

# **Franklin D. Roosevelt's Brain Trust**



## **Background Guide**

**Stanford Model United Nations Conference 2020**

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## **Letter from the Chair:**

Dear Delegates,

Hello! My name is Matthew Heafey and I am excited to serve as your chair for SMUNC 2020 in Franklin D. Roosevelt's Brain Trust. I'm currently a sophomore, studying Political Science and Math, from the Bay Area, just about half an hour north of Stanford's campus. I've participated in Model UN for about six years at this point, including attending SMUNC four times, and chairing SMUNC once before. Outside of Model UN, I love singing with my a cappella group, Stanford Talisman, and running, reading, and swimming. I'm looking forward to an educational and exciting committee, taking full advantage of the benefits that our virtual conference will provide us with and making the most of this conference. I hope this committee will provide you with the ability to explore such an important period of American and World history, one with strong connections to our modern world.

Our committee will take place immediately following the inauguration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt to the presidency of the United States of America, in the height of the Great Depression. Agricultural and economic crises have ravaged the United States, and have fed political unrest, with reformers and revolutionaries of various political alignments pushing for the reconstruction of the country along their vision. International affairs also heat up, as the Depression impacts the whole world. You will be tasked with taking on the roles of influential government and political players of this period, working together to construct a plan to escape the Depression and build a new vision for the future, informing your plans for the future. A variety of different viewpoints will be presented in this committee, and both collaboration and strategic thinking will be required to steer the United States through this tumultuous time.

I am aware of and understand just how unique a virtual conference may be for you, and I understand that there may be some concern about how well this committee may go. That being said, all of us staffing this conference have worked hard to plan a conference that takes advantage of our online format, and I am so excited about the possibility it presents for a unique and amazing committee.

Please send your position papers and any questions or concerns you may have to me at my email: [mheafey@stanford.edu](mailto:mheafey@stanford.edu). My goal is to make this committee the best it can be, and to that end, please don't hesitate to contact me if you need anything. Looking forward to meeting you all!

Best regards,

Matthew Heafey

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## **Background and History**

### International Affairs prior to the Great Depression

Following the First World War, the United States and much of western Europe experienced a period of prosperity known as the Roaring Twenties. Technological innovations and the end of the economy-depressing World War I had allowed for regrowth, though economic troubles remained in large parts of the world, World War I left a lasting scar, with its millions dead, and political instability remained common, fed in part by the ascendant Soviet state in what had been the Russian Empire. Europe and specifically Germany had struggled to rebuild, especially with the dissolution of once-powerful and once-expansive empires like Austria-Hungary or the Ottomans, but investment in Europe allowed for a certain level of recovery. While the future had briefly looked bright, the failures of the League of Nations to unite the globe, the rise of Fascism across Europe, Japanese imperialist ambitions in Asia, and ultimately the Great Depression itself darkened any hope that people had held.

Born in the aftermath of the uniquely devastating First World War, a conflict in which 10 million soldiers died, not including the civilian casualties, the League of Nations was founded to “promote international co-operation and to achieve international peace and security,” through a variety of means. The organization was given a number of tasks, including overseeing global standardization, ending border disputes, supporting decolonization efforts, encouraging disarmament, and more generally facilitating arbitration of disputes, operating with the express consent and backing of the world’s powers in a way never seen before.<sup>1</sup> Despite lofty ambitions,

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<sup>1</sup> The League of Nations. “The Covenant of the League of Nations.”

however, the League of Nations quickly ran into trouble enforcing its expansive mandate, in part due to its founding vision in the first place. While support for some sort of international organization had existed prior to World War I, and had become more popular during the war, there were strong disagreements about what would be expected of member states, and what power this body would have to enforce decisions. There were challenges, for instance, from European delegates on the requirement to respect and defend the territorial integrity of all member states. Additionally, while in the development of the covenant, the French delegation had encouraged the formation of bodies within the League to enforce its decisions, an American and British-led opposition prevented its passage. The League, furthermore, had no ability to enforce its decisions, and in the case of disagreements in adjudication, countries were only required to delay their declaration of war, in the hope that delay would allow for anger to cool off and the states would attempt further diplomacy. The League was also weakened by not including a declaration of racial equality alongside its declaration of religious equality, over the objections of Japanese delegates.<sup>2</sup>

The establishment of the League of Nations on the 28th of April, 1919 brought many of these problems to forefront. German delegates brought objections against the organization immediately, denouncing their lack of involvement in its creation, as well as their inability to join it. Chinese delegates also challenged Japan, as the country consolidated its concessions from Germany within China, against the will of the Chinese government. Most disastrous, however, was the United States' never ratifying the covenant, despite Woodrow Wilson having been an

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<sup>2</sup> Henig, *The League of Nations*.

architect of the League, an organization based on Wilson's own 14 Points.<sup>3</sup> The Republican Party, holding the Senate from March of 1919 until March of 1933, resisted any effort to join the League, citing concerns about entangling alliances and weakening of the Monroe Doctrine, especially after President Wilson, its most ardent supporter in the United States, suffered a debilitating stroke while attempting to promote League membership among the American people.<sup>4</sup> This concerned the other great powers, particularly the United Kingdom. The United States was the richest of the great power, and without its money propping up the League, it was expected to struggle economically. Also, a Great Power standing outside of the agreement threatened the entire enterprise, with other powers fearing that they'd be bogged down in respecting League conventions that the US could freely ignore if they were in conflict. The League struggled to deal with the conflicts tossed its way and was overlooked on disputes and agreements in its purview. The Washington Conference, for instance, reorganized Pacific politics, limiting fleet sizes, preventing the construction of new forts, and guaranteeing the territorial integrity of China. It was negotiated completely outside of the League. When the League was presented with a dilemma, including tensions from the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, and Russian empires, it faltered. While early successes negotiating a deal over the Åland Islands between Sweden and Finland in 1920 and demarcating a border in Upper Silesia between Germany and Poland in 1921 showed promise, the League struggled with larger problems, not helped by a continual power struggle between France and the United Kingdom, especially as Germany remained outside of the League and the Soviet Union

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<sup>3</sup> Mazzei, "Fourteen Points."

<sup>4</sup> Marburg, *League of Nations*.

denounced it as imperialist, actively interfering in its attempts at peace through the Soviet invasion of Armenia in 1920.<sup>5</sup>

The situation became significantly more drastic, however, and the failings of the League became more apparent a decade later, when in 1931, an explosion occurred at Mukden, in Manchuria, China, on a Japanese-operated railroad. While most evidence pointed towards the bomb having been planted by members of the Japanese Kwantung Army, the blast was used to trigger conflict with the Chinese forces in Manchuria and a full-scale invasion of the region.<sup>6</sup> China immediately approached the League of Nations and the United States for their intervention, both of whom trusted the Japanese line of no territorial ambitions in Manchuria, motivated in part by a racist lack of interest in a distant region, inhabited by people whom the Western Powers saw as inferior savages. While the League of Nations desired a quick and peaceful resolution of the conflict, internal affairs of Japan had pushed it towards increasing aggression. In a series of coup attempts throughout 1931 and 1932, reactionary and nationalist elements of the Japanese military, directed by an organization known as the Cherry Blossom Society, alongside civilian ultranationalists attempted to topple a civilian government which they saw as weak, capitulating to the Western Powers. In response, Japan would adopt a militaristic, expansionist policy, doubling down on their imperialist claims across East Asia.<sup>7</sup> Conflicts in Shanghai in February 1932 were barely controlled by the League, and even as they sent a commission under Lord Lytton to Manchuria and Japan to investigate the occurrence, Manchuria declared itself a new state: Manchukuo, legally under the control of Puyi, the final Qing Emperor of China, but in practice under

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<sup>5</sup> Henig, *The League of Nations*.

<sup>6</sup> Smith, *The Manchurian crisis, 1931-1932: a tragedy in international relations*.

<sup>7</sup> Large, "Nationalist Extremism in Early Showa Japan: Inoue Nissho and the 'Blood-Pledge Corps Incident'.."

Japanese direction. Despite attempts to broker a peace between the two sides, Japanese insistence that the independence of Manchukuo was non-negotiable, and a League proposal for peace that did not recognize it, directly led to the departure of Japan from the organization, weakening an already struggling system.<sup>8</sup>

Also altering the global situation was the Soviet Union, a new state growing out of what had been the Russian Empire. Shattering under the combined weight of World War I and the Russian Civil War, the ultimately victorious Bolshevik faction, led by Vladimir Lenin, began a campaign of defeating White Army holdouts and other dissidents and rebels, invading weak states which surrounded the new Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. Having left World War I early, in March of 1918, the Soviets were free to begin correcting their internal matters, calling for global revolution and a dramatic reorganization of society. In 1922, the RSFSR was combined with the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, and the Transcaucasian Soviet Socialist Republic into a new Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, in which ethnic republics within Russia and without would be given certain varying levels of autonomy, despite ultimate direction coming from Moscow. In 1919, the Soviets established the Comintern, an organization dedicated to communist global victory, attacking the West, and the League of Nations, with propaganda. The Comintern also backed the nascent Chinese Communist Party, providing it with assistance and guidance as it began its growth.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Henig, *The League of Nations*.

<sup>9</sup> Carley, "Behind Stalin's Moustache: Pragmatism in Early Soviet Foreign Policy, 1917-41."

When Lenin died in 1924, Joseph Stalin, a high-ranking Soviet official, took the leadership of the Soviet Union. Propagating a doctrine of “Socialism in One Country,” Stalin departed from previous attempts to achieve global revolution towards a policy of internal strengthening, while maintaining institutions like the Comintern as instruments of foreign influence. Internally, the Soviets had to deal with disastrous failed harvests in 1921, 1924, and beyond, drawing attention to the *Kulaks*, rich peasants who speculated on the price of grain.<sup>10</sup> These *Kulaks* frequently had their grain confiscated, and were forced onto collective farms, though beginning in 1930, they were subject to a campaign of “class liquidation,” sent to work camps across the Soviet Union in which thousands died. Later, extreme famine in grain-producing regions of the USSR and an unwillingness to accept aid during 1932 and 1933 led to the Holodomor in Ukraine, where more than three million Ukrainians died, alongside millions more in other parts of the USSR, including 1.5 million Kazakhs, nearly 42% of the entire Kazakh people.<sup>11</sup> During the 20s, the Soviets engaged in massive industrial projects as well, quickly developing what had largely been an agrarian empire into an industrialized force. The first Five-year Plan, beginning in 1928, quickly reorganized the economy of the USSR and massively expanded heavy industry, succeeding at making the Soviet Union a dominant industrial power.

Despite an unstable world order, the 1920s were largely prosperous for Western Europe and America, as industry got back on track with millions of soldiers returning from war. Uncertainty

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<sup>10</sup> Carr, *Socialism in one country, 1924-1926*.

<sup>11</sup> Mohn, “Holodomor.”

remained common, but prosperity brought some amount of hope to a world which had been devastated by one of the largest wars in history.<sup>12</sup>

### Beginning of the Great Depression

In 1929, the prosperous 1920s came to a sudden end with a sudden economic crash, later called Black Thursday, the result of a number of factors, including massive growth in the stock market fueled by borrowed cash, and a low agricultural price as harvests continued to be massive and other countries began to produce more grains. As growth began to slow and investors cooled, however, banks found themselves low on cash as an increasing number of people sought to withdraw their money, feeding into a vicious cycle as investors sought to sell to minimize losses. Starting with a decline in September, stock prices began to collapse on October 18, 1929, with particularly dramatic collapses on October 24, “Black Thursday,” where a record 12,894,650 shares were traded, followed by further collapses on October 28, “Black Monday,” and October 29, “Black Tuesday,” where 16,410,030 stocks were traded, and the markets plunged, not to properly recover until the end of the Great Depression.<sup>13</sup>

Through the 1920s, the stock market had steadily risen, with the Dow Jones Industrial Index hitting an unprecedented 381 in September of 1931, building on the immense prosperity of the 1920s. Even as they did, however, the economy had already begun to contract, with production down and greater unemployment, making some sort of drop inevitable. The true level of

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<sup>12</sup> Hirata, *Prosperity, Great Depression and New Deal; a bibliography of American economy during the interwar period.*

<sup>13</sup> History.com, “Stock Market Crash of 1929.”

destruction from the crash, however, would not become evident for several years: the economy bottomed out in 1933, with the US GDP having fallen from \$104 Billion to \$55 Billion in less than four years. By 1933, one in four Americans was unemployed, and the national income had halved. The Depression spread outward from the United States, as each country's struggles weakened the others as the network of international trade collapsed. Americans found themselves in a unique situation, where all the resources and infrastructure they needed to operate was still in place, but the economic disaster meant that no one had the money to get it started up again. Such a high number of unemployed citizens fundamentally altered the culture of the Depression, with migration across the United States becoming more common, as people looked for any opportunities, however small, which might exist. Shanty-towns sprung up around major cities, and bread and soup lines became common in many cities, as people lacked the money to buy even a small amount of food. By 1933, little improvement was visible. Economic conditions were still horrible, compounded by the Dust Bowl across the Midwest and political affairs all around the country, developing into a vicious cycle, with powerful forces feeding off each other.<sup>14</sup>

### The Dust Bowl

At the same time as the Depression developed, a combination of drought and dysfunctional agriculture practices led to a disastrous period marked by dust storms and horrible farming yields. Topsoil, loosened by a removal of native grasses and overgrazing, was blown off by heavy winds, covering the more prosperous farms in unavoidable and choking layers of dust.

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<sup>14</sup> Holley, "Great Depression."

Without prosperous harvests providing a stable income, many Great Plains homesteads were foreclosed on, with their owners choosing or being forced to abandon their properties. This triggered migrations westward, as farmers and other people from across the Great Plains headed west, hoping for jobs in the more prosperous California and other similar states, immortalized in works like Dorothea Lange's photo of Florence Owens Thompson, *Destitute Pea Pickers in California*, *Mother of Seven Children*, and John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*.

The Dust Bowl itself was caused by a combination of events, with periods of poor land management and drought contributing to a perfect storm, creating a "drought of record." In particular, agricultural efforts were hurt by misleading information from a period of about a century prior. To encourage westward expansion and settlement, partially as part of an effort to remove Native Americans from their ancestral lands, so called "boosters" would publish brochures, pamphlets, and other documents presenting the Plains as beautiful, bountiful farmland available for the taking.<sup>15</sup> As a result, individuals from the East Coast and further abroad, seeking successful farming land flocked to the region, encouraged by policies like the Homestead Act of 1862, giving ownership of land to those who worked it. When they arrived, however, they were confronted by an agricultural situation not as incredible as had been shown to them. Combined with a lack of knowledge of proper farming practices for the region, continued attempts at farming were only saved by frequent, and fortunate, rains that kept farmers motivated despite frequent bad harvests and cold winters. Many believed that with the planting of trees, rain would follow, making farming easier and providing timber and fuel as well. It was this belief in their

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<sup>15</sup> Dando, "Virtually Constructing a *Great* Plains: Booster Impacts on Plains Viewing."

ability to change the climate of the Great Plains that led to the Timber Culture Act of 1873, providing 160 acres of public land to anyone if they grew trees on 40 of those acres for a period of ten years, beliefs only slowly abandoned, and only completely ignored starting in the 1890s.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>17</sup> The situation of the Depression itself also contributed to the Dust Bowl. The prosperity, and an increase in crops caused in part by a lack of wheat exports from the Soviet Union, of the early 1920s had encouraged farmers to expand their operations, both to utilize new crops and technology to grow more, but also to afford new machinery, which was often purchased on credit. As the Depression hit, however, crop prices plummeted, while the prices for the machinery skyrocketed, forcing farmers to work less productive and more critical soil, even as they also had to resort to less sustainable but more efficient farming methods to make ends meet, all depleting nutrients, water, and natural grasses which had previously mitigated the effects of soil erosion, heavy winds, and drought, all of which were to come.<sup>18</sup>

With the stage set, a number of dry years in the late 1920s and early 1930s lit the spark of the Dust Bowl, with exposed topsoil from enlarged farming attempts dried out by the great heat. This allowed for heavy winds to easily remove the topsoil, damaging the ability for that farmland to produce anything at all. This powdery, dusty topsoil was then blown across the hundred of millions acre region, plunging those farms which had escaped the first round of harm into another, not to mention the health consequences for the millions of people across the United States forced inside and made to breath in immense amounts of particulate matter by the dust storms. By 1932, the Dust Bowl was only just beginning, migration westward had only just

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<sup>16</sup> Goetz, "Timber Culture Act, 1873."

<sup>17</sup> White, *"It's your misfortune and none of my own": a history of the American West.*

<sup>18</sup> "The Dust Bowl."

started to pick up, and the worst remained ahead. Little action had been taken to prevent its consequences, and significant action would be necessary to stave off the worst possible consequences.

### Early Response Attempts

The Great Depression began about half a year after Herbert Hoover's inauguration as president, fundamentally changing the environment of his presidency. Hoover had campaigned for president as a Republican continuation of Calvin Coolidge's two terms. Hoover himself had a certain level of popularity. During World War I, he had coordinated efforts to send aid and feed both Americans stuck in Europe, but also Belgians, who found themselves in famine after the German invasion. In 1917, once the United States entered the War, Hoover was appointed to head the United States Food Administration, overseeing production, storage, and transportation of food during the conflict. Hoover gathered a skilled team around him, including experts in agriculture and business, and managed to avoid rationing through use of initiatives and recommendations that drew on Americans' wartime patriotism.<sup>19</sup> He continued to distribute food across Europe after the war, earning him both national and international fame. This was built upon during his time as Secretary of Commerce under both presidents Warren G. Harding and Calvin Coolidge, where he promoted radios and facilitated the government response to the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927, among a number of other accomplishments, using his typical emphasis of widespread publicity, voluntary action, and strong managerial techniques. His attempts at reform led to him receiving the label of "progressive," however, angering more

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<sup>19</sup> Cuff, "Herbert Hoover, The Ideology of Voluntarism and War Organization During the Great War."

conservative parts of his Republican party, and leading to him struggling in the early days of his 1928 presidential run, where Coolidge was unwilling to endorse him, and he competed against several other Republicans for the nomination. Once he received the nomination, however, Hoover had a fairly easy time winning the election. Already popular, and on the heels of two Republicans, Hoover presented a platform fairly similar to his Democratic opponent, Al Smith. Smith, however, was the first Catholic to run for the presidency and he became a target of anti-Catholic sentiment and discrimination. The Democratic Party was also not particularly united during this time period, struggling with disagreements on prohibition and other similar issues. Hoover was able to put aside similar disagreements in the Republicans, putting aside his own ambivalent feelings on prohibition to adopt Republican doctrine, and adopted a white voter-centered approach in southern states, removing Black republicans from positions of party governance in the hopes of bringing traditionally Democratic whites to the party.<sup>20</sup> Hoover handily won the election, with 444 electoral college votes to Smith's 87.<sup>22</sup>

When the Depression itself hit, Hoover quickly pivoted his focus from his optimistic earlier platform, but fell back on the style that had defined his leadership over the years: Constant publicity and voluntary action.<sup>23</sup> He encouraged community-based support networks, with citizens freely choosing to assist those in their towns suffering from any of the many crises of the Depression, and appeared frequently in radio broadcasts and press conferences, prophesizing a swift and stable recovery for the United States, that "prosperity [was] just around the corner,"

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<sup>20</sup> O'Dell, "Blacks, the Democratic Party, and the Presidential Election of 1928: A Mild Rejoinder."

<sup>21</sup> Ogburn, William F., "A Measurement of the Factors in the Presidential Election of 1928."

<sup>22</sup> Hendrick, "Herbert Hoover."

<sup>23</sup> Tarbert, "The Quest to Bring 'Business Efficiency' to the Federal Executive: Herbert Hoover, Franklin Roosevelt, and the Civil Service Reformers in the Late 1920s."

famously uttered by his vice president, Charles Curtis. He did take more drastic action in a few ways however, creating the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, for instance, with the intent of getting major banks with significant influence on citizens' everyday lives operational again.

Hoover, however, struggled to shake off a quickly growing opinion that he was out of touch, and unaware or uncaring of how bad things were for everyday Americans. Many saw his attempts at community-based volunteerism as deeply flawed and completely unable to lift the country out of the Depression. This view was not helped by Hoover's response to the Bonus Army, a group of World War I veterans who had received certificates for future bonuses in exchange for their service. With the outbreak of the Great Depression, many wished to receive their bonuses early, a policy Hoover denounced, believing that the rise in taxes to pay them would in turn make the Depression worse. In response, in June 1932, the Bonus Army marched on Washington, setting up camp in an open area south of the city center. In late July, however, Hoover gave the order to remove the protesters, sending General Douglas McArthur to clear out their camp. Despite orders to stay back at first, McArthur attacked the camps several times, removing the Bonus Army from Washington. While Hoover had not directed McArthur's actions, the lack of a vocal denunciation from him weakened his popularity even further.<sup>24</sup> It became common to refer to Hoover in referencing parts of the Depression. Shanty-towns which popped up became known as "Hooverilles," while "Hoover Blankets" referred to old newspapers, and "Hoover Wagons" referred to old cars, pulled by horses, their engines removed. Despite any attempts to the contrary on his part, Hoover failed to change his appearance in public, becoming quickly derided as an ineffective president, unable to match the situation.<sup>2526</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Dickson, *The Bonus Army: an American epic*.

<sup>25</sup> Hawley, "Herbert Hoover and the Historians-Recent Developments: A Review Essay."

<sup>26</sup> Hendrick, "Herbert Hoover."

## Political Radicalism

As the Great Depression progressed, the perception of many that democratic governance had failed pushed many towards supporting other forms of governance, especially alongside similar concerns about the capitalistic American economic system of the 1920s and earlier. The most significant of these movements was socialist in nature, though a number of smaller movements existed, supporting ideologies like fascism, technocracy, and a Roosevelt-led “presidential dictatorship,” each one making a sizable impact on the political environment of the early Thirties.

Socialist organizing had a long history in the United States, and was intrinsically linked to various forms of urban and rural labor organizing. These groups challenged what they saw as an oppressive and unfair economic system, with change becoming all the more necessary as the country proceeded into the Great Depression. Ranging from economically-concerned labor unions to more avowedly political groups, some with Soviet backing, these leftist groups formed a significant power bloc in the thirties, one frequently at odds both with itself, but more importantly with the government itself. Socialist groups drew off the existing network of labor unions, especially those of urban workers, farmers, and Appalachian coal miners.

The coal miners of Appalachia had already been organizing prior to any serious Soviet or leftist involvement. Conditions in the mines were horrible to start with, with black lung, cave-ins, and explosions were all frequent occurrences, and very present in the minds of miners. Near the end of the 19th century, innovations in technology and organizational structures led to the

establishment of company towns across the United States, but particularly among the already brutal coal mines of West Virginia, Kentucky, and Pennsylvania, among other states. In a company town, everything was provided by the corporation one worked for, with workers paid in a combination of cash and company scrip, redeemable only at company stores, all to make it harder for workers to escape their debt and stop working for the mining company. This was combined with strong anti-union efforts on the part of the companies, hiring private investigators working alongside law enforcement to keep union organizers and representatives out of their territories. The conflicts lasted for decades through the early part of the 20th century, with a particularly brutal flare up in 1920 and 1921 in Mingo and Logan Counties, West Virginia. Mingo County in particular had been targeted by John L. Lewis, leader of the United Mine Workers of America as a prospective location for organizing, expanding the reach of what was already one of the most powerful unions. The county government was less hostile towards unions than some of their neighbors, with some officials even being in support. Lewis and the UMW's ambitions, however, had a challenge in the form of Attorney General Mitchell Palmer, an ardent anti-communist and architect of the First Red Scare, to whom labor organizing was deeply concerning. On May 19, 1920, in Matewan, a small town in the middle of the coal fields, union-aligned chief of police Sid Hatfield and the people of Matewan fought agents of the Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency, after Hatfield had gone to arrest the agents, and the agents had in turn presented a fraudulent warrant for Hatfield's arrests. Tensions would continue to rise after this: Hatfield was assassinated by corporate agents in August of 1921 when traveling to stand trial, and restless and angry union miners' demands were ignored by the governor of West Virginia, sparking into full battle at Blair Mountain. Union miners, marching south toward

Mingo County from Charleston were met at Blair Mountain in Logan County by agents of the anti-union Sheriff Chafin. Despite attempts by President Harding to diffuse the conflict with threats, the two sides ultimately engaged in fighting for a week in late August and early September 1921, the largest armed uprising in the United States since the Civil War. The battle only ended when federal troops intervened, but the fight was notable for its brutality, with private planes dropping bombs on the miners. The battle would ultimately contribute to a decline in the influence of unions in the United States, only saved by the Great Depression and the concerns that came along with it. Mine organizing would cease to be a major force in American politics until 1931, when the Harlan County War triggered further fighting and put wind in the sails of the UMW.<sup>2728</sup>

Mine workers were not the only group organizing, however, with a number of other labor organizations working together and occasionally with support from the Soviet Union. While the Socialist Party of America had split over whether to align with the USSR, both the remnant Socialists and the new Communist Party of the United States of America achieved some success. Both struggled during the First Red Scare, though, and as labor unions, weakened by high publicity failings and the passage of new right-to-work laws, pivoted towards the Democrats, they struggled to stabilize. After supporting a number of high profile races, like Robert La Follette's 1924 Progressive presidential campaign, the party fell into relative obscurity, though actively denounced President Roosevelt's talk of new programs, which they determined to be nowhere near far enough. The CPUSA, meanwhile, struggled to make ground in American

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<sup>27</sup> Shogan, *The battle of Blair Mountain: the story of America's largest labor uprising*.

<sup>28</sup> Portelli, *They Say in Harlan County : An Oral History*.

politics. Driven underground in the First Red Scare, specifically the Palmer Raids the party struggled to develop beyond their Soviet support. An early opposition to labor unions lost any connections they could have made, instead forcing the Communists to develop their own network of unions, most of which struggled. Additionally, being required to follow the Soviet line weakened their relationship with other leftist groups who they frequently denounced for views they considered too conservative.<sup>29</sup>

In contrast to the labor unions and socialism, little attention was generally paid to Fascism and Mussolini's government in the United States, with a few high profile exceptions. Certain anti-communists, disillusioned with communism as well, chose to identify themselves with the fascist movement, most notably Catholic priest Father Charles Coughlin, famous for his radio broadcasts in which he denounced communism and capitalism and spread his anti-semitic beliefs. While initially a supporter of President Roosevelt, Coughlin would become increasingly anti-democratic, anti-semitic, and pro-fascist.<sup>30</sup> While little attention was paid to a properly fascist America, there were brief movements between the election and inauguration of Roosevelt in which the possibility of him seizing dictatorial power was floated. According to supporters, the condition of the United States required a firm hand, a benevolent but dictatorial leader who could make the changes necessary to end the Depression. Roosevelt himself, at his inaugural address in 1933 hinted at this, stating that, if Congress failed to pass legislation to end the crisis,

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<sup>29</sup> Ross, *The Socialist Party of America : A Complete History*.

<sup>30</sup> Goodman, "Before Hate Speech: Charles Coughlin, Free Speech and Listeners' Rights."

<sup>31</sup> Boyea, "The Reverend Charles Coughlin and the Church: The Gallagher Years, 1930-1937."

he would request “broad Executive power to wage a war against the emergency, as great as the power that would be given to me if we were in fact invaded by a foreign foe.”<sup>32</sup>

Also briefly relevant during the early 30s was technocracy, a political and economic system that proposed the division of the world into self-sufficient “Technates,” states ruled by scientists and engineers governing according to principles of science. Based on the beliefs of engineer Howard Scott and geologist M. King Hubbert, they proposed these technocrats as truth-tellers, acutely aware of what was causing the Depression and how to end it. Technocracy believed that scarcity did not actually exist, and with proper governance, the United States could easily leave it behind, drawing people who were struggling due to the Depression to its banner, counting hundreds of thousands of members during its height in 1932 and 1933.<sup>333435</sup>

The United States was challenged by these and other movements during the Great Depression, as the critical and disastrous time pushed forward ideas which would have been thought absurd in any other time. Despite the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt, these ideas and movements would remain to challenge his presidency in various ways.

## Election of 1932

The Election of 1932 pitted Republican incumbents Herbert Hoover and Charles Curtis against their Democratic challengers, Franklin D. Roosevelt and John Nance Garner. The election

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<sup>32</sup> Roosevelt, “First Inagural Adress of Franklin D. Roosevelt.”

<sup>33</sup> Murray, “The Facts about Technocracy.”

<sup>34</sup> Parrish, *An outline of technocracy*.

<sup>35</sup> “Historical Background and Development of Social Security.”

quickly centered on the Depression itself, and perspectives on President Hoover's response to it. Roosevelt developed a platform challenging the Republican efforts, supporting a greater level of government intervention to improve conditions for American citizens. Roosevelt's campaign was, from the start, in a better condition than Al Smith's in 1928. As a Protestant, he avoided the anti-Catholic sentiment which hurt Smith, and with the Depression the main issue and the Democrats united against Prohibition, the party was united behind their nominee. Meanwhile, Hoover was struggling; while he tried to claim some credit for improving the conditions of the US, his attempts fell on deaf ears. Dealing with a broken party, conservatives criticizing him for being too progressive, progressives criticizing him for doing nothing, it seemed incredibly unlikely Hoover would receive a second term. On November 8th, 1932, it became clear he would not, as Roosevelt won 472 electoral votes to his 59, sweeping Roosevelt into office and beginning the next stage of recovery from the Depression.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Schnell, "Franklin D. Roosevelt."

## **Present Situation:**

Members of this advisory “brain trust” council will be members of the cabinet, American politicians of the early 1930s, or various forms of private citizens involved in the political discourse of the Great Depression. Each individual brings unique experiences and a unique perspective to the committee, alongside access to a variety of resources outside this advisory council. Members of the council must work together to develop an action plan in accordance with the vision set forth by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, drawing on all the resources they may have available to respond to each of the crises gripping the nation. While our primary focus will be on the economic crisis within the United States, delegates should also remember that global affairs will occur, and that both domestic and international responses to the decisions made by this advisory council should be expected. The council will walk a fine line, and it is imperative that the plans developed be well thought out to avoid unintended consequences.

President Roosevelt is aware that the members of his advisory council have a wide variety of different opinions on how to combat the Depression and restore economic and social stability to America. He hopes that this diversity of views will contribute to the development of robust policies that will respond to the unstable situation of American banks, develop policies to support farmers displaced by the Dust Bowl, put Americans back to work, ensure stability against the political and economic movements roiling the country, detail foreign policy stances which have been left by the wayside, while presenting these policies to the public and developing a legitimate and detailed vision for the future of the United States, one that will serve the country going forward.

President Roosevelt looks forward to working with this assembled body to ensure the revitalization, stability, and continuity of the United States of America.

## **List of Roles:**

George Dern: Secretary of War under Franklin D. Roosevelt. Progressive politician from Utah with little previous military experience.

Stephen Early: White House Press Secretary under Franklin D. Roosevelt.

John Nance Garner: Vice President under Franklin D. Roosevelt. Conservative southern Democrat from Texas.

J. Edgar Hoover: First director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, strong opponent of organized crime and political radicals.

Harry Hopkins: Member of the “Brain Trust” and advisor of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Architect and strong supporter of the New Deal.

Cordell Hull: Secretary of State under Franklin D. Roosevelt. Later assisted in the formation of the United Nations.

Harold Ickes: Secretary of the Interior under Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Supervised much of the New Deal, and a strong supporter of desegregation and civil rights.

John L. Lewis: President of the United Mine Workers of America. Liberal labor leader, and a strong supporter of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932.

Huey Long: Senator from Louisiana, former populist governor of Louisiana, and an outspoken critic of the New Deal. Controversial for policies considered authoritarian and undemocratic as governor.

Raymond Moley: Member of the “Brain Trust” who broke with Franklin D. Roosevelt on the New Deal, becoming a strong opponent. Additionally served as a speechwriter for President Roosevelt.

Henry Morgenthau Jr.: Secretary of the Treasury under Franklin D. Roosevelt, a strict monetarist, and later heavily involved in World War II foreign policy.

Frances Perkins: Secretary of Labor under Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The first woman to serve as a cabinet secretary, she worked heavily with labor groups.

Gifford Pinchot: Republican governor of Pennsylvania. First head of the US Foreign Service as well, and a supporter of conservation. A supporter of prohibition.

John D. Rockefeller: American business magnate and philanthropist. Owned the massively profitable Standard Oil Company.

Jouett Shouse: Conservative Democrat from Kansas and a former congressman. Later, the leader of the anti-New Deal American Liberty League.

Upton Sinclair: Socialist Politician and Journalist. Unsuccessful candidate for Congress and the Governorship of California. Author of *The Jungle*, *The Brass Check*, and a number of other books.

Henry Wallace: Secretary of Agriculture under Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Former Republican and a strong supporter of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Later became Vice President during President Roosevelt's third term. A vocal opponent of segregation.

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