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Rugged Individualism in American Political Thought

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Abstract

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Keywords

political ideology, rugged individualism, social liberalism, American individualism, Great Depression, New Deal, Rogers Smith, Political Science, Social Sciences

Disciplines

American Politics | Political History | Political Theory | United States History

Rugged Individualism in American Political Thought

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Senior Honors Thesis in Political Science

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Introduction

In Herbert Hoover's famed campaign speech of 1928, he emphasized "the American system of rugged individualism" (Hoover 1928). The latter term outlived his presidential endeavors. Hoover advocated for a return to the previously-held approach of American government, even though the term "rugged individualism" had not then been popularized. Herbert Hoover's seminal speech emphasized scaling back the government's size and diminishing intervention to reestablish the policies of limited government in place before the First World War (Hoover 1928). In order to defend his conservative approach to government interventionism, Hoover deliberately distinguished rugged individualism from the rising ideology of social liberalism in Europe and the United States.

Social liberalism surfaced in American economic policy debates most visibly with Franklin D. Roosevelt's advocacy of a New Deal. In his 1932 campaign platform, Roosevelt proposed a series of large-scale government mandates to form federal redistribution programs, public works projects, economic reforms, and regulatory practices that jointly addressed the economic crisis of the Great Depression. In Hoover's reelection campaign, the incumbent denounced Roosevelt's New Deal proposals and defended the traditional "American system" of individual freedom and government nonintervention (Hoover 1932). Unlike Roosevelt's insistence upon centralized reforms, Hoover hesitated to endorse federal regulations aimed at mitigating the effects of economic devastation. Rugged individualism instead called for economic policies that permitted cooperative crisis relief, but in a primarily voluntary manner. Emphases on self-reliance, individual opportunity, and equal access to self-actualization characterized Hoover's political ideology, distinct from Roosevelt's relatively collectivist policies of social welfare and financial interventionism.

Although Hoover's rugged individualism evolved into a symbolic ideal of free market capitalism, his ideology diverged significantly from conservative laissez-faire approaches. When Hoover articulated his approach of rugged individualism in 1928, he outlined how this ideology differed from the pro-business, pro-competition, Republican framework that denounced all forms of community cooperation in the public and private sectors. Laissez-faire ("allow to do") economic policies put forth a system almost devoid of government intervention beyond enforcement of property rights and contracts, with individual actors and corporations largely determining their own economic affairs in their own interests. Although Hoover and further right, laissez-faire capitalists all denounced big government programs, Hoover's notion of rugged individualism incorporated, and even encouraged, voluntaristic opportunities for cooperation and collective support to advance common interests.

Just as Herbert Hoover's ideological stance took a more centrist approach than far-right economists, Roosevelt's New Deal policies took on more moderate characteristics than further left figures, who made propositions as radical as centralized socialism. Throughout the campaign of 1932, Roosevelt sought the input of prominent economists to address the pressing issue of the Great Depression. His 'Brains Trust,' largely composed of professors from Columbia University, contributed expertise to Roosevelt's formulation of modernizing economic reforms. The Democratic nominee integrated a range of perspectives in his campaign team and subsequent administration, but maintained the final say in deciding which views to include in his political rhetoric and actions. For example, Rexford Tugwell, a key figure in the Brains Trust, presented a more radical approach to national economic planning. Although Tugwell remained relatively peripheral in the formulation of New Deal policies, Roosevelt gained valuable insight from Tugwell's proposed leftwing alternatives, along with recommendations from other left advocates.

Roosevelt's center-leaning divergences from Tugwell's theories and his partial alignments with Hoover's initiatives indicated the liberal but moderate approach of the thirty-second president, steering away from the far left policies of his colleagues and advisors.

In light of America's historic and contemporary debates about governmental economic interventionism, this thesis argues that the rhetoric and policies of President Herbert Hoover and President Franklin D. Roosevelt revealed economic ideologies of notable opposition, but, in reality, more moderate approaches than suggested by accounts depicting a stark dichotomy between laissez-faire capitalism and social liberalism or socialism. In 1932, both presidential candidates called for features of national planning in response to economic decline, though the degree of interventionism and regulation differed between their platforms. Each candidate's campaign speeches insisted they offered polarized economic approaches, but their practical policies demonstrated moderate, overlapping positions instead of the extreme theorizations of government and political economy being advanced in the early 1930s. Although Hoover defined rugged individualism as anti-interventionism, the ideology included a unique blend of government involvement and community voluntarism. Roosevelt's campaign in 1932 pushed for a substantial increase in government mandates to correct the failures in the American economic system that yielded the Great Depression. However, the New Deal incorporated certain initiatives that Hoover had implemented during his term in office, revealing significant overlap between the two politicians' crisis management and broader views of governance. While Hoover's and Roosevelt's rhetorical strategies highlighted their opposition to one another, both candidates ultimately advocated for more centrist models of economic reform.

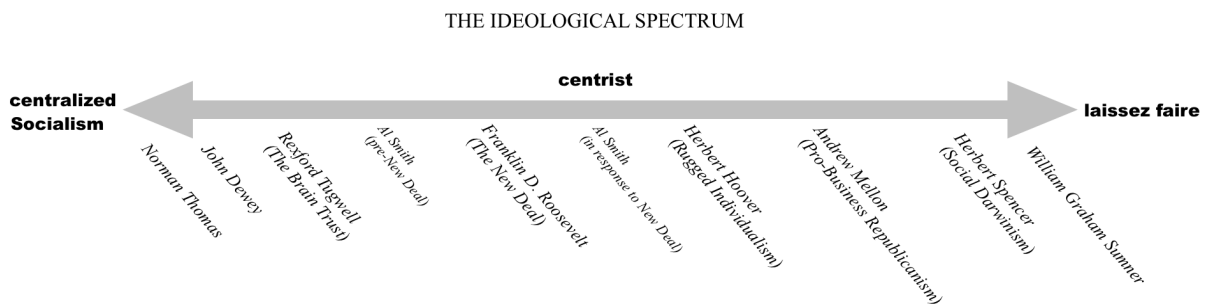
Although the presidential election of 1932 yielded historic partisan divisions, political discourse in the 1932 campaign demonstrated considerable centrism and inter-party collaboration

in a time of national crisis. The Great Depression threatened not only the livelihood of individual Americans, but also the national economy as a whole. Debates about interventionism presented salient and enduring arguments regarding the purposes of government, strategies for crisis management, and the means to uphold human rights in modern American society. Hoover's strain of individualism, emphasizing strength of character, self-reliance, and generosity, failed to secure his reelection, but the ideology has persisted in American political culture as a seminal trope in determining the values of the nation. His intermediary approach to conservative ideology helped ground his core tenets of self-actualization, united crisis management, and societal progress in American political identity. Similarly, Roosevelt's rhetoric and perceived heroism permanently transformed the role of the American executive, along with major national economic policies and institutional frameworks. His New Deal ideologies and practical strategies shifted the national expectations of leadership amidst severe crisis, a set of political notions held by the American public to the present-day. It is widely overlooked, however, that despite the deep schism between Hoover's and Roosevelt's opinions on interventionism, the two figures supported policies that shared significant overlap. The commonalities indicated the potential for moderation of political extremes, even amidst national crises, and even when platforms appeared diametrically opposed to one another.

In order to examine how these two figures pushed contrasting yet relatively centrist policies, my qualitative analysis investigates the nation's ideological clashes in the aftermath of the market crash of 1929. Politicians' discourses during the 1920s and 1930s illuminated the differences between rugged individualism and laissez-faire economics, as well as the New Deal's divergences from more radical social liberalism. The center-leaning platforms of both Herbert Hoover and Franklin D. Roosevelt, I argue, fell within a spectrum of American perspectives of

government intervention that spread to the right and left of Hoover and Roosevelt, respectively. To the right of Hoover were the pro-business Republicans who prioritized industrial growth over equitable prosperity across the population, and still further right were the laissez-faire capitalists who promoted entirely free markets. To the left of Roosevelt were advocates of a centrally planned economy, and still further left were the center-state Socialists who championed systems of collective ownership. As portrayed in Figure 1, the dynamic spectrum highlighted the relatively moderate ideologies of President Hoover and President Roosevelt, as their more extreme colleagues exhibited more polarization than the candidates' policies.

Figure 1: The Ideological Spectrum



The following thesis proceeds in eleven parts. The first section looks at the origins of individualism in American political culture, aiming to provide the contextual background to ground individualistic rhetoric in long-lasting American traditions. Part Two provides the business-centric, “scientific management” insights Hoover brought to his positions and strategies in government. Part Three examines the perspectives of key figures in the 1920s who advocated for business rights and freedoms in the private sector, including domestic protectionism and national free markets. Building on the role of pro-business Republicanism in American political identity, Part Four looks at the perspectives even further to the right than the business advocates,

highlighting the preexisting political theory that proved foundational for laissez-faire arguments. Part Five returns to focusing on Herbert Hoover and his response to the Great Depression during his presidency, paying special attention to the Hoover administration's executive interventionism in spite of his anti-big-government rhetoric. Hoover's rugged individualism met the opposition of leftwing advocates of social liberalism, as detailed in Part Six.

After analyzing Hoover's words and actions in relation to both the political left and the further right, Part Seven examines Franklin D. Roosevelt's national recovery plan. The 1932 campaign speeches calling for a New Deal outlined Roosevelt's intentions and many of his ultimate actions as Chief Executive. Part Eight conveys the prominent advocates of further left political positions, including a member of Roosevelt's Brains Trust, Rexford Tugwell. After examining the range of influential political ideologies that contributed to the discussion about government intervention during the Great Depression, Part Nine depicts the incorporation of rugged individualism into the foundation of American political culture. In light of the debates and interactions between and among right-wing 'conservatives' as well as left-wing 'liberals,' the pervasive appeal of Hoover's individualism demonstrated the significant overlap between the two political camps.

The final two sections of this essay reflect upon the significance of 1930s American political discourses. Hoover and Roosevelt represented warring political stances, but the spectrum of ideologies showed their relative moderation. The two presidents' policies and ideas included more common ground than meets the eye, an important political reality to remember as the U.S. faces another era of deep divisions amidst national crisis. The Epilogue, Part Ten, looks at how these discourses, debates, and overlapping policies provide insight into the state of American politics in 2020. The Covid-19 pandemic and related economic crisis parallel the Great

Depression, especially considering the rampant unemployment, nation-wide fear, xenophobia, and economic stagnation. President Joe Biden's campaign, election, and initial actions in the Oval Office suggest a distinct parallel with President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The examination of politicians' rhetoric amidst the ideological debates in the 1930s provides important precedents for evaluating the political intentions, collaborative aims, and policies of present-day national leaders. The rhetorical clashes and noteworthy overlap between the ideals of Hoover and Roosevelt indicated how a seemingly divided nation may advance more centrist policies than meet the eye. From this theoretical exploration, I conclude that the lessons from Hoover and Roosevelt in the 1932 campaign might help to foster more collaboration and inclusion across the aisle in present-day American politics.

Roots of Individualism

The ideological spectrum presented throughout this thesis provides insight into the range of political positions taken throughout the debates about government involvement in and regulation of economic affairs. As a student of both Political Science and Anthropology, I approached this topic with the aim of examining the theoretical discourses at play in the 1930s in order to characterize the American political identity that proved receptive to Hoover's rearticulation of rugged individualism. Many Americans' backgrounds, narratives, and identities coalesce around individualistic modes of existing and persevering. This culture connects to a series of influential events throughout the establishment, expansion, and development of the American nation. For example, as Protestants fled the persecution occurring in Great Britain, colonial settlements were founded upon the need to rely on hard work. Protestant colonials' religious practices reified the culture of individual discipline and rigor, as they strove to interpret

the Bible by reading the text individually and forging their own personal connections to the spiritual realm.

Max Weber theorized the connection between the Protestant work ethic and the ethos of an associated economic system. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber sought to identify the emergence of modern Western capitalism in relation to the Puritan value of hard work. The elements of self-interest, sense of duty, material success, and moral responsibility contributed to the foundation of ideologies that dominated American political economy throughout history. Weber's argument about the roots of individualism in political identity paralleled James Truslow Adams's historical perspective on rugged individualism in America. In 1934, Adams's article in *The New York Times* examined the evolution and manifestations of individualism, including rugged and other kinds, in American society. Although the American population lived primarily in urban centers by 1934, he argued, "the legend of the farm and frontier persists, and politically it is a great asset to a man to have come from one or another" (Adams 1934). Adams drew attention to the domination of the American dream in American political identity, applauding those individuals who managed to rise from rags to riches by committing themselves to the hard work necessary for such social mobility.

Bazzi, Fiszbein, and Gebresilasse (2020) similarly studied the American frontier in relation to the cultural persistence of rugged individualism. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, colonial settlements along the frontier fostered individualistic identities, due to either selective migration of those inclined toward that way of life, or the causal effect of the dire living conditions on the residents of the frontier. The study found that in 2020, counties that historically endured higher levels of exposure to frontier conditions exhibited more individualism and resistance to governmental redistribution and regulation (Bazzi, Fiszbein, and Gebresilasse 2020,

1). Frontier culture reflected the Jeffersonian ideal, as individualistic sentiments amplified faith in an American exceptionalism and the presumed superior way of life that distinguished the United States of America from the rest of the world.

Many theoretical analyses and empirical studies about individualism in political culture have demonstrated the persistence of this key element in American identity. Philosopher John Dewey further emphasized how liberty and freedom were perceived as diametrically opposed to governmental action in American political discourse, especially considering the influence of the colonies' revolt and pioneer conditions (Dewey 1935, 29). The throughline of individualism, from Protestantism to the frontier to self-interested entrepreneurs, came to the public forefront with Hoover's rearticulation of rugged individualism in his 1928 campaign speech. The popularization of this term revealed a society and political discourse with underlying inclinations to favor non-interventionist approaches to economic functions.

Herbert Hoover's Rugged Individualism

Herbert Hoover's rearticulation of rugged individualism was visibly developed in his writings and policy enactments throughout the 1920s. In 1922, Hoover published *American Individualism*, a book in which he emphasized "equality of opportunity," so that the practical, intellectual, and spiritual talent of each individual could spur progress in society (Hoover 1922). This nonfiction work provided a quintessential account of Hoover's ideals, highlighting the importance of self-motivation to strive toward greatness. Hoover's rugged individualism idealized the notion of American self-actualization, inspired by Hoover's own experiences of social mobility and self-reliance. Simultaneously, Herbert Hoover, an engineer, businessman,

administrator, and politician, acknowledged the value of community support, albeit in a voluntary manner, to address the needs of the American people.

Hoover's rhetorical emphasis on self-reliance in economic and social policies gained credibility and influence from his professional and political backgrounds. President Hoover's approach to political administration embodied his 'engineering ideal,' as discussed in John M. Jordan's dissertation. Jordan (1989) examined the engineer's 'conquest' of the natural world, and the cultural authority of this profession, which Hoover subsequently wielded on the political stage. As an administrator and politician, Hoover attempted to implement tenets of the 'engineering ideal' in the state, upholding social science professionalization by championing economic efficiency and scientific management. In office, Hoover recruited political scientists, economists, sociologists, and rational administrators to the Department of Commerce in order to "modernize politics" and optimize the efficacy of his administration (Jordan 1989). This approach to political organization reflected Hoover's idealization of efficiency, running the government like a business with a directed purpose. Hoover's professional background influenced his focus on economic efficiency and self-sufficiency in his orations of 1928 and 1932.

Although the words preceded Hoover's campaign speech, the Republican nominee popularized the term "rugged individualism" in 1928, integrating the phrase into the identity of the American conservative. The president later wrote: "While I can make no claim for having introduced the term 'rugged individualism,' I should be proud to have invented it" (Lohof 1970, 699). As a self-made millionaire, Hoover's focus on national progress reflected his background in pursuing individual greatness, benefiting from liberty and equality of opportunity in the "American system" that allowed for such strides (Hoover 1928). Hoover advocated for "the

American system [which] is founded upon the conception that only through ordered liberty, freedom and equal opportunity to the individual will his initiative and enterprise spur on the march of progress” (Hoover 1928).

Herbert Hoover’s rugged individualism reified ingrained tropes in American political society, from self-reliance on the frontier to the opportunities for upward mobility of socioeconomic status in a free market system. The phrase incited opposition to government mandates, centralized relief programs, and compulsory participation in national plans. According to Hoover’s political ideology, the government ought to remain the “umpire instead of a player in the economic game,” so that the people played the more active role in financial stimulation and national economic growth (Hoover 1928). This political approach placed the onus on the citizen, calling for individuals to exhibit productive efficiency in order to maximize the output from the national economic machine. Hoover’s rhetoric called upon all American citizens to pull themselves up by their bootstraps and pursue their best personal outcomes. As a successful businessman himself, Hoover had attained the rags-to-riches American dream, so he encouraged and expected others to follow suit. This sociopolitical mindset certainly contrasted with his competitor’s policies in the 1932 presidential election. Franklin D. Roosevelt advocated for an expansion of government involvement into unprecedented realms of the American economy.

While Hoover voiced his commitment to traditionally conservative economic approaches in 1932, however, his policies included a significant amount of moderate regulatory measures on the federal level. Hoover encouraged voluntary forms of community support to yield public value, especially in response to national economic crises. Whereas laissez-faire free market capitalism opposed the expenditure of tax dollars to avoid burdening the private sector and to minimize government control over money flows, President Hoover increased federal spending

during his presidency in response to the economic crisis. Hoover aligned with conservative theorists in his condemnation of government employment programs that required significant spending from the federal repository, but, in practice, employed more centrist policies that augmented government expenditure.

Pro-Business Republicanism

Although Herbert Hoover's rugged individualism represented the more conservative approach in the 1932 competition with Roosevelt, comparisons with further right colleagues and thinkers in the 1920s and 1930s revealed the relative centrism of Hoover's platform. While Hoover's political career paralleled that of Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon, the two businessmen-turned-politicians' economic policies diverged significantly. As colleagues under the Warren G. Harding and Calvin Coolidge administrations, Hoover and Mellon presented the business perspective on American fiscal policy. Because Andrew Mellon was born wealthy and came to own several companies, he advocated for the rights of businesses and beneficiaries without government infringement (Stoller 2019). During his term as Secretary of Treasury under the presidencies of Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover, Andrew Mellon spearheaded the restoration of political domination by private financiers.

Andrew Mellon's political ideology steered to the right of Hoover's rugged individualism, but did not go as far as the champions of pure laissez-faire. As a pro-business Republican, Mellon made way for unregulated business by striving to reduce all taxation on individuals, corporations, and inheritance, and by opposing Progressive-era minimum wage, maximum hours, and industrial safety laws. His economic philosophy held that taxing the wealthy threatened the stability of society, similar to Hoover's call for government

nonintervention to achieve progress and prosperity as a nation. In contrast to Mellon's laissez-faire policy in the domestic fiscal realm, however, he compelled President Harding to raise tariffs with the intention of protecting domestic industries and monopolies. Mellon's ideological stance of fiscal protectionism bridged the conservative robber baron politics of the nineteenth century with the growing federal government of the twentieth century (Stoller 2019). This pro-business, Republican position leaned right by denouncing government intervention in domestic economics, but diverged from laissez-faire ideology by advocating for tariffs that protected the efficient production of goods in American industries.

Although both Hoover and Mellon aimed to reduce government involvement in economic matters, they differed on the extent to which federal regulations should intervene in the private sector. Similar to his colleague, Hoover advocated for a return to prewar economic policy, such that the government would scale back regulations to reflect the level of conservatism that reigned before the First World War. When Hoover outlined the difference between rugged individualism and the new wave of 'paternalistic' liberalism, however, he clarified that rugged individualism was also distinct from laissez-faire free market capitalism. Rather than leaving all market-related concerns to the whim of Adam Smith's notion of the 'invisible hand,' Hoover encouraged government engagement in public works for flood control, navigation, irrigation, scientific research, and national defense, accepting that such endeavors sometimes increased regulatory power or commodity production as by-products of governmental actions. Hoover emphasized that the United States ought not to implement a "free-for-all" system of laissez-faire. Rather, mild regulations served to insure fairness, legal equality of opportunity, and American individualism, with the intentions of preventing the domination of a singular group. Hoover

maintained that, when properly regulated, “the freedom of initiative and enterprise” provided the chance for anyone without an inheritance to prosper.

During the 1920-1921 recession, Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover convened conferences to unite government officials and businessmen in order to optimize cooperation (Horwitz, ‘Hoover’s early career’). He intended to allow the government to play a larger role in economic issues by mimicking wartime policies in the financial crisis. Whereas President Harding chose more laissez-faire approaches, Hoover urged government actions, such as public works projects, during his conferences in order to avoid future depressions. Unlike the laissez-faire approaches endorsed by his pro-business colleagues, Hoover sought cooperation with the industrial sector to “do something” together for the public good (Horwitz, ‘Hoover’s early career’). Herbert Hoover demonstrated the distinct nature of rugged individualism when he undertook a more collectivist approach to the 1920-1921 recession, a strategy that foreshadowed his response to the Great Depression.

Hoover, a seasoned organizational strategist, viewed bureaucracy through a pragmatic lens. Rather than prioritizing the wellbeing of industry alone, Hoover diverged from Mellon’s protectionist, free domestic competitive market approach by fostering more cooperative private efforts for the public’s benefit. As Secretary of Commerce, Hoover chaired the Special Mississippi Flood Committee in 1927, employing his practical skills in administration. He established a hierarchy to direct the relief operation, exhibiting his belief that effective bureaucratic organization could enable and stimulate grassroots individualism (Lohof 1970, 692). His relief efforts signified a collaborative approach to solving a collective problem. The Committee united the thoughts and actions of various contributors, including federal, state, local, and private agencies, in the decision-making process. In the early weeks as superintendent of the

flood relief operation, Hoover created a bureaucratic mechanism to “secure centralized direction to all national agencies and coordination with all state agencies,” demonstrating the cooperative nature of Hoover’s approach to the crisis (Lohof 1970, 691). Hoover consistently advocated for citizens to join communal relief efforts of their own will for the betterment of the collective, displaying how his concept of rugged individualism included more participatory, collaborative elements than permitted by pure laissez-faire.

In order to scale back the wartime practices of government intervention, Herbert Hoover and the Republican Party aimed to reinstate “our fundamental conception of the state and rights and responsibility of the individual” (Hoover 1928). Hoover’s doctrine of rugged individualism promoted not only the opportunities given to each individual, but also the “responsibility” of each citizen to contribute to the progress and prosperity of the nation. The American experiment consisted of “decentralized self-government, ordered liberty, equal opportunity, and freedom to the individual,” praised as the sources of the economic progress gained in the 1920s (Hoover 1928). The ideal of “ordered liberty” grounded Hoover’s advancement of voluntarism, as opposed to tax-funded welfare programs, reflecting the nuance of his conservative approach to government interventionism. An examination of the further right positions on the ideological spectrum indicates the relative moderation exhibited by Hoover’s rugged individualism.

The Further Right

While Hoover’s rugged individualism encouraged more collaborative efforts to build a prosperous society, further right schools of thought advocated for significant reductions of government participation in the economy. Andrew Mellon represented the pro-business, protectionist perspective on American political economy: encouraging the reduction of taxes and

regulations and raising tariffs to allow the free market within the United States to progress toward efficiency. Beyond Mellon's business-centered views, influential political thinkers Herbert Spencer and William Graham Sumner presented economic and sociological theories advancing laissez-faire capitalism and other strains of fiscal conservatism. These two perspectives demonstrated the body of thought that steered political platforms and actions to the right. However, despite Herbert Hoover's praise for individualistic policies, his tenet of rugged individualism incorporated more nuance, centrism, and cooperative tactics than Spencer or Sumner endorsed.

Herbert Spencer incorporated the disciplines of biology, sociology, and anthropology into his formulation of "Social Darwinism." The English philosopher coined the phrase "survival of the fittest" to define the role of the individual in an efficient society (Weinstein 2019, 'Herbert Spencer'). According to David Weinstein (2019), Spencer conflated mere survivability, a natural property, with the notion of goodness itself, a non-natural property. Social Darwinism presented a biological justification for merciless economic competition, asserting that those most "fit" for economic success would gain dominance, while the "unfit" would endure lesser natural outcomes and many would not survive. Herbert Spencer's discussion of "natural" differences in human capacities supported a non-interventionist approach of laissez-faire policies. In this conceptualization of social evolution, Spencer conveyed a framework of progression: from primitive political cooperation to militant hierarchies, and then advancing toward minimally regulated industrial systems. In Spencer's idyllic society, the government would wither away as market utopias emerged with spontaneous, self-regulating, ever-growing economies (Weinstein 2019, 'The Principles of Sociology').

As a notable parallel to Herbert Hoover's emphasis on equality of opportunity, Herbert Spencer prioritized the principles of equality and liberty in the organization of a just society. Just as Hoover called for equality of opportunity, Spencer defined justice as equal liberty among members of society. In *Social Statics*, Spencer wrote that "liberty of each, limited by the like liberty of all, is the rule in conformity with which society must be organized" (Spencer 1970, 79). This view called for a foundation of liberty among citizens, because Spencer believed that general utility thrived when individuals exercised and developed their faculties based on equal freedom (Weinstein 2019, 'Spencer's "Liberal" Utilitarianism'). Spencer's focus on individual rights, in opposition to national planning, echoed in Hoover's denunciation of government interventions and prioritization of individualized success.

In Herbert Spencer's *The Man Versus the State*, the influential philosopher advocated for the maximal freedom of each citizen as the key element to achieve societal progress. Government interventions, called "dictatorial measures," had "rapidly multiplied" with rising social liberalism in Europe, which "tended continually to narrow the liberties of individuals" (Spencer 1982, 3). From Spencer's perspective, modern social liberalism had increasingly propped up policies that forced the actions of citizens according to the government's dictates, restricting the liberty and potential of civilians to actively contribute to society. Like Andrew Mellon, Herbert Spencer fervently condemned taxation, considering the "compulsory" practice an infringement upon the ability to spend one's own income according to one's personal desires. From this perspective, taxes restricted the freedom of each taxpayer by reducing the "portion of his earnings which he can spend as he pleases" (Spencer 1982, 3-4). Along with taxation, in Spencer's view, increasing grants for education, sciences, arts, and other collectivist policies

solely yielded “further coercion,” as each expenditure “restricts still more freedom of the citizen” (Spencer 1982, 23).

Herbert Spencer’s conservative works had a significant impact among political thinkers, including the renowned American sociologist William Graham Sumner. Social Darwinism played an integral role in Sumner’s socio-political-economic theories, especially in his promotion of laissez-faire free market capitalism. Sumner’s influential essay, “What Social Classes Owe Each Other,” originally published in 1883, advocated for conservative economic policies as foundational sources of the citizen’s fundamental rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness in American political society. In accordance with Hoover’s promotion of equality of opportunity, Sumner critiqued those who believed that “they have a right, not only to *pursue* happiness, but to get it; and if they fail to get it, they think they have a claim to the aid of other men” (Sumner 1974, 14).

William Graham Sumner called for unrestricted market relations, because government interventions were deemed infringements of individual liberty. Aligning laissez-faire economic policy with basic human liberty, Sumner explained: “a man whose labor and self-denial may be diverted from his maintenance to that of some other man is not a free man, and approaches...the position of a slave” (Sumner 1974, 15). From Sumner’s perspective, the implementation of national planning would fundamentally obstruct societal organization, enabling one man’s efforts to benefit another man’s satisfaction instead of his own. The individualistic trope of reaping one’s own benefits reflected the rags to riches tenet that grounded the American dream: the social ideology that any American could be successful if he worked hard enough to rise through the ranks.

This fundamental promotion of laissez-faire differed in some important ways from pro-business Republicanism, because Sumner opposed monopolies and the tariffs that many financiers encouraged to protect American industry. Unlike Andrew Mellon, William Graham Sumner asserted that monopolies muted competition. Moreover, tariffs were, in Sumner's view, a government intervention in the free market, thus impeding economic efficiency and progress. Although Sumner accepted minor industrial regulation in extreme cases, he condemned most economic interventions and any form of egalitarian redistribution (Sumner 1914, 182). In order to uphold the equal opportunity to pursue the American dream, Sumner condemned the invention of new "theories of property," which were responsible for "distorting rights and perpetuating injustice" (Sumner 1974, 21).

Sumner critiqued cooperative social programs and opposed redistributive plans, representing the conservative response to the kind of social liberal economic reforms that Roosevelt would propose in 1932. A national pursuit of equitable outcomes ultimately "necessitates a sacrifice of liberty," he asserted (Sumner 1974, 15). Sumner spoke against the "unquestioned doctrine...that 'the rich' ought to 'care for the poor'" (Sumner 1974, 16). The poor that benefited from such care represented a societal "burden" in Sumner's view. Rather than obligating or even encouraging the wealthy to give up their earnings, contribute to philanthropic initiatives, and redistribute resources, William Graham Sumner invoked Spencer's notion of the "survival of the fittest:" "Certain ills belong to the hardships of human life," Sumner urged (Sumner 1974, 17). Inequitable outcomes were deemed "natural," as not every member of society deserved the benefits that the rich earned from their accumulated wealth. The people considered "weak" by philanthropists gained unrightfully from receiving redirected resources. Sumner deemed any redistributive effort, whether government-mandated, as liberal New Dealers

would promote, or entirely voluntary, as rugged individualists would encourage, a waste of productive forces in society (Sumner 1974, 19).

Rather than encouraging free-riding among the poorer classes, William Graham Sumner called for active productivity by each member of society. In fostering an efficient society, each benefiting consumer ought to contribute land, labor or capital to competitive market relations, so wealth was a prerequisite to attaining the valuable output of the capitalist economy (Sumner 1974, 19). Sumner supported economic policies that steered away from providing relief to the burdensome members of society, and refocused on the “Forgotten Man,” who “deserves our attention” (Sumner 1974, 22). According to Sumner, these overlooked citizens deserved praise because they were the hard workers burdened by others’ lack of productive output. Sumner’s commendation of a “man who by his own effort raises himself above poverty” served to encourage citizens to work hard to gain capital, as opposed to allowing the poor to benefit from others’ extensive efforts to achieve industrial progress (Sumner 1974, 21).

Response to the Great Depression

The range of conservative ideologies came to the forefront of national discourse as political figures scrambled to respond effectively to the market crash of 1929. When America fell into the Depression, Andrew Mellon advised Hoover to scale back investments in people and enterprises in order to expand the nation’s financial flexibility: “Liquidate labor, liquidate stocks, liquidate the farmers, liquidate real estate” (Krugman 2011). Business leaders voiced strong opposition to proposals to expand government expenditures, rather than minimize them, during President Hoover’s term in office. This campaign for retrenchment applied even to public schools, evaluating educational institutions with the same criteria as other governmental

functions that used tax dollars (Rippa 1962, 81). As president, however, Herbert Hoover actively intervened in the economy during the Great Depression in a manner that reflected smaller and less institutionalized versions of the very policies of the New Deal that Republicans would scrutinize. Hoover expanded the government's scope relating to federal spending, agriculture, wage policy, immigration, international trade, and tax policy. A clear demonstration of Hoover's interventions could be presented numerically: government spending increased by forty-eight percent, without accounting for deflation, during Hoover's four years in office (Horwitz, 'The Hoover presidency').

While President Hoover maintained vehement opposition to large-scale, unilateral government programs throughout his career, his policies called for cooperation with the private sector. Paralleling his actions as Secretary of Commerce during the 1920-1921 recession, President Hoover summoned major business leaders to the White House to confer during the Great Depression (Horwitz, 'The Hoover presidency'). Hoover asked the businessmen not to reduce wages, despite the soaring unemployment rates that could allow them to do so without losing productive workers. These actions clearly demonstrated Hoover's deviance from pro-business, laissez-faire economic policies, as well as his intentions to foster voluntary, private-sector cooperative measures instead of governmental mandates.

President Hoover favored certain forms of augmented governmental intervention amidst the economic crisis, indicating his conviction that the market would not necessarily fix itself. Government interventionism manifested in the 1931 Davis-Bacon and Norris-LaGuardia Acts, which upheld unions; the Smoot-Hawley Tariff, which increased tariffs on many imported goods; and an Executive Order that blocked immigration in 1930, seeking to preserve Americans' employment by minimizing foreign competition (Horowitz, 'The Hoover presidency'). On

December 31, 1931, Hoover proposed the following to Congress: (1) the Reconstruction Finance Corporation to lend funds to banks, firms, and other institutions; (2) a Home Loan Bank to help the construction sector; (3) Congressional affirmation of his Executive Order that blocked immigration; (4) direct loans to state governments to aid unemployment relief; (5) aid to Federal Land Banks; (6) the establishment of a Public Works Administration to coordinate and expand Federal public works; and (7) greater enforcement of antitrust laws to prevent more “destructive competition” (Horwitz, ‘The Hoover presidency’). To fund these new measures, Hoover also proposed the largest peacetime tax increase in the nation’s history, which Congress subsequently approved.

Despite his efforts to intervene at the federal level while maintaining the industrial power of American production, Hoover failed to adequately respond to the Great Depression. The industry heads agreed to Hoover’s requests at the conference held at the White House, especially to appease union leaders and avoid growing strife in the labor movement. However, Hoover’s efforts to foster private-sector cooperation backfired, since the maintenance of wages led to layoffs and escalating unemployment. The Smoot-Hawley Tariff yielded a decline in international trade, exacerbating the economic depression on the global scale (Horwitz, ‘The Hoover presidency’). As exhibited by his failed incumbency campaign, Hoover’s implementation of moderate government interventions in the economy failed to lift the nation out of deep financial crisis. Caught between pro-business Republicans fighting for a free market and the social liberal advocates of welfare calling for many more mandated government programs, Hoover teetered at the cusp of both approaches, but ultimately failed to resolve the Great Depression with his ideological compromise.

Clashing with the Left

According to Herbert Hoover, the American system depended upon self-interest, promising a high standard of living in exchange for each American's hard work (Sita 1962, 382). Hoover advocated for equality of opportunity and the chance for personal development, stimulation, and innovation, all while productively utilizing a person's best endowments of heart and mind. Opposition to collectivism involved the denunciation of large public bureaucracies and centralized governments that inherently violated liberty, and, by discouraging individual initiative, could never raise the standard of living (Sita 1962, 389). This call for equal individual freedoms reinforced Americans' entrenched rejection of hereditary class hierarchy and reified the perceived exceptionalism in the United States: "our individualism departs from the individualism of Europe [where] there can be no rise for the individual through the frozen strata" (*Los Angeles Times* 1922).

From the perspective of Hoover and political thinkers to his right, American individualism contemporaneously rejected modern social liberalism, Fascism, Socialism and Communism. His ideology of rugged individualism encouraged the government to serve as an "umpire" in balancing the needs of various actors, whereas other political creeds viewed the state as master and the individual as servant. Russia's experiment with Socialism was deemed a "ghastly failure" by the *L.A. Times* (1922), as such collectivism failed to stimulate the development and activity of the individual as a contributor to the larger economic machine. The "American" nature of individualism and the individualistic nature of America were deemed predominant features of the nation's political culture, and key contributors to its economic prosperity in the 1920s.

Herbert Hoover's 1928 campaign speech pitted "the American system of rugged individualism" against "a European philosophy of diametrically opposed doctrines, doctrines of paternalism and state socialism" (Hoover 1928). American exceptionalism came to the forefront of Hoover's speech: he asserted that government nonintervention had allowed for "unparalleled greatness" among "our people" (Hoover 1928). Stark opposition to "paternalism" in European government systems shaped Hoover's condemnation of social liberalism, as he called for a return to the prewar system that made the American economy unique. Hoover even characterized the interpretation of liberalism that promoted government operation of commercial business as "false liberalism" (Hoover 1928). In this view, bureaucratization of the market only "poisons the very roots of liberalism, that is political equality, free speech, free assembly, free press and equality of opportunity" (Hoover 1928). Rather, Hoover's liberalism sought to limit bureaucracy, insisting that political freedom in American society depended on an economically liberal "force[,] truly of the spirit" (Hoover 1928).

For decades, social liberals and socialists had formulated challenges to views like Hoover's rugged individualism by denying that such individualistic approaches provided equality of opportunity. In *Liberalism*, British theorist L.T. Hobhouse presented a seminal characterization of social liberalism that informed the political environment in the U.S. (Hobhouse 1911). By critiquing laissez-faire economics and endorsing social welfare, Hobhouse emphasized the need for state regulation in economic and social policies if all members of society were to have the resources they needed to survive and succeed. By combatting conservative tropes of individualized self-actualization, Hobhouse provided a key voice in the leftwing opposition, arguing that competitive market individualism did not bring about equality of opportunity. Prominent political thinkers like Hobhouse on the left side of the ideological

spectrum served as predecessors to American social liberals' response to rugged individualism in the 1930s.

Socialist Isaac Kushner (1922) raised similar concerns about the system of private ownership of the means of production, questioning how a capitalistic organization of the economy could possibly incorporate true equality. In accordance with the American dream, Hoover's personal story represented one example of an American citizen rising from humble beginnings to notable financial success. However, Kushner asserted that even Hoover knew that not all workers had the same chance to become wealthy, no matter how hard they worked (Kushner 1922). In Kushner's view, Hoover's path to success was not realistically available to all Americans, illuminating the limitations of Hoover's notion of equal opportunity to pursue the American dream. Kushner's argument about Hoover's awareness of inequities in the American economic system gained recognition in a 1923 issue of *The Youth's Companion*. The column asserted that even Hoover would admit a fully individualistic system would prove incapable of guiding policy (*The Youth's Companion* 1923). In the decades leading up to Hoover's rearticulation of rugged individualism in 1928, the ideological left posited such arguments against fiscal conservatism, establishing the foundation for the leftwing backlash against Hoover's individualistic rhetoric and policies.

Roosevelt and the New Deal

The most significant threat in America to Hoover's ideology of rugged individualism came from the popular appeal of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal policies. Social liberalism echoed in Roosevelt's resounding promises to reform the inadequate American economic system with his New Deal. Roosevelt's rhetoric challenged Hoover's assertion that the traditional

structure of the American economy proved efficient and just (Zinn 1966, 45). In his campaign speech, “Every Man has a Right to Life,” Roosevelt articulated the quintessential idealism of New Deal policies. Negating Hoover’s doctrine of rugged individualism, Roosevelt claimed: “the situation today only too clearly indicates that equality of opportunity as we have known it no longer exists” (Roosevelt 1932b, 48). Rather than calling on the talent and voluntaristic generosity of each individual citizen, Roosevelt emphasized the importance of governmental policies “distributing wealth and products more equitably” and “adapting existing economic organization to the service of the people” (Roosevelt 1932b, 50). In his advocacy for the “right to life,” Roosevelt rearticulated wealth distribution as an essential component of equitable human rights outcomes.

In Roosevelt’s view, discussions in government about political economy focused on “whether individual men and women will have to serve some system of government or economics, or whether a system of government and economics exists to serve individual men and women” (Roosevelt 1932b, 46). Unlike Hoover’s characterization of government as the “umpire” in economic affairs, Roosevelt argued that the “task of government in its relation to business...[was] to assist the development of an economic declaration of rights” (Roosevelt 1932b, 50). This proposed “economic constitutional order” ought to function such that every member of the society maintained the right and the opportunity to make a living. Roosevelt characterized government nonintervention, a “comfortable theory,” as “an invitation to sit back and do nothing,” critiquing the passivity of laissez-faire political leaders (Roosevelt 1932a, 80). Guided by Roosevelt’s proposed ideology, government restrictions to the private sector under the New Deal would serve “not to hamper individualism but to protect it” (Roosevelt 1932b, 51). This promotion of interventionism prioritized governmental actions to champion collective

benefits for the nation, with those in leadership assuming responsibility for civilians' outcomes, rather than pointing to individuals as the primary agents in a free market.

In Franklin D. Roosevelt's efforts to restructure the economy, he sometimes suggested an interconnection between national planning and efficient and just outcomes. In his famed 1932 speech at Oglethorpe University, entitled "Bold, Persistent Experimentation," Roosevelt emphasized the need to try new economic structures, as the prior attitudes of laissez-faire had proven unsuccessful (Zinn 1966, 77). The inefficiency of individualistic economic systems yielded "waste" as the "inevitable by-product of progress in a society which values individual endeavor" (Roosevelt 1932a, 79). Overproduction and inadequate distribution prevented producers from selling their products profitably and civilians from obtaining the necessary means to survive. The faults of a non-interventionist framework reached an unprecedented height with the Great Depression, exacerbated by President Hoover's failure to appropriately address the needs of American civilians. In a denunciation of free market capitalism, Roosevelt asserted that the laissez-faire approach required "greater faith in immutable economic law and less faith in the ability of man to control what he has created than I, for one, have" (Roosevelt 1932a, 80). Contrasting Hoover's individualistic approach to societal progress, Roosevelt pointed to the unsustainability of that preceding economic order, asserting: "we cannot make [our economic order] endure for long unless we can bring about a wiser, more equitable distribution of the national income" (Roosevelt 1932a, 82).

While campaigning for the 1932 presidential election, Herbert Hoover and Franklin D. Roosevelt presented a distinctive dialogue about the future of the American economy. As Hoover reified rugged individualism in his non-interventionist economic policy, Roosevelt called for a radical shift in distributive processes, claiming "we are at the threshold of a fundamental change

in our popular economic thought” (Roosevelt 1932a, 82). The turning point in 1932, according to Roosevelt, steered the nation toward planning for commodity creation and distribution within the American “economic machine” (Roosevelt 1932a, 81). Roosevelt’s rhetoric in the 1932 campaign highlighted his faith in America’s future amidst a dark period of economic devastation, incorporating leftwing considerations of consumer bargaining powers, minimum wage, and price fixing (Tugwell 1968, 57).

Franklin D. Roosevelt countered the preceding American traditions of non-interventionism that allowed the economy to fail in such a dire manner. Unlike Hoover’s prioritization of industry and upward mobility, Roosevelt’s campaign speeches applied special attention to the woes of American farmers, denoting them “the forgotten men” (Tugwell 1968, 47). When Roosevelt prompted the recognition and remembrance of the “forgotten” agricultural workers, the Democratic nominee utilized the same terminology as William Graham Sumner, though with a very different intention. Whereas Roosevelt called attention to the suffering endured by hard-working farmers and the need to actively mitigate their undeserved economic devastation through public aid and services, Sumner advocated for the societal recognition of the “forgotten man” who worked hard for his own hard-earned outcome and risked having it redistributed to undeserving beneficiaries (Sumner 1974, 22).

By redirecting societal attention to the hard workers suffering amidst the crisis, Roosevelt’s speeches intended to instill hope in his constituents and the American public about a new economic approach. Roosevelt called for “faith in our institutions...[which] demands that we recognize the new terms of the old social contract” (Roosevelt 1932a, 52). In reaction to Hoover’s promotion of status quo, nonintervention, and business-centric progress, Roosevelt emphasized the “vital necessity of planning,” because he believed that states could not handle the

economic dilemma without federal aid and guidance (Tugwell 1968, 104, 78). Rather than supporting the efforts of entrepreneurs, who, from the social liberal perspective, only behaved according to their own interests, Roosevelt promoted the needs of the national economy as a whole (Tugwell 1968, 114). In a healthy economic system, “the reward of a day’s work will have to be greater,” in order to instigate economic stimulation starting from the workers’ purchasing power.

As Roosevelt promoted his approach to national planning, the candidate simultaneously moderated the more radical notions of some advisors in order to accumulate constituent support. In his efforts to advance the New Deal, Roosevelt often eliminated the contributions of Rexford Tugwell, the furthest left member of The Brains Trust, from his speeches, revealing his hesitance to include far-left proposals in public-facing rhetoric. To maintain constituent support, Roosevelt did not provide specific details about the type or extent of his intentions with national planning. Regarding the possible federal redistribution of income, Roosevelt remained vague during his discussions about the interactions between a minimum income program and rising prices, because “a political candidate wouldn’t like to make such a complex explanation” (Tugwell 1968, 97).

Herbert Hoover’s defensive strategy in the presidential election of 1932 demonstrated his perception of the New Deal as a preeminent threat to rugged individualism. On October 31, Hoover gave a speech warning that “grass will grow in the streets” if Roosevelt were elected (Tugwell 1968, xviii). In the race against Roosevelt, Hoover employed the rhetorical strategy of *apologia* in defense of his leadership amidst the market crash of 1929 (Carcasson 1998, 350). In an examination of Hoover’s key radio addresses throughout the campaign, Carcasson (1998) analyzed the candidate’s rhetoric, style, and approach to conclude that Hoover aimed not to win

in 1932, so much as to defend his administration, character, and view of government. The election outcome showed Roosevelt gaining nearly twenty-eight million votes, as opposed to Hoover receiving fewer than sixteen million. The Great Depression dominated the 1932 presidential election, and brought a significant transition in the prominent ideologies held by the American public (Tugwell 1968, xviii). Carcasson's 1998 study concluded that this election established not only popular support for a new economic program, but also reimagined the norm of a rhetorical presidency, valuing Roosevelt's emotional popular leadership over Hoover's behind-the-scenes administrative work (Carcasson 1998, 349). The tactics employed in the 1932 campaign played a pivotal role as the norms of the American presidency transitioned toward a more populist rhetorical foundation that underpinned an increasingly interventionist national government.

While Roosevelt appeared heroic in resolving the economic depression in comparison to Hoover's relatively passive approach, Hoover's rugged individualism and Roosevelt's social liberalism had some noteworthy overlaps. Rugged individualism at first glance seemingly contradicted every element of Roosevelt's proposed economic policies: Hoover advocated for self-reliance, emphasized voluntarism, and minimized government-mandated programs. Although Hoover publicly opposed the New Deal, however, Roosevelt's advisors acknowledged that many aspects of the New Deal had their origins in Hoover's policies (Horwitz, 'The views of contemporaries and modern historians'). Roosevelt even expressed his support for the Construction Council, a trade association established by Hoover and the Department of Commerce before the crash of 1929 (Tugwell 1968, 58). Both politicians wanted many of the economic reforms that Roosevelt brought with the New Deal, except with differing degrees of government involvement (Tugwell 1968, xxii). Whereas Roosevelt cherry-picked strategies

formulated by his leftwing advisors and gained quick approval from large Democratic congressional majorities, Hoover was obstructed by Democrats in Congress (after the 1930 midterm elections) as well as by his Republican traditionalist colleagues.

Throughout the 1932 campaign, as Roosevelt grew aware of the risks of overpromising, he grew increasingly conservative, conveying more overlaps with rugged individualism than initially seen. In “Every Man has a Right to Life,” Roosevelt articulated the quintessential idealism of New Deal policies, but subsequent promises, such as intentions to balance the budget, constrained the candidate’s original plans to restructure the national economy (Zinn 1966, 45). The parallels between Hoover’s rugged individualistic approach and Roosevelt’s New Deal policies became apparent when distinguishing the former from laissez-faire free market capitalism, because both approaches called upon the government to interfere with American economic functions, albeit at different magnitudes.

The Further Left

Along with the commonalities shared by the New Deal and rugged individualism, prominent leftwing political thinkers that sought more radical restructuring demonstrated the relative centrism of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s ideological position. American economist Rexford Tugwell was a prolific and influential advocate for national economic planning while Roosevelt developed his platform for the campaign of 1932. As a member of Roosevelt’s “Brains Trust,” Tugwell contributed his liberal economic arguments throughout the early creation of New Deal reforms. Since obtaining his undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral degrees from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, this economist became a passionate proponent of “the magnificence of planning” (Krebs 1979, ‘Magnificence of Planning’). Tugwell fervently called

for governmental stimulation of economic activity in order to address the Great Depression: consumers urgently needed to gain purchasing power. Jumpstarting the “producing machine” depended on consumers having income so that they would buy goods, and then factories would be able to supply them (Tugwell 1968, 43).

Tugwell was the most radical of Roosevelt’s advisors, persistently advocating for a centralized plan to remedy America’s economic devastation following the 1929 market crash (Zinn 1966, 84). Before Roosevelt took the Executive Office in 1932, Tugwell wrote a vigorous argument to endorse national economic planning in an article entitled, “Planning Must Replace Laissez Faire.” The economist called for “fundamental changes of attitude, new disciplines, revised legal structure, [and] unaccustomed limitations on activity” as necessary components to centralized planning (Tugwell 1932, 85). This radical assertion promoted an overhaul of laissez-faire free market capitalism, a shift that would amount “practically, to the abolition of ‘business’” (Tugwell 1932, 85). The federal government, from Tugwell’s view, ought to engage in both “planning for production” and “planning for consumption[,] too” (Tugwell 1932, 88). Such adjustments required “a control of prices and of profit margins” in order to effectively manage the consumer economy in the United States (Tugwell 1932, 90). Rexford Tugwell represented the furthest left perspective among Roosevelt’s advisors in the Brains Trust, reimagining the extent of government intervention to the brink of eliminating destructive competition in the private sector.

In *The Brains Trust*, Rexford Tugwell conveyed a close account of his work alongside the rest of Roosevelt’s advisors, depicting the contentious debates and collaborations in the formulation of New Deal policies. Throughout his book, Tugwell continuously reasserted that “earnings would only resume when there were customers for goods and services” (Tugwell 1968,

95). The millions of unemployed members of society could not actively consume the products produced by enterprises because they lacked the purchasing power. In order to implement large-scale unemployment relief, Tugwell favored the creation of extensive public employment, which, notably, would yield temporarily unbalanced budgets, an economic strategy that Hoover and Roosevelt both ultimately abandoned. From Tugwell's perspective, the government would need to serve as a "residual employer," providing jobs and compensation for living expenses to stimulate the consumer economy (Tugwell 1968, 96). The financial dilemma called for a centralized solution, because states could not uniformly address these employment issues due to lack of funds. According to Tugwell, the federal government was the sole entity with "the power to create and distribute income" (Tugwell 1968, 96).

Tugwell explicitly contrasted his centralized framework for addressing the economic crisis with Hoover's overall non-interventionism in theory and strategy. In Tugwell's view, as Hoover rose to prominence in American politics, the advocate of rugged individualism emerged as the nation's leading "defender of the faith." Despite his failed incumbency campaign, Hoover's ideological influence on American traditions was acknowledged in Tugwell's observation of the 1932 election cycle: "He had by now erected a bulwark of Americanism" (Tugwell 1968, 110). Rugged individualism, which emphasized progress, innovation, and voluntarism, represented "an American way, rooted in tradition, firm in moral understanding." However, Tugwell's advocacy for national planning sought to reimagine the central features of the American political identity, upholding collective benefits and governmental participation in the labor market.

Just as Tugwell critiqued Hoover's approach of rugged individualism, the economist pointed to the failures of the generally conservative solutions to the Great Depression. Although

Hoover's crisis management style diverged significantly from pro-business Republicanism, Tugwell attacked Hoover's "unjustified confidence in the business system" that obstructed federal programming to resolve the depression (Tugwell 1968, 114). As Secretary of Commerce, Hoover had sponsored extensive analyses of the business cycle, and although his commission had made specific recommendations for financial crises, Hoover ultimately failed in execution. Unlike many advocates of centralized economic planning, Hoover overtly opposed making public funding grants, because he felt that men should work for their incomes. As a clear exhibition of rugged individualism, Hoover set up private-sector committees to collect funds and distribute charity while simultaneously attempting to reduce expenditures and balance the federal budget. Tugwell reacted by arguing that Hoover's 1932 demand, "the budget must balance," came too late in the depression (Tugwell 1968, 114). Furthermore, Tugwell insisted that Hoover's inclination to give loans to businesses instead of grants proved insufficient to jumpstart the economy, since they had no means of repayment as long as business remained stagnant (Tugwell 1968, 115).

While considering plans to jumpstart the economy, Tugwell referred to the distribution of relief funds as a temporary solution that failed to address the root causes: "the disparities, the imbalance, the uneven distribution" (Tugwell 1968, 43). In order to achieve a more sustainable solution to the faults in the American economy, he called for "a change in the system" (Tugwell 1968, 44). Notably, Tugwell claimed that his leftist approach to economic restructuring was not grounded solely in justice, welfare, or humanitarian inspirations. Beyond the moral concerns, ending exploitative measures and establishing an equitable, mutual arrangement for economic affairs served to sustain the continued efficacy of the American machine of production. Tugwell acknowledged the dilemmas connected to his federal approach to income redistribution:

subsequent taxation to pay back the initial financial distributions and the inflation caused by printing money could lead to higher prices and discourage consumers. However, the initial, colossal implementation of purchasing power would open opportunities to protect industries and institutions via debt moratoria, simplified bankruptcy proceedings, and other mechanisms to permit fresh starts for small enterprises (Tugwell 1968, 97).

As an influential member of Roosevelt's Brain Trust, and, subsequently, Roosevelt's administration, Tugwell played a significant role in radicalizing the policies for economic restructuring within the New Deal. Throughout his candidacy, Roosevelt asserted that "something must be done" such as printing money, eliminating "the hopeless gold standard," and borrowing the money needed, without concern for government credit (Tugwell 1968, 116). As a prominent voice in Roosevelt's formulation of economic policy, Tugwell pushed for "greenbacks," the commodity dollar backed by commodities besides gold, since the value of the precious metal fluctuated unreliably (Tugwell 1968, 98). In order to establish stability in the American economy, Roosevelt similarly opposed the gold standard in his platform and subsequent presidential actions. Abandoning the gold standard, the monetary system in place for decades, indicated Roosevelt's radical shift away from American economic traditions as encouraged by Tugwell.

Rexford Tugwell's calculated influence on Roosevelt's rhetoric endorsing a more radical ideology of economic planning was exemplified in a series of seminal speeches throughout the 1932 campaign. At a Jefferson Day dinner, Roosevelt gave his "concert of interests speech," in which the politician clearly communicated Tugwell's ideas about cooperatively restructuring the faulted American economy. Roosevelt pointed to "the necessity that there be a real community of interests...among [the country's] economic units" (Tugwell 1968, 48). Uniting the country for the

purpose of financial collectivism signified Roosevelt's intentions to plan "on the basis of a shared common life."

The Democratic nominee's emphasis on common and shared interests reflected his reimagining of American individualism in 1932. In the speech "Every Man has a Right to Life," Roosevelt asserted the need to restrict the economic operations of "the speculator, the manipulator, even the financier...not to hamper individualism but to protect it" (Roosevelt 1932b, 51). This radical perspective, which connected individualistic ideals with government regulations, represented an overt reconstitution of American traditionalism. Instead of encouraging individualistic striving, economic competition, and innovative enterprise, Roosevelt and his advisors posited a new and inclusive form of the American dream. As argued by Tugwell and communicated by Roosevelt, the explicit emphasis on collective benefits, shared interests, and community support reconfigured the very foundation of American political identity while rhetorically perpetuating the nation's tradition of individualism.

Rexford Tugwell's further left notions pushed the Democratic platform toward more central, nationally-planned solutions to the economic crisis. As a self-proclaimed "gas and water Socialist," Tugwell called for the nationalization of more facilities, on the model of the centralized postal service (Tugwell 1968, 74). Tugwell's radical perspective even extended to U.S. foreign policy amidst the growing Red Scare, asserting that "[t]he future [was] becoming visible in Russia" (Tugwell 1932, 90). Although Tugwell refrained from promoting full-fledged Communism, he was impressed with "the power of the collective will" exhibited in the Soviet Union (Krebs 1979, 'Magnificence of Planning'). The economist similarly commended Norman Thomas, the "Socialist" candidate in 1932, for "put[ting] the central problem first," though he found that Thomas's "specific suggestions weren't impressive" (Tugwell 1968, 440). Tugwell's

refrain from endorsing central-state socialism revealed the leftward boundary of Tugwell's political orientation.

Tugwell, the most radical advisor to Roosevelt, remained firm in his beliefs and loyal to the Democratic candidate by bringing national planning to the party platform. Socialist candidate Norman Thomas advanced a platform based on issues such as subsidies for consumption instead of profit-seeking production, weekly emergency grants from the federal government, taking over unused factories to be run by workers, higher income and inheritance taxes, and a five-day work week. Though Rexford Tugwell was only somewhat impressed by Thomas's prioritized policies, Franklin D. Roosevelt was notably "intrigued" (Tugwell 1968, 439). Roosevelt spoke of the "radical" crowd, claiming that those progressives were the only ones receptive to the notion that "the business system had to be overhauled" (Tugwell 1968, 437). However, despite his admiration for the Socialist left, Roosevelt insisted on the impracticality of Thomas's proposals: "they were reaching for the moon" (Tugwell 1968, 439). Some progressives or "liberals" reportedly supported Norman Thomas, who promoted "revoluting," but Tugwell argued that "they ought to have been Roosevelt supporters" instead (Tugwell 1968, 283, 437). Like Tugwell, Roosevelt expressed concerns about the Socialist candidate taking votes away from his own electoral success as the Democratic nominee, indicating how Tugwell and Roosevelt both remained loyal to their party while harboring some appreciation for Socialist proposals (Tugwell 1968, 439).

Although Tugwell's centralized approach to economic restructuring in 1932 surfaced in Roosevelt's campaign platform, the Democratic nominee ultimately took a more moderate position to formulate centrist policies. Roosevelt did not pursue the same types of nationalizing projects as those of his more radical advisor, with the exception of regional experiments like the

Tennessee Valley Authority (Tugwell 1968, 71). Taking a more moderate approach than Tugwell, Roosevelt generally sought a relatively decentralized solution for the Great Depression (Tugwell 1968, 96). Roosevelt maintained private ownership but induced a rise in prices to liquidate the burden of debt and unfreeze assets with the National Industrial Recovery Act, especially prohibiting “destructive price cutting” in order to ascribe value to efficient production (*Columbia Law Review* 1934, 1519). This method was detailed by Adolph A. Berle, Jr., another primary member of the Brains Trust from Columbia University, whose ideological stance sometimes overlapped with Tugwell, but usually remained less radical with regard to economic restructuring.

Roosevelt considered views beyond The Brains Trust in order to draw conclusions about the feasibility of an integrated economic system (Tugwell 1968, 100). Throughout his candidacy, Roosevelt modified the speeches written by his staff to navigate the middle ground between radical economic restructuring and maintaining appeal as an American politician. As a key signifier of Roosevelt’s hesitation to endorse radical economic ideologies, the presidential candidate often cut Tugwell’s contributions in crafting the campaign platform. For example, Tugwell, among other economists, denounced the “make-work fallacy,” contending that reducing hours of work could not boost productive employment in practice. Roosevelt, however, clung to the notion that shortening the number of working hours would distribute employment among more workers (Tugwell 1968, 75). From Tugwell’s perspective, Roosevelt “ought to say more than he had been saying about what had to be done, whether or not the politicians approved” (Tugwell 1968, 94). A notable exception was when Roosevelt gave the speech “Bold, Persistent Experimentation” at Oglethorpe University as written by Ernest K. Lindley, voicing previously concealed, more radical convictions. However, Tugwell was relatively “less happy” in response

to Roosevelt's renowned Oglethorpe speech, because Roosevelt appeared to promise more progressive advances than he pursued in actuality (Tugwell 1968, 112). Thus, although Tugwell and the rest of the Brains Trust provided key insights into Roosevelt's policy formation, the New Deal did not directly reflect the leftist intentions Tugwell favored.

Similar to how Tugwell advocated for policies to the left of Roosevelt's platform, American philosopher John Dewey was dissatisfied with the New Deal, claiming that Roosevelt's programs were not radical enough to address the social inequities plaguing American society. Dewey presented an influential academic perspective on radical reform, focusing on the theoretical critique of American individualism, privatization, and capitalism. As a philosopher, he rarely recommended specific policy proposals as further left alternatives, though his writings brought integral ideological contributions to the rising radicalism in the American political left. In *Individualism, Old and New*, Dewey discussed rugged individualism in light of the 'money culture' in the U.S., along with the shaping of individualism within American society (Dewey 1930). His critiques of American capitalism extended beyond laissez-faire, pro-business, and rugged individualist ideologies, and he even pushed past New Deal policies to advocate for a radically democratic, optimally inclusive welfare system. Although he did not outline specific policy alternatives, Dewey strongly endorsed overall liberal causes, such as academic freedom, democracy, and an "equalitarian economy" (Zinn 1966, 28).

In *The Future of Liberalism*, Dewey stressed the need to recognize historic relativity while developing a salient contemporary political ideology. Traditional liberal social thought failed to incorporate this recognition, conceiving of "the individual as something given, complete in itself, and of liberty as a ready-made possession of the individual, only needing the removal of external restrictions in order to manifest itself" (Dewey 1935, 30). This critique of older forms of

liberalism broadened the discourse surrounding government interventionism, countering the misconception that governmental action was always the “antithesis” of desired freedom (Dewey 1935, 29). Rather, Dewey called for the achievement of liberty by working within the contemporary political circumstances to find more equitable outcomes, often by encouraging more collectivist public policies.

John Dewey’s characterization of historic relativity in *The Future of Liberalism* deepened the dichotomy between social liberalism and laissez-faire, free market capitalism. Hoover’s rugged individualism represented “pseudo-liberalism” according to Dewey (Dewey 1935, 30). Dewey’s call for contextual understanding suggested that ideologies yielding social change at one point in history may “assume another guise” when they prevent further social reformation. With the constant evolution of social relations, the associated concepts of individuality and liberty should be continuously reconstructed under the approach of “experimentalism” (Dewey 1935, 32). For example, science and technology had transformed productivity and distribution after the preceding wave of liberalism during the Industrial Revolution, which in turn affected interpersonal relationships. In Dewey’s perspective, policy shifts ought to coordinate with the practical reality that emerged from temporal and structural changes of the society, since those underlying conditions influenced the experience of individuality under those policies.

In order to implement fair and effective policies that reflected democratic and liberal ideologies, Dewey called for realistic studies of contemporary conditions to inform subsequent political transitions. The formation of policy ought to be grounded in expert examinations of reality, and respond accordingly in the interests of the personal development, individuality, and liberty of all civilians, not just the “fittest” members of society (Dewey 1935, 33). The pursuit of societal knowledge, according to Dewey, presented an integral endeavor in order to achieve full

freedom of “the human spirit.” Modern liberalism, Dewey claimed, required “unremitting use of every method of intelligence that conditions permit, and to search for all that are possible” (Dewey 1935, 35). Thus, Dewey’s writings provided a new philosophical stance on social responsibility, individual capacities, and equality-based means of production. Policy formation should involve collaborative processes among academics, philosophers, politicians, and constituents, so Dewey hoped his theoretical contributions would prove valuable in subsequent policymaking to achieve freedom for individuals (Dewey 1935, 35).

Dewey’s work in 1939, *The Old Problems are Unsolved*, pushed beyond the interventionist policies of Roosevelt’s New Deal, taking a further left approach to economic reform. Despite Roosevelt’s attempts to reconstruct the structures of employment and compensation, Dewey argued that such interventions remained reactionary to the economic crisis, rather than proactive (Zinn 1966, 410). Hoover’s and Roosevelt’s emphases on efficiency echoed in Dewey’s arguments, but the proposed means of resolving economic devastation diverged significantly. His discussion of productive capacity reflected Hoover’s priority of instigating societal progress and Roosevelt’s aim to construct a just and efficient economic system. However, Dewey asserted a more radical means of achieving optimal productivity, calling for the adjustment of individual capacities and their development to tailor workers to their practical occupations (Dewey 1939, 412).

In Dewey’s view, the education system should focus more specifically on fostering productivity and efficiency in the endeavors of a democratically planned economic and social system. The rearing of an ideal generation of workers would forge an interconnected process, bilaterally grooming the individual and the occupation to fulfill the most valuable role for economic production. Critiquing the present method of economic development, Dewey claimed

that scarcity of materials and a surplus of hard workers mostly benefited the few who dominated the market (Dewey 1939, 412). Rather, economic policies ought to recognize the social responsibilities owed to the unemployed, as well as optimize the productive capacity of the system by eliminating the power relations inherently dictating a market based in scarcity. Innovations, such as community control of industry, should be prioritized to persistently experiment with economic structures, enhancing efficiency as well as advancing values of democracy and liberty.

While an emphasis on economic efficiency pervaded the ideological approaches associated with laissez-faire capitalism, rugged individualism, New Deal liberalism, and leftist restructuring, Dewey ultimately took a more socially-conscious approach to the labor market. With his advocacy for worker and community ownership, Dewey (1939) called for a socioeconomic system that established a means of production based on free humans associating with each other on equal terms (Dewey 1939, 413). Although Dewey and Hoover sought similar ends (namely: societal progress, self-actualization of each individual, and freedom of the human spirit), the two ideologists diverged in their theoretical approaches. The economic state of affairs, in Dewey's view, profoundly affected cultural freedom. Although Hoover intended upon similar outcomes, he argued against government involvement in economic affairs. In 1932, Hoover grounded his presidential campaign platform in non-interventionism, arguing that his approach adequately addressed the economic crisis following the market crash of 1929. Roosevelt ran against Hoover on a platform based on radical reform in order to steer away from the failures of the preexisting economic system. In 1935, John Dewey evaluated rugged individualism, the New Deal, and social liberalism, ultimately calling on the government on both sides of the aisle for a

more active democratic approach that would establish a productive, efficient, and just socioeconomic system.

John Dewey's philosophy manifested in more Socialist politics than Rexford Tugwell's economic plans. Unlike Tugwell, Dewey endorsed Norman Thomas' campaign, supporting the Socialist candidate's call for "revoluting" (Tugwell 1968, 437). Dewey did not express the same concerns harbored by Tugwell and Roosevelt about the practicality of Socialist agendas, instead advocating for a further left approach than the Democratic candidate and his advisors dared broach. John Dewey's role as an influential American philosopher paralleled that of Upton Sinclair. Sinclair had a prolific career as a novelist and "muckraker" in the Theodore Roosevelt era, exemplified by *The Jungle*, Sinclair's powerful exposé of the abominable conditions in the Chicago meatpacking industry (Zinn 1966, 10). As a long-time Socialist representing the furthest left margin of New Deal thought, Sinclair insisted that "the only remedy...is to abolish private ownership of industry and production for profit, and substitute public ownership with production for use" (Sinclair 1933, 11). Sinclair and Dewey both remained steadfast in their relatively radical political philosophies, whereas Tugwell and Roosevelt exhibited heightened consciousness about the practical reality in the political climate. For example, President Roosevelt refused to actively support Sinclair's 1934 gubernatorial campaign in California, because he held concerns about his public image if he endorsed such a radical candidate. Roosevelt may have been a left-leaning humanitarian, but he was "also a politician" who had to keep in mind public perception (Zinn 1966, 11).

Throughout the historic debate about government interventionism in response to the Great Depression, John Dewey provided a theoretical framework to fuel leftwing ideologies. The New Deal policies of the Roosevelt administration and the Brains Trust revived the notion of

reconstruction amidst the global economic crisis. Dewey, a philosopher, allocated his energies primarily to the schools of academic thought that helped set the stage for subsequent policies, prioritizing equality, social responsibility, reciprocity, and productive capacity. Dewey aimed to reimagine the social philosophy of liberalism, insisting that individual achievements depended upon “the aid and support of conditions....including in ‘cultural’ economic, legal, and political institutions” (Dewey 1935, 31). This philosophical endorsement for efficient democratic social institutions asserted that collective development would valuably impact “the growth of individuals who shall be rugged in fact and not merely in abstract theory.”

Legacy of Competing Individualisms

Even during the Great Depression, continued support for the American value of individualism among political elites demonstrated the widespread appeal of individualistic ideologies in American political culture. On the political right, conservative rhetoric endorsed Hoover’s rugged individualism in opposition to government intervention, and this phrase became a widespread trope among advocates of small government. Newspaper articles especially exhibited the prominent political discourse with regard to the ‘rugged’ aspect of this individualistic dogma. In 1934, *The Christian Science Monitor* published Massachusetts Governor Joseph B. Ely’s concerns about the rise of “paternalistic” government practices, advocating: “‘Rugged Individualism’ Best for the U.S.” (*The Christian Science Monitor* 1934). The newspaper article critiqued the domineering governments in Italy, Germany, and Soviet Russia, as well as the centralized features of the American federal government, especially with Franklin D. Roosevelt as Chief Executive.

In opposition to the governmental “domination” seen abroad, Governor Ely asserted that the American people were “made happy, contented and prosperous” by the rugged individualism of the past (*The Christian Science Monitor* 1934). Furthermore, President Roosevelt’s National Industrial Recovery Administration could “lead to paternalistic socialism,” Ely warned. Governor Ely’s speech articulated Herbert Hoover’s sentiment in religious terms, concluding that establishing order in society “requires tenacious faith...let us never legislate to break in any way the American faith in religion” (*The Christian Science Monitor* 1934). The speech by the Massachusetts governor demonstrated the pervasive impact of Hoover’s individualistic rhetoric, as well as the overlapping influences of political and religious institutions in U.S. society.

Al Smith’s shifting ideologies similarly demonstrated the wide-reaching appeal of Hoover’s rugged individualism as a moderating approach to government interventionism. Al Smith and Franklin D. Roosevelt were colleagues, allies, and successive Governors of New York in the 1920s. Whereas Roosevelt came from wealthy, aristocratic beginnings, Smith dropped out of eighth grade and entered the workforce to support his widowed mother (Kosner 2018). As Governor of New York, Smith reformed insane asylums, created the state parks system, and reformed the state bureaucracy (Kolbert 2001). Smith reorganized the state government on a consolidated, businesslike basis, much like Hoover’s administrative approach, even though these two political figures initially endorsed divergent ideologies about government intervention in the 1920s. In 1924, Franklin D. Roosevelt nominated Al Smith to be the Democratic candidate in the presidential election, even coining Smith’s nickname, “Happy Warrior,” in his speech (Kosner 2018). In 1928, when finally Smith received the nomination, he lost the election to Hoover due to Smith’s identification as an “ethnic” Catholic, his New York centrism, and his lack of appeal to southern and western rural voters (Kolbert 2001).

Despite his interventionist policies as the Governor of New York and his defeat by Herbert Hoover in 1928, Al Smith aligned with Hoover's rugged individualistic approach to American economic and social systems in the 1930s. The Democratic party nominated Franklin D. Roosevelt for the 1932 presidential election, though Smith believed that he deserved it again himself, piquing the tension between the two politicians (Kosner 2018). Smith subsequently denounced Roosevelt's candidacy for reelection, and accused Roosevelt's administration of hypocrisy in 1936 (*The Atlanta Constitution* 1936). On a personal level, Al Smith resented Roosevelt based on simple jealousy of his success in politics. According to Rexford Tugwell, Roosevelt's confidant and advisor, Smith also attacked Roosevelt for turning into "a dangerous radical," (Tugwell 1968, 49).

After Smith accumulated wealth as the head of the Empire State Building and of a bank, the 'self-made' figurehead spoke out against both Roosevelt's New Deal agencies and communist Russia, implying a connection between those two systems of government. In 1935, Smith and Hoover met to show their shared support for the Salvation Army; this public-facing, symbolic meeting between the prior ideological rivals served to promote private, rather than public, relief efforts for the Great Depression (*Los Angeles Times* 1935). Smith's reversal in political ideology and stark opposition to Roosevelt's economic reform in the New Deal showed when Smith campaigned for Alf Landon against Roosevelt in the 1936 election (Kosner 2018). Al Smith's policies transitioned from championing social liberalism to a more individualistic approach, forging an alliance with Hoover and the Republican Party. This transformation exemplified the heightened conservative emphasis on American individualism in relation to government nonintervention, combatting the surging social liberalism reified in Roosevelt's New Deal.

While Al Smith transitioned from Roosevelt's relatively leftist camp to Hoover's center-right ideals of selfhood, a series of committed social liberals assented to the individualism celebrated in American politics. Despite apparent opposition to Hoover's articulation of rugged individualism, many figures on the political left reinforced structures of individualism, albeit through more collectivist means. Roosevelt's New Deal proposals may have presented an opposing threat to Hoover's policies in the campaign of 1932, but the two candidates' platforms incorporated more overlapping ideologies than public perception might acknowledge. Specifically, individualism represented a core element of American political culture that grounded both Hoover's and Roosevelt's proposals, even if the means of achieving the goals of American individualism were divisive and controversial between the two politicians.

Roosevelt reimagined American individualism to align with collectivist values, indicating the enduring influence of American traditions of individuality on the New Deal policies. In a radio address to the Young Democratic Clubs of America (1935), Roosevelt called for the "stark necessity to unlearn the too comfortable superstition...that the American spirit of individualism--all along and unhelped by the cooperative efforts of Government--could withstand...every...crisis" (Roosevelt 1935). The President conveyed the myth of laissez-faire free market capitalism, the hegemonic ideal that any individual may climb "the golden ladder" in a land of equal opportunity. Instead, Roosevelt's policies called for the aid, intervention, and cooperation of government authorities in order to adequately structure an economic fabric that allowed for self-actualization. He condemned the "errors of unrestrained individualism," insisting that the government ought to regulate the functions that would yield individual prosperity (Roosevelt 1935). Despite his scathing critique of laissez-faire, anti-collectivist

ideologies, Roosevelt assured a continuance of American individualistic traditions: “I do not believe in abandoning the system of individual enterprise” (Roosevelt 1935).

Roosevelt both contrasted and built upon Hoover’s rugged individualism; the New Deal brought significant economic reform while intending to maintain the core structures of the traditional American system based on efficiency, productivity, and achievement. Hoover aimed to return to a past vision of the American dream, focused on equality of opportunity, self-actualization, and hardworking citizens contributing to an efficient national economic machine. Similar to Hoover, Roosevelt pointed to the “freedom and opportunity that have characterized American development in the past,” signifying a sentimental reminiscence of the traditional American dream (Roosevelt 1935). However, Roosevelt’s proposals contrasted with Hoover’s approach with regard to the means of upholding individual liberty. Rather than scaling back government regulations to allow the individual to associate freely, Roosevelt emphasized the need for the “collaboration of all of us” in order to “maintain...the individual system of our day” (Roosevelt 1935). The most effective system of societal organization called for “[g]overnment cooperation to help make the system of free enterprise work” (Roosevelt 1935).

Under the Roosevelt administration, political figures of ranging ideological positions reified the preeminence of individualism in American governance. The President appointed a progressive Republican, Harold Ickes, to serve as the Secretary of the Interior, a centrist move that indicated Roosevelt’s attempt to appeal to a more moderate popular audience. Ickes rearticulated a version of Hoover’s ideologies by arguing that the nation could achieve an unprecedented level of prosperity if the doctrine of “rugged individualism” could be understood to include cooperation for the common good (Robbins Washington 1934). As a prominent politician in President Roosevelt’s administration, Ickes contributed to New Deal proposals by

calling for regulations in the labor markets: outlawing child labor, sweatshops, and city slums, as well as establishing unemployment security, social security, fair hours, and living wages. Along with making the traditional statement, “We are individualists by long inheritance,” Ickes argued that “We can so cooperate, if we will, and still be a free people” (Robbins Washington 1934). This nuanced approach to the individualistic tenet of “every man for himself” urged a higher standard of living for all members of a capitalistic society, thus merging the collectivist ideals of social liberals with American principles of individualism.

Beyond the moderate appointee, even further left social liberals such as John Dewey embraced traditions of individualism as an integral element of American political culture. The title of Dewey’s seminal work, *Individualism, Old and New*, demonstrated his fundamental belief in the evolution of individualism, with “new” versions of the ideology emerging among advocates of collectivism. This book primarily critiqued “our rugged--or is it ragged?--individualism,” with a focus on the descriptor as a negative approach to the tradition of individualism (Dewey 1930, 45). While his left-wing philosophies fervently condemned Hoover’s non-interventionist policies, Dewey found value in reimagining American individualism to adapt contemporary political culture to a new, collectivist reality. In evaluating “American life,” Dewey acknowledged the benefit of this system that “offers such unparalleled opportunities for each individual to prosper” (Dewey 1930, 45-46). Social liberalism could lead to the “decline of an individualistic philosophy [with] the formation of a collectivistic scheme of interdependence,” transforming popular attitudes along with the structure of governance (Dewey 1930, 64).

In order to maintain the promising aspects of American individualism while restructuring the economic system into a collective form, John Dewey philosophized that new systems of

individuality would prove essential. Before individuality could achieve “[a] stable recovery,” he called for the “elimination of the older economic and political individualism...which will liberate imagination and endeavor” (Dewey 1930, 75-76). Throughout the development of American individualism, the enduring problems of the nation transitioned from “pioneers wrestling the wilderness” to “now [having] problems...from “social conditions” (Dewey 1930, 85). As a result, the social problems clashing with this American ideology ought to have structural solutions. John Dewey expressed his optimism regarding the American system of individualism, which provided the freedom necessary to innovate in the hearts, minds, and creations of the American people. His argument relied on “economic revision” as the essential action for “the sound element in the older individualism--equality of opportunity--[to] be made a reality” (Dewey 1930, 76).

The social liberals’ receptivity to individualistic ideology exhibited its powerful persistence in American political culture. Although Franklin D. Roosevelt and other social liberals in the 1930s expressed overt opposition to Hoover’s strain of rugged individualism, these left-leaning figures ultimately embraced the tradition of American individuality, while adding the requirement to enact the essential social conditions that would allow equitable access to individualism and actualization for Americans. Although their policy approaches diverged significantly, Hoover and Roosevelt still found immense common ground in establishing centrist policies to balance equality of opportunity, free enterprise, and economic stability. John Dewey (1930) proclaimed the ubiquity of American individualism, calling the ideology “inexpugnable and...of its nature to assert itself” (Dewey 1930, 120).

Aided by Roosevelt’s incorporation of a reimagined type of individualism, the New Deal left a significant and lasting impact on American political institutions. In the 1932 presidential election, Hoover lost his incumbency campaign while implementing a strategy of *apologia*,

whereas Roosevelt captivated the American public with his rhetorical influence that ultimately shifted the role of the Chief Executive and the dominant vision of the American political economy. While the two candidates exhibited different campaign strategies, their platforms were not entirely diametrically opposed, because both Hoover and Roosevelt upheld policies and systems that served the goal of allowing American individualism to flourish. Both political figures demonstrated enduring success in their policies grounded in American individualism, given that the popularity of rugged individualism and New Deal liberalism have both persisted until the present-day.

Epilogue

This thesis investigates the rhetorical confrontations of leading American thinkers in response to the Great Depression, and, in closing, I explore the present-day implications of these findings. With regards to the range of ideologies, journalists and critics may tend to emphasize the polar ends of the spectrum, implying a starkly divided political reality. Highlighting interactions between extremist groups and politicians, such as Representative Lauren Boebert's openness to the QAnon conspiracy, depicts severe extremism in American political culture in 2020 (Walters 2020). However, the argument of this thesis applies to contemporary political issues by suggesting that, while deep divisions remain a reality in today's political arena, perhaps there is more support for centrist policies than meets the eye. With polarizing rhetoric fragmenting the nation in 2020, the media has focused on the divisive nature of the Trump administration: rousing far-right supporters of Donald Trump, such as the Proud Boys and QAnon, and stark opposition, including the Women's March and Black Lives Matter. These

active movements embody the publicized political unrest that seems to never find common ground.

In 1932, both Herbert Hoover and Franklin D. Roosevelt called for national action to mitigate the effects of the Great Depression. The American nation was deep in crisis, and the public called for strong leadership to guide the nation out of despair. Hoover's campaign strategy focused primarily on defending his leadership, character, and governmental approach in his preceding presidential term. Franklin pushed for radical and experimental changes to formulate strategic plans that could pull America out of economic downfall. Despite their divergent rhetoric, the two candidates found significant common ground in their actionable policies for the national recovery efforts. Thus, although the ideologies of these two opposing candidates were widely perceived as sharply divided, Hoover and Roosevelt's policies in practice signified distinct but relatively centrist approaches.

This notable contrast between campaign rhetoric and executive initiatives called for a reconceptualization of polarization in American politics. The rhetorical strategies utilized by Hoover and Roosevelt in the campaign of 1932 mirrored in many ways those of the 2020 presidential election, despite important differences. In 1932, the nation faced severe economic crisis, with a global depression causing rampant evictions, hunger, and joblessness. The stagnation of the American economy hindered the progress and efficient growth that all political camps desired for the national public. In 2020, Covid-19 spread across the globe, killing millions and halting the dynamics that kept the economic and social systems afloat. With skyrocketing unemployment, demands for childcare, and stalled production, Americans struggled to make ends meet.

Similar to how the market crash of 1929 contributed to Hoover's 1932 loss, Covid-19 played a key role in Trump's failed incumbency campaign in 2020. Both of these crises called for new leadership to instigate a political change and deliver the services that Hoover and Trump inadequately provided. Hoover committed his 1932 campaign to defending his conceptualization of rugged individualism, which promoted the reestablishment of the prewar economy. Hoover's call for a return to a superior past echoed in the "Make American Great Again" rhetoric under Donald Trump's administration. Paralleling Carcasson's analysis of Hoover's *apologia* strategy that served to defend his failed administration, Trump's campaign slogan for the 2020 election was, "Keep America Great." Similar to how the market crash of 1929 led to Hoover's political downfall, the economic downturn that resulted from the public health emergency in 2020 lowered President Trump's approval rating. Trump supporters had previously praised him for the success of the American economy, but his failure to mitigate the Covid crisis led to Trump leaving office with an all-time low approval percentage (Gallup 2021). Much like Hoover's self-preservative incumbency campaign strategy, Trump's platform in 2020 emphasized the successes of his leadership and administration, rather than prioritizing the need to address the crises that pervaded the nation during his presidency.

Upon gaining office, President Joe Biden has looked to Franklin D. Roosevelt's model of national recovery. Biden's decoration of the Oval Office centers around a colossal portrait of Roosevelt, suggesting Biden's parallel intentions to recover from the public health and economic crises via cooperative strategies. For example, the implementation of a mask mandate among the Federal workforce indicates Biden's centralized efforts to mitigate the Covid crisis, displaying his alignment with Roosevelt's public-facing efforts for crisis management (Biden 2021a). President Biden's Inaugural Address focused on fostering the value of unity throughout the

American nation, attempting to address political fragmentation: “I know the forces that divide us are deep and they are real” (Biden 2021b).

The polarization that pervades American political society today is, in President Biden’s words, “real,” though the center-leaning tendencies in 1932 indicated that ideological schisms may have more overlap than initially perceived. Similar to how Hoover and Roosevelt enacted more moderate policies than their rhetoric might suggest, Donald Trump’s encouragement of right-wing extremism has been far from consistent. For example, according to Representative Beryl Anthony Jr., Trump communicated “a Democratic message” in 1987, indicating his bluer values well into adulthood (Butterfield 1987). Toward the end of his presidency, moreover, in the midst of the pandemic, Trump called for relief spending on a scale as large as that of the Democrats, urging \$2000 checks for most Americans. Trump has an inconsistent history with stark Republicanism, just as Hillary Clinton, Democratic nominee in 2016, was the president of the Young Republicans during her undergraduate years at Wellesley College. As politicians, voters, and adversaries highlight the deep divisions between the red and blue political camps, the overlapping ideologies can easily be overlooked. Vice President Kamala Harris symbolically donned a deep purple coat at President Biden’s Inauguration, representing the new administration’s political ambitions to reach across the aisle. While Biden upholds national planning in his Covid-19 response, his policies remain far more centrist than the proposals of further left Democrats such as Bernie Sanders, who advocates for policies as radical as free higher education.

The New York Times columnist Michelle Goldberg drew notable parallels between Biden and Roosevelt, referring to the conceptualization of “political time” argued by Yale political scientist Stephen Skowronek (Goldberg 2021). In Skowronek’s view, presidential history

incorporates decades-long cycles, each inaugurated by defining leaders. Franklin D. Roosevelt, for instance, initiated an era in which both Republicans and Democrats accepted core elements of the New Deal. Trump and Hoover were deemed “late regime affiliate[s],” characterized as outsiders from the overall regime. Such presidents tend to capitalize on the “weakness of the establishment,” stirring incentive to return to a prior political order (Goldberg 2021). These types of leaders ultimately self-destruct, causing the old regime to crumble along with them. Their reelection campaigns have never yielded success. Trump’s 2020 campaign could, in this view, represent the final throes of Reaganism, which suggests that Biden’s presidency is bringing about a new regime in the American political order.

The Biden campaign did not promise reconstruction in its approach to leadership, but the administration has nevertheless produced a new political schema steering away from the Reagan era. Skowronek characterizes Joe Biden as “a guy who’s made his way up through establishment Democratic politics,” so President Biden is far from an ideological trailblazer (Goldberg 2021). The end of Reaganism can be demarcated by the disintegration of the conventional conceptualization of deficits, inflation, and the appropriate size of government. Biden’s presidency represents “the opportunity to show that the government, by getting the shots in every person’s arm of the vaccines, and building infrastructure, and helping working families, is going to be a force for good,” according to Representative Ro Khanna (Goldberg 2021). In the face of a devastating pandemic, Biden responds to the urgent needs of the nation with policies that mirror Roosevelt’s interventionist restructuring of the role of American government. Biden’s \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan initially included \$1,400 checks to most Americans, an increase in federal unemployment assistance to \$400 a week, and a national \$15 per hour minimum wage. Unravelling the economic approaches of Reaganism, Biden reported: “Every major economist

thinks we should be investing in deficit spending in order to generate economic growth” (Goldberg 2021). Although the President allowed concessions to gain the votes of conservative Democratic Senators, Biden proved able to win extensive popular support, even among Republicans, for a major but not radical reform initiative.

Although Skowronek’s analysis of the Biden era highlights the potential for increased government involvement, the political scientist also emphasizes the value of a moderate president. He asserts, “It’s a mistake to think that moderation is a weakness in the politics of reconstruction” (Goldberg 2021). Skowronek notes that Roosevelt was “viciously” attacked from the left for not taking his supposedly ‘bold’ experimentation far enough in economic reform. In this view, the reconstructive value of the Roosevelt and Biden administrations can align with more moderate values, as long as they construct new political orders that completely reject the failed regimes that precede them. Rather than conceptualizing moderate politics as a middle ground between extremes, Skowronek posited moderation as “the establishment of a new common sense.”

Conclusion

In response to the severe economic devastation of the 1930s, political thinkers across the ideological spectrum argued for a range of remedial approaches. From Socialists to Social Darwinists, businessmen to idealist politicians, American political society saw a series of contradictions, transformations, evolutions, and disagreements. The ultimate question of politics is how to organize the decision-making structures in a society. American democracy has, over the centuries, championed the model of choice that centers the individual, upholding each person’s freedom to determine their own life outcomes. The forefathers of the American nation

built citizens' rights on the foundation of 'unalienable rights' to 'life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness.' However, prominent political thinkers over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries argued for divergent understandings of equality, freedom, and natural rights. The controversial discourses following the market crash of 1929 highlighted these contradictory notions of American ideals.

Herbert Hoover's rugged individualism took hold of the national discourse in the early 20th century, building on similar antecedents in Western political culture, and has remained prominent in American political identity over the decades. In contrast, Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal pushed policies that protected the economic rights of the polity by augmenting government regulatory mechanisms. The clashing ideologies during the Great Depression, much like the polarized political environment of 2020, demonstrated a severe rift in American politics. In the midst of a global health crisis, theoretical controversies have similarly steered governmental responses as well as public sentiment. This thesis analyzes the spectrum of stances that fall between the polarized extremities of center-state socialism and pure laissez-faire. The gradient of ideologies conveys the interacting forces that pull policy platforms to the right or the left. Hoover and Roosevelt were opponents during the 1932 presidential election, and diverged significantly in their policy proposals for addressing the Great Depression, representing clashing ideologies that produced significant argumentation and controversy. However, although these two Chief Executives could be perceived as diametrically opposed in their views of government interventionism, their relative moderation and overlapping policies indicated more common ground between them than first meets the eye.

The debates between the 1932 presidential nominees presented valuable insights into the contentious dialogue between rugged individualists and New Dealers, while the common ground

in their policy platforms signified the equally noteworthy moderation exhibited by Hoover and Roosevelt. One matter the two political figures agreed upon was the persistence and efficacy of individualism in American political culture. The ideologies of both rugged individualism and the New Deal simultaneously saluted and reified individualistic values in American societal structures and governmental strategies. Although Hoover's vocal advocacy for non-interventionism appeared to directly contradict Roosevelt's government mandates and federal programs, the two opponents endorsed more centrist approaches in practice than they suggested in their rhetoric.

In the 2020 election, the American political environment once again exhibited stark divisions, though analyzing the political discourse in the 1930s illuminated the possibility of moderation in the face of heated rhetorical controversy. Michelle Goldberg (2020) characterized Roosevelt as the initiator of a new regime in the American presidency, much like President Biden has the potential to be as he pushes beyond the reconstructive efforts of former President Barack Obama. The changing sentiments in the American political environment of the 1930s are mirrored in the shifting reality of today. While the rhetorical strategies and policies transitioned into an era of visible interventionism, Roosevelt's ideological stance did not consistently oppose Hoover's rugged individualism. The center-leaning tendencies of these national leaders may signify the intentional role of the current U.S. president: upholding unity, as proclaimed by President Joe Biden.

Whereas professors, philosophers, businessmen, and regional political figures have argued in favor of the further left or the further right, the executive administrations of Roosevelt, Hoover, and Biden instead have upheld more center-leaning policies than the media have tended to portray. Throughout Hoover's and Roosevelt's presidential terms, the throughline of

individualistic approaches indicated that the value of individualism indeed characterized the traditional political identity in America. While social liberals demanded equitable social conditions to achieve universally optimal outcomes for the American individual, non-interventionists called upon the 'ruggedness' of each citizen to work toward their own self-actualization. Although different political thinkers across the ideological spectrum presented ranging conceptualizations about the best means to achieve individualistic progress, efficiency, and development, the notable common ground between the policies of Herbert Hoover and Franklin D. Roosevelt suggested that supposedly divisive rhetoric may be reconciled to achieve common goals and values in American politics.

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James Adams published the historical perspective of rugged individualism in *The New York Times* in 1934, accounting for the evolution and manifestations of individualism, both rugged and not, in American society. By 1934, although the American population lived primarily in urban centers, “the legend of the farm and frontier persists, and politically it is a great asset to a man to have come from one or another” (Adams 1934). Adams, a scholar of the era, drew attention to the domination of the American dream in political society, applauding those who managed to rise from rags to riches.

Bazzi, Samuel, Martin Fiszbein, Mesay Gebresilasse. (2020). “Frontier Culture: The Roots and Persistence of ‘Rugged Individualism’ in the United States.” *The National Bureau of Economic Research*, NBER Working Paper No. 23997. Revised August 2020. <https://www.nber.org/papers/w23997>

This academic article analyzes the culture of rugged individualism, highlighting the significant role of the American frontier. The essay sheds light on the roots of ideology, considering the geographic and economic considerations that might influence the political identities of individuals taking on the challenges of frontier culture. The article discusses Hoover’s promotion of individualism and non-interventionism, encapsulated by the term “rugged individualism,” which gained the Republican candidate of 1928 notable support from counties that had higher levels of total frontier experience.

Biden, Joseph R., Jr. (2021a). “Executive Order on Protecting the Federal Workforce and Requiring Mask-Wearing.” January 21, 2021. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/20/executive-order-protecting-the-federal-workforce-and-requiring-mask-wearing/>.

The newly elected U.S. President implemented a mask mandate among the Federal workforce, indicating Joe Biden’s centralized efforts to mitigate the Covid crisis. Along with his portrait of Roosevelt in the Oval Office, this mandate demonstrates his alignment with Roosevelt’s public-facing efforts for crisis management.

Biden, Joseph R., Jr. (2021b). “Inaugural Address by President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.” January 20, 2021. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/01/20/inaugural-address-by-president-joseph-r-biden-jr/>.

President Joe Biden’s Inaugural Address focused on the value of unity throughout the American nation. His emphasis on togetherness signified a notable effort to reach across the aisle, in spite of deep divisions in the body politic.

Butterfield, Fox. (1987). "Trump Urged To Head Gala Of Democrats." *The New York Times*. November 18, 1987.

<https://www.nytimes.com/1987/11/18/us/trump-urged-to-head-gala-of-democrats.html>.

Donald Trump's political past included Democratic values and associations, indicating the aisle-crossing that can take place in American politics. Trump's rightwing rhetoric is far from consistent when compared to his past political messages, indicating that polarization and extremism may not be as stark and enduring as the media portrays them to be.

Carcasson, Martin. (1998). "Herbert Hoover and the Presidential Campaign of 1932: The Failure of Apologia." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 28, no. 2: 349-65.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/27551864>.

Carcasson's study found that Hoover's campaign reflected a shift in the norms of rhetorical presidencies. His failed campaign in 1932 employed strategies of *apologia*, by which Hoover defended his administration, his character, and his view of government. Following his success in the 1928 campaign along with the popularity of his "rugged individualism," these subsequent rhetorical failures shifted expectations of the role of the president in American political identity and morale.

Columbia Law Review (1934). "Price and Production Control under the N. I. R. A." *Columbia Law Review* 34, no. 8: 1518-529. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1115457>.

The National Industrial Recovery Act demonstrated Roosevelt's efforts to intervene in the economic system while maintaining business functions independent from politicians' meddling. The Chief Executive strove to foster the most efficient, productive economic machine by moderating the extremes. Unlike his leftist colleagues, Roosevelt upheld private ownership; however, he intervened by inducing a rise in prices to liquidate debt.

Dewey, John. (1930). "Individualism, Old and New." In *The Later Works of John Dewey, 1925-1953*. Vol. 5: 42-125.

John Dewey presented a seminal critical discussion of rugged individualism in American political society, especially considering the "money culture" across the nation. U.S. society shaped an individualistic outlook to policy, sociality, and economics that molded both interpersonal relationships and the sense of self in the American psyche. Dewey formulated philosophies to guide systemic change, commenting on the potential for reform in American political culture.

Dewey, John. (1935). "The Future of Liberalism." In Howard Zinn (Ed.) *New Deal Thought*. (1966). Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill.

In this essay, John Dewey redefined liberalism in conversation with Ernest Hocking to advocate for a more 'equalitarian' society. Rather than supporting traditional conceptions of American individualism, Dewey called Hoover's rugged individualism 'pseudo-liberalism,' and instead demanded social institutions that fostered valuable societal growth. Contrasting the notion that liberty was the antithesis of government involvement, Dewey insisted that economic, legal, and political institutions ought to contribute to the collective attainment of a free society.

- Dewey, John. (1939). "Old Problems are Unsolved." In Howard Zinn (Ed.) *New Deal Thought*. (1966). Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill.
American philosopher John Dewey presented a scathing critique of the federal government's response to the Great Depression. From Hoover's rugged individualism to Roosevelt's New Deal, executive approaches to the economic crisis ultimately failed to meet social responsibility, productive capacity, and equal freedoms. Dewey called for a socioeconomic system grounded in democratic social equality to organize the means of production.
- Gallup. (2021). "Presidential Approval Ratings -- Donald Trump." March 1, 2021. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/203198/presidential-approval-ratings-donald-trump.aspx>.
Former President Donald Trump left office in 2021 with an all-time low approval rating of thirty-four percent. After gaining admiration due to his economic policies, the former Executive failed to adequately address the needs of the American public amidst the Covid-19 crisis. In the face of a public health catastrophe and subsequent economic devastation, the Trump administration lost significant support.
- Goldberg, Michelle. (2021). "The First Post-Reagan Presidency," *Opinion - The New York Times*. January 28, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/28/opinion/biden-president-progressive.html>
The New York Times Opinion columnist Michelle Goldberg drew parallels between Biden and Roosevelt regarding their initiation of new regimes in the American presidency, aiming to unite the parties and seek new solutions in times of crisis. Franklin D. Roosevelt initiated an era in which both Republicans and Democrats accepted core elements of the New Deal. Goldberg similarly pointed to parallels between Trump and Hoover as outsiders from the overall regime who roused incentive to return to a prior political order.
- Hobhouse, L.T. (1911). *Liberalism*. London: Oxford University Press. The Project Gutenberg. https://www.gutenberg.org/files/28278/28278-h/28278-h.htm#CHAPTER_II.
British theorist Hobhouse wrote this seminal critique of laissez-faire economics. His argument, favoring social liberalism and welfare, called for state regulation of economic and social policies. Hobhouse's written contributions provided key insight in the political discourse taking place on the global stage leading up to Hoover's presidency and the subsequent clash with Roosevelt's New Deal policies.
- Hoover, Herbert. (1922). *American Individualism*. New York: Doubleday, Page & Company.
Hoover's book illuminated his views on American individualism before his ideological shift to 'ruggedness' at the end of the decade. These writings provided the background of Hoover's individualism in the early 1920s, reflected in his 'engineering ideal' and promotion of self-reliance.
- Hoover, Herbert. (1928). "'Rugged Individualism' Campaign Speech." *Digital History 1334* (2019). http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=1334.
The phrase "rugged individualism" echoed in American political identity after Herbert Hoover's 1928 campaign speech. Investigating the term's preeminence in American

political culture called into question the key figures, opposing forces, and transformative factors that affected the receptibility to the ideology.

Hoover, Herbert. (1932). "Herbert Hoover: Against the Proposed New Deal." *The State Papers and Other Public Writings of Herbert Hoover*, Vol. 2, William S. Myers, ed. (1934): 408-413.

In 1932, President Hoover ran for reelection and lost to Franklin D. Roosevelt. Hoover's campaign strategy incorporated the denunciation of Roosevelt's New Deal policies, and advocated for his approach that championed individual liberty and government nonintervention. President Hoover's articulation of rugged individualism reflected his staunch support for individualistic policy, and this clear opposition to social welfare programs yielded tension between the politicians, ideologies, and approaches to government.

Horwitz, Steven. "Hoover's Economic Policies." *The Library of Economics and Liberty*." <https://www.econlib.org/library/Enc/HooversEconomicPolicies.html>.

Hoover's business background influenced his subsequent approach to politics, striving to optimize the efficiency of the American economy. Rather than taking a pure laissez-faire approach, Hoover convened interactions between businessmen and government officials to foster a collaborative environment between the public and private sectors. This divergence from free market capitalism revealed Hoover's nuanced incorporation of government interventionism in order to advocate for rugged individualism in the American economy.

Jordan, John M. (1989). "Technic and ideology: The engineering ideal and American political culture 1892-1934." *Deep Blue*. <https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/162207>. In this dissertation, PhD Candidate Jordan analyzed Hoover's attempts to implement the "engineering ideal" in his administrative organization of the state. The engineer's mindset was characterized as a "conquest" of the natural world, reflected by Hoover's strategic pursuit of legitimacy in government with social science professionalization. As he recruited credible administrators, Hoover's pragmatic approach to government reified his prioritization of organizational efficiency and improvement.

Kolbert, Elizabeth. (2001). "Unhappy Warrior." *The New Yorker*, February 26, 2001.

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2001/03/05/unhappy-warrior>.

Kolbert's article in *The New Yorker* depicted Al Smith's background throughout his upbringing and political ventures. Although he advocated for more government regulations as Governor of New York, he denounced Roosevelt's New Deal policies as impractical. The article examined the personal sentiments that could have swayed Smith's loyalties away from his colleague, Roosevelt.

Kosner, Edward. (2018). "Frank and Al' Review: A Friendship Forged in Albany; the Collaboration and Rivalry between Franklin Roosevelt and Al Smith Shaped the Democratic Party and Helped Pave the Way for the New Deal. Edward Kosner Reviews 'Frank and Al' by Terry Golway." *Wall Street Journal (Online)*, September 25, 2018.

<https://proxy.library.upenn.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.proxy.library.upenn.edu/docview/2111872795?accountid=14707>.

Kosner analyzed the changing relationship between Al Smith and Franklin D. Roosevelt, from allied Democratic politicians in New York to adversarial opponents about the economic policies posited in Roosevelt's New Deal. Roosevelt's wealthy family contrasted Smith's humble origins, though both championed social liberal reforms in the State of New York. On the national stage, the two Democrats became competitors when Smith envied the nomination that Roosevelt received. Smith subsequently denounced the Roosevelt administration, and aligned more with conservative politicians, such as Herbert Hoover and Alf Landon.

Krebs, Albin. (1979). "Rexford Tugwell, Roosevelt Aide, Dies." *The New York Times*, July 24, 1979.

<https://www.nytimes.com/1979/07/24/archives/rexford-tugwell-roosevelt-aide-dies-recruited-for-inner-circle-in.html>

This *Times* special detailed the career of Rexford Tugwell, especially considering his interactions with Franklin D. Roosevelt and the rest of the Brains Trust in the development of New Deal policies. Tugwell's liberal approach implicated left-wing, collectivist aspects of economic restructuring. However, he did not go as far as some of the radical Socialists and Communists to call for an entirely new resource distribution system.

Krugman, Paul. (2011). "The Mellon Doctrine." *The New York Times*, April 1, 2011.

<https://www.economics.utoronto.ca/gindart/2011-04-01%20-%20The%20Mellon%20Doctrine.pdf>.

Andrew Mellon provided a pro-business, protectionist perspective to foster the most productive American economy. As a prominent colleague throughout the 1920s, Mellon wielded influence over Hoover's considerations of how to address the Great Depression. However, Hoover's consistent departure from profit-driven, laissez-faire economics revealed the limits to Mellon's impact as Hoover pursued his rugged individualistic ideology.

Kushner, Isaac. (1922). "A Socialist replies to Mr. Hoover's contentions with regard to Individualism." *The Sun (1837-1994)*, December 15, 1922.

<https://proxy.library.upenn.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.proxy.library.upenn.edu/docview/544434600?accountid=14707>

This Socialist response to Hoover's individualistic ideology shed light on the rising social liberalism that flooded the political discourse in the 1920s. The pushback in this article communicated that Hoover's promotion of bettering oneself cannot apply to all workers. The Socialist voice incorporated elements of Marxism when arguing that equality of opportunity cannot necessarily apply to everyone under a system of private ownership of the means of production and distribution.

Lohof, Bruce A. (1970). "Herbert Hoover, Spokesman of Humane Efficiency: The Mississippi Flood of 1927." *American Quarterly* 22, No. 3: 690-700. doi:10.2307/2711620.

This scholarly article described Hoover's accomplishments in relief efforts: organizing a hierarchy for the operation, delegating local leadership, and fostering the spirit of community. Hoover gained recognition as a champion of grassroots individualism. The doctrine of humane efficiency pervaded his administrative actions, as Hoover's organizational strategies allowed for pragmatic utilization of the bureaucracy. This article revealed the other face of Hoover's political ideology, and reimagined his approach to American politics as more community-oriented. His emphasis on voluntarism remained relatively constant, but his ideology of individualism grew in intensity throughout the 1920s.

Los Angeles Times. (1922). "Individualism Hoover's Creed: American Philosophy of Government Upheld; Backwash of World War Confirms it: Secretary Sets Out Views in Recent Book." *Los Angeles Times (1886-1922)*, December 10, 1922: III14
<https://proxy.library.upenn.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.proxy.library.upenn.edu/docview/161252627?accountid=14707>

In the *Los Angeles Times*, a section entitled "Altruism Insufficient" voiced the faults of socialist systems. Drawing upon arguments about human motivation, stimulation of activity, economic development, and social mobility, the article promoted Hoover's creed of individualism.

Los Angeles Times. (1935). "Former foes unite to aid Salvation Army: Hoover meets Al Smith and poses for picture. Hoover Poses with Al Smith." *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995)*, April 9, 1935.
<https://proxy.library.upenn.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.proxy.library.upenn.edu/docview/163389774?accountid=14707>.

In 1935, Herbert Hoover and Al Smith met to collaboratively support the Salvation Army. This joint action reified Hoover's promotion of voluntarism, as opposed to the government programs initiated in Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal policies. The photo-opportunity of these political figureheads symbolized a potential alliance, or simply an ideological alignment, as they both starkly opposed Roosevelt.

Rippa, S. Alexander. (1962). "Retrenchment in a Period of Defensive Opposition to the New Deal: The Business Community and the Public Schools, 1932-1934." *History of Education Quarterly* 2, No. 2: 76-82.
https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/367103.pdf?casa_token=U_8ZbSnUqv8AAAAA:GX-t117Si85Np6cp4C7EAEMCKL4EswWJV-5uWld7riMFTcVt3n4JB9pGy_umuJ1-NOIplVm6TXAT6MBSHcqSwFt6WISHThfLBBYMv-mpCh_KJXlvKi4

The private sector expressed strong opposition to government expenditure during Hoover's presidency. Business leaders enacted a campaign for re-entrenchment, and viewed public schools as another governmental function that used up tax dollars. The business perspective brought laissez-faire opposition to Hoover's rugged individualism, demonstrating the distinction between Hoover's nuanced political ideology and the starkly non-interventionist approach of pro-business conservatives.

Robbins Washington, L.H. (1934). "Ickes Defines the Task Ahead: The Nation Can

Attain ‘A Prosperity Far Better Than Any of the Past,’ He Says, But Only If ‘Rugged Individualism’ Is Willing to Cooperate Intelligently For The Common Good.” *The New York Times (1923-Current File)*, April 1, 1934.

<https://proxy.library.upenn.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.proxy.library.upenn.edu/docview/101034914?accountid=14707>

This historical newspaper article illuminated the nuanced response to rugged individualistic rhetoric, claiming that rugged individualism must cooperate for the common good. Cooperation would yield benefit in a way that the individual’s efforts could not. Ickes argued in favor of a capitalistic system that regulated certain aspects of industry to provide a higher standard of living, such as outlawing child labor and sweatshops, and providing fair hours.

Roosevelt, Franklin D. (1932a). “Bold, Persistent Experimentation.” In Howard Zinn (Ed.) *New Deal Thought*. (1966). Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill.

On May 22, 1932, Roosevelt made this famous speech to Oglethorpe University, which most closely implied that a national plan was essential to make the economy function. Using the arguments of efficiency and justice, Roosevelt reimagined the role of the nation’s leader, and called for drastic change in the organization American political society. The profound rhetoric echoed in his platform, but this speech presented the most centralized plans in Roosevelt’s policy proposals.

Roosevelt, Franklin D. (1932b). “Every Man has a Right to Life.” In Howard Zinn (Ed.) *New Deal Thought*. (1966). Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill.

On September 23, 1932, Roosevelt delivered this speech to the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco, communicating his opposition to Hoover’s argument that the traditional American economic structure worked well. Roosevelt criticized the practicality of ‘equality of opportunity,’ and demanded more redistributive efforts to ensure the rights of civilians living under the economic constitutional order. The speech endorsed collectivism, but also upheld the individualism and non-interventionism rooted in traditional American political thought.

Roosevelt, Franklin D. (1932c). “Franklin D. Roosevelt Speeches: Oglethorpe University Address.” *Pepperdine School of Public Policy* (2020), May 22, 1932.

<https://publicpolicy.pepperdine.edu/academics/research/faculty-research/new-deal/roosevelt-speeches/fr052232.htm>.

In Roosevelt’s speech on May 22, 1932, he promised to reform the “faults in our economic system” with his New Deal policies. The social liberalism rising across the globe reflected in this speech, anticipating government intervention as a remedy for the Great Depression. Roosevelt’s political approach signified the shifting rhetoric and policy of the U.S. economic system, posing a threat to conservative advocates of privatization, such as Herbert Hoover.

Roosevelt, Franklin D. (1935). “A Radio Address to the Young Democratic Clubs of America.” *Teaching American History*, July 24, 1935.

<https://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/a-radio-address-to-the-young-democratic-clubs-of-america/>.

The President's address to the Young Democratic Clubs of America communicated Roosevelt's nuanced endorsement of individualism within the framework of social liberalism. He rejected the previous conceptualization of the American dream, which he described as "the golden ladder" with each individual climbing for himself. Rather, Roosevelt promoted a collaborative approach to yield freedom and opportunity for all, instead of pushing others down in the process.

Sinclair, Upton. (1933). "Production for Use." In Howard Zinn (Ed.) *New Deal Thought*. (1966). Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill.

Upton Sinclair was a long-time Socialist who represented the further left perspective on the spectrum of New Deal Thought. He wrote this letter during the California gubernatorial campaign, in which Roosevelt did not take action to support Sinclair's campaign. Roosevelt's passivity demonstrated the political restraints that withheld the president from supporting such a radical approach to a planned economy. In the letter, Sinclair called for the abolishment of private ownership of industry and production in order to foster a more "prosperous and happy communal life" in the U.S.

Sita, A.K. (1962). "Herbert Hoover and American Individualism." *International Studies*. October 1, 1962.

https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/002088176200400403?casa_token=mJ6R90BHTCUAAAAA:ph8owyBQkMtPEmXhwoJH3t653Cf4c_uNhbBDqZDq1P9TTs-GEKID7IVa9oqAQFbfDXoIeVltdk9u

Sita's journal article analyzed the origins of individualism, beginning with Jeffersonian, agricultural interests, and building with the transcendentalist movement, Sumner's promotion of the 'survival of the fittest,' laissez-faire economics, and rugged individualism. Hoover emphasized the American system that prioritized self-interest and rewarded hard work with a higher standard of living. According to Hoover, this system presented the optimal relationship between state and citizen, unlike collectivist societies in which the government reigned over individuals who could not attain equality of opportunity.

Spencer, Herbert. (1851). *Social Statics*, Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1970.

Herbert Spencer argued in favor of liberal utilitarianism, with individual liberty central to the justice and organization of society. This notion of equal freedom persisted in conservative tropes across the Atlantic. 'Survival of the fittest' as an ideology played a role in the development of right-wing economic views in the U.S. in the 1930s, especially in response to growing efforts to champion government interventionism.

Stoller, Matt. (2019). *The Rise and Fall of Andrew Mellon*, October 14, 2019.

<https://prospect.org/culture/books/the-rise-and-fall-of-andrew-mellon/>.

Andrew Mellon's financial and political careers informed his approach to American economic functions. As a financier with vested interest in the political rulings on economics, Mellon advocated for American protectionism by pushing President Harding to raise tariffs and reduce taxation. Mellon connected conservative robber baron politics to the federal government structures to empower monopolies. An influential colleague of

Hoover in the 1920s, Mellon's pro-business perspective mingled with Hoover's emphasis on efficiency and progress.

Sumner, William Graham. (1914). "The Challenge of Facts." In Albert Galloway Keller (Ed.) *The Challenge of Facts and Other Essays*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

William Graham Sumner wrote his nuanced advocacy of laissez-faire free market capitalism in this set of essays. A noteworthy contribution from Sumner's work was the complication of legislative regulation of industries, such as the railroad. Rather than remaining firm about opposing any government involvement in private works projects, Sumner acknowledged the value in minor political decision making in the industrial sector in small and calculated manners.

Sumner, William Graham. (1974). *What Social Classes Owe to Each Other*. Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, Ltd.

https://cdn.mises.org/What%20Social%20Classes%20Owe%20Each%20Other_2.pdf

This seminal essay exhibited Sumner's bold argument in favor of a free market, in stark opposition to social welfare systems. He advocated against any favors or social safety nets that "burden" those who worked to achieve their wealth, only to benefit the social classes that did "nothing" to gain the gifted capital. Sumner's influential account provided a strong, rightwing voice from academia, building a foundation in the scholarship that would provide support for notions like Hoover's rugged individualism many years later.

The Atlanta Constitution. (1936). "Al Smith Charges F.D.R. Suppressed Liberties of U.S.: Liberty Leaguers Hear Demand that Democratic Party 'Re-Establish Principles' of Party as Set Forth in Platform Not a Candidate, He Tells Country Unbalanced Budget, Pyramiding Deficits Given as Chief Concerns in Washington Address." *The Atlanta Constitution (1881-1945)*, January 26, 1936.

<https://proxy.library.upenn.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.proxy.library.upenn.edu/docview/502436111?accountid=14707>

In 1936, Al Smith vocalized his opposition to Roosevelt's policies. Smith pointed to the hypocrisy of the Roosevelt Administration, and had aimed to prevent the Roosevelt nomination at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Instead, Al Smith recommended that legislators "stop compromising" as he put forth more individualistic policies.

The Christian Science Monitor. (1934). "Ely Fears Rise of Paternalism in Federal Aid: 'Rugged Individualism' Best For U.S., He Tells Governors Address Applauded Conference Reports Show 4,300,000 Families In Nation on Relief Debate on Recovery Measures Warns Against Excessive Credit 'Rugged Individualism' Is Best For U.S., He Tells Governors. Special to *The Christian Science Monitor (1908-Current File)*, Jul 28, 1934.

<https://proxy.library.upenn.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.proxy.library.upenn.edu/docview/513642636?accountid=14707>

The governor of Massachusetts supported the rugged individualistic approach, claiming this governmental strategy made people "happy, contented and prosperous." The article reflected the positive response to Hoover's rugged individualism among this politician's

audience, and highlighted the backlash against “paternalistic” governments elsewhere. Ely’s support for Hoover’s ideology from the political right contributed to the discourses among politicians and thinkers about competing American individualisms.

The Youth’s Companion. (1923). “American Individualism.” *The Youth’s Companion* (1827-1929), 97, 68, February 1, 1923.
<https://proxy.library.upenn.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.proxy.library.upenn.edu/docview/127197251?accountid=14707>

The Youth’s Companion expressed opposition to Hoover’s rhetoric of rugged individualism. The socialistic measures reflect the desire to help the helpless. The article claimed that Hoover himself would admit that a system of pure individualism cannot possibly guide public policy.

Tugwell, Rexford G. (1932). “Planning Must Replace Laissez Faire.” In Howard Zinn (Ed.) *New Deal Thought*. (1966). Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill.

In this article, Tugwell asserted his most vigorous argument in favor of national economic planning. He called for fundamental changes of attitude and an abandonment of laissez-faire almost entirely. This radical demand for centralization and regulation of economic activity demonstrated the political ideologies to the left of the New Deal. Tugwell was a leftwing economist who influenced Roosevelt, and advocated for even more national planning than the president implemented.

Tugwell, Rexford G. (1968). *The Brains Trust*. New York: The Viking Press.

In Tugwell’s book, this advisor to Franklin D. Roosevelt conveyed a detailed account of the conversations and debates leading up to the 1932 presidential election. This up-close analysis shed light on the interchange of ideas, especially considering the forces on the left and the right that influenced the development of New Deal policies. Although Tugwell’s far-left suggestions were often excluded from final proposals, this liberal economist contributed significantly to the movement toward government programs under Roosevelt’s administration.

Walters, Joanna. (2020). “Who is Lauren Boebert, the QAnon sympathizer who won a Republican primary?” *The Guardian*, July 1, 2020.

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jul/01/who-is-lauren-boebert-republican-primary-qanon-trump>.

The Guardian article highlights the extremism existing in contemporary American politics. Lauren Boebert, who won the Republican primary for Colorado’s third congressional district, claims that she “believes in personal freedom, citizen rights, and upholding the constitution of the United States” but also proclaimed that she “hope[s] that [the QAnon conspiracy theory] is real.” Her far-right rhetoric exemplifies the extremism that pervades American politics today.

Weinstein, David. (2019). “Herbert Spencer.” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Stanford University, August 27, 2019. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/spencer/>.

David Weinstein published this in-depth account of Herbert Spencer and his contributions to conservative political thought in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The publication

presented Spencer's background, detailed explanations of key works, and a contextualization of Spencer's contributions to intellectual history. These characterizations and analyses helped guide this comprehensive investigation of conservative tropes in American thought, especially considering the 'biological' justification for laissez-faire capitalism.

Zinn, Howard. (1966). *New Deal Thought*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill.

Zinn's anthology presented the key speeches of political theorists, politicians, historians, and journalists that engaged with the New Deal. The rhetoric of Franklin D. Roosevelt provided insight into his approach to resolve the problems in the American economy amidst the Great Depression. Reactions and criticisms from influential voices, such as John Dewey and Walter Lippmann, presented the interactions between rugged individualism and social liberalism, and provided alternative perspectives of economic organization based on efficiency and justice.