

# Andrew Jackson: democratic intentions vs undemocratic actions

[Government](#)



Andrew Jackson was known as obstinate, but a man of the common people, and a democratic man. He was a man who created the party of the common white men and birthed American political culture. He was a frontiersman who although controversial, executed solely to the benefit of the common white men, with the underlying belief, that pushing westward was the cornerstone of American prosperity. He was a strong-willed character who spoke up in sight of flawed systems, which he saw as a burden to the equality of the common white men. He was the creator of a New Democracy which people began to see as the 'true character' of the United States. Due to Jackson being the first voice of a new political party, his intentions were frequently disputable by the people of America... and still, are to this day. Jackson's intentions were always democratic throughout his presidency, although the follow through was contentious; which can be seen throughout two major instances, Indian Removal and the Bank War during the New Democracy era.

### **The Shift to New Democracy**

During the New Democracy era, Jackson represented the common white man by being the first president to value the judgment of the people. Though the huge change he craved to endure on the nation caused controversy on his morals. The presidents prior to Jackson's inauguration like John Adams and Henry Clay, were afraid of having too many people voting because they looked down on lower classes of society. There was even a state law that restricted the franchise to propertied men, which evidently discluded a large population at the time. Their outlook was that if you didn't have a stake in the country, (land and wealth) then you weren't qualified to make rational decisions regarding the fate of the nation. Thankfully by 1810, the ideals of

democracy began to catch on among the common people, and led to the property voting rights to be eliminated! This expansion of voting rights represented a shift in who the average American thought deserved to have a political voice.

With this shift about Democratic ideals in mind, Jackson ran for the president whose views paved the way from 'traditional democracy' to 'new democracy'. His style in governing was portrayed in document 2, written by Thomas Bailey and David Kennedy. This document outlines Jackson's character resemblance to the people's new values of a relatable president, who is a man of the people. It also shows Jackson's connections he's developed between the people, which was the building block to a New Democracy.

## **Jackson's Undemocratic Decisions**

Apart from the good that he intended on the nation though, Jackson made some undemocratic decisions which made people question those good intentions. As document 7 explains, Jackson's secretary of state (Van Buren) warned Jackson about appointing Samuel Swartwout to be the collector of the port New York due to his 'criminal tendencies'. Overall, Jackson did not comply solely because Swartwout was an early supporter. In time, Swartwout absconded \$1,222,705.09. Along with Jackson's biased decision he made, he created something called the Spoil System which is explained in document 6 in a letter to Congress. He believed in 'rotation in office' because most people can do government jobs. So every new official would be able to appoint his own supporters and friends to government jobs. This

was an irresponsible action taken it replaced hundreds of good federal employees with incompetent party loyalists. Overall, his democratic intentions of providing land for the good of the common white men were clear, although the way he acted disobeyed the democratic intent.

## **The Bank War**

Jackson defended the common men in one major instance during his presidency called the Bank War. In 1816, the national bank (the second bank of the United States) was given a twenty-year charter by Congress, but before the charter bank expired in 1836, Jackson destroyed the bank.

Jackson argued against the bank because it went against his Democratic ideas which can be seen in Document Four. This document outlines how to Jackson, the bank was a corrupt business which illustrated how a privileged class of bank owners, oppressed the will of the common people of America. Jackson was a man to speak up in sight of flawed systems and wasn't afraid to deny any audience... even Congress'. The president went against Congress when Jackson vetoed the charter, which caused the Bank War to be the biggest controversy of Jackson's administration. It gave off the image that he felt his vote was more important than Congress' vote. Because of this, Nicolas Biddle and a group of people who started to coalesce around their hatred for Jackson called Jackson's veto a manifesto of anarchy and compared him to King Andrew the First, which can be seen on the bottom of document 3. If you look at the document you can see how he tramples on the constitution and pushes forward his own agenda like a monarch. Thus, although his intentions of getting rid of a flawed bank were Democratic, the

outcome did not portray so taken it later caused the Panic of 1837... which led to the plummet of the American economy.

## **Jackson and Native Americans**

The obstinate Andrew Jackson took office having one major goal, that Indians must be moved “ beyond the great river Mississippi.” As mentioned earlier, Jackson was a frontiersman who believed that pushing his people westward was the cornerstone of American prosperity. Therefore, as the frontier population continued to push westward, it forced a confrontation with the Indians that were living there. This caused the Indians to gradually get pushed away more and more. Knowing Jackson's values of working behalf the common white who wanted to grow cotton on their land, he ordered the Indians to leave their homeland and walk to a specifically designated territory. He puts forth this desire in document 8 as he proposes a place where Native Americans could go... but interestingly enough, never mentioned HOW. He entirely disregarded the supreme court's vote (which defended the tribes status); he thought his vote was superior over the supreme court's vote. More importantly, he disregarded ensuring that the tribes would get to the designated area safely. This caused the Trail of Tears which was the Native Americans life-threatening journey which led to the death of at least 3000 people. This was the worst outcome any president could have ever ask for. It was an unorganized and selfish decision that can be seen by the response from the Cherokee people in document 9. They appeal their case to the American people, to announce that they have natural rights just like white Americans do. It wasn't an altruistic act which a democratic president should have made if he meant well for the nation. Once

again, while his intentions of wanting to extend America's borders were democratic, he did sacrifice moral principles (by causing thousands of deaths), to achieve some political goals.

## **Summary**

In conclusion, Jackson was full of Democratic intentions for the nation, although failed to portray Democratic Actions. He was a man who assured that he would do his utmost to comply to his supporters' demands, but unfortunately faced a huge problem being that; Jackson showed blatant disregard for people other than his supporters, which is an undemocratic action. Whether or not he was good for the nation is another complex question, but overall, he was a democratic man whose intentions were honorable to the nation.