made the election of running man all the more critical; few doubted that the next president was elected on the running man ticket.¹⁸¹

Despite an increasing chorus of voices calling for FDR to finally retire, as his health would not allow him four more years, FDR and his doctors lied that apart from a yearly bout with influenza and his chronic sinus, he remained healthy in body and sound of mind; the presidential approval of the Morgenthau Plan made it clear for all in his inner circle that this in no way was the truth. Hamilton called it *the crisis that should never have taken place*.¹⁸² It called for the dismantling of German heavy industry, forcing the country back to an agricultural economy of eighteenth-century standards. It was free propaganda as Goebbels saw it, making it all the clearer what the German people faced in defeat.¹⁸³ Even Churchill who had envisioned punishment of Versailles proportions shivered when FDR greenlit the plan.¹⁸⁴ In the end Stimson openly protested calling it *Carthaginian* and reminding the president that it clashed with the ideals proposed by FDR in the Atlantic Charter and the Four Freedoms.¹⁸⁵ It dawned

¹⁷⁸ Hamilton, *War and Peace*. P.232

¹⁷⁹ Hamilton, *War and Peace*. P.255

¹⁸⁰ Smith, *FDR*. P.620

¹⁸¹ Smith, *FDR*. P.620

¹⁸² Hamilton, *War and Peace*. P.359

¹⁸³ Hamilton, *War and Peace*. P.359

¹⁸⁴ Hamilton, *War and Peace*. P.364

¹⁸⁵ Hamilton, *War and Peace*. P.366

upon FDR shortly before the election, but the damage was done. It was free mana for the Axis and it deeply embarrassed and ashamed Morgenthau, a close friend of FDR since the Albany days.¹⁸⁶

The election was yet again a formality, FDR proved himself to still own the campaign trail when he made the GOP a laughing stock for accusing him of forgetting his dog Fala on the Aleutians, ordering a destroyer back after him.¹⁸⁷ His opponent Thomas Dewey never recovered, but the margins shrank yet again. The same could be said about the health of FDR. The widow after Woodrow Wilson, attending the inauguration, reduced to a short speech from a White House balcony that January, was shocked by what she saw: ‘He looks exactly as my husband did when he went into his decline.’¹⁸⁸

Since last inauguration FDR had passed more than 300 executive orders, creating 100 new agencies in 1942 alone. Between 1940-1945 the number of federal employees quadrupled from one to four million. During the war years, government spent more than the total sum of every federal budget since 1789.¹⁸⁹ 12 years were behind FDR. It is difficult in retrospect to know what must have gone through his head as he was inaugurated for another four. He must have known his life was fading away, and whether it was hubris or an undeniable fact, he truly believed – as those around him did – that he was the only one who could lead America, and the world, in building a sustainable post-war peace.

The culmination of all he had worked towards would be settled on the Crimean Peninsula, in the abode of the once mighty czars. The journey was the longest and most demanding of FDR, whom at this point was cared for by his daughter Sara. Churchill was horrified by how sickly FDR looked. Too weak to wear the heavy steel braces Churchill walked by his car, truly worried for the president. A comradeship and deep friendship had developed between them over the course of the war, and despite an unhealthy diet and alcoholic consumption, Churchill seemed not only fit, but the image of health next to FDR. Churchill became immediately protective of FDR, almost like an older brother, nervous what his health would mean for the coming meeting with Stalin.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ Hamilton, *War and Peace*. P.369

¹⁸⁷ Smith, *FDR*. P.625 The speech has been called the ‘greatest’ of his political career.

¹⁸⁸ Smith, *FDR*. P.629

¹⁸⁹ Leuchtenburg, *The American President*. P.218

¹⁹⁰ Hamilton, *War and Peace*. P.408

The Yalta Summit was important for several reasons: FDR hoped to bring home signatures committing them to the establishing of UN as an organization for securing post-war peace. Secondly was the need to solidify the demand for an unconditional surrender and the subsequent occupational treatment of Germany, and finally, Russian intervention in the war against Japan.¹⁹¹

FDR led the meetings, had private conversations with Churchill and Stalin, and received their support and full commitment to the UN, along with the 26 nations which signed the declaration in 1942. Furthermore, a conference would be held somewhere in America by the end of April as an inaugural meeting formalising the organisation, and every free nation that declared war on Germany was invited to join.¹⁹²

FDR had achieved what he most desired. American participation and leadership in a post-war world were secured. A setback on the other hand, particularly for Churchill, was the fact that FDR did not commit to force Stalin out of Poland, already liberated and installed with a communist regime. The best he could manage was to make Stalin promise elections would be held, purely symbolic, and to no real consolation for the British who had entered the war over their guarantees for a free Poland.¹⁹³

He left Russia, even weaker than when he arrived. He was grey when he arrived home, immediately summoning Congress to brief them on the summit. For the first time he sat while addressing them, and openly excused himself with the fact that he was indeed paralysed.¹⁹⁴ The press speculated about how long he had left, whether he suffered from dementia, and how long before he was reduced to the state in which Wilson found himself his last year in office.¹⁹⁵

Prime minister King of Canada however, found that despite FDR *'wearing the face of death upon him,'* was sharp as usual and predicted the end of the war in Europe down to the week. He also made clear that he would not hesitate to bomb Japan to oblivion if that was indeed demanded; as FDR was responsible for the atom-bomb he would not, when the time came, hesitate to use it.¹⁹⁶ Of all modern weaponry invented through the course of warfare, FDR's America would be responsible for the most devastating single weapon.

¹⁹¹ Hamilton, *War and Peace*. P.410

¹⁹² Hamilton, *War and Peace*. P.437

¹⁹³ Hamilton, *War and Peace*. P.451

¹⁹⁴ Roosevelt, *1944-45 Victory and the Threshold of Peace*, 13. P.570

¹⁹⁵ Hamilton, *War and Peace*. P.465

¹⁹⁶ Hamilton, *war and Peace*. P.474

It was with careful optimism that FDR braced himself for the peace looming on the horizon. It was much to be done, but he looked forward to retiring, to perhaps be the first president in history to leave office in the middle of a term. Few had earned it more. He reconnected with ER, who found pleasure in his company. FDR knew he had needed ER at every step of the way, an anchor in some aspects, holding him back, a sail in others pushing him on. He talked about travelling the world, to see it heal with his own eyes; one particular dream of his, as it had been Lincoln's before him, was to see the Holy Land.¹⁹⁷ He had so much he wanted to do, but the one thing FDR simply could not talk over or persuade, over which he had no control, was life itself, and his was burning out.

Through his last years, evermore consumed by the war, FDR had in his loneliness, requested from his daughter the opportunity to reconnect with Lucy. Through the thirty years which had passed since they parted, his love for her had only grown, both deeper and more intense. '*A romance which endures thirty years is not an affair,*' stated one historian.¹⁹⁸ They reconnected and it was like no time had passed. Lucy was as beautiful in FDR's eyes as during his secretary years, and she still found him wonderful. FDR did not have to be alone anymore. In march, as the red army encircled Berlin, FDR travelled to Warm Springs to rest and prepare for the UN convention in San Francisco. With him was Lucy, and despite him being tired, he truly was happy and very much in love. Their relationship was now one of a spiritual and emotional depth, which would have been impossible to find in FDR before his paralysis.¹⁹⁹ He had truly grown to become something more, both as a man and also as a president.

April 12, he sat working on his stamp collection when he suddenly slumped forward in his seat. One of his assistants came to him asking if he had dropped something. FDR smiled although he was in terrible agony. 'I have a terrific pain in the back of my head.'²⁰⁰ He collapsed and never awoke – he had suffered a massive cerebral haemorrhage. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the longest serving president of the United States, the mightiest man in the world, was dead.

4.5 Summary – The Legacy:

ER received the news and it became a question of getting the cabinet together, alert Congress, Pentagon, the leaders of the UN and not the least VP-Truman who had the daunting task of taking up the mantle from FDR.

¹⁹⁷ *The Roosevelts: An Intimate History*, episode 7, "A Strong and Active FAith,"2014. 00:48:00

¹⁹⁸ Hamilton, *War and Peace*. P.489

¹⁹⁹ Hamilton, *War and Peace*. P.497

²⁰⁰ Hamilton, *War and Peace*. P.497

‘Harry, the president is dead,’ is what Eleanor Roosevelt greeted him with when he finally arrived in the White House.

‘Is there anything I can do for you?’ Truman instantly asked despite the shock, only to have ER smile and shake her head.

‘No,’ she said, ‘is there anything *I* can do for *you*? For you are the one in trouble now.’

And he was in trouble indeed. After Truman was sworn in, the staff of the White House announced the president’s entry, only to have the announcer burst into tears, when instead of FDR being wheeled in, president Truman greeted a sombre White House grieving the passing of a president, whose shadow would ever reside over the executive office.²⁰¹ Throughout the Capital whose splendid buildings of departments and ministries were a testament to the expansion of powers of Government, the population received the news with disbelief. People walked down the streets mouthing ‘*president Truman, Truman*’ as if practicing a foreign language.²⁰² As to be expected in a monarchy Americans had after more than a decade seemingly come to expect that FDR always would be there.

‘Boys, if you ever pray, pray for me now,’ Truman told the press corps covering the occasion from the White House, making his feelings about the sudden transition as more a cruel trick of fate than an acation worthy of celebration as a testament to the resilience of American democracy, despite the circumstances. ‘I don’t know whether you fellows ever had a load of hay fall on you. But when they told me yesterday what happened it felt like the moon, the stars and all the planets had fallen on me.’²⁰³ For such was the magnitude of the burdens now encapsulated in the office of the presidency, and that FDR had carried for the past twelve years.

The radios were abuzz with the latest news from Washington D.C and Warm Springs. Not since 1865 had such a sorrow stained what would otherwise have been a time for celebration. Only in Berlin, besieged by the Red Army and laid to ruin by the efforts of the destructive bombing raids conducted by UN air forces did there seem to be room to celebrate the death of a statesman. Adolf Hitler, Führer of what he imagined a thousand-year German Reich was isolated in his ruined capital, which he still envisioned to compete with ancient Babylon and imperial Rome, while his henchmen continued to bow and do their utmost to obey his delirious orders, manoeuvring imaginative army groups around the map. Hitler remembered

²⁰¹ William Leuchtenburg, *In the Shadow of FDR* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2009). P.2

²⁰² Leuchtenburg, *In the Shadow of FDR*. P.2

²⁰³ Leuchtenburg, *The American President: From Teddy Roosevelt to Bill Clinton*. P.244

Frederick the Great in his greatest hour of crisis. The Russian tsarina died and the anti-Prussian coalition of the Seven Years War collapsed and saved Prussia; the death of FDR could only mean the same for Hitler, even as it was Russian and Polish armies surrounding Berlin, with American army groups still far to the west. For Nazis it was the end of a dream, and a rude awakening it would turn out to be.

And in America people lined the railways in sorrow between Warm Springs and Washington D.C. offering the CiC a final salute as his coffin was taken to lie in state. A great sorrow swept the country as an entire generation grown up under FDR realised that his voice never would comfort or guide through the radio ever again.

As his mortal remains departed from the White House to his final resting place in Hyde Park New York, where he had yearned to retire for so long, a man collapsed as the carriage passed him by. A worker came to him and helped him stand. 'Did you know the president?' the worker asked the grieving man.

'No,' he answered, 'but the president knew me.'²⁰⁴

On the funeral train on the other hand, filled to the brim with loyalists of FDR and the new president, there was not only room for sorrow, but anger. Truman later recalled how Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes carried on about how the Country and the world would go to hell without Roosevelt. Truman truly believed he said it for him to hear it alone.²⁰⁵

Despite the belief some Americans had come to take for granted, that FDR would always be in the White House, it is no understatement in saying that historically FDR came like the wind, like the wind touched everything, and like the wind was gone. To think in our own time, seventy-six years after his death, that the presidency of FDR encompassed over a decade, 12% of the entire twentieth century, is hard to even comprehend. His presidency and its impact on America and the world are without equal; the framework for an everlasting world peace is of his design to this day. It is not too far-fetched to state in such bold terms that not since the Roman Caesars has there existed a man with such a direct influence on the course of the known world as a whole. Pax Americana, the American peace has reigned since 1945, to an even greater extent after the collapse of the USSR in 1991. Only China, one of the four policemen envisioned by FDR during the creation of the UN, is seen as a potential challenger of the American

²⁰⁴ *The Roosevelts: An Intimate History*. 01:01:00

²⁰⁵ Leuchtenburg, *In the Shadow of FDR*. P.3

hegemony as the super power of the world, and still the power and extent of America eclipses the combined might of the great military nations of the world.

Such was the everlasting image of FDR, that Leuchtenburg describe the legacy of FDR as a radiant everlasting imprint on the executive office, that all who have followed him reigns with the awesome and supreme powers he vested and concentrated in the executive office in the presidency, but they do so in his shadow.²⁰⁶

Rexford Tugwell, economist and part of FDRs first braintrust took it even farther in his comparisons to justify the greatness and impact of the age of FDR when he wrote that *'No monarch [...] unless it may have been Elizabeth or her magnificent Tudor father [...] or maybe Alexander or Augustus Caesar, can have given quite that sense of serene presiding, of gathering up into himself, of really representing a whole people.'*²⁰⁷

5. The Language of FDR – An Analysis:

5.1 Ideas and Method

In *Age of Fracture* Daniel T. Rodgers' prologue chapter is titled *'It's a war of ideas'* and he argues for the existence of breaking points and definitive fault lines to which we delegate and categorize certain periods and ages of American history and also how we relate to certain ideas and concepts considering any given historical period of time.²⁰⁸ Though his book mainly focuses on the decline and collapse of the New Deal Coalition with the election of president Reagan, his book is valuable in that it also shed light on the political and intellectual bearings of social thought throughout the 1930s and 40s, and how Reagan as the first president truly broke away from the legacy of the age of FDR.

Power as an idea rests upon an everchanging foundation – presidential power perhaps even more so. Already we have defined presidential power through the fusion of Neustadt and Barber as a given on the president's part to set the agenda if his influence is to result in political breakthroughs rather than be muted by Congress, and to also understand the person elected to the office and his character, which has been examined in the biographical chapter.

The most powerful weapon at FDR's disposal was language. Through his use of language FDR not only advised the citizens on any given agenda; through the executive office of the presidency and the power granted in him, he was given an exclusive opportunity to define

²⁰⁶ Leuchtenburg, *In the Shadow of FDR*. P.2

²⁰⁷ Leuchtenburg, *The American President: From Teddy Roosevelt to Bill Clinton*. P.163

²⁰⁸ Rodgers, *Age of Fracture*. P.3

and shift views on morality.²⁰⁹ The question as defined by the problem statement becomes what exactly FDR was trying to do, and in which way did it contribute to the debate surrounding American individualism and collectivism?

The analysis of FDR's language will encompass campaign speeches, fireside chats, State of the Union Addresses and whatever else the presidential papers may contain credited to FDR which may be of relevance. Throughout the analysis I will point out certain remarks and quotes which I will define as ground-breaking in their significance for the overall views and opinions of FDR, but also how they eventually contributed to the ever-shifting moral view on certain social legislation and collectivism in general in America – at least as they were in the age of FDR.

But apart from defining individualism and collectivism in an American context, and giving a biographical overview of FDR's endeavours, it is also necessary to understand what the American view on social policies was before and during the age of FDR, and when the *fracture* in this sense appeared during his presidency. The way FDR expressed himself and the use of words and key phrases is therefore vital to the analysis. As Skinner underlines in *Visions of Politics*: 'It is in large part by the rhetorical manipulation of these terms that any society succeeds in establishing, upholding, questioning or altering its moral identity.'²¹⁰

The fact that FDR in 1933 was politically and morally leagues away from endorsing the collectivist policies evident in the G.I. Bill of 1944 makes this an even stronger argument. As Skinner states, 'the rise within a given society of new forms of social behaviour will generally be reflected in the development of corresponding vocabularies in which the behaviour in question will then be described and appraised.'²¹¹ Next to this he suggests that a general disapproval of, and an absence of praise for current policies may also contribute to a change in current view on – what in the case of this thesis will mainly revolve around social policies – whether they are New Deal Alphabet-Soup-Programs or social legislation such as the SSA.²¹² This is rhetoric in general as Plato and Aristotle envisioned it more than two thousand years ago, and a conclusion to either of the theories Skinner proposes will only reveal itself through actions rather than discussions surrounding whether language and policy remains normative or is practiced in full. Agency is therefore also of importance when weighing the power residing

²⁰⁹ Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 1. P.145

²¹⁰ Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 1. P.149

²¹¹ Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 1. P.179

²¹² Skinner, *Visions of Politics*. P.181

in the words of FDR. In politics statements or mere utterances of phrases and slogans will often not be enough. Results will be of utmost importance to fully appreciate the weight and virtue of his language. Through this it will be evident that what FDR aimed to achieve was to impose a new moral vision upon the country.²¹³ One which I will argue contributed to increased collectivism in America.

FDR was in no way virtuous in a sense which Cicero would approve. More than anything FDR was a pragmatic Machiavellian in how he sought to influence and change America: he could camouflage his words and wrap his message and vision in the coat of the local population as he saw fit. He would praise the virtues of the New England States pleasing liberal urban democrats when in Boston, while with a rare audacity, unafraid of being called out, trash those exact virtues in the states of the Deep South, appeasing the conservative democrats with the fact that the executive office still to the heaviest degree looked south, and whose influence and dependence he never truly escaped from throughout his presidency. FDR was an idealist, albeit a realistic one, and more importantly, he was a true political visionary.

5.2 1930-1932 The Making of an Agenda

I accuse the present Administration of being the greatest spending Administration that has piled bureau upon bureau, commission on commission and has failed to anticipate the dire needs and the reduced earning power of the people. Bureaus and bureaucrats, commissions and commissioners have been retained at the expense of the taxpayer.^{214;215}

This could easily be read as a speech by Wendell Wilkie during the 1936 campaign, criticizing the executive office in overriding Congress with federal alphabet soup programs, further increasing the influence of the White House. To realise that these are the words of FDR, proclaimed the autumn of the election of 1932, is quite interesting, almost hard to believe. He is not only accusing the Hoover administration of overspending; he is accusing the Administration of doing *too* much. In another campaign address on federal budget spending held in Pittsburgh he attacked Hoover even harder:

[...] the Department of Commerce went through [...] the days of the World War on about 13 millions a year. When Secretary Hoover left it, it was spending 39 millions a year; and this year it is estimated it will be spending 43 millions a year. [...] That, my friends, may explain the 50 percent increase in Government overhead in four

²¹³ Skinner, *Visions of Politics*. P.182

²¹⁴ Roosevelt, *1928-1932 The Genesis of the New Deal*, 1. Address on Agriculture and Tariffs, Sioux City, Ia. Sept. 29, 1932. P.761

²¹⁵ As these quotes are transcriptions found in the presidential papers published in the 1930s, 40s and 50s the spelling and punctuation will reflect this.

years, 1927-1932 [...] It is committed to the idea that we ought to center control of everything in Washington as rapidly as possible – Federal control. [...] Ever since the days of Thomas Jefferson, that has been the exact reverse of the democratic concept, which is to permit Washington to take from the States nothing more than is necessary to keep abreast of the march of our changing economic situation.²¹⁶

FDR is by all accounts an avid protégé and believer in the idea of the classical republic the Founding Fathers were inspired by, and the agrarian, frontier-based society, protected by the liberal statutes of the Constitution as envisioned by Jefferson, where the minutemen militia would be summoned if threatened by a foreign foe, and a police force would see that the law was upheld by the citizens. In criticizing Hoover, the last *laissez faire* president, of forcing government upon the individual, in an age when government was barely considered an official institution in America, and of overspending and expanding federal bureaus, would initially set the bar low for FDR.

What then did he say about collectivist policy before his presidency? As governor of New York, we already know that his public relief programs were the first of their kind, several of them active years prior to his accusation of Hoover doing too much:

Such communities where there is no unemployment are almost utopian, for even in times of prosperity there are always some unemployed [...]

The first principle I would lay down is that the primary duty rests on the community, through local government and private agencies, to take care of the relief of unemployment. But we then come to a situation where there are so many people out of work that local funds are insufficient.

It seems clear to me that the organized society known as the State comes into the picture at this point. [...]

‘What is the State? It is the duly constituted representative of an organized society of human beings, created by them for their mutual protection and well being. One of the duties of the State is that of caring for those of its citizens who find themselves the victims of such adverse circumstances as make them unable to obtain even the necessities of mere existence without the aid of others.

‘[...] To these unfortunate citizens aid must be extended by the Government – not as a matter of charity, but as a matter of social duty.’

[...] In the words of our Democratic national platform, the Federal Government has a ‘continuous responsibility for human welfare, [...]’²¹⁷

²¹⁶ Roosevelt, *1928-1932 The Genesis of the New Deal*, 1. Address on the Federal Budget, Pittsburgh, Pa. Oct. 19, 1932. P.808

²¹⁷ Roosevelt, *1928-1932 The Genesis of the New Deal*, 1. Radio address on Unemployment and Social Welfare. Albany, N.Y. Oct. 13, 1932. P.786-795

Empirical collectivism is evident from the get-go in the language of FDR. And it becomes evident quickly that there was a certain way FDR phrased himself when talking about collective responsibility:

All agree that the first responsibility for the victims of the depression rests upon the locality – its individuals, organizations and Government. It rests, first of all, perhaps, upon the private agencies of philanthropy, secondly, other social organizations, and last, but not least, the Church. [...] ²¹⁸

Although FDR called the Jeffersonian vision of America his ideal, his progressive legislative history, as evident in the biographical chapter stands out to counter such statements; he would break with the democratic view of Jeffersonian Classical Republicanism when it simply was not practical. This was evident already throughout his governorship as he battled the Great Depression in New York State, he already knew the potential of power vested in a governmental body, whether it be local, State or Federal:

The most striking and important difference between the civilization of today and the civilization of yesterday is the universal recognition that the first duty of a State, and by that I mean a Government, is to promote the welfare of the citizens of that State. It is no longer sufficient to protect them from invasion, from lawless criminal acts, from injustice and persecution, but the State must protect them, so far as it lies in its power, from disease, from ignorance, from physical injury, and from old-age want.

It is difficult for us who live in the present day to realize what a tremendous change this is from the time, comparatively recent in the world's history, when the State was the instrument of despots for their own aggrandizement and the great body of its citizens were mere serfs, chattels, or cannon fodder at the service of their overlords. ²¹⁹

Whether it was Bismarck, Stalin, Napoleon or George III, the state they each represented was one which Americans feared. For FDR the job of presenting the state as an instrument of good, must have been daring and not without opponents in his own inner circle. That he already before his election advocated to the benefit of the state, should have been forewarning enough that he never truly feared that Republicans did too much, it was simply a question of being on the right side of power when it began manifesting itself in Washington D.C. The speech did not end at that:

We speak lightly of this being the era of Democracy without realizing what a tremendous change has been brought about, or how it has revolutionized the everyday existence of every one of us. In this building up of theory of government “by the people, for the people” our country has been the leader of the civilized

²¹⁸ Roosevelt, *1928-1932 The Genesis of the New Deal*, 1. P.776-778

²¹⁹ Roosevelt, *1928-1932 The Genesis of the New Deal*, 1. P.330-331

nations of the world, and I think I can proudly add that our State has been the leader in our country. Nor do I think it an exaggeration to attribute our progressive position very largely to intelligent, tireless and systematic efforts, for almost sixty years, of the State Charities Aid Association. For while there has been a constantly growing understanding of this real and most important function of government, legislation, as is always the case, has followed with lagging and hesitant footsteps.

It is always easy to say that the State must look after the welfare of its citizens, but translate that into terms of law and to create additional agencies of government to make such laws effective is not an easy matter, and can be expedited only by the rousing of public attention and the wise direction of public interest on the part of unselfish organizations such as yours.²²⁰

Empirical collectivism and how it had been appropriated in America was explained to the letter here. The recipe for how the future New Deal would operate was also evident in the same lines. FDR to some degree openly recognized the need for a shift in public view on social legislation and what that would signify for the people. Where charity and good neighborhood was enough prior to the crisis, the continuing economic crisis had made evident to FDR the need for governmental intervention, and more than that, bold experimentation and social policy of the like which America had not seen the likes of in all of its legislative history.

5.3 1933-36 – Social Experimentation

After having been sworn in, he continued to focus on local relief and charity, as he did while proposing the Unemployment Relief Bill:

[...] The principle which I have on many occasions explained is that the first obligation is on the locality; if it is absolutely clear that the locality has done its utmost but that more must be done, then the State must do its utmost. Only then can Federal Government add its contribution to those of the locality and the State.²²¹

Despite having embraced the fact that social legislation was necessary, he would still not commit in word to anything more than what would resemble collectivism of an empirical nature as described by Tilman. Not long after this he again remarked on this importance to the Administrators of said relief:

[...] As to this relief money that the Federal Government is putting up, I think it should be made perfectly clear that it is only to be used where the localities have done everything that they can possibly be asked to do, both through private charity and public appropriation, and that the State Governments have done everything that they could possibly do within reason. If that is not sufficient and the Federal funds are needed, that is where these funds are to be used. [...] It is essential that States

²²⁰ Roosevelt, *1928-1932 The Genesis of the New Deal*, 1. P.330-331

²²¹ Roosevelt, *1933 The Year of Crisis*, 2. P.183-184

and local units of Government do their fair share. They must not expect the Federal Government to finance more than a reasonable proportion of the total.²²² [...]

The hierarchical step-ladder which Government was to follow was obvious at this stage, and very uniquely American at this point in history. Compared to the European welfare state which was alien beyond anything described by Shields merely viewed as *outlandish nonsense*, and can from this be regarded as deeply coloured by the red, black and brown of the regimes of Russia, Italy and Germany. This can also make it easier to understand the focus on democratic freedom and why it is so essential, as FDR explained the aim of the fresh administration, which on the whole barely had begun its endeavour towards economic recovery and what would become a social foundation for the American Federal State.

When we came to the problem of meeting the emergency of human needs, we did not rush blindly in and say, "The Government will take care of it." We approached it from the other angle first. We said to the people of this country, "When you come to the problem of relief, you face the individual family, the individual man, woman and child who lives in a particular locality and the first objective and the first necessity are that the citizens of that community, through the churches, the community chest, the social and charitable organizations of the community, are going to be expected to do their share to their utmost extent first."²²³

The basics of American individualism is the neighbourly community charity. As FDR expanded Government through the New Deal, he continued to underline the importance that Americans continued to be '*good neighbors*,' an expression he used several times to underline the importance of charity work. As explained earlier this can largely be connected to the lacking class struggle in America, as the average American simply packed up and travelled further west whenever the need became unbearable. However great this opportunity had been for Americans in the generations past, Manifest Destiny had by the 1930s interconnected the 48 states of America from sea to sea. There was no longer any other place to go. The frontier was history, but the moral values and its uniquely American way of life made it not only important, but absolutely necessary for FDR to recognize this, as Americans evidently at this time preferred to suffer in silence rather than seeing the growth of a state guided by the principles of European social policies. He continued to do so to the largest degree, throughout the first part of his presidency:

Last year, when I had the privilege of speaking to you, I emphasized the simple fact that the responsibility of the individual and of the family for the well-being of their neighbours must never cease. [...] I always like to emphasize the word "privilege" rather than the word "duty"; for it is clearly the privilege of the individual American

²²² Roosevelt, 1933 *The Year of Crisis*, 2. P.239

²²³ Roosevelt, 1933 *The Year of Crisis*, 2. P.356

to bear his personal share in a work which must be kept personal in so far as it is possible to make it so. It is that personal appeal, that personal service, which has carried us through all these trying years.²²⁴

In his second fireside chat of 1934 he underlined that *'We count, in the future as in the past, on the driving power of individual initiative and the incentive of fair private profit, strengthened with the acceptance of those obligations to the public interest which rest upon us all.'*²²⁵

And in 1935 during a mobilization speech for human needs it is apparent yet again: *'[...] It is the duty of private charity and of State and local government agencies to take care of those who for these sound reasons are unable to work, and as I have so often said, it is the duty of Federal Government to assist in the type of relief only when private and local means come to the end of their tether.'*²²⁶

In 1936 he remarked also upon the unique *frontier spirit* of the American people as he celebrated American individualism.

[...] This heritage, my friends, we owe to Jacksonian democracy – the American doctrine that entrusts the general welfare to no one group or class, but dedicates itself to the end that the American people shall not be thwarted in their high purpose to remain the custodians of their own destiny.

The frontier spirit that brought men into the Arkansas wilderness, and later was to carry them even further in their conquest of the West, inspired in the hearts and minds and souls of those men a new ideal of our national democracy. Perhaps it would be more exact to say that the frontier spirit caused a rebirth of the earlier ideal of free government. [...] ²²⁷

It is worth to remark that he does not celebrate the frontier society of 1933, only its heritage, and its significance in presenting perhaps the purest ideals of the liberal republic which the Founding Fathers imagined 150 years earlier.

Today that life is gone. Its simplicity has vanished and we are each and all of us, whether we like it or not, parts of a social civilization which ever tends to greater complexity. In these later days, the imperilled well-being, the very existence of large numbers of our people, have called for measures of organized Government assistance which the more spontaneous and personal promptings of a pioneer generosity could never alone have obtained.²²⁸ [...]

²²⁴ Roosevelt, *1934 The Advance of Recovery and Reform*, 3. P.412

²²⁵ Roosevelt, *1934 The Advance of Recovery and Reform*, 3. P.416-417

²²⁶ Franklin Delano Roosevelt, *1935 The Court Disapproves*, 13 vols., vol. 4, ed. Samuel I. Rosenman, The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, (New York: Random House 1938). P.428

²²⁷ Franklin Delano Roosevelt, *1936 The People Approves*, 13 vols., vol. 5, ed. Samuel I. Rosenman, The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, (New York: Random House, 1938). P.199

²²⁸ Roosevelt, *1936 The People Approves*, 5. P.199

As he celebrated the frontier society, he had by 1936 also reached the conclusion that the pioneer generosity in 1936 was incapable of protecting everyone.

This however did not stop him from continuing to address the need for relief to work its way through the hierarchical step ladder. Why he would continue to stress this fact even as the SSA and the Wagner Act benefited millions of unemployed workers and several hundred thousand old, is quite fascinating, as the New Deal no longer at this point was of an experimental nature. The Second Hundred Days forced America into the twentieth century, and had already largely replaced the localities need to handle any kind of crisis whether it was environmental or financial in its nature. At the opening of the Bonneville Dam, one of the minor electrification- and irrigation programs inspired by the massive TVA, he reiterated himself:

[...] the responsibility of the Federal Government for the welfare of its citizens will not come from the top in the form of unplanned, hit or miss appropriations of money, but will progress to the National Capital from the ground up – from the communities and counties and states which lie within each of the logical geographical areas. [...] ²²⁹

As late as 1944 he continued to state this as one of the chief mantras of importance regarding American governmental aid policy:

I believe that Federal Government should render financial aid where it is needed, but only where it is needed. [...] Only where it is needed in communities where farming does not pay much, where land values have depreciated through erosion or through flood or drought, where industries have moved away where transport facilities are inadequate, or where electricity is unavailable for power and light. [...] ²³⁰

In other words, FDR said he wished for the American government to simply aid the locality or the state, while he at the same time was an avid proponent of an active form of Government that condoned intervention on a Federal level, to lay a solid foundation to relieve the individual of his '*neighbourly duty*', without disrupting individual freedom and liberty to choose, as is also of importance to FDR.

In a fireside chat held in 1935 FDR invoked what I find in the theories of Fischer, regarding the American tendency to blame what Europeans may regard as external factors which might determine the standard and quality of life, such as living quality, wage income and health. FDR described it in such a fashion as to make it clear that he understood it to be rather

²²⁹ Franklin Delano Roosevelt, *1937 The Constitution Prevails*, 13 vols., vol. 6, ed. Samuel I Rosenman, The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, (New York: Macmillan, 1941). P.390

²³⁰ Roosevelt, *1944-45 Victory and the Threshold of Peace*, 13. P.315-316

a personal choice or trait more than anything which determined the poverty or wealth of Americans, when he talked about president Jackson yet again: ‘*When Andrew Jackson, “Old Hickory,” died, someone asked, “Will he go to Heaven?” and the answer was, “He will if he wants to.” If I am asked whether the American people will pull themselves out of this depression, I answer, “They will if they want to.”*’²³¹

With knowledge that FDR throughout his presidency supported the idea of charity and neighbourly relief, the fact that he also busted the illusion of the much-romanticised frontier society, makes it clear to me that he actively sought to justify his social legislation, and that he had the patience to wait for the American people to catch up to him in their view on the virtues of social policies.

In Norway, it has been said by one historian that Trygve Bratteli, Prime Minister of Norway in periods between 1971-1976, only had to peak his head through window of his office in Downtown Oslo to get a reading on the national mood of the people; The historian also said that the Father of the Land, Einar Gerhardsen, from that same office, could do exactly the same, but he did not even need to leave his office desk – he just instantly knew.²³² In much the same way, the method that FDR used, required a constant reading of the pulse of the American people; the electorate.

For as he told the American people about the importance of charity and *neighbourly pioneer spirit* to cope with the crisis, he also pushed through Congress an entire alphabet soup of federal programs: the AAA, CCC, NIRA, NRA, PWA and TVA account for only a handful of the programs which during the first 100 days of experimentation set the standard for the route which the administration staked out and which marked the creation of the modern American State. For the first time, at least in peacetime, the American state was manifest and tangible and had a very real presence in Washington D.C. and an influence which affected individual lives whether it was in a Manhattan skyscraper, a Vermont woodcutters lodge, or a Kansas cattle ranch. The reach of the State affected them all, and for FDR the important thing still was to ensure that Americans never lost sight of what it would mean to lose all the benefits that the State now provided. This meant to make the threat of economic depression, and the ability of social policies to fight it, indispensable, and in such a way make it impossible for any opposition, whether they were moderate Democrats or Republicans to oppose social legislation,

²³¹ Roosevelt, *1933 The Year of Crisis*, 2. P.302

²³² Lahlum, interview. 09:06:00

simply because to oppose it would be to oppose what FDR now must have considered the key to the American way of life.

An important necessity to achieve this was unity. Remembering the busy days of the Capital during the first world war, and with a basic knowledge of the history of the Country, he knew how to unite the people behind his endeavour:

[...] Our greatest primary task is to put people to work. This is no unsolvable problem if we face it wisely and courageously. It can be accomplished in part by direct recruiting by the Government itself, treating the task as we would treat the emergency of a war, but at the same time, through this employment, accomplishing greatly needed projects to stimulate and reorganize the use of our natural resources.
[...]²³³

FDR must have wondered why Hoover did not try anything similar during his term. FDR may have had an advantage as a protégé of Wilson. It could almost seem as if the Democratic party had taken ownership of overcoming great crises. By revoking the language of war, and likening the economic crisis to that of a foreign foe, it would in an American sense it seems, be easier to justify the sudden and awesome expansion of Government. On the other hand, as underlined earlier, he continued to state the importance that the locality did its utmost before turning to the higher authority, whether it was a city mayor, or the Governor, he did also underline what he considered a duty, more than mere charity in 1933:

[...] We demand that local government shall do its share to the utmost, and then, if that is not sufficient, if those two features do not meet the needs, we come to the next unit, the State, and if that still is not enough, if the State has done everything it reasonably should do, then obviously the Federal Government must step in, because, while it isn't written in the Constitution, nevertheless, it is the inherent duty of the Federal Government to keep its citizens from starvation.²³⁴ [...]

The obligation to save every citizen from starvation sets a standard for basic human necessities. FDR had not yet at this point truly embraced the social policies that his friend Bob Wagner long had sought to make a benefit to all, but the fact that FDR was conscious about what we consider basic human rights already at this point, made it rather obvious that the embrace of the future Wagner Act and SSA in no way was a quantum leap for FDR. Again, it was more a question of having the backing and endorsement from both the public and the elected to further his own political agenda at this point. FDR needed to justify a new social role for the Federal Government, which would infringe upon State-laws as well, whether the local state government was pro- or anti-New Deal. At this point it was more a question about moral virtues than

²³³Roosevelt, *1933 The Year of Crisis*, 2. p.13

²³⁴ Roosevelt, *1933 The Year of Crisis*, 2. P.356-357

anything else as FDR went a long way to underline that what America was going through was an evolution, and not a revolution, perhaps both to distance himself from communism, fascism and also to distance himself from the troubled European continent as a whole.²³⁵ Since the days of Washington himself, Europe had rarely been regarded with envy. More than anything the chaos, war and the seemingly endless flood of immigrants was enough for Americans to consider their own way of life superior and made it easy to disregard anything European as either dangerous or archaic. It is ironic in this aspect that American social policy was so ancient compared to the European welfare state. The classical republicanism laid down by the Founding Fathers was in any aspect preferred by Americans, even if they did not truly understand how social policy, which was not a thing of the Enlightenment was meant to be read in the light of the Constitution. It was always a question of constitutional legality. This void of sorts was something FDR was quick to utilize to the best of his efforts when he said: [...] *If, as our Constitution tells us, our Federal Government was established among other things “to promote the general welfare,” it is our plain duty to provide for that security upon which welfare depends. [...]*²³⁶

He quickly established what he interpreted to be consistent with the ideals and the legacy of the Founding Fathers, and as the New Deal continued to take a definite shape and form in its objectives, FDR’s agenda became more manifest as well. The programs became more extensive and far-reaching in their social impact on America. The Second Hundred Days which I have already argued to be more extensive and focused in its agenda than the first, heralded a definite change, a fracture of sorts, regarding the duty of the Government, and what Americans should expect from it as he made clear in his first fireside chat of 1935:

[...] The objective of the Nation has greatly changed in three years. Before that time individual self-interest and group selfishness were paramount in public thinking. The general good was at a discount.

Three years of hard thinking have changed the picture. More and more people, because of clearer thinking and a better understanding, are considering the whole rather than a mere part relating to one section, or to one crop, or to one industry, or to an individual private occupation. That is a tremendous gain for the principles of democracy. [...]²³⁷

We must begin now to make provision for the future. That is why our social security program is an important part of the complete picture. It proposes, by means of old-age pensions, to help those who have reached the age of retirement to give up their jobs and thus give to the younger generation greater opportunities for work and to give to all a feeling of security as they look toward old age. [...]

²³⁵ Roosevelt, *1934 The Advance of Recovery and Reform*, 3. P.195

²³⁶ Roosevelt, *1934 The Advance of Recovery and Reform*, 3. P.292

²³⁷ Roosevelt, *1935 The Court Disapproves*, 4. P.132-133

Our responsibility is to all of the people in this country. This is a great national crusade to destroy enforced idleness which is an enemy of the human spirit generated by this depression. Our attack upon these enemies must be without stint and without discrimination. No sectional, no political distinctions can be permitted.²³⁸ [...]

As SSA passed Congress the administration of FDR had taken America a decisive step into the twentieth century. With the second hundred days unionizing increased, pension laws secured the old from poverty, and starvation wages were a thing of the past. The individualist frontier society was truly history, but only in the sense of legislation. The romance of the frontier endures to this day, and the Homestead Act is perhaps remembered better as a foundation for the modern America more than any of FDR's New Deal programs.

With a foundation laid for further expansion and development of social policy, the first obstacle that faced the collectivist policy of the New Deal and its coalition in Congress, was, at least as FDR saw it, the Supreme Court after it declared NRA unconstitutional. As explained in the biographical chapter, FDR was deliberately silent about SC throughout the election except for in a press conference in the decision's immediate aftermath, in which he made clear how he already felt the people was with him in wanting a court reform. FDR's relationship with the press gives us a great look into how FDR actually conversed. The atmosphere was casual, this is very evident in the transcriptions of the press conferences:

FDR. Have you any questions to ask?

Q. What did you do yesterday outside of seeing Mr. Richberg?

FDR. I saw lots of people. I telephoned to a lot more, and I am continuing to do it.

Q. Do you care to comment on the N.R.A.?

FDR. Well, Steve, if you insist. That's an awful thing to put up to a fellow at this hour of the morning, just out of bed. Suppose we make this background and take some time because it is an awful big subject to cover and it is just possible that one or two of you may not have read the whole twenty-eight or twenty-nine pages of the Supreme Court Decision. I have been a good deal impressed by -- what shall I call it? the rather pathetic appeals that I have had from all around the country to do something. They are very sincere as showing faith in Government [...] so sincere that you feel the country is beginning to realize that something in the long run has to be done. And they are all hoping that something will be done right away.²³⁹ [...]

It is infinitely deeper than any partisan issue; it is a national issue. Yes, and the issue is this – going back to these telegrams that I have been reading to you: Is the United States going to decide, are the people of this country going to decide that their Federal Government shall in the future have no right under any implied power

²³⁸ Roosevelt, *1935 The Court Disapproves*, 4. P.135-137

²³⁹ Roosevelt, *1935 The Court Disapproves*, 4. P.200-201

of any court-approved power to enter into a solution of a national economic problem, but that that national economic problem must be decided only by the States? [...]

This N.R.A. decision – if you accept the obiter dicta and all the phraseology of it – seems to be squarely on the side of restoring to the States forty-eight different controls over national economic and social problems. This is not a criticism of the Supreme Court’s decision; it is merely pointing out the implications of it. [...]

Q. You made a reference to the necessity of the people deciding within the next five or ten years. Is there any way of deciding that question without voting on a constitutional amendment or the passing of one?

FDR. Oh, yes; I think so. But it has got to come in the final analysis.

Q. Any suggestion as to how it might be made, except by a Constitutional Amendment?

FDR. No; we haven’t got to that yet.

Q. Or a war? (*laughter*)

FDR. Just qualifying the issue, that is all.²⁴⁰

As an apparent outrage over the court decision to sabotage his efforts, FDR seemingly more actively embraced collectivist policies. The apparent hesitation and apprehension he showed Secretary of Labor Perkins, and senator Bob Wagner, was gone, and despite his continuing efforts to underline the need to be a *good neighbor* and that it is a privilege to contribute to relieve the poor, even before Federal Government considers it an obligation, the volume of such utterances declines in such a dramatic way after 1936 that it is hard to consider it more than a reminder that such had been the very uniquely American way of doing things the past century and a half. Remarks such as those he made at the Roosevelt Home Club convinces me that it is difficult to interpret it in any other fashion:

[...] There are more and more people who are coming to realize that in many other Nations they have already gone farther toward meeting social needs than we have, and that we have to go a good long way to catch up with them, to bring ourselves up to the modern conception or ideal of personal security for the men, women and children who make up the great mass of our population. [...]²⁴¹

To be the leader of the New World, and at the same time the oldest of the modern democracies must make it hard to take inspirations from contemporary countries and not the classical republics and empires of the Ancient World. And FDR certainly advocated this by and large on his own from the White House, but it is worth to remark that to this day, America is seriously lagging behind Europe, and also Asia South-America and Africa in some instances when it

²⁴⁰ Roosevelt, *1935 The Court Disapproves*, 4. P.200-222

²⁴¹ Roosevelt, *1936 The People Approves*, 5.P.263

comes to social policies. The struggle to keep up with the rest of the west, even as the Country continues to be idealised as the promised land is a paradox of sorts it seems to me. And after the election victory was a fact, FDR even more boldly set out to justify his view on the flexibility of constitutional interpretation and the legality of his New Deal policies:

[...] The vital need is not an alteration of our fundamental law, but an increasingly enlightened view with reference to it. Difficulties have grown out of its interpretation; but rightly considered, it can be used as an instrument of progress, and not as a device for prevention of action.²⁴² [...]

FDR had made his intentions clear. The Supreme Court would be his primary target as his second term began, and despite being a battle fought over constitutional legislation, it was with words alone that FDR would alter its moral views on social legislation.

5.4 1937-1941 – Challenging the Establishment

In one of his most fascinating and controversial press conferences as president, FDR described the The United States of America as a three horse buggy, where the executive branch – the president, and the legislative branch, Congress, pulled in one direction, while the Supreme Court, representing the third horse, alone pulled the cart in opposite direction. In the first fireside chat of 1937 he made sure to remind the people that it was not with *him* the supreme court were struggling, it was with those whom he governed on behalf of:

[...] The American people have learned from the depression. For in the last three national elections an overwhelming majority of them voted a mandate that the Congress and the President begin the task of providing that protection – not after long years of debate but now. [...]

I described the American form of Government as a three horse team provided by the Constitution to the American people so that their field might be plowed. [...] Two of the horses are pulling in unison today; the third is not. Those who have intimated that the President of the United States is trying to drive that team, overlook the simple fact that the president, as Chief Executive, is himself one of those three horses.

It is the American people themselves who are in the driver's seat.

It is the American people themselves who want the furrow plowed.

It is the American people themselves who expect the third horse to pull in unison with the other two.

I hope that you have re-read the Constitution of the United States in these past few weeks. Like the Bible, it ought to read again and again. [...] ²⁴³

²⁴² Roosevelt, *1936 The People Approves*, 5. P.639

²⁴³ Roosevelt, *1937 The Constitution Prevails*, 6. P.123-124

Knowing that the Court-packing plan was near devastating to the uniformity of the Democratic Party and the New Deal coalition, it is fascinating that it was FDR's belief that the people was with him that convinced him to carry on with the plan, even after the Court deemed the SSA and the remainder of the Wagner-Act constitutional. With SC firmly in line regarding the constitutionality of collectivist social policies, which the opposition had deemed to be infringing on states' rights, it would appear that FDR had achieved his goal in changing how Americans, electors and even the courts viewed the moral virtue of social policies in an American context. That is to say that Americans did not consider the New Deal programs to infringe on their individual freedom and agency despite the programs being of a collectivist nature, as he remarked in Gainesville in 1938:

[...] You were not content with rebuilding along the lines of the old community. You were not content with throwing yourselves on the help which could be given to you by your State and by the Federal Government.

On the contrary, you determined in the process of rebuilding to eliminate old conditions of which you were not proud; to build a better city; to replace congested areas with parks; to move human beings from slums to suburbs. For this you, the citizens of Gainesville, deserve all possible praise. [...]

Today, national progress, and national prosperity are being held back chiefly because of selfishness on the part of a few. If Gainesville had been faced with that type of minority selfishness your city would not stand rebuilt as it is today.²⁴⁴ [...]

In *The FDR Years* Leuchtenburg states that Americans too easily looks to the past for solutions to present problems. FDR threw shade on the politics of the past, and did never talk fondly about the twelve years of Republican rule prior to his own. As the recession of 1938 threatened the gains made the five years prior, and even as FDR himself dreaded immediate Government action, there now existed a foundation that would immediately relieve the localities. Collectivism relieved the locality in a way that past economic crises had not; no longer would the unemployed beg hungry – the state would relieve them with unemployed insurance and actively seek to combat the depression with the means at their disposal, whether it be through public works or federal employment. FDR reminded Americans of this in his fireside chat prior to the midterm elections of 1938:

[...] The opposing conservative school of thought, as a general proposition, does not recognize the need for Government itself to step in and take action to meet these new problems. It believes that individual initiative and private philanthropy will solve them – that we ought to repeal many of the things we have done and go back,

²⁴⁴ Franklin Delano Roosevelt, *1938 The Continuing Struggle for Liberalism*, 13 vols., vol. 7, ed. Samuel I. Rosenman, *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, (New York: Macmillan, 1941).P.164-165

for instance, to the old gold standard, or stop all this business of old age pensions and unemployment insurance, or repeal the Securities and Exchange Act, or let monopolies thrive unchecked – return, in effect, to the kind of Government we had in the twenties.²⁴⁵ [...]

The fear of the government of the twenties, was the fear of a total dismantling of the State. In an address celebrating SSA, he made it clear in scope and numbers the importance of social policies in a modern democracy: more than 40 million had acquired old-age insurance accounts, 27 million were protected by unemployment insurance, and several hundred thousand households received cash assistance because of handicaps and old age, something the localities never would have achieved on their own. And despite the relief, as has always been the goal of the social state, to make sure that the minimum requirements for a worthy life are upheld, FDR felt obliged to remind Americans that this in no fashion or form, anywhere in the world had been applied to carry the outcasts on a golden throne through life:

The Act does not offer anyone, either individually or collectively, an easy life – nor was it ever intended so to do. None of the sums of money paid out to individuals in assistance or insurance will spell anything approaching abundance. But they will furnish that minimum necessary to keep a foothold; and that is the kind of protection America want. [...] ²⁴⁶

With the moral view on collectivism shifted, and as unemployment fell and industry passed 1929 figures, FDR in a larger degree began to prepare Americans for the need to look out beyond its borders; to understand that the world seas would not necessarily save them in a future world war. With the outburst of war in Europe, FDR committed to keep America neutral, but in his State of the Union speech of 1940 warned about the dangers of continued isolation and totalitarianism as the Country continued its recovery, but also made sure to tie healthy democracies to a functioning social state, thus arming the New Deal as a weapon of defence, making it even harder for the opposition to truly criticise it:

[...] If any local unit – a city, county, State or region – low standards of living are permitted to continue, the level of the civilization of the entire nation will be pulled downward.

The identical principle extends to the rest of the civilized world. But there are those who wishfully insist, in innocence or ignorance or both, that the United States of America as a self-contained unit can live happily and prosperously, its future secure, inside a high wall of isolation while, outside, the rest of civilization and the commerce and culture of mankind are shattered. [...]

Behind the Army and the Navy, of course, lies our ultimate line of defence – “the general welfare” of our people. We cannot report, despite all the progress that

²⁴⁵ Roosevelt, 1938 *The Continuing Struggle for Liberalism*, 7. P.399

²⁴⁶ Roosevelt, 1938 *The Continuing Struggle for Liberalism*, 7. P.477-480

we have made in our domestic problems – despite the fact that production is back to 1929 levels – that all our problems are solved. The fact of unemployment of millions of men and women remains a symptom of a number of difficulties in our economic system not yet adjusted. [...]

Our continued progress in the social and economic field is important not only for the significance of each part of it but for the total effect which our program of domestic betterment has upon that most valuable asset of a nation in dangerous times – its national unity. [...]²⁴⁷

In his fireside chat on national defence, he went even further in likening social policies as a defence equal to the firearm, warplane and the warship. The economic threat was replaced with a very physical foe in Germany and Japan, in their Nazism and colonial imperialism, which had to be fought because in FDR's opinion they both represented the worst of the past, which had to be eradicated, and FDR's favourite weapon before Pearl Harbor, was social policies. And in his acceptance speech for the unprecedented third term, he declared that America still had a long way to go:

[...] There have been occasions, as we remember, when reactions in the march of democracy have set in, and forward-looking progress has seemed to stop.

But such periods have been followed by liberal and progressive times which have enabled the nation to catch up with new developments in fulfilling new human needs. Such a time has been the past seven years. Because we had seemed to lag in previous years, we have had to develop, speedily and efficiently, the answers to aspirations which had come from every State and every family in the land.

We have sometimes called it social legislation; we have sometimes called it legislation to end the abuses of the past; we have sometimes called it legislation for human security; and we have sometimes called it legislation to better the condition of life of the many millions of our fellow citizens, who could not have the essentials of life or hope for an American standard of living. [...]

I do not believe for a moment, and I know that you do not believe either, that we have fully answered all the needs of human security. But we have covered much of the road. I need not catalogue the milestones of seven years. For every individual and every family in the land know that the average of their personal lives has been made safer and sounder and happier than it has ever been before. I do not think they want the gains in these directions to be repealed or even to be placed in the charge of those who would give them mere lip-service with no heart service. [...]²⁴⁸

The campaign of 1940 was unrecognizable from that of 1932, when FDR had come as close to criticise the state as he ever did. Few could have questioned his agenda at this point. FDR was proud more than anything to see the evidences of the vast shift in moral view which his terms

²⁴⁷ Franklin Delano Roosevelt, *1940 War - and Aid to Democracies*, 13 vols., vol. 9, ed. Samuel I. Rosenman, The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, (New York: Macmillan, 1941). P.2-8

²⁴⁸ Roosevelt, *1940 War - and Aid to Democracies*, 9. P.299-300

had seen in regards to social policies and the role of state and government in America, and he wanted no one to question who had fought for this change:

[...] Government, no longer callous to suffering, moved swiftly to end distress, to halt depression, to secure more social and economic justice for all. [...]

Back in 1932, those leaders were willing to let the workers starve if they could not get a job.

Back in 1932, they were not willing to guarantee collective bargaining.

Back in 1932, they met the demands of unemployed veterans with troops and tanks.

Back in 1932, they raised their hands in horror at the thought of fixing a minimum wage or maximum hours of labor; they never gave one thought to such things as pensions for old age or insurance for unemployed.

In 1940, eight years later, what a different tune is played by them! [...]

We have passed the time when the prosperity of the nation is measured in terms of the stock ticker. We know that the wellbeing of a people is measured by the manner in which they live, by the security which they feel in their future.

For the Americans as a whole – the great body of its citizens – the standard of living has increased well above that of 1929. [...] ²⁴⁹

Unprecedented, especially after the setbacks in the first half of his second term, FDR were to commence on his third presidential term. With Germany reigning supreme on the European mainland, and potential enemies on both sides of the world seas, FDR's vision of his ideal world and the freedom that was essential for it to properly prosper became more important to put in words. More importantly is the shift in his language at this state. Despite the loud voices of the isolationist bloc, FDR talked about the world as a whole more than America alone from this point on. In his State of the Union speech for the year 1941, emboldened by his recent victory, he painted a vision in words of what he desired not only for America, but for all of the world:

[...] In the future, days, which we seek to make secure, we look forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms.

The first is freedom of speech and expression – everywhere in the world.

The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way – everywhere in the world.

The third is freedom from want – which, translated into world terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants – everywhere in the world.

²⁴⁹ Roosevelt, *1940 War - and Aid to Democracies*, 9. P.489-492

The fourth is freedom from fear – which, translated into world terms, means a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor – anywhere in the world.

That is no vision of a distant millennium. It is a definite basis for a kind of world attainable in our own time and generation. That kind of world is the very antithesis of the so-called new order of tyranny which the dictators seek to create with the crash of a bomb. [...] ²⁵⁰

The Four Freedoms were possibly the most important thing in the world to FDR. He was terribly disappointed when the press and the replies to the Union speech almost solely surrounded the Lend-Lease Bill. This did not stop him on the other hand, and he experienced a sort of New Deal renaissance when his propaganda machinery geared up on spreading the gospel of the Four Freedoms, through radio plays, preview films in the cinema, and perhaps most famously, the paintings of Normann Rockwell. The second fracture is evident here. The first when he embraced the Wagner-Act including the SSA, the second, albeit purely symbolical at this point, testified certain rights each and every state is expected to secure for its citizens. Bipartisanship, national borders and such are non-existent as FDR described the society of his desires. The Four Freedoms became a measuring stock of sorts towards which all aspects of society were to be measured, and for the rest of his life he never lost sight of his vision, regarding the Four Freedoms, as he repeated them at every opportunity afterwards as in his inaugural address:

[...] A Nation, like a person, has a body – a body that must be fed and clothed and housed, invigorated and rested, in a manner that measures up to the standards of our time.

A Nation, like a person, has a mind – a mind that must be kept informed and alert, that must know itself, that understands the hopes and the needs of its neighbors – all the other Nations that live within the narrowing circle of the world.

A Nation, like a person has something deeper, something more permanent, something larger than the sum of all its parts. It is that something which matters most to its future – which calls forth the most sacred guarding of its present. [...] ²⁵¹

In an address to the White House Correspondents Association:

[...] A few weeks ago I spoke of four freedoms – freedom of speech and expression, freedom of every person to worship God in his own way, freedom from want, freedom from fear. They are the ultimate stake. They may not be immediately attainable throughout the world but humanity does move toward those glorious ideals through democratic processes. And if we fail – if democracy is superseded

²⁵⁰ Roosevelt, *1940 War - and Aid to Democracies*, 9. P.672

²⁵¹ Franklin Delano Roosevelt, *1941 The Call to Battle Stations*, 13 vols., vol. 10, ed. Samuel I. Rosenman, *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1950). P.4-5

by slavery – then those four freedoms, or even the mention of them, will become forbidden things. Centuries will pass before they can be revived. [...] ²⁵²

In his address declaring National Emergency after repeated violations of American neutrality:

[...] Today the whole world is divided between human slavery and human freedom – between pagan brutality and the Christian ideal.

We choose human freedom – which is the Christian ideal.

No one of us can waver for a moment in his courage or his faith.

We will not accept a Hitler-dominated world. And we will not accept a world, like the postwar world of the 1920's, in which the seeds of Hitlerism can again be planted and allowed to grow.

We accept only a world consecrated to freedom of speech and expression – freedom of every person to worship God in his own way – freedom from want – and freedom from terror. ²⁵³ [...]

And after the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, the objective remained unchanged and if anything, only emboldened him about his hopes and visions for the future. The Four Freedoms were to become ammunition in the ideological fight for the future, and FDR was dead set on convincing the people about his own conviction: that the world needed a powerful and influential America in collective harmony with the rest of the west, and the foundation he was to lay down both in words and legislation was to be as fundamentally solid as to become just as American as the frontier society. To oppose it was to be as unamerican in the age of FDR as opposing the free market was in the 1920s.

5.5 1942-45 – War and Visions for the Future

The State of the Union address of 1942 was the first FDR held in wartime. At this point in time, he was already leader of the great arsenal of democracy, and he was mere months away from becoming the unprecedented leader of the free world. To understand his power is to understand his influence and the true clarity of his voice at this point. The Four Freedoms were more important than ever one year after he conceived them as he made them objectives that they were to fight towards:

[...] We shall not stop short of these objectives – nor shall we be satisfied merely to gain them and then call it a day. I know that I speak for the American people – and I have good reason to believe that I speak also for all the other peoples who fight with us – when I say that this time we are determined not only to win the war, but also to maintain the security of the peace that will follow. [...] ²⁵⁴

²⁵² Roosevelt, *1941 The Call to Battle Stations*, 10. P.65-66

²⁵³ Roosevelt, *1941 The Call to Battle Stations*, 10. P.192

²⁵⁴ Roosevelt, *1942 Humanity on the Defensive*, 11. P.35-41

The importance of the Four Freedoms became all the more important as the UN became an organization built on the Atlantic Charter. It was no longer enough to eradicate colonialism among their enemies, FDR's most important ally and guest in the White House the past weeks. Churchill, was the senior advocate of imperial colonialism. FDR would have nothing of it pronouncing from the get go that colonialism and imperial ambition would be an ancient thing in the post war world he was to be the architect of:

[...] We are united to maintain man's religious heritage against those who would destroy the great spiritual resources of resistance to injustice. We are united against those who would enslave humanity by substituting terror for law, treachery for statecraft, and force for justice. We are united against the tyranny that has created untold want, privation, and suffering in a larger part of the world.

These are the pledges inherent in the four freedoms which are the essence of the Atlantic Charter: Freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from fear, and freedom from want. [...] ²⁵⁵

For this to become a reality FDR quickly envisioned a period of struggle in the aftermath of victory and despite advisors and colleagues discouraging him, FDR as had been his way since childhood, made up his mind and took it on alone when no one seemed encouraged to follow. As a protégé of Wilson, FDR remembered the troubled transition from a wartime economy back to civilian economy. More importantly, the Four Freedoms made it morally bankrupting to enforce a second Versailles treaty on Germany. Therefore, FDR was quick to begin planning what was expected but also what he thought was needed for the coming peace:

[...] **Q.** Mr. President, would you like to expand on what you just said about the postwar period?

FDR. Of course, as I think has been intimated before, there are a great many objectives when peace comes, so that we won't go back to the old menace of the prewar period – a great many things the United Nations ought to and I think will remain united for.

However, there is one thing which at the present time stands out as the most important war objective, and that is to maintain peace, so that all of us, in going through this war, including the men on the fighting fronts and on the seas, will not have to go through another world cataclysm again, and they have some reasonable assurance that their children won't have to go through it again. Almost all the other things we hope to get out of the war are more or less dependent on the maintenance of peace – all kinds of planning for the future, economic and social, and so forth and so on. It isn't an awful lot of use if there is going to be another world war in ten years, or fifteen years or twenty years. All the planning for the future is dependent, obviously, on peace.

²⁵⁵ Roosevelt, *1942 Humanity on the Defensive*, 11. P.161

Q. Could we put quotes around that?

FDR. It isn't very well expressed.

Q. That last sentence, sir. (*The President indicated approval, and the reporter read back, "All the planning for the future is dependent, obviously, on peace."*)

Q. Mr. President, would you care to say how you think that can be maintained after the war?

FDR. No, no. That's a different thing. In other words, you are talking about details. I am talking about objectives. I think we have got to keep that very firmly in mind on everything we do from now on. The details are not the important thing. The issue is: the objective. [...] ²⁵⁶

His farsightedness and vision already at this point is almost prophetic. And it all surrounds collective social policies. The limits of the current programs however radical in American eyes were still too restricted and orthodox to cope with the growth FDR envisioned for post-war America and the world's dependency on her in the aftermath. In his State of the Union address for 1943 he fleshed out the obligations of America and the UN further:

I have been told that this is no time to speak of a better America after the war. I am told it is a grave error on my part.

I dissent.

And if the security of the individual citizen or the family, should become subject of national debate, the country knows where I stand.

I say this now to this Seventy-eight Congress, because it is wholly possible that freedom from want – the right of employment, the right of assurance against life's hazards – will loom very large as a task for America during the coming two years.

I trust it will not be regarded as an issue – but rather as a task for all of us to study sympathetically, to work out with a constant regard for the attainment of the objective, with fairness to all and with injustice to none. [...] ²⁵⁷

The seeds of the G.I. Bill of Rights are slowly being sowed. In a note to congress he underlined more extensively the importance of getting the several million servicemen and women back into civilian life in as smooth a fashion as possible, and in such a way so that they benefit postwar America rather than overburden the still fresh – relatively speaking – unemployment relief which the state would supply:

The following further steps seem desirable now:

- (1) To help service men and women tide over the difficult period of readjustment from military to civilian life, mustering out pay will be needed. It will relieve them of

²⁵⁶ Franklin Delano Roosevelt, *1943 The Tide Turns*, 13 vols., vol. 12, ed. Samuel I. Rosenman, The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1950). P.4-5

²⁵⁷ Roosevelt, *1943 The Tide Turns*, 12. P.30-31

anxiety while they seek private employment or make their personal plans for the future. I therefore recommend to the Congress that it enact legislation and provide funds for the payment of uniform, reasonable mustering-out pay to all members of the armed forces upon their honorable discharge or transfer to inactive duty. This pay should not be in a lump sum but on a monthly installment basis.

- (2) We must anticipate, however, that some members of the armed forces may not be able to obtain employment within a reasonable time after their return to civil life. For them, unemployment allowances should be provided until they can reasonably be absorbed by private industry. [...] It is plainly a Federal responsibility to provide for the payment of adequate and equitable allowances to those service men and women who are unable to find employment after their demobilization.

For these reasons, I recommend to the Congress that a uniform system of allowances for unemployed service men and women be established.²⁵⁸ [...]

The work of making laws which would represent the essence of the Four Freedoms was one of the most important domestic focuses of FDR's third term. In his State of the Union address of 1944, he committed to the most extensive social legislation in almost a decade, as he presented to Congress what he deemed to be a *Second Bill of Rights* more formally recognized as the G.I. Bill of Rights:

[...] It is our duty now to begin to lay the plans and determine the strategy for the winning of a lasting peace and the establishment of an American standard of living higher than ever before known. We cannot be content, no matter how high that general standard of living may be, if some fraction of our people – whether it be one-third or one-fifth or one-tenth – is ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-housed, and insecure. [...]

In our day these economic truths have become accepted as self-evident. We have accepted, so to speak, a second Bill of Rights under which a new basis of security and prosperity can be established for all – regardless of station, race, or creed.

Among these are:

The right to a useful and remunerative job in the industries or shops or farms or mines of the Nation;

The right to earn enough to provide adequate food and clothing and recreation;

The right of every farmer to raise and sell his products at a return which will give him and his family a decent living;

The right of every businessman, large and small, to trade in an atmosphere of freedom from unfair competition and domination by monopolies at home or abroad;

The right of every family to a decent home;

The right to adequate medical care and the opportunity to achieve and enjoy good health;

²⁵⁸ Roosevelt, *1943 The Tide Turns*, 12. P.525-526

The right to adequate protection from the economic fears of old age, sickness, accident, and unemployment

The right to a good education.

All of these rights spell security. And after this war is won we must be prepared to move forward, in the implementation of these rights, to new goals of human happiness and well-being.

America's own rightful place in the world depends in large part upon how fully these and similar rights have been carried into practice for our citizens. For unless there is security here at home there cannot be lasting peace in the world. [...] ²⁵⁹

As before the war he remarked on the importance of a functioning social state. Without the war he would more likely than not never been able to secure government funded tuitions and college enrolments, nor housing loans of such generous rates as the future G.I. Bill were to encompass. Half a year later he read the points which made out the G.I. Bill, and here yet another fracture appears, as objectives become social collectivist legislation, among them loans to insure G.I.s higher education, home loans, unemployment allowances and offers of customized hospital facilities, among several things. ²⁶⁰

Not only would the G.I. Bill of rights secure a smooth transition from war to peace for millions of servicemen and women, it birthed the modern middleclass and laid the foundation for the baby boom to practically flourish and grow in a prosperity which no country in could possibly have experienced at any other point in history. Through the social policies of the G.I. Bill FDR cemented his own legacy as the architect behind the modern might and prosperity of America in the 1950s and the 60s, both in quantity of goods but also in quality of life – this is of course not to say that it was in any way perfect. Despite preaching equality across race, belief and creed. Jim Crow Laws continued to flourish in the Deep South, and in California and other border states Latino Americans would continue to work for starvation wages and with few of the benefits promised in the Wagner Act.

FDR was also quick to call on Congress to go even further during the session before the election in November 1944, both because of his own shortcomings, but perhaps also to see how far such policies could go without his guiding hand hovering over it at any given time:

[...] Moreover the bill fails to prescribe minimum standards to govern the amount and duration of unemployment benefits which should be paid by the States to all workers unavoidably out of a job during the period of transition from war to peace.

²⁵⁹ Roosevelt, *1944-45 Victory and the Threshold of Peace*, 13. P.33-41

²⁶⁰ Roosevelt, *1944-45 Victory and the Threshold of Peace*, 13. P.303-304

We have rightly committed ourselves to a fair and generous treatment of our G.I. men and women. We have rightly committed ourselves to a prompt and generous policy of contract settlement aid industry to return to peacetime work. We have rightly committed ourselves to support farm prices at a fair level during the period of reconversion. We should be no less fair in our treatment of war workers.

I am glad to know that the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee has announced that his Committee will give consideration to further amendments of the Social Security Act after recess and I hope that the deficiencies which I have pointed out in the bill before me will be promptly rectified.²⁶¹ [...]

There is much in common with how he regarded the importance of social legislation as a means to secure peace in the post-war era and how he regarded the New Deal as a shield against which the troubles of the old world would infect them, whether it be communism or fascism. What differentiates his post war push for social legislation from the New Deal, is the lack of experimentation. The agenda was set from the beginning, to secure prosperity in the post-war world through social policies.

As the forces of the UN closed in on the waning forces of the once mighty Axis, FDR quickly faded away. Despite this, he won a fourth election and committed to see America winning the war and the peace quickly approaching, as he made clear in his last address on the State of the Union:

[...] An enduring peace cannot be achieved without a strong America – strong in the social and economic sense as well as in military sense. [...]

We have had full employment during the war. We have had it because the Government has been ready to buy all the materials of war which the country could produce – and this has amounted to approximately half our present productive capacity.

After the war we must maintain full employment with Government performing its peacetime functions. This means that we must achieve a level of demand and purchasing power by private consumers – farmers, businessmen, workers, professional men, housewives – which is sufficiently high to replace wartime Government; and it means also that we must greatly increase our export trade above prewar level. [...]

An expanded social security program, and adequate health and education programs, must play essential roles in a program designed to support individual productivity and mass purchasing power. I shall communicate further with the Congress on these subjects at a later date. [...]²⁶²

²⁶¹ Roosevelt, *1944-45 Victory and the Threshold of Peace*, 13. P.303-304

²⁶² Roosevelt, *1944-45 Victory and the Threshold of Peace*, 13. P.501-505

With an unprecedented fourth term, armies on every continent, battlefleets on every sea, and half the planet's industrial capacity at his disposal, America had during the age of FDR become something more than a mere democracy of united states. A superpower in every sense apart from the legislative branch where FDR still fought to secure what he had come to view as self-evident rights which all should enjoy.

Whatever FDR would have achieved we will never know as he died in Warm Springs, recuperating before the UN summit in San Francisco. He worked on a speech he was to deliver on Jefferson Day, one in which he was to present a very different view on what the third president of the United States signified for the country than what FDR said during the election of 1932.

[...] As Minister to France, then as our first Secretary of State and as our third President, Jefferson was instrumental in the establishment of the United States as a vital factor in international affairs.

It was he who first sent our Navy into far-distant waters to defend our rights. And the promulgation of the Monroe Doctrine was the logical development of Jefferson's far-seeing foreign policy.

Today this Nation which Jefferson helped so greatly to build is playing a tremendous part in the battle for the rights of man all over the world.

Today we are part of the vast Allied force – a force composed of flesh and blood and steel and spirit – which is today destroying the makers of war, the breeders of hatred, in Europe and in Asia. [...] ²⁶³

It was to be a short speech, simply celebrating a president, but FDR, seeing his opportunity made sure to tie the Founding Father to his own agenda, justifying the political developments and commitments America was about to face. It was also nostalgic as FDR mirrored it on his famous quote that *all we have to fear is fear itself*, but it was in an optimistic and a hopeful manner, and the speech ended on a note which solidifies FDR as the president that American collectivism is and should be entwined with for all history, as he was the first president to successfully lay the groundwork for what might one day be a welfare state, as he also successfully ended the isolation dominant since the days of George Washington, and committed the country to oversee and secure an everlasting world peace as the leading superpower of the world militarily, economically, culturally and morally:

[...] Let me assure you that my hand is the steadier for the work that is to be done, that I move more firmly into the task, knowing that you – millions and millions of you – are joined with me in the resolve to make this work endure.

²⁶³ Roosevelt, *1944-45 Victory and the Threshold of Peace*, 13. P.614

The work, my friends, is peace. More than an end of this war – an end to the beginnings of all wars. Yes, an end, forever, to this impractical, unrealistic settlement of the differences between governments by the mass killing of peoples.

Today, as we move against the terrible scourge of war – as we go forward toward the greatest contribution that any generation of human beings can make in this world – the contribution of lasting peace, I ask you to keep up your faith. I measure the sound, solid achievement that can be made at this time by the straight edge of your own confidence and your resolve. And to you, and to all Americans who dedicate themselves with us to the making of an abiding peace I say:

The only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today. Let us move forward with strong and active faith.²⁶⁴

5.6 Summary – Truly a Fracture in ideas and thought?

From apprehension towards Governmental intervention on a grand scale, to creating the defined American State from the ground up, there can be no question about the change in view and apprehension, when it comes to FDR's contributions to the massive shift in moral view on the role of the Federal government in America, and the ability of social welfare policies to relieve and contribute to the American experience. Next to this the role and place which America, as FDR saw it, was dutybound to uphold in the post-war world was perhaps equally important to underline as a clear shift in moral view and attitude.

The fracture in this regard is a clean break with laissez faire policies, and the introduction of governmental supervision of the markets, and a final goodbye to the frontier based good neighbour society in which it was up to the individual to secure whatever was needed to live. It was the introduction of unionized labour on a grander scale than ever before, at the same time as the Government actively cooperated with the large industries, as evidenced during the world war. It was a final break with the beliefs held since the days of Washington that minimum interference with the rest of the world was paramount to the prosperity of the Republic.

One Norwegian historian considered FDR to have no immediate vision for the future outside of his own presidential periods, that his political labours were limited to the limits of his own lifetime – I strongly disagree.²⁶⁵ The collectivist policies of the New Deal through TVA and its minor spin-offs contributed to the completion of the electrification of the rural areas of America in the 1950s, and the public works lay the foundation for the massive Interstate highway system constructed throughout the 1950s and 60s, and most importantly in regards to answering the statement of my thesis, the G.I. Bill, birthed the American Middle Class and

²⁶⁴ Roosevelt, *1944-45 Victory and the Threshold of Peace*, 13. P.614

²⁶⁵ Lahlum, *Presidentene, fra George Washington til Barack Obama*. P.364

made prosperity achievable in a manner which would make the American way of life the envy of the world for generations to come. Perhaps of same importance was the elimination of the idea that a strongly reduced government ever again would properly equal to prosperity for the individual, which in itself signified a radical shift in moral view regarding the virtue of the state and its power as well. These were all projects achievable through the collectivist policies of FDR, and through his ability to influence the moral virtue with which Americans now regarded the benefits social policies, and to a large degree the elected representatives of the Congress, and the judiciary through its embracement of the New Deal and the policies of the G.I. Bill.

The impact of the Age of FDR cannot be understated; Harry Truman, Ike Eisenhower, JFK, LBJ, Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, and Jimmy Carter all evolved or expanded upon the existing policies created during the age of FDR and they abode by the Coalition of New Dealers which remained dominant in Congress more than 30 years after his death and ensured a lasting legacy for FDR, which largely endures to this day.

Regarding the question of FDR's influence on the post-war prosperity, and whether it is logical to consider it a fracture in the form of which Rodgers applies it to the neoconservative counterreaction towards the collectivist policies of FDR, I find it legitimate to consider his efforts in shifting the moral views held by Americans for centuries to be not only important but paramount to the political modernization and the moral obligation which America was dutybound to uphold as a victor in the world war and advocate for more extensive cooperation across borders and ideologies in the UN.

The Age of FDR was an age of experimentation, politically, socially and oratorically, during which the most dramatic upheavals since the days of the Reconstruction fundamentally changed the American way of life; the importance of individualistic freedom and agency remained, but because of the efforts of FDR, to intertwine the collectivist policy of the New Deal and the wartime legislation with freedom and individual prosperity, there remains no doubt surrounding the influence and power of the words of FDR and their ability to influence the evolving view, morally and politically regarding collectivism in America.

6. Conclusion:

As the executive head of Government, FDR took full advantage of the powers vested in the office to further his agenda as it took shape over the course of his presidency. Experimental as the New Deal was in the beginning, the result was in no way safe, and in such

a way FDR's own consideration regarding the virtues of social policies remained uncertain and difficult to pinpoint during those first years of his presidency.

What becomes clear on the other hand is the scope and the reach of his powers. In this sense it becomes, as Neustadt and Barber put it, the ability to make oneself heard, and none but a few have ever challenged FDR's ability to reach out and directly influence the American people to challenge preconceptions of the role of the state or the virtues of social policies.

We saw it with the passing of the Wagner-Act, the most ground-breaking series of social legislation to that date in America, and in the moderation of SC regarding its constitutionality and how GOP incumbents by the election of 1940 embraced The New Deal on an equal point.²⁶⁶

We saw it also in FDR's rather misplaced struggle with the SC in 1937, which changed its moral outlook on the virtues of the New Deal and its constitutionality, when FDR himself began to consider actions towards the Courts, which in itself was a matter of great debate regarding its constitutionality.

We saw it when FDR declared freedom of speech, freedom of religious practice, freedom from want and freedom from fear to be basic human rights, which every decent democracy was obliged to uphold, and we saw it even clearer when he exerted his powers to make them part of the Declaration of United Nations, and soon afterwards sought to make them into American laws.²⁶⁷

We saw the scope of the presidential powers when FDR convinced the American people that the duty of America no longer was to look to itself in splendid isolation, protected by the world seas. That American economic, industrial and military might was to be essential in securing a post-war world that saw the destruction of the Nazi and fascist states of the Axis, and the eventual dismantling of the colonial empires in Africa and Asia.²⁶⁸

And finally, we saw it when FDR proposed and signed the G.I. Bill of rights into law which lay the foundations for the modern American middle class and cemented the role of government in the eyes of American, even as the social policies it had enacted over the course of the last twelve years were considered a given, even though FDR, as he died, believed the task to be unfinished.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁶ Ref. p.44

²⁶⁷ Ref. p.75

²⁶⁸ Ref. p.81

²⁶⁹ Ref. p.80

In the final analysis, to what length his dreams of medical health care for all, schooling for all and whatever else he might have been prepared to fight for in the aftermath of the war we were never to truly know. What is worth mentioning on the other hand is that while FDR slowly but steadily steered America free of the economic troubles of the Great Depression, with a social foundation to ease the burden on the individual as well as the locality and the state, it was nowhere near enough to secure recovery by itself. America was, as it continues to be, governed by the supply and demand of the market, and FDR quickly connected American prosperity with general purchasing power. Despite heavy stock market regulations and reforms, certainly from an American point of view, and the increased influence of the government, the flow of capital still reigned supreme. One could say that this was to be expected by the country that proudly declared itself the leader of the free world, deeming the west to be that of the free capitalists versus the totalitarian communists in the east.

The dependence upon the capitalists, whose hatred FDR had welcomed a decade before his death, proud to be seen as a traitor to his own class, was vital to secure FDR the unity within the nation which he needed to more clearly express his vision of the Four Freedoms and secure a social impact not only in America, but in the world as well, as ER made sure when she helped make them part of what would become the UN Declaration of Human Rights. On the other hand, by binding America to uphold the peace of the world, through the rapid expansion of military force and the covert operations conducted by the OSS, FDR also laid the groundwork for the military-industrial complex which through its symbiotic dependency secured a continuing flow of armaments for capital – the essence of a capitalist society – and has certainly to a large degree influenced American policy considerably more since the 1940s compared to any piece of social legislation. FDR tied the need for a strong social and economic might to the military might, but he may have underestimated what would happen should an imbalance within the triad occur as it did.²⁷⁰

There can be no dispute about the great extent to which FDR used his power, which contributed to the collectivisation of America throughout his terms as president. The circumstances taken into consideration, the vulnerability of the nation, and the mandate granted him by the American public's overwhelming vote of confidence, manifest in the unprecedented four elections he won, backed by a Democratic Party which dominated both Houses of Congress, testify that if there truly existed any sort of discord, the moral virtues of the people

²⁷⁰ Ref. p.81

would never have accepted social policies which intervened in individual lives of such a scale, if they truly were considered an abuse of power in government. I have shown that FDR's views and own beliefs evolved over the course of his presidency and that the people's views evolved similarly. In no other way was the moderate shift in moral view of social policies more evident than in SC's changing view of the constitutionality of New Deal programs. Of almost equal value was the acceptance and embrace of the American duty to partake in the international collective organization of the UN upholding the Four Freedoms as its most important virtue. We saw this in the analysis of Thomas Jefferson as an example of the ideal America.²⁷¹ A decade of experience – learning, winning, failing, compromise and supreme overruling – separated this take on Jefferson from the global and collective Jefferson FDR presented in the final speech he worked on.²⁷² Was FDR a collectivist? That he implemented an increasingly radical social agenda over the course of four unprecedented terms certainly suggests so.

Despite a rather unclear agenda prior to the Second Hundred Days, it is easier to see FDR's embrace of collectivist social policies, particularly after the pack controversy, as the SC moderated itself – the virtue of social policies was certainly changed – and GOP's embrace of the New Deal in 1940 as FDR brought several Republicans into cabinet testify a more unison belief regarding the New Deal.

Despite everything FDR achieved throughout 1930s it was the unison of wartime which allowed FDR to push through the G.I. Bill, as millions of servicemen and women relied on Governmental aid to secure a smooth transition from total war economy to a more prosperous and functioning civilian economy free from the woes of the 1930s. Caught short by death FDR's legacy was largely secured through his immense presence. His successors governed in his shadow, and in Congress the New Deal Coalition dominated for the decades which were to come.

Of all the countries in the world, seen from a purely democratic perspective, America is possibly the only Country, which has proven to be positively allergic to the totalitarian means and ways of dictatorships when it comes to their overwhelming need to intervene and control the individual down to minutest detail. To say that FDR rocked this foundation would be a great lie. On the contrary I have attempted to demonstrate that perhaps more than any other president,

²⁷¹ Ref. p.58

²⁷² Ref. p.82

FDR was vital to enhancing this sacrosanct belief in the individual and personal freedoms that Americans cherish so dearly.

Paradoxical as it may seem, it was out of the propaganda machinery of the Second World War that FDR made the American way of life, with a focus on freedom, a merchandise for export. With the prosperity that followed it was easier to credit individual freedom to pursuit dreams, as is the mantra rather than an active powerful Government and the social policies that possibly helped save America during the darkest days of the 1930s. That it was a socialist, communist dictatorship which, as the trials of Nuremberg washed away the filth of Nazism, again became the great menace which threatened everything the American way of life represented, makes it easier to conclude at such.

The progress of the New Deal Coalition in the decades after FDR's death saw Medicare and Medicaid as the last great social policies in the spirit of the New Deal. With the election of Ronald Reagan, who proudly voted for FDR four times, the Coalition collapsed and the reactionary neoconservative wave saw attempts at dismantling collective policies as well as the influence and reach of the Government itself. Despite likening himself to FDR, few modern presidents have been further from him politically. The result as it was in the age of FDR, when republicans were forced to embrace collectivist social policies as a benefit to the country, democrats were in the age of Reagan forced to embrace the idea that individualism was a benefit to America, despite an almost non-existing development of such policies since the age of FDR.

In the aftermath of the great recession president Bush and his republican administration immediately looked to the administration of FDR in how to handle the crisis. When Obama signed the Recovery Act it eclipsed the means that the Brain Trust was given to combat the great depression. When president Biden took the oath of office in the midst of the Covid Pandemic which had seen the highest levels of unemployment and economic need since the 1930s, Biden modelled himself on FDR, and for the first time since 1968, his portrait is to be found as the main portrait in the oval office, and the reaction both socially and economically after the Teens dominated by the conservatives, is very much in the spirit of FDR and the collective social policy the New Deal, the four freedoms and the G.I. Bill represented. The moral virtue of social policy has certainly shifted over the course of seventy years, but yet again, as new reactionary generations slowly grab for the reigns, they once again invoke FDR as they pledge a green new deal for the American people. The influence and power of FDR is there still, though exactly what he meant and signified may be more clouded, after the neoconservative deconstruction and change in certain views of the moral virtues of the social

policies FDR embraced. Now more like Lincoln and Washington, the great presidents of the preceding centuries whose legacy have also become one surrounding the man, FDR is more ethereal than anything, and despite this his language continues to inspire and solidify the Democratic Party and its social ideals, and the social policies of the New Deal and the wartime years remain the foundations of a potential welfare state.

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Media:

Big Three at Yalta Summit - [Crimean Conference--Prime Minister Winston Churchill, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Marshal Joseph Stalin at the palace in Yalta, where the Big Three met / /U.S. Signal Corps photo. - b&w film copy neg. | Library of Congress \(loc.gov\)](#)

Front page picture - [73-113 23 | FDR in his wheelchair with a group assembling on... | Flickr](#)

NY City Hall protests - <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/hard-hat-riot-1970-pitted-construction-workers-against-anti-war-protestors-180974831/>