

AS3238/HY3238  
The Political History of the U.S.

Week 8 (The New Deal and Total War)

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Masako Hattori, Ph.D.

# Agenda for Today

- ▶ The 1920s
- ▶ The Great Depression and the New Deal
- ▶ World War II

*How did Franklin D. Roosevelt change the role of the U.S. Presidency and the federal government in American society?*

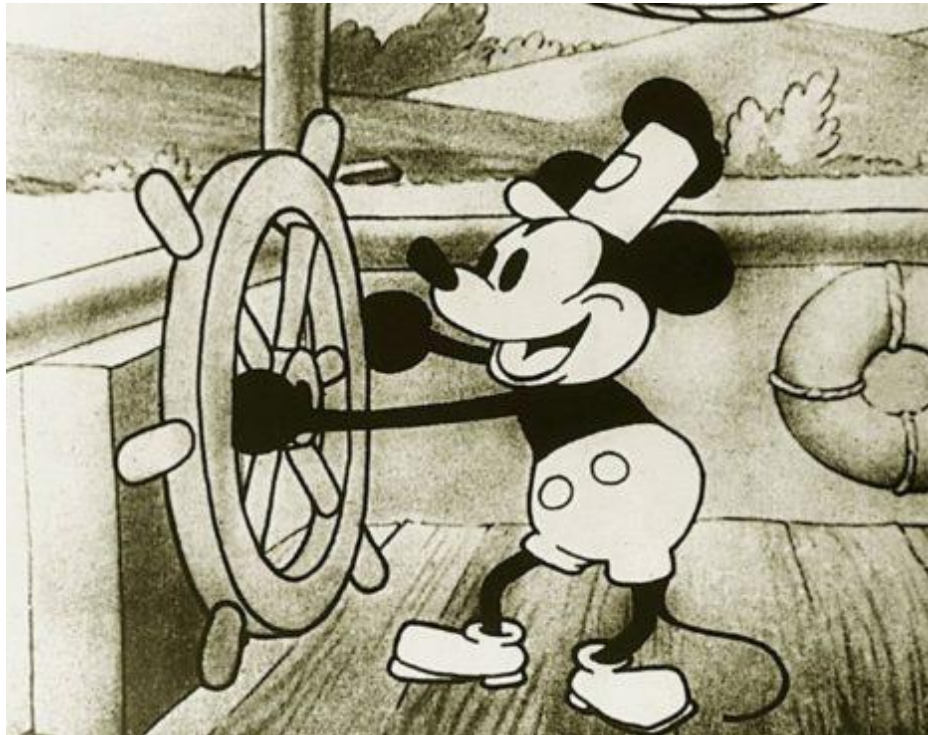
# The “New Era” / “Roaring Twenties”

- ▶ A period of prosperity and economic expansion led by the emergence of a new urban, industrial, consumer-oriented culture.
  - ▶ US companies produced 85% of the world's cars; by 1929, half of all American families owned a car.
- stimulated other sectors of the economy (steel, rubber, oil, tourism etc)



# The Rise of a Consumer Society

- ▶ New household appliances: telephones, vacuum cleaners, washing machines, radios
- ▶ New leisure activities: by 1929, weekly movie attendance had reached 80 million (double the figure of 1922); the rise of Hollywood



# The Flapper





# “The New Woman”

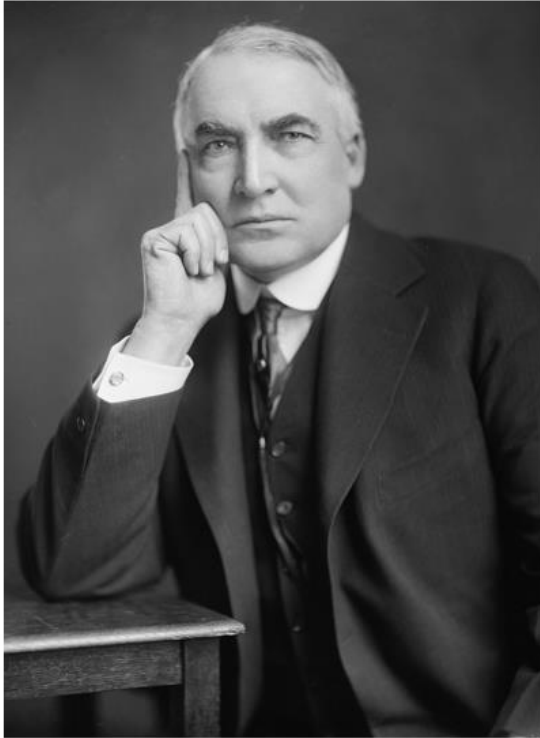
- ▶ The “flapper” epitomized the “liberation” of women (but the image applied only to young, single, urban women)
- ▶ In reality, most women remained highly dependent on men (poorly paid in work, confined to the home after marriage)



F. Scott Fitzgerald,  
*The Great Gatsby*  
(1925)



# A “Return to Normalcy”



- ▶ 3 Republican presidents
- ▶ Pro-business policies (low taxes, high tariffs, anti-union); firm believers in limited gov
- ▶ “Never before [...] has a government been so completely fused with business.” (*Wall Street Journal*)



# Foreign Policy: An “Isolationist” Period?

- ▶ A retreat from Wilson’s goal of internationalism  
→ unilateralism aimed at serving US economic interests (increasing exports and investment opportunities overseas).
- ▶ US presence in arms reduction negotiations (e.g. 1922 Washington Naval Arms Conference)
- ▶ Yet, foreign policy was conducted primarily through private economic relationships (e.g. US banks extended loans to European govs & advanced money to Germany for reparations payments).

# The Limits of Prosperity

- ▶ The fruits of prosperity were unequally distributed (between 1922-29, the wages of industrial workers rose by one quarter; corporate profits rose at more than twice that rate).
- ▶ Economic concentration continued (e.g. General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler dominated the automobile industry).
- ▶ Farmers remained in economic plight.
- ▶ At the beginning of 1929, the share of income of the wealthiest 5% exceeded that of the bottom 60% (40% of the population remained in poverty).

# The Great Depression

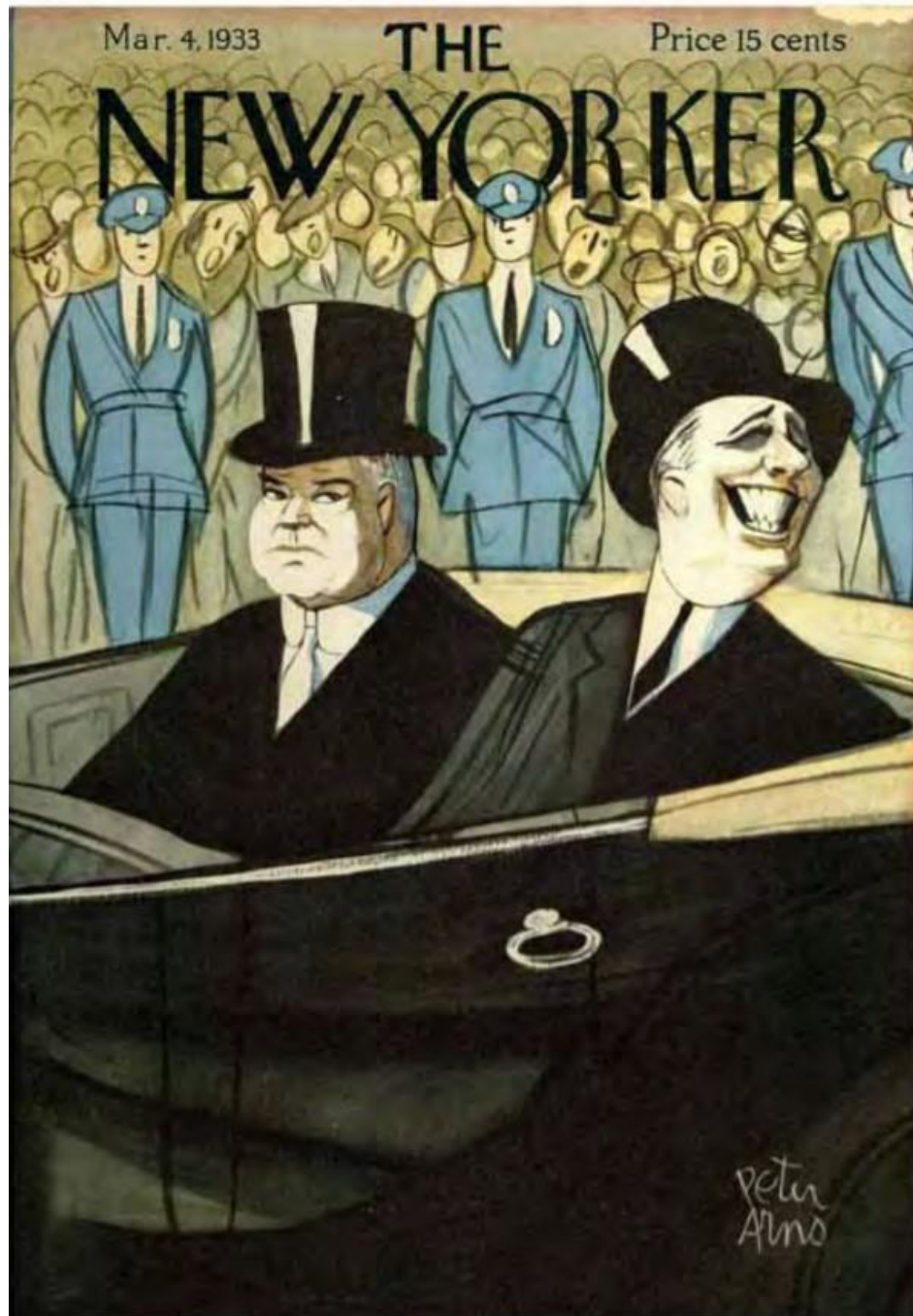
- ▶ Signs of depression: (the unequal distribution of wealth, depression in the farming regions, stagnation of consumer goods sales; lack of diversification in the US economy; decline in European demand for US goods).
- ▶ At the depth of the Depression, 25% of the US workforce was unemployed.



# Hoovervilles







## Franklin D. Roosevelt (32nd President: 1933-45)

- ▶ Born into an affluent, family, TR's cousin. A Democrat, served in the NY Senate & as US Assistant Secretary of the Navy.
- ▶ Promised a “New Deal” for American people during the 1932 campaign.
- ▶ The only president elected to the office four times.
- ▶ Cheerfulness, determination to keep fighting, pragmatism (“Try something!”)



# The New Deal

- ▶ A series of policies to help the economy recover, regulate the economy, and provide relief to individuals in need.
- ▶ Drew on the reform traditions of the progressive era; resulted in an unprecedented peacetime extension of the federal gov's and the president's authority (→FDR's reference to war)



# Creating jobs + improving the country's infrastructure & public facilities



- ▶ The Civilian Conservation Corps (1933-42)
- ▶ Had young unemployed men work & receive vocational training in forestry, flood control, construction etc.
- ▶ The gov offered the position to 3 million men in total, with a wage of \$30/month.



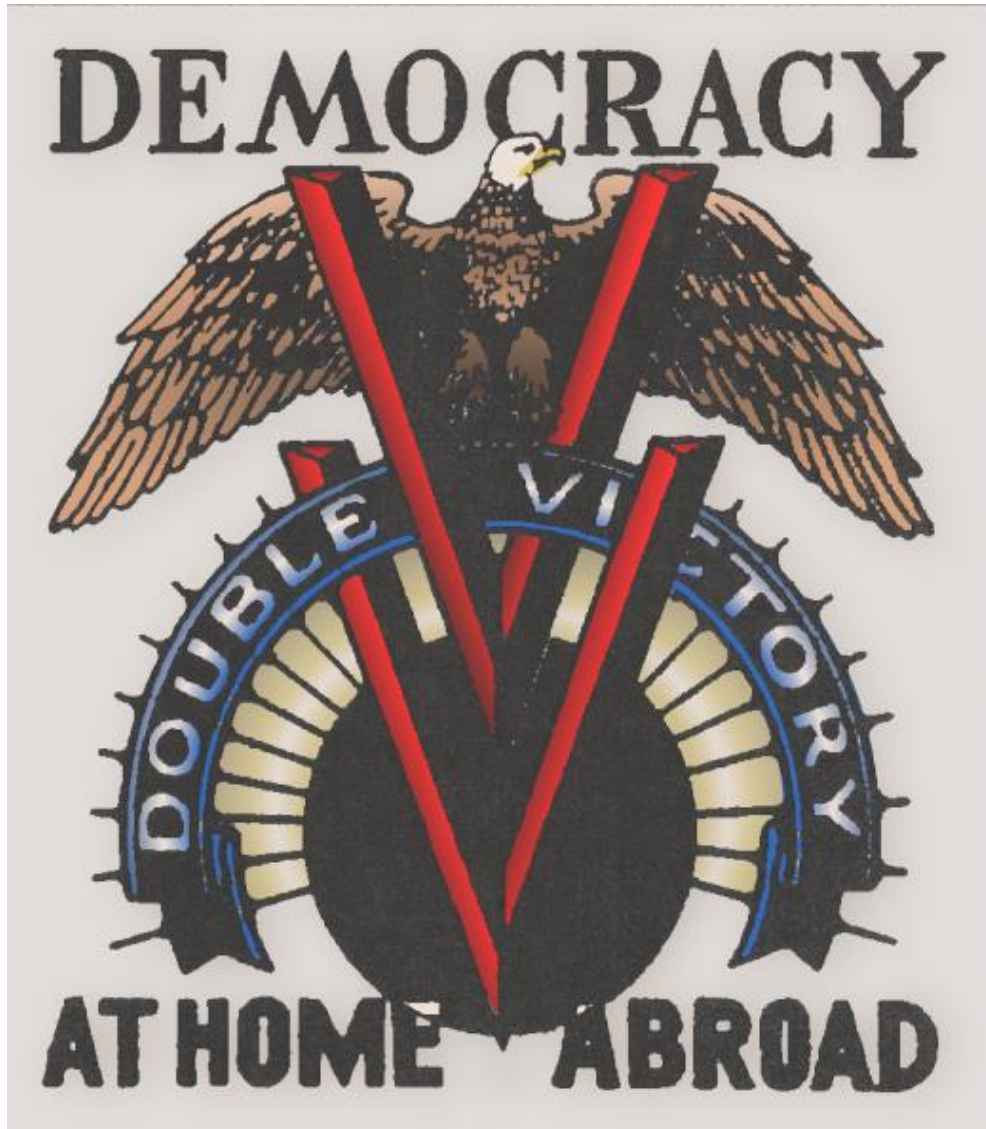


# The New Deal and Its Limits

- ▶ The “first” New Deal (circa 1933-34): focused on the recovery from the depression.
- ▶ The “second” New Deal (circa 1935-37): experimented policies for long-term economic security
- ▶ The National Security Act (1935): established a system of unemployment insurance, old age pensions, and aid to the disabled, the elderly poor, and families with dependent children; signified FDR’s conviction that the fed gov was responsible for ensuring the well-being of the American people (=not a temporary relief program but a permanent system of social welfare).
- ▶ →limits: local administration, the exclusion of domestic and agricultural workers (readings)
- ▶ Limits of the ND: did not end the depression.



# “Dr. New Deal” → “Dr. Win the War”

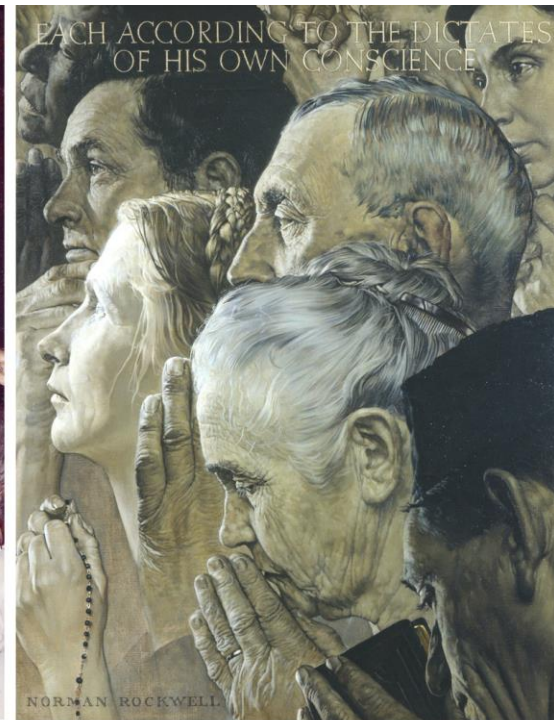
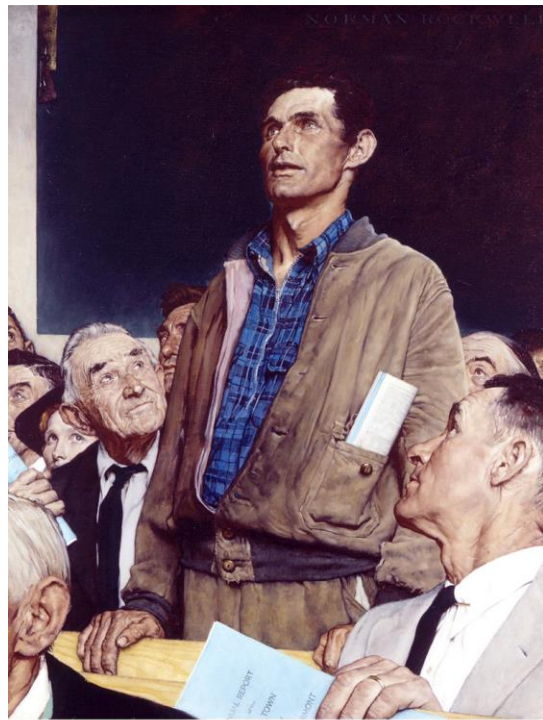


- ▶ Gov spending during the four years of war doubled all federal spending in all of US history up to that point. → annihilated unemployment and propelled economic growth.
- ▶ WWII set the stage for political & economic developments later in the century
- ▶ The rise of the west as an industrial center (“military-industrial complex”)
- ▶ The rise of the civil rights movement (WWII highlighted the discrepancy between the war for freedom and racial segregation at home)



# FDR's Vision of the Postwar World

- ▶ Jan 1941: the Four Freedoms speech
- ▶ August 1941: the Atlantic Charter (by FDR and Churchill)
- ▶ August 1944: the Dumbarton Oaks conference (the basic structure of the UN outlined)



► October 1945: the establishment of the UN

→ the League of Nations headquarters: [      ]

the United Nations headquarters: [      ]

→ signifies the rise of the US as the leading global power.

★ A change in American attitudes: Just a third of Americans in 1937 agreed with the concept of a League of Nations-style international organization. But by 1945, 81 percent had done so.



<https://www.un.org/en/delegate/united-nations-headquarters-%E2%80%9Ccool-un%E2%80%9D>

# Other Legacies of FDR

## ▶ Political realignment

→ The Republican Party: pro-business, conservative, limited government

The Democratic Party: liberal-progressive, active government, supported by a coalition of labor unions, ethnic/racial/religious minorities, rural whites, and intellectuals (the New Deal coalition)

▶ A new relationship between US Presidents and ordinary Americans (e.g. the “fireside chats”)



# The Presidential Library System



# Conclusion

- ▶ FDR and his policies during the Great Depression and World War II greatly expanded the federal government's role in American society (the rise of the “New Deal state”).
- ▶ The New Deal redrew the map of American politics.
- ▶ FDR established a new relationship between US Presidents and the American people.



# Tutorial:

Please come prepared to offer two discussion questions.