

The legacy of andrew jackson history essay



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What is a good president? Is it one that makes the best economical decisions that are at cost to others, or the president that makes the best moral decisions that benefit everyone? A good president can make decisions based on both moral and the economics. A person with American spirit, or patriotism, whom is a strong defender of the constitution, is in addition what makes a first-class president. Andrew Jackson made decisions in his presidency that made him an average president; such as dealing with national debt, opposition to the national bank, the Nullification Crisis, Indian removal, and the Trail of Tears.

Jackson reduced federal debt to only \$33, 733. 05 in 1835; the lowest it had been since the first fiscal year of 1791. Andrew Jackson is the only president in history to have paid off the United States' national debt. However, Jackson's accomplishment with national debt did not last long. After his presidency a severe depression hit America from 1837 to 1844, which caused a tenfold increase in national debt within the first year. Jackson did not plan ahead for when the economy would change; instead he only focused on what was happening during his presidency.

During James Madison's tenure in 1816, the Second Bank of the United States was authorized for a twenty year period. Jackson, as president, worked to terminate the bank's federal charter. Jackson's veto message stated that the bank needed to be abolished because:

- It concentrated the United States' financial strength into one establishment.
- It exposed the government to control by foreign interests.

- Its main purpose was to make the rich richer.
- It took too much control over members of Congress.
- It favored northeastern states over southern and western states.

Jackson felt the bank enhanced the fortunes of an “ elite circle” of commercial and industrial entrepreneurs at the expense of farmers and laborers, and Jackson supported an “ agricultural republic”. Jackson was successful in eliminating the bank by vetoing the 1832 re-charter that was issued by Congress and by withdrawal of United State’s funds in 1833.

The Second Bank of the United State’s lending functions were taken over by the local and state banks that had begun to spring up. This led to an expansion of credit and speculation. Jackson had originally withdrew money from the bank to invest it in other banks, land sales, cotton production, canal construction, and manufacturing boomed. However, banks issued only paper banknotes that were not under warranty by gold or silver reserves, which led to rapid inflation and state debts increased hastily. Jackson issued what was called the Specie Circular in 1836, which required purchasers of government lands to pay in “ specie” (gold or silver coins). Jackson’s decision resulted in a very large demand for specie, and many banks did not have near enough to exchange for their notes. These banks collapsed. The Panic of 1837 was a direct reaction to this, which took the national economy into a deep depression. America’s economy took years to recover from the damage.

The U. S. Senate censured Andrew Jackson on March 28, 1834, for the decision to remove U. S. funds from the Bank of the United States. Later when the Jacksonians had a majority in the Senate, the censure was gone.

Jackson's presidency was faced with another crisis which was known as the "Nullification Crisis," or "secession crisis," and joined issues of sectional strife with disagreements over tariffs in 1828-1832. Critics proposed that high tariffs on imports of common manufactured goods made in Europe made those goods more expensive than ones from the northern U. S., raising the prices paid by planters in the South. Politicians from the south pointed out that tariffs benefited northern industrialists at the cost of southern farmers.

The crisis was brought to light when Vice President Calhoun, in the South Carolina Exposition and Protest of 1828, backed the claim of his home state, South Carolina, that it has the right to declare void the tariff legislation of 1828, and, more generally the right of a state to nullify any Federal laws which went against its own interests. Jackson was sympathetic with the South in the tariff debate; he also was a strong supporter of a strong union, with effective powers for the central government. Later, Jackson attempted to face down Calhoun over the issue which then led into a rivalry between the two men.

A specific incident was at the Jefferson Day dinner on April 13, 1830 involving dinner toasts. Robert Hayne began by a toast to "The Union of the United States, and the Sovereignty of the States." Jackson rose after, and in a loud voice added "Our Federal Union: It must be preserved!" a clear challenge to Calhoun. Then Calhoun clarified his position by responding "The Union: Next to our Liberty, the most dear!"

The following year, Jackson and Calhoun separated politically from each other. At the same time, the Petticoat affair caused further resignations from

Jackson's Cabinet, which led to its reorganization as the "Kitchen Cabinet." Despite resigning as Secretary of State, Martin Van Buren played a leading role in the new unofficial cabinet. The first Democratic National Convention, which was privately engineered by members of the Kitchen Cabinet, Van Buren replaced Calhoun as Jackson's running mate. Calhoun resigned from his Vice Presidency in 1832 to become a United States Senator for South Carolina.

Jackson responded to South Carolina's nullification claim with a vow to send troops to enforce the laws in South Carolina. He issued a resounding proclamation in December 1832 against the "nullifiers," and stated that he considered "the power to annul a law of the United States, assumed by one State, incompatible with the existence of the Union, contradicted expressly by the letter of the Constitution, unauthorized by its spirit, inconsistent with every principle on which it was founded, and destructive of the great object for which it was formed." The President declared South Carolina on "the brink of insurrection and treason," and he appealed to the people of the state to rethink their allegiance to the Union for which their ancestors had fought for. Jackson also denied the right of secession.

Afterward, Jackson asked Congress to pass a "Force Bill" which would explicitly authorize the use of military force to enforce the tariff, but was delayed its passage until the protectionists led by Clay agreed to a reduced Compromise Tariff. Both the Force Bill and Compromise Tariff passed on March 1, 1833, Jackson signed both. The South Carolina Convention then after met and revoked its nullification decree, which made the Force bill moot because it was no longer needed.

The most controversial aspect of Jackson's presidency was his policy regarding American Indians. He was one of the leading advocates of the policy known as Indian removal. Jackson had been negotiating treaties and policies of removal with Indian leaders for years before his election as president. Many tribes whom were removed to Arkansas Territory and further west of the Mississippi River did not go through the suffering and tragedies of what later became known as the Trail of tears. Many white Americans who had experienced frontier wars advocated total extermination of the " savages." Jackson's support of removal policies is best understood by studying of those previous cases he had personally negotiated, rather than those which took place after his presidency. However, Jackson is often held responsible for all which took place in the 1830s.

In his First Annual Message to Congress on December 8, 1829, Jackson stated: " This emigration should be voluntary, for it would be as cruel as unjust to compel the aborigines to abandon the graves of their fathers and seek a home in a distant land. But they should be distinctly informed that if they remain within the limits of the States they must be subject to their laws. In return for their obedience as individuals they will without doubt be protected in the enjoyment of those possessions which they have improved by their industry." "(Andrew Jackson: First Annual Message)

Before his election, Jackson was involved in the issue of Indian removal for over ten years. Native American removal to the west of the Mississippi River was a major part of his political agenda during both the 1824 and 1828 presidential elections. Once elected, Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act into law in 1830. This Act authorized the President to negotiate treaties with <https://assignbuster.com/the-legacy-of-andrew-jackson-history-essay/>

tribes to buy their lands in the east in exchange for lands further west and outside of existing U. S. state borders.

While frequently frowned upon by the North, and opposed by Jeremiah Evarts and Theodore Frelinghuysen, the Removal Act was very popular in the South. Population growth and the discovery of gold on Cherokee land had increased pressure on tribal lands. Georgia became quite involved in a contentious jurisdictional dispute with the Cherokee tribe, which resulted in the 1832 U. S. Supreme Court decision (*Worcester v. Georgia*) which ruled that Georgia could not impose its laws upon Cherokee tribal lands. Jackson is often quoted as having said, “ John Marshall has made his decision, now let him enforce it!” (Remini, Robert V. *The Legacy of Andrew Jackson*) It is disputed whether Jackson said that or not.

Jackson used the Georgia crisis to pressure the Cherokee leaders into signing a removal treaty. A small group of Cherokees led by a man named John Ridge had negotiated the Treaty of New Echota with Jackson’s representatives. Most Cherokees rejected the document because Ridge was not a recognized leader amongst the Cherokee Nation. Fifteen thousand Cherokees proposed removal by signing a petition of protest; the list was ignored by the Supreme Court and the U. S. legislature, which was partially at fault to bad delays and timing. Van Buren, Jackson’s successor, was the one who enforced the treaty. He ordered seven thousand armed troops to remove the Cherokees from their lands. Because of the arguing between political groups, many of the Cherokees thought their appeals were still being considered until the troops arrived. The quick and forced removal

resulted in the deaths of over four thousand Cherokees on the “ Trail of Tears.”

By the 1830s, from constant pressure from settlers, all five of the southern tribes had lost most of their lands, but rather large self-government groups lived in Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, and Florida. All of the tribes, except the Seminoles, moved far in the coexistence with whites, and resisted the suggestion to voluntarily remove themselves. The title, the Five Civilized Tribe was given to them for their nonviolent methods.

More than forty-five thousand Indians had been relocated to the west during Jackson’s presidency. Few Cherokees escaped the forced relocation or walked back afterwards, fleeing to the high Smoky Mountains along the North Carolina and Tennessee border.

In the Jacksonian time period, his administration had bought nearly one hundred million acres of Indian land for a about sixty-eight million dollars, and purchased thirty-two million acres of western land. Jackson was criticized at the time for his role during these events, and criticism toward him has grown over the years. The Author of The Legacy of Andrew Jackson, Robert V. Remini, characterizes the Indian Removal era as “ one of the unhappiest chapters in American history.”

The topics of national debt and opposition to the national bank are decisions that Jackson made well in his presidency. Indian Removal and the Nullification Crisis are prime examples of Jackson’s bad choices. Overall, Jackson is an average president. Every president has their good and bad

decisions, and Andrew Jackson had an even amount. Therefore, Jackson is a run of the mill president.