Having gone through severe unemployment, food shortages, and a seemingly remiss President Hoover, the American people were beginning to lose hope. But sentiments began to turn as FDR stepped into office and implemented his New Deal programs. FDR and his administration responded to the crisis by executing policies that would successfully address reform, relief, and, unsuccessfully, recovery. Although WWII ultimately recovered America from its depression, it was FDR’s response with the New Deal programs that stopped America’s economic downfall, relieved hundreds of Americans, reformed many policies, and consequently expanded government power.

One of FDR’s first orders of business was to respond to the need of reforming the banking system. FDR created the Emergency Banking Act that shut down all banks across the US and only allowed them to reopen upon government inspection. This proved effective as Americans began to restore their trust in the banking system. The EBA also demonstrated how government power was expanding, as the program allowed the government to ignore states’ and businesses’ rights to shut down the banks. In Document G, John L. Lewis praises the Wagner Act, which was FDR’s response to the “widespread labor unrest”. The Wagner Act addressed the concerns of workers over their rights as union members and ability to collectively bargain. The act proved effective as labor unrest began to dwindle. FDR took this chance to once again increase the government’s power by creating the National Labor Relations Board. The NLRB enforced the terms of the Wagner Act. The Wagner Act changed the role of the government by implying that social justice was now also on the government’s agenda of what to provide to citizens, in addition to political rights and economic security. Document E shows another instance of reform provided by FDR and his administration: social security. In response to Townsend and his followers, FDR created the Social Security Act which gave pensions to old-age workers, along with many other benefits to citizens. The effectiveness of Social Security was only satisfactory, as it failed to help farmers and domestic workers. Yet, it implanted hope into millions of Americans for the well-being of their future and the capitalist system. The Social Security Act was also revolutionary in changing the government’s role by showing how a citizen’s welfare was now also part of the government’s responsibility. All these new programs and organizations created by the New Deal show how they greatly expanded the government’s power and influence, as shown in Document C. In Document C, the cartoon shows how FDR’s New Deal was a progression of small change that consequently led to an expansion of government power. The New Deal’s many reform programs provided a foundation for America to build off of.

FDR’s New Deal also sought out to provide relief for Americans. Unemployment rates were high and poverty was widespread. To solve these problems, FDR created many programs and organizations, such as the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), the Civil Works Administration (CWA), the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), and the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Document A shows how poor women, and also men, were barely assisted by the government. Urban unemployment represented a big problem in the US. To solve the unemployment issue, FDR implemented the CWA, which gave jobs to many people to build or repair roads, buildings, and other structures. This was very effective because it not only dealt with the problem of unemployment, but it also improved the deteriorating parts of the country. Unfortunately, public works programs like these greatly increased the national debt, as well. The CCC functioned in the same way, providing millions of jobs to unemployed workers for maintaining and restoring the environment. The Federal Emergency Relief Program revitalized local relief programs by giving them funding. All of these programs were in the First New Deal and according to Document J, the New First Deal dropped unemployment about twenty-five percent from 12,830,000 unemployed to 7,700,000 unemployed, thus proving the effectiveness of these relief programs. The creation of such programs also expanded the role of government by demonstrating that the government could have a large bureaucracy. The numerous programs FDR implemented were all run by the bureaucracy, thus the “bureaucracy in Washington grew by leaps and bounds” according to William Lloyd Garrison, Jr. in Document D.

One of the issues the New Deal did not completely heal was recovery, which would be taken care of by WWII. Two of FDR’s chief recovery programs, the National Industrial Recovery Act of June 1933 (NIRA) and the Agriculture Adjustment Administration (AAA) were repealed because they were viewed as unconstitutional. In Document D, Garrison says that some New Deal programs “retarded the recovery of industrial activity.” This was true in the case of the NIRA, as it promoted a cycle of overproduction and underproduction and set in many complicated codes. Document F also shows how the government’s powers have been expanded too much. In the Document, the court ends up ruling against NIRA because it expanded government powers. Although the role of government had been increased by other New Deal programs, NIRA crossed the line for many of the justices on the Supreme Court. The AAA was also one of the programs that “retarded the recovery of industrial activity”. The AAA attempted to increase farm prices by paying farmers not to overproduce, thus keeping the prices stable. But millions of Americans were still starving, so it made more sense to the public to give the surplus of food to the starving Americans. The AAA was deemed unconstitutional because it expanded the power of government too much. Under the AAA, the agriculture sector was viewed as a “creeping socialism”, as the government regulated what to produce and how much of it. The government’s role in the economy was becoming much too interfering in the private sector. Document B reflects these fears, as it said “that the Administration at Washington is accelerating its (sic) pace towards socialism…” Under FDR, Congress was made rubber stamp and FDR’s policies went through undisputed. Therefore, many of FDR’s “socialist” policies ended up becoming implemented. The judiciary reacted and shut down both NIRA and the AAA because they not only proved impractical, but also tried to greatly expand the role of the government.

Overall, FDR’s response to the crisis in America proved beneficial to many Americans, at least for the short term. As Document J demonstrates, it was WWII that truly solved the problem of depression and spurred America’s recovery. However, FDR’s New Deal impacted the future of America mentally. It instilled trust for FDR and his leadership which would be critical as America was heading into WWII, and FDR would have to serve three terms. As Document H states, “the government as an instrument of democratic action in the future has…been strengthened and renovated.”