Franklin D. Roosevelt

1933-1945
Background Information

- 1910 elected to NY Senate
- Upset party bosses with his support for a rebel Democrat
  - Reputation got Wilson's attention and 1913 appointed assistant Secretary of the Navy
    - Helped with plans rendering German U-boats useless
- 1920: running mate to James Cox, proved effective campaigner despite loss
- 1928 returned, and elected Governor of NY
  - Befriended Rose Schneiderman, Harold Ikes, Frances Perkins, and Harry Hopkins, all influenced his progressive actions, with their radical solutions for the economy
  - Attempted to help unemployment with New York Emergency Relief Commission with Harry Hopkins and Frances Perkins because of Hoover's inaction
- Innovative relief and recovery initiatives gained Democrat's attention for candidacy
Chief Legislator: B

- Set presidents as chief legislators
- "First Hundred Days" characterization by quick drafting and Congress immediate approval.
  - Congress passed 15 reform and relief pieces of legislation
    - Most momentum and bipartisan support he would receive
  - Programs passed were ungainly, ineffective, and challenged by the court (AAA) in the long run (temporary relief)
- Court packing plan rejected by Congress
  - Courts with majority Republican justices in the way of his New Deal
  - Only true obstacle in passing legislation, eventually diminished in opposition
- Sent Japanese to internment camps with strong approval
- Work with Congress knowing entering war was inevitable
  - Asked to repeal Neutrality Act: Congress refused
  - Lend-Lease Act approved
- Social Security one of his lasting pieces of legislation
Commander-in-Chief: A-

- Condemned international aggression, but American public was isolationist and antiwar during World War II outbreak
  - Action restricted by American Public and Congress's Neutrality Act, but privately prepared for war
  - Increased defense budget in 1939
    - Supplying Allies with weapons as indirect involvement
  - Worked secretly and around public and Congress in preparation
- Response to Pearl Harbor declare war on Japan 1941
  - Later also against Germany and Italy
- Allies, work with Stalin and Churchill
  - Response to Tripartite Pact
- Engaged in World War II until Germany's surrender 3 weeks after FDR's death (1941-1945)
Chief Executive: A-

- Extremely active president, usually able to persuade people to adopt his ideas, including some Republicans (including some of his presidential election opponents)
  - Reshaped domestic policy, role in international affairs, and role of president
- Expand government and its roles
  - New Deal programs hypothetically good, useless in long term reality
- Never met opposition to nominations by Senate
- Cabinet Members usually remained for several years
  - Overall approval of his members was found, and his make-up unique with informal meetings for free flowing ideas
  - Set up National Emergency Council, a super cabinet that included Cabinet and agency chiefs meeting regularly
Head of State: A-

- Knew Americans needed a publicly confidant leader
  - In every speech, at every press conference, every public appearance, he smiled and laughed assuring Americans that by sticking together the Depression would lift
- His distinct pronunciation, mellifluous voice, and ability to read with feeling was comforting and easy to relate to
- Friend and neighbor to all with his fireside chats over nationwide radio
  - Very open with talking to press and people, more personable
  - Public opinion diminished slowly with no change to the economy, rose again though with confidence in his ability to deal with foreign affairs
- 1936 held some unrest over his not keeping to his promise of a balanced budget
  - Eventually, able to deliver with promise of revived economy as world's leader in supplying munitions
Chief of Party: A

• Elected as Democratic presidential candidate for four terms
• Gained congressional seats in 1934, in the following two elections lost seats in both the Senate and House
  o Didn't end up too much of a problem
• Set the ideology and position of the Democratic Party
  o Reconstructed from fractured and split ideology to united front to remain in power in years to follow
• Built a coalition with great diversity of southern Protestants, northern Jews, Catholics and blacks from urban areas, labor union members, small farmers in Midwest and Plains states and liberals and radicals
  o Convincing winning margin each time though decreasingly so from initial election realignment of 1932
Guardian of the Economy: B+

- Committed to action and balanced budget.
- First dealt with bank crisis, with "Brain Trust" advisers
  - Saved banks Emergency Banking Act: "bank holiday"
- Economy Act: cut federal salaries
- New Deal programs meant to deal with Great Depression unemployment and recession
  - In reality none actually solved the problem, really only a symbol of temporary relief
- Shifted approach 1937 to Keynesian deficit spending, after largest peacetime deficit in 1936: $3.5 billion
- One problem was solved with another: Great Depression with World War II
  - Transformed into military economy supplying arms and ammunition to Allies, and other materials to Japan
  - Surplus of jobs
Chief Diplomat: A

- 1934 Treaty of Relations with Cuba
  - No U.S. intervention in politics, but U.S. retains control of Guantanamo Bay naval base
- Recognized the Soviet Union: good relations with Stalin and Soviet important to maintain peace
- Atlantic Charter called for national self-determination and stated that aggressor nations be disarmed
- Declarations of Nations: no individual peace with the enemy, forming peacekeeping organization (United Nations)
- Casablanca Conference with Churchill and Tehran Conference with Stalin and Churchill
  - Accept nothing but unconditional surrender of Axis powers
- Yalta Conference (big three): Yalta Declaration commit Allies to the destruction of German militarism and Nazism
  - Divide conquered Germany into 3 military occupation zones
    - Soviet Union in Eastern Europe until free elections are held to choose form of government
- Wants United Nations after war
  - Conference of United Nations in San Francisco
Overall Performance: A-

- Passed legislation in the Hundred Days, most of which turned out unconstitutional, and had his court packing blunder. Though later passed long standing legislation like Social Security.
- Raised the military budget with the eminent threat of World War II and allied with Stalin and Churchill against the Axis Powers. Eventual success, though finality.
- Cabinet though with disagreements, made decisions after internal deliberation despite occasional replacements.
- Tended to maintain more positive approval of public, though difficult in first 5-6 years, finished on a high note.
- Established Democratic Party dominance in office and set party ideological platform with great support.
- Temporary relief legislation enacted, and eventually ended recession with sale of munitions, after greatest deficit.
- Alliance with Great Britain and Soviet Union to counteract hostilities of Germany, Italy, and Japan. Treaty with Cuba and helped further plans for United Nations after war.
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   <http://millercenter.org/president/fdroosevelt/essays/biography/4>
3. Domestic Politics. PBS 7 January 2011.
   <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/presidents/32_f_roosevelt/f_roosevelt_domestic.html>
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