Andrew Jackson presided over one of the most remarkable periods of political change in U.S. history, in which circumstances seemed destined to provide wealth and political opportunity to the many, instead of an aristocratic few. Jackson's rise to power contributed to the birth of the Democratic Party, and through his insistence that the president alone represented the will of the whole nation, he signaled a shift in U.S. government toward a strong executive.

Jackson Becomes President

The Campaign of 1828

In the early nineteenth century the nation found its way of life being reshaped by a number of factors: the surge of settlers into the western United States, the impact of the Industrial Revolution, the advent of great U.S. cities, and dramatic advances in transportation. Andrew Jackson's rise to power in this era was no coincidence. In a time when many Americans were growing tired of being governed by a "Virginia Dynasty" that they viewed as being elitist, corrupt, and detached, Jackson, was considered the champion of the popular majority. The Virginia Dynasty referred to the early hold of Virginians on the presidency--only one of the first five presidents, John Adams, was not from Virginia. George Washington was from Virginia, and presidents Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and James Monroe were all Virginians as well and had been nominated through a caucus system over which Virginian politicians had a powerful hold.

The presidential election of 1824 lent credibility to the idea of a selfish and underhanded system at work in government. Jackson, running against Kentucky senator Henry Clay, secretary of state John Quincy Adams, and former secretary of the treasury William Crawford, captured most of the popular and electoral votes but failed to gain an overall majority in the electoral college. The selection of a president then fell to the House of Representatives, of which Henry Clay was Speaker. Though Clay had finished last in the balloting and was therefore eliminated from consideration, he still believed Jackson to be his most powerful political rival and used his influence to gain John Quincy Adams the presidency. When Clay was later named to Adams's cabinet, Jackson's followers denounced the "corrupt bargain" that had gotten Adams into the White House.

U.S. voters were reminded of this corrupt bargain by Jackson's supporters in the election of 1828--considered by many historians to be one of the dirtiest presidential campaigns in history. The election turned out to be a strictly Jackson-Adams contest. Jackson and his followers officially split with Adams's party, the National Republicans, and called themselves the Democrats. Almost no issues of substance were addressed by the campaign. Instead, Jackson's followers depicted Adams as an elitist with European tastes who had spent extravagant sums of money on elegant White House furniture. In particular, they made a great fuss over Adams's purchase of a billiard table, which they portrayed as the toy of a gambler and aristocrat. One of the most outrageous claims against Adams was that he
had procured the services of a prostitute for the Russian minister when he was U.S. minister to Russia--a charge that was never substantiated.

Although Adams did not stoop to mudslinging, his supporters launched attacks that were as disgraceful as the Democrats'. Charges that Jackson and his wife were adulterers (See also, Family Life) and that his pious mother had been a common prostitute stung Jackson acutely. Black-bordered handbills with the shapes of coffins printed on them were distributed as campaign material. They cited Jackson's numerous pistol duels and his hanging of mutinous militiamen during the Creek War as evidence of his barbarism.

The Election

In the end all this sleazy campaigning had little effect on voters. The party organization assembled by Jackson, vice-presidential candidate John C. Calhoun, and the New York politician Martin Van Buren--along with Jackson's widespread popularity--decided the election of 1828. Jackson won 56 percent of the popular vote, and a 178 to 83 victory in the electoral college. In March of 1829 he took the oath of office and delivered an inaugural address in which he vowed to undertake "the task of reform, which will require particularly the correction of those abuses that have brought the patronage of the Federal Government into conflict with the freedom of elections, and the counteraction of those causes which have disturbed the rightful course of appointment and have placed or continued power in unfaithful or incompetent hands."

Jackson's election was interpreted by the general population as the end of government control by the commercial aristocracy of Virginia. Though Jackson was a bit of a Tennessee aristocrat himself, and by no definition a common man, his coming to power was expected to establish a link between the central government and the masses of people from all over the country. This heralded the advent of what came to be known as Jacksonian Democracy. His view was generally that government's task was to break down barriers, such as social and economic obstacles, so people could develop their abilities and enjoy the rewards of their work. Also he held that the president, being the only nationally elected official, reflected the will of the people and therefore should vigorously exercise his powers. While he held that government should generally leave people alone, as president he believed wholly in the indivisibility of the federal Union, on which the American society was founded. He fought hard to maintain a single, indissoluble Union.

The Campaign of 1832

The campaign of 1832 was memorable for several reasons. It was the first in which presidential candidates were selected by nominating conventions, which took over from the state legislatures the responsibility for naming candidates. The first national party platform was published, and for the first time there was a third-party ticket in the field, though the party--the Anti-Masonic Party--was a short-lived movement. It was formed in reaction to a particular social phenomenon of the day: a growing suspicion of the secrecy of the Society of Freemasons. The Freemasons, originally a loose fraternity of free-thinking men, had in the United States become more of a social club for wealthy, upper-class farmers, merchants, and bankers whose ranks included both Andrew Jackson and Henry Clay. However, when a New York bricklayer named Morgan, who had written an exposé of the practices (mostly symbolic rituals) of the Freemasons, was mysteriously murdered, the Anti-Masonic Party was
formed with the express purpose of wresting control of the government from the Freemasons, and combating secrecy in a supposedly free and open society.

The platform of the Anti-Masons was based on a charge of nationwide conspiracy for which there was not much evidence (Morgan's murder was likely the work of a few men), and the party did not play a significant role in the campaign. It was to be a contest between the two fragments of the Republican Party. For the Democratic-Republicans, Jackson's nomination was a given; the function of the Democratic convention was simply to select a vice-presidential candidate. Martin Van Buren was overwhelmingly nominated over the out-of-favor John C. Calhoun. The National Republicans nominated their leader, Kentucky congressperson Henry Clay, and the fight was on.

The presidential campaign of 1832, unlike Jackson's first, had a real issue. Clay had made sure the issue would be the future of the Second Bank of the United States (BUS), an institution to which Clay knew Jackson was opposed. The bank's charter was not up for review until 1836, and Jackson was willing to wait until then to set about dismantling it. Clay, however, saw the issue as a means by which he could gain the White House. He convinced bank president Nicholas Biddle to reapply for the bank's charter four years early, in the campaign year of 1832. Clay thought Jackson could either veto the charter, thereby opposing a congressional majority and angering the Eastern aristocrats, or he could give in and allow the charter to be renewed, alienating the westerners who had elected him.

But in staking his presidency on the issue of the BUS, Clay had made a serious political miscalculation. He appeared to believe that the U.S. presidency was still decided by the moneyed classes—a belief that Jackson had already proven wrong in 1828. Confident that this would continue to be a major factor of U.S. politics, Jackson promptly vetoed Congress's approval of the bank's charter. Congress was unable to override the veto, and the Bank issue was set before the American people to decide in the coming presidential election.

The National Republicans, helped along by a seemingly endless stream of money and propaganda by Nicholas Biddle, pointed to Jackson's veto as just the latest proof that he was a tyrant who had trampled the Bill of Rights. The Democrats, however, decided to address the issue as little as possible: a nationwide campaign of parades, songs, and barbecues was accompanied by the old arguments about rich versus poor and the privileged versus the working class, and about Andrew Jackson as the only "man of the people" in the contest. The election results showed that the national sentiment had not changed since 1828. Jackson claimed a 219 to 49 majority in the electoral college.

**Jackson's Advisers**

Prior to Jackson's election the executive cabinet was known as the organization where U.S. presidents were cultivated. Jackson's appointments, however, were notoriously mediocre; among them, only his secretary of state Martin Van Buren was a first-rate officer with the intelligence and shrewdness to have much influence over policy formation. This was not because Jackson chose his officers poorly. He chose a weak cabinet purposely, because he meant to dominate it. He believed firmly in the doctrine of "executive supremacy"—it was the president, and not the legislature or the courts, who alone represented and symbolized the will of the American people. As one historian put it, "While [he]
intended to listen to their ideas, his vision of President-Cabinet relations involved secretaries who functioned as lieutenants, carrying out policies they had little voice in deciding" (Belohlavek, p. 25).

The Kitchen Cabinet

There was a group of greater consequence who advised Jackson: a clique of men known by jealous adversaries as the Kitchen Cabinet, so-called because it included several men without official titles with whom Jackson met in informal sessions. The group consisted of Jackson's closest friends and most trusted political allies, including his good friend John H. Eaton, the secretary of war. The other principal members of the Kitchen Cabinet were William B. Lewis, a friend from Tennessee; Amos Kendall, editor of a pro-Jackson newspaper in Kentucky and a fellow enemy of Kentucky senator Henry Clay; Duff Green, editor of the United States Telegraph, the leading Jackson political organ; and Isaac Hill, editor of the New Hampshire Patriot and later, with the help of Jackson, a New Hampshire senator. Van Buren and Eaton were also trusted advisers who met informally with Jackson.

Because Jackson saw his cabinet secretaries as clerks rather than advisers, he discontinued the practice of holding regular cabinet meetings. So the Kitchen Cabinet was certainly more powerful than the actual cabinet. Though generally more influential than Jackson's formal cabinet, the Kitchen Cabinet's role in forming policy has been historically overrated. Jackson himself was the policy maker. Composed largely of journalists, the Kitchen Cabinet helped Jackson to perceive, and in turn shape, popular thought. In this way they did help to direct his policy. Ultimately, it was Jackson (critics sometimes called him King Andrew I) who decided the administration's course of action.

Martin Van Buren and John Calhoun

Toward the end of Jackson's first term, Martin Van Buren was emerging as the clear choice as Jackson's right-hand man and successor, helped along by both his own political shrewdness and by a succession of political blunders on the part of Vice President John Calhoun. When Calhoun perceived Van Buren's threat to his future presidency, he launched an effort to strike down his political opponents in the cabinet. Unwisely, the secretary he pursued most vigorously was Eaton, Jackson's close friend--and even more unwisely, his attacks centered on the character and reputation of Eaton's wife, Peggy. After Rachel Jackson's death, caused in the president's opinion by the slander of malicious propagandists, the president was especially offended and upset by these attacks. Calhoun and President Jackson also differed substantially on the issue of states rights. When Jackson later learned that in 1818, Calhoun the legislator had voted to censure the general after his Florida campaign, Calhoun's days were numbered. By 1831 Jackson had forced Calhoun's resignation and purged the cabinet of his followers. Van Buren became the next vice president at the beginning of Jackson's second term.

Jackson and Congress

Jackson presided over the Twenty-first, Twenty-second, Twenty-third, and Twenty-fourth sessions of Congress, each of which was composed of a majority of Democratic members in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. The opposition party, the National Republicans (later the Whigs), was led by figures such as Kentucky senator Henry Clay and Massachusetts senator Daniel Webster. While Jackson's executive decisions did spark much legislative debate, some of it quite heated, he generally prevailed due to the strength of his majority.
When Jackson’s majority did not prevail in Congress, his belief in "executive supremacy" was made clear—"King Andrew" defied and dominated Congress as few presidents in history have done. The six presidents before him had exercised the veto a total of 10 times, but Jackson alone wielded it 12 times during his two terms, including seven uses of the "pocket veto." A pocket veto allows a bill to fail through inaction. If Congress adjourns before the president can return the vetoed bill within the specified 10 days, the bill is considered "pocketed" and does not become a law. The pocket veto, used first by James Madison, was employed by Jackson as a relatively quiet, noncontroversial way to sink congressional legislation with which he did not agree.

**Jackson and the Judiciary**

In the years since the Jackson administration, it has been accepted in U.S. government that in the interpretation of the Constitution, the Supreme Court holds ultimate supremacy. To Jackson, this was questionable. He saw no reason why the Supreme Court should act as the final arbiter of constitutional issues. His views on this subject were complicated, however, by the fact that Chief Justice John Marshall was a political enemy who had supported John Quincy Adams and Henry Clay during the election of 1828. It was often difficult to tell whether Jackson’s reactions to the Court’s opinions were due to political convictions, or to his personal feelings on the matter at hand.

The best example of Jackson’s sometimes contradictory approach to the judiciary is the Court’s decision during the [Georgia](#) controversy of his first term, involving the Cherokee Indians. ([See also, Domestic Issues](#)). When Georgia began to enact laws extending their authority over Cherokee lands—an action in strict contradiction to U.S. treaties with the [Cherokees](#)---the Supreme Court struck down these laws as unconstitutional. President Jackson, however, refused to enforce the decision mandated by the Supreme Court, on the constitutional grounds that Congress did not have the power to regulate commerce with Indian tribes. The president made the assertion that he was not empowered to enforce the law against a state. This is an extraordinary position, given that a year later Jackson came down hard on the "nullies" in [South Carolina](#) who made similar arguments for states’s rights. The president’s constitutional arguments seem to have fallen short in this instance, and appear to have been a rationalization of his lack of sympathy for the American Indians and his animosity toward Marshall.

Following Marshall's death in 1835, Jackson appointed Roger Brooke Taney as chief justice of the Supreme Court on March 15, 1836. Jackson’s associate justice appointments were as follows: John McLean (1829); Henry Baldwin (1830); James Moore Wayne (1835); and Philip Pendleton Barbour (1836). As chief justice, Taney is best remembered for his controversial opinion in the 1857 [Dred Scott v. Sandford](#) case. In speaking for the majority, Taney ruled that Congress had no authority to outlaw [slavery](#) in the U.S. territories. This decision voided the Missouri Compromise, a plan meant to keep the balance between slave states and free states, and helped speed the onset of the American Civil War (1861-65). Taney wrote that blacks, whether slaves or free, were not citizens as defined in the Constitution; they were "beings of an inferior order, (with) no rights which the white man was bound to respect."
Changes in the U.S. Government

Jacksonian Democracy

By the 1820s and 1830s the swelling population of the U.S. frontier helped transform U.S. government into something that more closely resembled true democracy. One by one, states began to eliminate property requirements for suffrage, extending the right to vote to all adult white males. While this still eliminated a good portion of the population, namely women and African Americans, it nevertheless transformed the federal government into one that more closely resembled the will of the masses. Candidates were more directly chosen by the will of the people, rather than by a caucus of political bosses.

Because Jackson saw himself as reflecting the will of the people, he also assumed a dictatorial role and saw the presidency as superior to the Supreme Court and the Congress. So he became the main beneficiary of this new populism, so much that this new type of democracy was called Jacksonian Democracy. While he did not create the new democracy, he was the only politician in possession of the shrewdness and backwoods credentials that would allow him to ride this new political sentiment to the presidency. Jackson was a symbol of the shift of U.S. political influence from the conservative eastern seaboard to the new states on the other side of the Appalachians.

The "Spoils System"

In his first inaugural address Jackson had promised to clean house in Washington. No party had been overturned in government since 1800, and many government offices suffered from complacency—or worse, incompetence and corruption. A few officeholders in 1828 had actually had their commissions signed by President Washington and had lingered on into their eighties, performing virtually no work for their salaries. To Jackson, the quickest way to reform was to sweep out this old, worthless corps and bring in his own followers—rewarding them as he punished the supporters of his predecessors.

Jackson is thus recognized by historians as having initiated one of the most troublesome and demoralizing practices in U.S. democracy. Though the "spoils system," from New York senator William Marcy's classic 1832 remark: "To the victor belong the spoils of the enemy" (Remini, p.110), was hardly new to U.S. government, and though Jackson actually only replaced fewer than 2,000 out of 11,000 officers, he did employ the system to a greater degree than any of his predecessors. Some of Jackson's officers, it was later revealed, had openly bought their posts with campaign contributions. Fairly or not, Jackson bears much historical blame for promoting the practice of patronage and undermining public service by subordinating professional merit to political considerations.

During Jackson's administration two states were admitted to the Union. Arkansas became the 25th state on June 15, 1836, and Michigan the 26th on January 26, 1837.

Domestic Issues

The remarkable changes in the U.S. domestic environment before and during Jackson's presidency presented the government with a host of new problems. While the nation continued to expand into its western frontier, resulting in the growth of an independent pioneer population who profited from
skyrocketing land values, the Industrial Revolution had produced powerful urban centers in the North and the East. The nation’s expansion into the American frontier created new tensions among settlers and American Indians. Rural Americans clamored for more land, some of which was legally occupied by the American Indians under previous treaties with the federal government. At the same time, the rise to prominence of Northern cities left many Americans in the South, who still relied on a primarily agricultural economy, feeling overlooked and even victimized by a government that appeared to be growing more sympathetic to urban interests. Both of these circumstances sparked fresh debate about the issue of states rights. Citizens in certain states, unhappy with the restrictions imposed on their way of life by officials in faraway Washington, began to assert that it was the states, and not the central government, which held ultimate sovereignty in the United States. In a country that had existed for only about a half century, this question had not yet been settled to anyone’s satisfaction. Increasingly the United States was becoming divided into two sectional interests: the wealthy and rapidly growing urban North, and the traditional agricultural society of the South.

**Indian Removal: The Trail of Tears**

Prior to Jackson’s arrival in the White House, Presidents James Monroe and John Quincy Adams had each tried to handle the problems resulting from the rapid settlement of the lands west of the Appalachians, where white settlers were coming into frequent contact with large American Indian tribes. Various treaties had been negotiated with the tribes, but continued frontier expansion forced renegotiation after renegotiation. While many of the tribes, faced with a combination of lures and threats, agreed to removal further west, some rebelled and many of them were crushed by General Jackson, the infamous Indian fighter.

The Cherokees of Georgia were a tribe who had seemed to win the fight to stay in their ancestral homeland. Like the Creeks, Choctaws, and Chickasaws, they were a practical people who had adopted many white ways and worked them to an advantage. The Cherokees raised cash crops and kept African American slaves. Both their houses and their language had become a mixture of Cherokee and white influences; in 1821 a half-Cherokee named Sequoya developed an alphabet for a new written tribal language, in which newspapers and books were printed. The tribe was widely considered to have run one of the best school systems in the South.

Under treaty with the United States the Cherokees were entitled to remain in their ancestral Georgia homeland and to be recognized as a semisovereign nation within the United States. Holding fast to their treaty, they resisted every federal inducement and threat to remove them. Nevertheless, the state of Georgia was resolute in its drive to get rid of the Cherokees. While the Cherokees had friends in Congress, there were no sympathizers to be found in the Georgia legislature. The people of Georgia wanted the Cherokee lands and were willing to ignore the federal government to get them. The state legislature tested its authority by trying and convicting a white missionary for a crime committed in Cherokee territory. The conviction was appealed to the Supreme Court, then led by Chief Justice John Marshall, Jackson’s adversary. While Marshall did not believe any more than Jackson that whites and Indians could live peacefully side by side, he was adamant that the United States honor its contracts. He ruled that the state of Georgia had no authority in Cherokee territory, threw out the conviction, and clearly proclaimed that the State of Georgia could not force the Cherokees to yield their homeland.

**Defiance**
To Georgians the matter was not settled. The state had gone largely for Jackson in the election of 1828, and the people knew that as a lifelong Indian fighter the president was not likely to stand up for the Cherokees. In an act of sheer defiance, the state held onto its prisoner, manipulated a few unscrupulous Cherokees into signing fraudulent agreements that gave away the land, and undertook the forced removal of the entire tribe from Georgia. President Jackson, learning of the Georgia controversy, was quoted as saying: "John Marshall has made his decision. Let him enforce it" (McDonald, p. 177).

The president proved not only willing to overlook Georgia's defiance of the federal government; he soon sanctioned it by signing the 1830 Indian Removal Act into law. Under this legislation the lands formerly held under treaty by American Indians within the states were exchanged for new lands west of the Mississippi River. Georgia engineered the tragic march thereafter known as the "Trail of Tears," the forcible 1,200-mile migration of the Cherokees and other southeastern tribes to what is now Oklahoma. Over four thousand Indians died on the march--two thousand of them in camps, waiting for the march to begin. Eventually, about 15,000 Cherokees made it to Oklahoma, a bitter and demoralized people who would never fully recover from the horrors of their forced march.

Jackson's role in the Trail of Tears has been roundly denounced by many historians, who claim that the president let his own personal history, emotions, and antagonism for John Marshall get in the way of the Constitution. At every turn Jackson allowed the State of Georgia to undermine existing authorities of the U.S. government, and he set a hateful precedent for federal treatment of American Indians. On the other hand, some think the president's conduct in the Georgia controversy was entirely detached, practical, and unemotional--he would never knowingly have allowed a state to nullify the authority of the U.S. government, but he also knew that an attempt to force the people of the South and the West to abide by the U.S.-Indian treaties was a doomed effort. The laws were, essentially, unenforceable, and the president was merely responding to the will of the people.

The Tariff of 1828 and Nullification

Just before Jackson took office in 1828, Congress passed an extremely high protective tariff. No legislators completely favored the tariff, but it was accepted by the majority and signed into law by John Quincy Adams. Specifically, the tariff imposed duties on imported goods to protect the prices of goods manufactured in the industrial North. The South, which was the least prosperous U.S. region because of declining land productivity and an increasingly costly system of slave labor, had no such protections for its agricultural products. Southern farmers and plantation owners were squeezed at both ends, forced to buy manufactured goods from the North on a closed market, and forced to compete on an open international market with their cotton or tobacco exports. Foreign markets reacted by imposing their own tariffs.

Ironically, the Tariff of 1828--denounced in the South as the "Tariff of Abominations"--had been masterminded by Jackson's supporters in Congress. It was designed specifically to alienate Southern voters, driving them away from the Adams administration into the waiting arms of Jackson. The tariff did just that, but a year later President Jackson was left holding the bag. Most southerners hated the tariff, but the cotton planters of South Carolina were especially angry. Trade reprisals from Europe had denied the South its market, and South Carolina's land was becoming depleted because of the adverse effects of cotton on the soil. It also was facing increased competition from the rich cotton land
in the Southwest. However, a constitutional majority had decided that this was the way trade would be administrated in the United States.

**Calhoun Proposes Nullification**

It was the Constitution, however, to which South Carolina's most prominent politician, Vice President John C. Calhoun, turned to solve the problems presented by the tariff. In 1829 he secretly wrote and distributed copies of *The South Carolina Exposition and Protest*, a pamphlet with a novel and ingenious interpretation of the Constitution. Calhoun argued that the Union had not been formed directly by the people of the United States; it had rather been formed by the people through the individual states, of which they were citizens. It was the states, and not a single federal government, who were sovereign. The states themselves were the indivisible units of government that had formed an agreement, the Union, for their mutual benefit.

Obviously, Calhoun argued, South Carolina was not benefiting from the Tariff of 1828. When a state objected to a law passed by a majority in the Union, as South Carolina objected to the tariff, it had the right to nullify the law (block its enforcement) within its borders until three-quarters of the other states overruled its decision. At this time the state could choose to yield to the will of the other states, or to secede entirely from the Union. Though a highly provocative document, the *Exposition* did not have much immediate effect in the South; for the time being, South Carolina remained largely alone in its outrage. But the dangerous theories of nullification and secession had been presented to the American people and were destined to work their destruction. Despite his conduct in the Georgia controversy, Jackson was an ardent supporter of the Union, and the *Exposition* had identified a new political enemy for him: his own vice president.

The South had supported Jackson in 1828, and after his election southerners fully expected him to pull the tariff rates down, especially after his passive "defense" of Georgia's rights in the Cherokee affair. But they were mistaken. Jackson did sympathize with southerners, but he also wanted to preside over a debt-free nation, and tariff revenues were an element in his plan. When Congress passed a new tariff in 1832, its rates were more modest than those of the Tariff of Abominations. But they were still considered outrageous and protective, especially in South Carolina. The state was now ready for drastic action. In the state elections of 1832 the "nullies" won a two-thirds majority, and the new state legislature promptly announced that the existing federal tariff was null and void within the borders of South Carolina. It further threatened to withdraw from the Union if the Washington government attempted to collect the duties by force.

**Jackson Responds**

President Jackson declared that if South Carolinians refused to collect the tariff and send the proceeds to Washington, he would personally lead an army into the state. For a brief moment violence seemed imminent. But again, no states joined South Carolina in their dramatic protest, and Kentucky senator Henry Clay proposed an 1833 compromise tariff that would reduce the tariff's existing rate. Despite bitter debate, the tariff was eventually squeezed through Congress.

Neither Jackson nor the "nullies" won a clear victory in this contest, though South Carolina did come
away with a lower tariff, which was what it had wanted from the start. After the conflict had subsided, Jackson expressed fears that the next logical step in the assertion of states rights was secession. His fears proved prophetic in 1860, when South Carolina became the first state to secede from the Union at the outset of the American Civil War (1861-65). While it is true that Jackson may have done more to squash the sentiment of nullification and secession at its roots, it is also probable that the only way he could have accomplished this was through military force. In hindsight it seems that only the tragedy of the American Civil War could permanently resolve the question of secession. In its far-reaching and disastrous consequences for the United States, the concept of nullification became perhaps the most significant issue of Andrew Jackson's presidency.

**Internal Improvements and the Reach of the Federal Government**

Jackson was both a westerner and a strict Constitutional constructionist: as one, he understood the need for roads and canals on the American frontier; as another, he questioned the constitutionality of the federal government paying for them. In 1830 he vetoed an appropriations bill for the construction of a road between Maysville and Lexington, Kentucky. He told Congress that he was not personally against the road, but that since it was to be built entirely within the boundaries of one state, rather than linking two or more states, it was unconstitutional for the federal government to pay for it. If the Constitution were amended to authorize such projects, he said, he would approve them.

In his veto of the Maysville Road, Jackson's true intent appears to have once again been obscured by politics and his personal feelings. Construction of the Maysville Road would have been undertaken entirely within the home state of Kentucky senator Henry Clay, Jackson's political rival, and would have added greatly to Clay's popularity there. Later, Jackson approved similar bills for internal improvements when the expenditures promised to boost his own popularity.

Because of politics and his own emotional involvement with certain issues, Jackson's stance on states's rights is difficult to pin down with certainty. While he began his political career clearly in line with the conservative ideas of Thomas Jefferson, including an inclination toward states's rights and laissez-faire economics (or the doctrine that government should not interfere in economics), he appeared to take a more active view later in his administration. He went on to support a strong central government (of which he was the "supreme executive") that was more involved in the affairs of the states--but often, the ultimate influence in his policies was political expediency. He continued throughout his presidency to worry over the constitutional difficulties involved in public works. Generally, he seemed to rely on a simple formula--if a public works project would work for him and the Democrats, he was for it; if it promised to benefit his opponents, he was against it.

**The Bank War**

Jackson had voiced his opposition to the Second Bank of the United States (BUS) shortly after his 1829 inauguration, but given all the pressing issues of his first term, the bank did not become a high priority. In 1832, however, it would become, along with the nullification controversy, one of the two defining issues of his presidency.

Through 29 strategically located branches, the BUS controlled about a third of all U.S. bank deposits and handled about $70 million in transactions each year. Jackson, as a land speculator who had been burned in the 1795 Allison ordeal (*See also, Career*), was wary of an institution that
held such immense power over the nation's money supply.

The Nature of the Second Bank of the United States

During Jackson's term the bank was led by Nicholas Biddle, a conservative Philadelphian under whom the bank flourished. The BUS acted as the government's financial agent, paying government bills out of its accounts, providing vaults for its gold and silver, investing deposits, and selling bonds. Biddle took pride in the public service provided by his bank, as well as its annual profits, but the fact remained that the bank was not a government institution. It was successful primarily because it controlled such a huge portion of the U.S. money supply, but its policies were made not by elected officials but by a board of directors responsible to shareholders. The bank was opposed by three main groups: the western bankers, who thought it was unfairly restraining their land speculations; the growing financial community of New York, who wanted looser control of the nation's money supply; and "hard-money" folks such as Andrew Jackson, who were simply opposed to any person or institution that issued paper money in quantities greater than it could redeem in gold and silver.

Opponents' charges of corruption and concentrated power at the BUS were justified. The bank had fallen into the hands of a wealthy clique, and the range of its beneficiaries was becoming narrower. However, the BUS did serve some positive functions. It kept the western banks under some restraint, issued sound bank notes, and reduced overall bank failures. It helped the West expand by making credit reasonably available, and it was also a safe depository for the government's funds. It did have a monopoly of surplus federal funds, but that monopoly had been authorized by Congress. The bank was a highly important and useful institution.

Biddle was aware of Jackson's opposition to the bank, and he was also aware that the president intended to run for another term in office. This meant that the Jackson administration might extend into 1836, the year the bank's charter would come up for reauthorization. Biddle lobbied hard to gain the president's favor: he made loans to several key Jackson supporters and designed a plan to retire the national debt, which was a particular goal of Jackson's. But Jackson was unmoved, and Biddle turned to Congress for support. It was here--and not in the White House as many had expected--that the first shot in the Bank War was fired.

Clay and Biddle Challenge Jackson

Henry Clay, Jackson's nemesis and a presidential hopeful, convinced Biddle in January 1832 to reapply for the bank's charter, four years before its 1836 expiration. Clay knew full well that a majority of Congress would support the charter and put Jackson on the spot. If Jackson vetoed the charter, he would oppose a congressional majority and anger the moneyed classes of the East. In Clay's eyes this created the opportunity for Clay to win the presidential election by promising to save the bank. If Jackson gave in and signed the bill, he would alienate the westerners who had voted him into office. Either way, Clay reasoned, it would be a victory for him.

Clay's political gamble on the bank failed (See also, Jackson Becomes President), as soon as Jackson won his second term he arranged for the demise of the BUS. Soon after his inauguration he began to deposit government funds not with the BUS, but into several dozen state institutions, his so-called "pet
banks." The new depositories were selected because of their pro-Jackson sympathies, and they were reputed by Jackson's enemies to be weak and unstable institutions. While this is only partly true (they were certainly not as stable as the BUS), this was the first in a series of events that would nearly bring the financial structure of the country crashing down. In a fit of spite, Biddle began to call in loans with unnecessary severity, apparently to force reconsideration of the bank's charter. The result was a wave of bank failures that wiped out the savings of thousands of citizens, which was precisely the kind of outcome Jackson had feared from the immense power of the BUS.

The Specie Circular

The nation's teetering financial structure soon swung dramatically in the other direction, however; under pressure from the business community, Biddle reversed his policy, increasing the nation's money supply and making loans to other banks. A boom in land speculation occurred, in which Jackson's "pet banks" proved to be among the most irresponsible investors. By 1836, when the BUS breathed its last breath, land values had soared, the number of state banks had more than doubled, and more credit was issued than could possibly be redeemed in any short period of time. Government land sales totaled $25 million in 1836. Since there was no Second Bank of the United States to slow things down, Jackson put an end to all land sales by issuing the Specie Circular in July, which required that government lands be paid for in gold and silver coin. Paper money was no longer acceptable.

While he stopped the runaway speculation, Jackson also created a full-blown financial panic. Many western speculators were unable to pay their debts to the government and went bankrupt. The Specie Circular drained gold and silver supplies from the East, creating a depression there. Jackson's financial policy, based largely on ignorance and stubbornness, was perhaps the biggest disaster of his administration. While few today would argue that the Second Bank of the United States should have remained a chartered institution, Jackson's method of bringing it down was reckless. The damage done to the U.S. economy ruined the career of Martin Van Buren, his successor, and lasted well into the 1840s. In 1841 alone, 28,000 Americans declared bankruptcy.

In hindsight, an institution such as the Second Bank of United States probably never should have been chartered without the kind of regulatory oversight that is provided today by the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. The BUS granted loans to secure political influence, and retaliated against opposition by disrupting business and threatening government. The fall of the BUS may have been the most important economic development of the nineteenth century, and the federal banking system of today is designed intricately and carefully to avoid the kind of financial panic that was created in 1836. What the nation needed in 1836, however, was a government program that would provide an effective means of regulating a banking system, that would benefit all classes of people. It is doubtful, given Jackson's personality and the prevailing 1830s philosophy of limited government, that the Jackson administration could have pulled this off. Instead, President Jackson did what he could--he destroyed the bank, roots and all.

Foreign Issues

The United States, one of the world's youngest nations in the early nineteenth century, had yet to spread its wings in terms of foreign affairs. As a nation created through revolution, it had remained
relatively isolated and opposed to meddling in the affairs of other countries as well as to the intrusion of foreigners into its own territory. But the fact remained that as a young nation situated on the opposite side of the globe from Europe, Africa, and Asia, the United States had much work to do in establishing relations with the rest of the world. As the European colonial powers continued to battle for influence in North and South America, the United States took the position that it was proper for them to keep these nations from encroaching into their sphere of influence.

As a former general and frontiersman, President Jackson could not claim much of a background in foreign diplomacy. This was in contrast to his predecessor, John Quincy Adams, who had undergone diplomatic training in both the Hague, Netherlands, and St. Petersburg, Russia. But Jackson, despite his reputation for a hair-trigger temper, in the end enjoyed greater diplomatic success than his more diplomatically seasoned rival. He did not let his lack of experience discourage him from pursuing a vigorous foreign policy that actively promoted and defended the nation's interests abroad. Jackson borrowed ideas from two former presidents, George Washington and James Monroe. In his 1796 Farewell Address, Washington envisioned a United States that would dominate the continent of North America while its commerce reached out to the world. However, Washington had fervently proposed neutrality and nonentanglement in foreign affairs that did not concern the United States. The celebrated Monroe Doctrine of 1823, an expression of post-1812 United States nationalism whereby Europe was prohibited from any further colonization in the Western Hemisphere and restrained from interfering in affairs there, seemed a follow-up to this philosophy. It sounded a warning to the colonial powers of Europe and Russia to keep their imperial hands off the territories of the Western Hemisphere.

To these traditional elements of U.S. foreign policy, Jackson added his own personal brand of conservatism and applied them all to the two prominent foreign concerns of the day: the expansion of foreign trade and the settlement of claims against various European nations who had seized or damaged American property during the Napoleonic Wars of 1803-15. Jackson's foreign policy, like other policies of his administration, bore the stamp of the president alone, and not the cabinet or even his secretary of state. He believed in the necessity of growth for the nation's cotton, tobacco, and grain markets overseas. Accordingly, he was concerned with advancing U.S. commercial interests around the world, but strongly opposed to involving the United States in alliances, revolutions, or wars unless they posed a threat to U.S. security. While Jackson was aggressive and sometimes forceful in his pursuit of U.S. interests abroad, his record does not fully deserve the label of "brass knuckles diplomacy" that is often used to describe it. At times he could be very tactful; he was harsh and assertive only when he felt it would produce the results he was seeking. He was an ardent nationalist who intended to fight for U.S. interests around the globe. Although Jackson sometimes argued and threatened approaching the brink of war, the United States never really came close to involving itself in any foreign wars during his administration.

The British West Indies

Perhaps one of the most successful examples of Jackson's surprising skill at conciliation occurred in dealing with Great Britain. The United States desperately wanted a resumption of trade with the Caribbean islands of the British West Indies, which had been broken off by Great Britain when the John Quincy Adams administration had refused to comply with trade restrictions imposed in 1825 by the British government. Adams had demanded trade in the islands as an absolute right and retaliated by forbidding the export of U.S. goods in British ships to the islands. He pushed for preferential
treatment of U.S. ships entering West Indian ports, while at the same time refusing to remove U.S. duties on British ships engaged in the same trade. When Great Britain attempted a compromise, Adams rejected it outright. Thus Adams managed to close off a very profitable market that southern agricultural and northern industrial interests had formerly enjoyed.

Jackson, a man who had fought against British dominance for most of his life, knew immediately upon being elected to his first term that the issue of the British West Indies would have to be among the most important of his immediate priorities; given their pasts, the two nations could not afford to be on bad terms. He quickly informed the British that in electing him president, the American people had rejected the foreign policy of the previous administration. He assured them that the new government could be expected to address the problem fairly and with a sense of compromise. A lowering of the tariff rates imposed on the British in 1828 were in order. Where Adams had claimed trade with the West Indies as a right, Jackson requested it as a privilege. The British reacted favorably to Jackson's accommodating gesture, and frank discussion of the problem commenced almost immediately.

Jackson's lack of experience in foreign affairs was soon apparent, however. Privately, he nearly lost patience with the slow pace of negotiations that ensued, and he suggested to his secretary of state, Martin Van Buren, that perhaps more vigorous measures would be required. He held his tongue, however, and in the end Louis McLane, minister to Britain, hinted that an act of Congress authorizing President Jackson to grant privileges to Britain might be met with a reciprocal gesture. President Jackson arranged for the legislation to be passed in 1830, and Great Britain removed its trade restrictions. Jackson completed the accord in October by issuing a proclamation which stated that the ports of the United States and the British West Indies were open without duties against ships of either nation or their cargoes.

**The Maine/Canada Boundary**

Jackson further nurtured good relations with the British by adopting a deferential posture on the question of the boundary between the state of Maine and Canada--then a British territory. The boundary had been unresolved since the end of the American Revolution (1775-83). When Maine had become a state in 1820, additional pressure to define the border was placed on Washington. It was another unresolved issue that Jackson inherited from Adams, and it was a thorny one, involving land grants that went back as much as two hundred years. Despite loud protests from the residents of Maine, Jackson accepted Britain's compromise line, which yielded 8,000 of the 12,000 disputed square miles to the United States. Jackson quietly engineered compensation to Maine landholders for their sacrifice, and instead of becoming an incendiary domestic issue, the matter was settled in relative peace.

**Texas, Sectionalism, and the Question of Annexation**

Since becoming president, Jackson had wanted to buy the territory of Texas from Mexico. He found, after five years of negotiations, that Mexico would not budge and that Texas was not for sale. Mexican officials appeared to invite trouble in the territory in 1823 when they granted huge tracts of land to a United States citizen, Stephen Austin, and about three hundred of his followers. By 1835 these settlers numbered 30,000, and they were tired of being told what to do by Mexico's government on issues such as slavery, immigration, and states rights. These tensions were touched off when General Antonio López Santa Anna, the Mexican dictator, revoked rights granted to the settlers by the 1824
The Texas Revolution was under way.

The fighting began in 1835, with Sam Houston, an old Indian-fighting sidekick of Jackson, in command of the Texas army. Jackson lent support to the rebels by ordering General E. P. Gaines to cross the Texas border, ford the Sabine River, and penetrate 50 miles into the territory--for the expressed purpose of protecting the United States from possible Indian attacks. Meanwhile, Houston defeated General Santa Anna at the Battle of San Jacinto, forced the Mexican president to grant Texan independence, and immediately appealed to the United States to recognize its independence--or even better, to annex it as a territory.

With his goal of sovereignty over the Texas territory close at hand, Jackson wavered. He was an ardent nationalist, but he was also pragmatic. The idea of either recognition or annexation made him uneasy for two reasons. First, it was likely to start a war with Mexico; and second, recognizing Texas as an independent republic--a move that could only be interpreted as a prelude to Texas statehood--would touch off the volatile issue of slavery at a time when the president was trying to engineer the election of his successor Martin Van Buren. If Texas statehood was made imminent, slavery and antislavery forces, in both Congress and Jackson's own Democratic Party, would fight for control of the state. Jackson did not want his party split by such an issue during Van Buren's campaign, so he did nothing until the election was over. On March 3, 1837, the day before he left office, Jackson officially recognized Texas independence.

Jackson's predictions for Texas ultimately came true. The United States did fight a war with Mexico over the territory (1846-48), and Texas did contribute to the firestorm of national debate on the question of slavery (See also, Polk Administration). When Jackson left office, the issue was only a couple of decades from tearing the nation apart.

Jackson's careful handling of the Texas question marks one of the first times that the issue of slavery showed its influence in U.S. politics. Jackson, a plantation owner himself who at one time owned about 150 slaves, probably did not think it to be such a significant issue. He did recognize, however, that in the political environment of the 1830s, there were many people in the United States who did find the issue to be significant. Along with the nullification controversy (See also, Domestic Issues), the question of Texas annexation was a sign that a sectional storm was brewing in the United States.

The French Claims Crisis

The event in foreign affairs that earned Jackson his reputation for "brass knuckles diplomacy" was the crisis surrounding the so-called French Spoilation claims. The long-standing controversy was created by claims from U.S. citizens against France for the destruction of their property during the Napoleonic Wars (1803-15). Most of these claims involved U.S. ships and goods that had been illegally seized by France during the wars. In 1831, after stalling for nearly two years, the Paris government belatedly agreed to pay the United States several million dollars as compensation.

Implementation of this treaty depended entirely on its approval by the French Chamber of Deputies and the subsequent appropriation of the money. Months and then years passed without the French government making a single move, and by 1833 Jackson was beside himself. He replaced the U.S.
minister to France with Edward Livingston, who immediately put pressure on the government for payment. The French government did more than ignore U.S. demands this time; in the spring of 1834, the French Assembly actually defeated a bill to appropriate the money.

Jackson's patience had run out. In his annual 1834 message he recommended that if provision were not made for repayment of the debt, a law be passed authorizing the seizure of French property in the United States so that the debt could be paid off with the proceeds. Though the French seemed to have been inviting such an insult for some time, they claimed to be appalled by Jackson's statement. The Paris government broke off diplomatic relations, recalling their representatives. The U.S. delegation in Paris was likewise shut down, and as talk of war spread, Jackson was urged by many advisers to apologize. But he saw no reason to ask pardon for demanding repayment of a legitimate debt.

The possibility of war was overstated, but the affair did catch the attention of the British, who stepped in to make sure its French ally did not spend its strength in a dispute with the United States. Meanwhile, the House of Representatives backed up the president's statement, passing a three-million dollar fortifications bill to be implemented as the need arose. The Senate wisely killed this bill, however, and Henry Clay, chairman of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, introduced a resolution in the upper house declaring it imprudent for the president to threaten such reprisals, no matter how just the U.S. claim.

The people, however, supported Jackson and admired his strong-arm tactics. Nobody, clearly, would bully the United States while Old Hickory was in the White House. Jackson's popular support, British mediation, and the increasing embarrassment of the French government finally resulted in the French Chamber of Deputies voting for the funds to pay the debt in the spring of 1835. The government added the stipulation that the money would not be turned over until Jackson apologized for the threat contained in his 1834 address to Congress--a condition that Jackson angrily refused, sensing another French dodge. Still, he desired the whole ordeal to be over with, and in his annual message to Congress he denied any intention to "menace or insult" (Remini, p. 176) the French government. He insisted, however, that the honor of the United States prohibited his offering of anything resembling an apology for stating the clear truth.

The French, anxious for an escape from this ugly situation, carefully interpreted Jackson's statement as an apology, though he protested loudly that none had been offered. Repayment was begun, and by the spring of 1836, just in time for the new presidential campaign, the president announced to the nation that four of the six installments of the debt had been paid off, and that friendly relations with France had been restored. In their 1836 campaign the Whigs had hoped to hurt the Democratic candidate, Martin Van Buren, with references to the administration's crude and ill-mannered diplomacy. But once again Jackson's appeal to the general public engendered a large measure of national pride, due in no small part to the work of the president and his Democrats.

**Asia: Quallah Battoo and the Roberts Treaties**

In Asia, a part of the world dominated by European trade prior to Jackson's presidency, the United States was anxious to expand trade. Since the days of Marco Polo, the thirteenth century Italian explorer, the riches of the Orient, including spices, tea, and silks, had enriched European trade, and the United States wanted to benefit as well. Some inroads had already been made. In 1790, a
seafaring merchant from Salem, Massachusetts, had earned a 700 percent profit on the first large cargo of pepper to be imported from Sumatra (a mountainous island in what is now western Indonesia), while another Salem merchant opened the coffee trade with the Red Sea port of Mocha in 1798. The United States, however, often found itself at a disadvantage in Asia. Many of the Europeans, who had been the first westerners to arrive in these Asian ports, had either colonized these lands or negotiated treaties that would make it difficult for competitors.

Except for the pepper trade, Americans had paid little attention to the East Indies before Jackson’s presidency, focusing instead on the resumption of trade in the neighboring British West Indies. But by 1831 U.S. merchants had taken control of Sumatran commerce; the world pepper price was set in the market in Salem. Unfortunately, the region became politically unstable for two reasons: the bottom dropped out of the pepper market in 1830, leaving merchants and natives alike desperate for profits; and control of the island was still being disputed by the British and the Dutch, leaving it governed by a loosely organized confederation of native tribes. It was into this tense environment that the U.S. merchant ship, the *Friendship* sailed on a routine voyage in 1831. The ensuing events would seize the attention of the entire United States and spark a new direction in Jacksonian foreign policy.

**Quallah Battoo**

During an early morning loading at the west Sumatran port of Quallah Battoo, while the *Friendship* was being loaded with pepper cargo, it was suddenly attacked by a band of native Malays who killed two seamen and seriously wounded three others before seizing the ship. By the time the *Friendship’s* captain, Charles Endicott, had enlisted the help of other merchants to recapture the ship, the vessel had been stripped of everything but its cargo: over $12,000 in gold and silver, $8,000 worth of opium, and everything else of value had been stolen.

When news of the assault reached the United States, politicians from the states on the seaboard demanded government intervention. The president had no policy that applied to Southeast Asia, and it is questionable whether, prior to the *Friendship* affair, Jackson or his advisers could have located Sumatra on a map. But such a brazen attack on a U.S. merchant ship was considered by Jackson to be a blow to the national honor. He quickly decided to take a firm stand in that part of the world. After investigating the incident, Jackson dispatched the naval captain John Downes to demand restitution and immediate punishment of the murderers from Quallah Battoo’s tribal leader, the rajah. If the natives did not comply within a reasonable period of time, Downes was to take the murderers prisoner, retake the stolen property, and destroy the ships and fortifications of the Malay pirates.

Downes arrived in Quallah Battoo almost exactly a year after the assault, and, sensing hostility from the natives, reinterpreted his orders. Instead of attempting discussion with the rajah, Downes and his men stormed Quallah Battoo and engaged in several hours of bloody fighting, killing over a hundred natives. When no stolen cargo was found in the village, Downes and his men looted the town and set fire to the village. Over the next few weeks, frightened rajahs from surrounding regions visited Downes and professed their undying friendship for the United States.

When word of Downes’s actions reached Washington, the capital was already in chaos: Congress was debating the tariff, and Jackson was preparing his veto of the Second Bank of the United
States (See also, Domestic Issues). Political opponents in both Congress and the press roundly denounced the barbarity of the diplomatic mission, in which dozens of noncombatants were killed without any prior attempt at negotiation. Not surprisingly critics also framed the assault as an abuse of executive power--Jackson was making war without waiting for a declaration from the legislative branch. Though the fault was Downes's, not the president's, Quallah Battoo was a serious blemish on Jackson's foreign affairs record--though it was seen by many Americans as an unpleasant but necessary lesson, invited by savage pirates who dared violate the rights of U.S. traders.

Roberts Treaties

After the Quallah Battoo affair was finally sorted out, it was clear that the president meant to expand and protect U.S. trade in the Pacific. He was aided in this endeavor by the former naval officer and explorer, Edmund Roberts, who had already urged the Jackson administration to explore the untapped trade potential of the East African and Persian Gulf lands controlled by the Islamic leader of Muscat. In 1831, awakened by the Quallah Battoo assault, Jackson dispatched Roberts to visit Muscat (Oman), Siam (now Thailand), Japan, and Cochin China (Vietnam)--an empire that had been visited by only two or three U.S. ships--for the purpose of establishing trade. The Roberts missions produced treaties with both Muscat and Siam in 1833, opening these countries to U.S. trade on a most-favored-nation basis, whereby the participants receive the same tax benefits. The Cochin China mission failed, and unfortunately the emissary grew sick and died before attempting to establish diplomatic ties with Japan.

The Roberts’s missions are among the most underrated accomplishments of the Jackson presidency. In exploring the diplomatic possibilities in Southeast Asia and Japan, the Jackson administration opened the door for a wholesale expansion of trade and healthy diplomatic relations with a previously neglected part of the world. The treaties with Siam and Muscat, the first treaties between the United States and Far Eastern countries, established a strong commercial foothold for the nation in an area where it had been handicapped by its own ignorance and disinterest. The Roberts missions also sparked interest in the rising Pacific nation of Japan, which would be visited 20 years later and opened to trade by Commodore Matthew Perry and diplomat Townsend Harris during the Franklin Pierce administration.

The Jackson Administration Legacy

Seventy years old and in poor health, Jackson did not stand for a third term. Instead, he engineered the nomination of his protégé, Martin Van Buren, as the Democratic candidate for the 1836 campaign. The party that Jackson had helped to create did not question the choice of the outgoing president, and in fact Van Buren was an able politician, though his leadership remained to be tested.

So total was Jackson's domination of the federal government during his administration that by 1836 a new party had formed among the National Republicans, led by Henry Clay and Democrats who had defected from Jackson. They had defected for several reasons: Jackson's indiscriminate use of the veto; his treatment of the Indians; his war against the bank; and his perceived bullying of South Carolina. This new party called themselves the Whigs, after the party opposed to the English monarchy. It was the hope of the Whigs to end the reign of King Andrew I and his successors. But this
opposition to Jackson proved to be all that united the Whigs, and they ran a weak and confused campaign against Van Buren who won a comfortable victory.

Van Buren found himself the unfortunate inheritor of two sizable problems. On the domestic front, he was forced to take charge of an economy that was in ruins. The panic of 1837 and the ensuing depression, one of the worst in U.S. history, were in part a result of Jackson's destruction of the Second Bank of the United States and his Specie Circular. It would be many years before the economy would recover, and Van Buren's reputation as a president would forever be tarnished by his inability to pull the country out of the depression. In recognizing the independence of Texas the day before he left office, Jackson also left Van Buren to resolve a nasty foreign affairs crisis with an infuriated Mexican government.

Jackson's hold on the Democrats remained closely linked to the issue of Texas annexation. In the presidential campaign of 1844, when Van Buren failed to come out strongly in favor of annexation, Jackson switched his support to James K. Polk. Polk agreed with Jackson that Texas should become part of the Union. Polk's nomination and victory in 1844 and the ensuing complications in domestic and foreign affairs can, in part, be traced to the residual popularity of Andrew Jackson.

**Lasting Impact**

Debate over the importance of the Jackson presidency has not ceased since the end of his second term. There is no doubt that through his forceful application of executive power and privilege, he expanded the significance of the presidency. In his eight years in office he vetoed more bills than had been vetoed in the previous 40 years. His presidency is often cited as the starting point in the trend toward federal centralization of the government, a principle that Jackson often claimed to oppose, but which he enjoyed while in office.

Jackson also enhanced the prestige of the presidency as the leader of a national political party with mass appeal. For the first time a presidential candidate was chosen not behind closed doors by caucus or committee, but by an open appeal to the people of the party. As a presidential candidate, Jackson was not a figurehead, manipulated to prominence by behind-the-scenes party operatives, but a true leader, a war hero, and a champion of the masses. He benefited from, and presided over, an age of entrepreneurship in which most Americans believed government should not grant privileges to one group that it would withhold from another--a very rudimentary form of the arguments of the Civil Rights movement, hatched in a time when the ownership of slaves was just beginning to be questioned on a fairly large scale.

Jackson's popularity with the masses allowed his emphasis on reform to trickle down to the state level during his administration. Reforms in prisons, schools, and mental hospitals were widely undertaken. The idea that all Americans, and not just the aristocratic, propertied classes, should participate in the nation's political affairs, was gaining increased acceptance. Of course, the nation still had far to go--"all Americans" at the time meant "all white males." Women and former African slaves would have to fight their own battles for suffrage later in U.S. history.

In foreign affairs Jackson was among the most influential presidents of his era; his Asian treaties were of immeasurable value to the nation. More important, he formulated and implemented the most
expansive and assertive foreign policy since Thomas Jefferson. In doing so, he further extended the
tower of the chief executive beyond the traditional realm of domestic affairs, and he helped set a
precedent for the more dynamic diplomatic actions of modern presidencies.

Administration

Administration Dates

- March 4, 1829-March 4, 1833
- March 4, 1833-March 4, 1837

Vice President

- John Caldwell Calhoun (1829-32)
- Martin Van Buren (1833-37)

Cabinet

Secretary of State

- Martin Van Buren (1829-31)
- Edward Livingston (1831-33)
- Louis McLane (1833-34)
- John Forsyth (1834-41)

Secretary of the Treasury

- Samuel D. Ingham (1829-31)
- Louis McLane (1831-33)
- William J. Duane (1833)
- Roger B. Taney (1833-34)
- Levi Woodbury (1834-41)

Secretary of War

- John H. Eaton (1829-31)
- Lewis Cass (1831-36)

Attorney General

- John M. Berrien (1829-31)
- Roger B. Taney (1831-33)
- Benjamin F. Butler (1833-38)

Secretary of the Navy
Lawyer; Politician (1782-1852) In the course of his life, Daniel Webster succeeded in making a name for himself on both the political and judicial fronts. Webster was a devout Federalist, which meant that he supported the idea that the states should exist under the control of a strong, unifying federal government. Though shared by many others, his position was still radical at a time when most people regarded the union of states as a loose and non-permanent partnership that could be dissolved. Serving in both the House and Senate, Webster could always be found leading the resistance to any legislation or attempt by any state, to usurp power from the federal government. In 1832, as a senator representing Massachusetts during Andrew Jackson's presidency, Webster was engaged in a Senate debate with Congressman Robert Y. Hayne of South Carolina. In the course of the debate, Webster made a now-famous, stirring, and emotional declaration of his passionate attachment to the idea of a strong, inseparable Union. His commitment was echoed in his support for President Jackson's enforcement of state challenges to federal government edicts. Webster was a frequent guest in the White House until relations began to crumble following President Jackson's veto of the proposed recharter of the Bank of the United States. Webster had interests in the bank and vigorously condemned the president. In 1934 Webster voted with the Senate majority to censure President Jackson for removing government deposits from the bank. Webster eventually made his own failed run at the presidency before losing his fortune to speculation in middle western real estate.

Fast Fact
The traditional symbol for the Democratic Party, the donkey, was first used as an attack on Jackson by the Whigs, his political opponents. They intended the "jackass" to be a satire on Jackson's supposed ignorance.

(Source: Morison, Commager, and Leuchtenburg. A Concise History of the American Republic, 1983.)

Fast Fact
When Jackson paid off the national debt in 1835, he became the first, last, and only president of a debt-free United States.

(Source: "Andrew Jackson," in the Internet Public Library <http://www.ipl.org/ref/POTUS/ajackson.html/#cabinet>, 1999.)
President Andrew Jackson shown as “King Andrew”

Cherokees march along the “Trail of Tears”

Webster, Daniel

**Further Readings**

**Sources**


**Suggested Readings**


**Full Text:** COPYRIGHT 2000 Gale.

**Source Citation**


**Gale Document Number:** GALE|BT2304200020