Understanding the Return of the Jacksonian Tradition

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Abstract: The 2016 presidential election demonstrated the rise of a “restraint constituency” in American politics that openly questions Washington’s bipartisan post-Cold War pursuit of a grand strategy of primacy or liberal hegemony. This constituency has been animated by the return of the Jacksonian tradition of American foreign policy, most notably in the candidacy of Donald Trump, which directly questions the benefits of alliance relationships as well as U.S. underwriting of an open global economic system. It also stresses the need for the United States to act unilaterally in defense of its core foreign policy interests. The resurgence of the Jacksonian tradition will make it difficult for the next President to reestablish a foreign policy consensus and combat perceptions of American decline.

The next President of the United States faces several fundamental foreign policy challenges. A rising China and an assertive Russia are demonstrating their willingness to use (or threaten to use) military means to achieve their political ends in the Ukraine and the South China Sea, directly challenging existing security/strategic orders which are largely underwritten by the United States. The Middle East has, since the Arab Spring of 2011, lurched from crisis to crisis in core regional states—from the overthrow of long-standing rulers in Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt to the conflagrations in Syria and Yemen—creating conditions for the rise of new forms of radical Islamism (the Islamic State) and extra-regional state intervention and proxy conflicts.

The United States, of course, has faced and often surmounted numerous foreign policy crises and challenges in the past. The ability of the incoming President to grapple successfully with today’s foreign policy challenges, however, will be constrained fundamentally by the rise of a dynamic in domestic politics not seen since World War II: an overt questioning of the U.S. role in international affairs. As the 2016 presidential election campaign has demonstrated amply, much of this

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questioning has focused on: 1) whether the costs of the U.S. underwriting of the post-World War II liberal international order have been commensurate with its benefits; and 2) whether that order can, or indeed should, be maintained.

These pressures perhaps have been all the more jolting for Washington policymakers as they come after more than 60 years of a largely bipartisan foreign policy consensus that at its core was based on the twin assumptions that a strong United States was “essential” to the maintenance of an open global order and that the alternative to U.S. leadership would not be “a harmonious, self-regulating balance of independent states but an international landscape marked by eruptions of chaos and destruction.”

American hegemony, in such a reading, was good not only for the national security and prosperity of the country itself, but also for the world. Kori Schake recently wrote that the United States faces, despite the contemporary crises noted above, an unprecedentedly benign security environment:

The U.S. has the luxury of stable, law-abiding and cooperative neighbors. The strongest countries in the world are U.S. treaty allies. The only two aspiring great powers, China and Russia, have significant economic and political constraints both in maintaining domestic stability and in attracting international support—and neither has a political model emulated other than by despots. Barriers to U.S. commerce in foreign markets have been reduced, and trade deals, corporate governance and publicity are slowly raising labor and other standards to American levels among U.S. trading partners. The American economy is the engine of global innovation.

Yet, the often intemperate debates of this presidential election cycle have demonstrated that a significant number of Americans not only doubt that the country faces such a benign environment but also that the sustainability of the strategy variously described as primacy or liberal hegemony espoused by successive administrations since at least the end of the Cold War.

2 Kori Schake, “Republican Foreign Policy after Trump,” Survival, 58 (5), 2016, p. 44.
argued that such a sentiment is pervasive enough so as to constitute a “restraint constituency” that is, in fact, “primed against primacy” to an extent unprecedented for decades.4

What accounts for this apparent disjuncture between the realities of the country’s security environment and such perceptions? Some, building on Paul Kennedy’s seminal “long-cycle” study of the rise and fall of great powers throughout history, identify the dynamics of “imperial overstretch”—i.e., the disjuncture between the hegemon’s unavoidable tendency to ever-increasing political and military commitments and its economic capability to meet them—in U.S. foreign policy over the past two decades.6 Such observers have offered alternative strategies of “restraint,”7 “retrenchment,”8 or “offshore balancing”9 to remedy this situation. While paying due attention to dynamics at the international or systemic level—like whether or not the U.S. strategy of primacy stimulates counter-balancing among other states—these analysts have also, consistent with the neoclassical realist theoretical perspectives of a significant subset of them, identified the major role of domestic factors in shaping U.S. grand strategy.10 For many of them, however, the role of domestic factors promotes rather than dissuades the continued pursuit of the primacist agenda.

Christopher Layne, for instance, acknowledges that although “the foreign policies of individual states are shaped by the ideas leaders hold about their own nations’ identity and place in world politics,” these ideas have been reified into “myths of empire to justify the United States’ hegemonic role.”11 In a similar vein,
Stephen Walt argues that “the United States remains a remarkably immature great power, one whose rhetoric is frequently at odds with its conduct and one that tends to treat the management of foreign affairs largely as an adjunct to domestic politics.”12 This dynamic, he laments, allows American foreign policy “to be distorted by partisan sniping, hijacked by foreign lobbyists and narrow domestic special interests, blinded by lofty but unrealistic rhetoric, and held hostage by irresponsible and xenophobic members of Congress.”13 Finally, Denis Florig makes an admirable case for modifying Kennedy’s concept of “imperial overstretch” to “hegemonic overreach” in analyses of the rise and fall of great powers, as the former “implies an unavoidable, inevitable, mechanical process” whereas the latter injects the choices of statesmen and policymakers into the equation: “Overstretch connotes a defective product; overreach invokes bad choices.”14 However, he, much like Layne and Walt, suggests that domestic factors—such as those connected to national identity—impinge negatively upon the hegemon’s ability to make the correct choices:

One of the central contradictions of U.S. foreign policy for the past century has been between the imperatives of hegemony and the sense of messianic mission developed in America’s formative years and enlarged in scope as U.S. power expanded. These two basic elements do not always conflict, yet in certain key crises the American belief in its special mission in the world leads it to make foreign policy choices that ultimately undermine its hegemonic position.15

Explicit in each of these arguments is not only a negative appraisal of the ultimate impact of domestic factors on American foreign policy and grand strategy, but also an assumption that there is one major animating idea that, in Layne’s phrase, justifies the U.S.’s “hegemonic role”: the desire to export the American model abroad.

Walter Russell Mead and Walter McDougall, in contrast, have demonstrated the shortcomings of such approaches by highlighting not only the influence of several traditions of American foreign policy, but also their intimate connection to core unit-level variables such as identity, regionalism, and nationalism. Uniting these traditions, Mead argues, are their shared “admiration for the founding principles” and “enlightened ideas of the Revolutionary era” and “a sober recognition that under their guidance the American Republic has enjoyed a far happier political and material existence than any other commonwealth of comparable size in the history of the world.”16 For McDougall, attempts to portray the history of U.S. foreign policy as a

13 Walt, “In the National Interest: A New Grand Strategy for American Foreign Policy.”
16 Mead, A Special Providence, pp. 96-97.
teleological struggle between realism/idealism or internationalism/isolationism are incorrect because “what is often seen as a Hegelian clash in the national discourse between theses and antitheses is actually a clash between competing syntheses of what American values and national interests require.”

Mead argued that American strategic culture since the founding of the Republic has been defined by the evolution of four contrasting yet complementary traditions of foreign policy: the Hamiltonian (promotion of an “Open Door” world), Jeffersonian (maintenance of a democratic system), Jacksonian (populist values, military strength), and Wilsonian (moral principle). A fundamental distinction amongst the four traditions is between those who seek to perfect and protect the virtues of the Republic (Jeffersonian and Jacksonian) and those who seek to remake the world in its image (Hamiltonian and Wilsonian). In Walter McDougall’s memorable terms, this distinction concerns the historical debate as to whether the United States would be a “promised land” or “crusader state.” We contend that it is the Jacksonian tradition that has (re)emerged as a contributor to priming a major portion of the American public against the strategy of primacy or liberal hegemony.

Andrew Jackson

18 McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State*. 
The Jacksonian Tradition

The Jacksonian school of thought takes a pessimistic view of the political elite and promotes a federalist system, which seeks to prevent the concentration of power within a centralized government. Indeed, Andrew Jackson, in a personal letter to John Quincy Adams, remarked that a powerful central government “is calculated to raise around the administration a moneyed aristocracy dangerous to the liberties of the country.” While Jeffersonian and Jacksonian traditions share this mutual affection for liberty, illustrated through their shared affording of primacy to the Bill of Rights and the Constitution, there is a stark divide in how both traditions believe this goal of liberty is best achieved:

The Jeffersonians are most profoundly devoted to the First Amendment, protecting the freedom of speech and prohibiting a federal establishment of religion, Jacksonians see the Second Amendment and the right to bear arms as the citadel of liberty. To oversimplify, Jeffersonians join the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU); Jacksonians join the National Rifle Association (NRA). In doing so, both are convinced that they are standing at the barricades of freedom.

The Jacksonian tradition is based on, what Mead terms, a “community of political feeling” defined by principles of populism, individualism, honor, and courage. Drawing on the work of David Hackett Fischer, Mead identifies the basis of the populism central to the Jacksonian tradition with the protestant “Scotch-Irish” element of British colonization of North America. The “Scotch-Irish,” Mead argues, shaped by centuries of conflict in Ireland, “established a culture and outlook formed by centuries of bitter warfare before they came to the United States.” Rogers M. Smith also identified the development of what he termed an “American creed” among this important segment of the American population that bears striking resemblance to Mead’s characterization of Jacksonians. For Smith, by the mid-nineteenth century, many Americans in fact “identified membership in their political community not with freedom for personal liberal callings or republican self-governance,” as Jeffersonians would have it, but rather “with a whole array of particular cultural origins and customs” strongly linked to North European ancestry, Protestantism, belief in the superiority of the “white race,” and patriarchal familial leadership.

20 Mead, p. 225.
In order to understand the importance of the Jacksonian tradition’s influence on American foreign policy, one must recognize perhaps its central engine. Jacksonians, Mead argues

believe that government should do everything in its power to promote the well-being—political, economic, and moral—of the folk community. Any means are permissible in the services of this end, as long as they do not violate the moral feelings or infringe on the freedoms that Jacksonians believe are essential.\(^{24}\)

The Jacksonian foreign policy call to arms is, thus, not driven by the moral underpinnings of the Wilsonian tradition or the quest for an “open door” world of the Hamiltonian tradition. Rather it is animated by the instinct, in the first instance, to protect members of the “folk community” from threat.

From this attitude flow several important implications for American foreign policy. The first concerns the Jacksonian threshold for action, especially for the use of military force. Jacksonians were against the U.S. intervention in Bosnia due to the limited threat this posed to direct American security interests, but were accepting of the push for U.S. intervention against Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait as the Iraqi dictator’s move was perceived as a threat to world oil supplies, and hence, a potential threat to the economic well-being of Jacksonian America. A similar rationale was evident in the shifting positions of Jacksonian sentiment in the lead up to American intervention in both World Wars. Here, it was not the atrocities committed by the Central Powers, the Nazis, or the Japanese army, but the sinking of American shipping (for example, the Lusitania) and the attack on Pearl Harbor that rallied Jacksonian sentiment to the side of Presidents Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt. In the latter case, as FDR biographer Jean Edward Smith has documented, the President, during the tense U.S.-Japanese diplomacy prior to Pearl Harbor, was careful to be “like Lincoln prior Fort Sumter” in wanting “Japan to be perceived as the aggressor” in the event of open conflict.\(^{25}\)

This desire to be seen as the righteously aggrieved party to a conflict also speaks to the second important implication of Jacksonian sentiment for foreign policy: the significance attached to the protection of national honor and reputation. Honor for Jacksonians

is not simply what one feels oneself to be on the inside; it is also a question of the respect and dignity one commands in the world at large. Jacksonian opinion is sympathetic to the idea that our reputation—whether for fair dealing or cheating, toughness or weakness—will shape the way others treat us.\(^{26}\)


\(^{26}\) Mead, “The Jacksonian Tradition,” p. 16.
From Robert F. Kennedy’s claim in his memoir, *Thirteen Days*, that he advised his brother, President John F. Kennedy, against a Pearl Harbor-esque “sneak attack” against Soviet missile sites in Cuba, to the opprobrium directed at President Barack Obama after his now infamous “red line” statement on Syria, the protection of American honor has been a vital element of the Jacksonian worldview.

Once Jacksonian opinion is mobilized in support of U.S. intervention or military action abroad, a third implication comes into play. Jacksonians agree with General Douglas MacArthur’s understanding that victory in war must be total and come with the “unconditional surrender” of the enemy. The failure to achieve this stringent war-fighting aim has seen Jacksonian sentiment turn against a number of twentieth-century American Presidents:

Truman’s efforts to wage limited war in Korea cost him his re-election in 1952. Similarly, Lyndon Johnson’s inability to fight unlimited war for unconditional surrender in Vietnam cost him his presidency in 1968; Jimmy Carter’s inability to resolve the Iranian hostage crisis with a clear-cut victory destroyed any hope he had of winning the 1980 election; and George [H. W.] Bush’s refusal to insist on an unconditional surrender in Iraq may have contributed to his defeat in the 1992 Presidential election.

A fourth implication stemming from the harnessing of Jacksonian sentiment in support of intervention or war is that Jacksonian opinion is predisposed to be bloody-minded once the United States is engaged in a conflict and resistant to rationales for their resolution short of “total victory.” President Richard Nixon’s struggle to extricate the United States from the Vietnam War is illustrative here. Nixon and his National Security Adviser and then-Secretary of State Henry Kissinger spent much of their time in office attempting to assuage Jacksonian opinion as they attempted to withdraw the United States from Vietnam without losing “credibility” with adversaries, allies, and the U.S. public alike. It was arguably no coincidence that Nixon and Kissinger framed their strategy of withdrawal from Vietnam as “peace with honor.” Additionally, once adversaries are defined as an “enemy nation” (for instance, China from 1949-1972 or Iran since 1979), it becomes extremely difficult for Jacksonian opinion to be swayed to support efforts at normalization. This attitude continues to manifest itself in contemporary foreign controversies, such as some of the rhetoric deployed by those opposed to the Obama Administration’s negotiation of a nuclear agreement with Tehran or normalization of relations with Cuba.

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Finally, Jacksonian opinion, in the absence of direct threats to American security is likely to advocate a minimalist or, in the words of George W. Bush during the 2000 election campaign, a “humble” foreign policy that eschews both the “crusading” liberal interventionism of the Wilsonians and the commitment to open international political and economic institutions characteristic of the Hamiltonians. For instance, in the 1990s, Jacksonian opinion was against the Clinton Administration’s interventions in Haiti, Somalia, and Bosnia, due to the limited threat these conflicts posed to the traditional U.S. national security interests. Michael Mandelbaum, encapsulating Jacksonian sentiment in this context, castigated President Clinton for attempting to “turn American foreign policy into a branch of social work.” He argued that the Administration’s interventions in these countries were symptomatic of a shift in attention from those states “potentially dangerous” to international order (and American security) to the “political, economic and social conditions” of weak states on the periphery of international affairs. Even more egregious from this perspective was that the administration’s interventions in each of these cases was half-hearted and harmed American prestige:

Putting an end to the suffering in Bosnia, Haiti and Somalia would have involved addressing its causes, which would have meant deep, protracted and costly engagement in the tangled political life of each country. When the time came to carry out the commitment at the risk of American lives, the president balked. He refused to bomb in Bosnia, withdrew U.S. troops from Somalia and recalled the ship from Haiti, thereby earning a reputation for inconstancy that haunts his presidency.

In contrast, the George H. W. Bush Administration avoided such criticism with respect to its response to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait, in part, by framing Saddam Hussein’s move as a threat to world oil supplies, and hence, a potential threat to the economic well-being of Jacksonian America. Thus, for a particular case or crisis in which American intervention (especially militarily) is proposed to win the support of Jacksonian opinion, the case or crisis must be framed as a direct threat to the core interests of the United States.

The 2016 Presidential Race

In many respects, the 2016 presidential race witnessed the return of Jacksonian sentiment to center stage in American politics to challenge the post-Cold War consensus on foreign policy. Robert J. Merry perceptively noted this when he argued that the Trump-Clinton presidential contest was (among other things) between whether “nationalism” or “globalism” would guide American foreign policy in the

near future.\footnote{Robert J. Merry, “Trump vs. Hillary is Nationalism vs. Globalism, 2016,” \textit{The National Interest}, May 4, 2016, \url{http://nationalinterest.org/feature/trump-vs-hillary-nationalism-vs-globalism-2016-16041}.} Donald J. Trump’s “America First” sloganeering placed him in opposition not only to the group of neoconservatives that have largely dominated GOP foreign policy debates in recent times, but also to the broader post-Cold War consensus among Washington’s foreign policy establishment. When Trump articulated his proposed foreign policy at his first major speech on the issue, he argued that a Trump Administration would be a major departure from previous administrations in affording primacy to the interest of the American people over that of establishment elites and their desire to underwrite the security of the international order. “We will no longer surrender this country or its people,” Trump stated, “to the false song of globalism. The nation-state remains the true foundation for happiness and harmony. I am skeptical of international unions that tie us up and bring America down.”\footnote{Michael Hirsh, “Why George Washington Would Have Agreed with Donald Trump,” \textit{Politico}, May 5, 2016, \url{www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/05/founding-fathers-2016}.} This “America First” foreign policy challenged core tenets of the strategy of primacy or liberal hegemony long championed by U.S. policymakers.

First, the Republican nominee openly and repeatedly questioned the web of long-standing alliances that the United States established since the end of World War II. In the European context, he speculated that if he were the occupant of the White House, the United States would not necessarily automatically abide by its treaty commitments to come to the aid of a member state if attacked.\footnote{David Sanger and Maggie Haberman, “Donald Trump Sets Conditions for Defending NATO Allies from Attack,” \textit{New York Times}, July 20 2016, \url{http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/21/us/politics/donald-trump-issues.html}.} Indeed, many U.S. officials, from the depths of the Cold War to the crisis in Libya, often have complained about the unwillingness or inability of other NATO members to pull their weight. In recent times, perhaps the most prominent expression of this sentiment came from Robert Gates, former Secretary of Defense under both Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, when he asserted that “there will be dwindling appetite and patience in the U.S. Congress—and in the American body politic writ large—to expend increasingly precious funds on behalf of nations that are apparently unwilling to devote the necessary resources […] to be serious and capable partners in their own defense.”\footnote{Quoted in Tom Shanker, “Defense Secretary Warns NATO of ‘Dim’ Future,” \textit{New York Times}, July 10 2011, \url{http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/11/world/europe/11gates.html}.}

Trump’s criticisms of NATO went further than these, however, by suggesting that NATO was “obsolete” and that the United States should be prepared to walk away from it unless member states “reimbursed” Washington or committed more of their own materiel in the form of additional troops or funding to the alliance. Central to Trump’s case was the claim that NATO was “unfair” economically as “we pay a disproportionate share.” Under a Trump Administration,
he claimed, “We will no longer be ripped off anymore” and “taken advantage of.”

Trump also applied this logic to long-standing alliance relationships in Asia and the Middle East, suggesting that states such as Japan, South Korea, and Saudi Arabia should be prepared to “go it alone” in security terms by acquiring nuclear weapons.

Second, Trump also elucidated a belligerent position on countering the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria: “I have a simple message for them. Their days are numbered. I won’t tell them where and I won’t tell them how. We must as, a nation, be more unpredictable. But they’re going to be gone. And soon.” In a separate campaign speech, the Republican standard bearer went further to assert that he would, “Bomb the shit outta them…. I’d just bomb those suckers…. I’d blow up the pipes, I’d blow up the refineries, I’d blow up every single inch, there would be nothing left.” This statement speaks both to the Jacksonian desire to protect its community from direct threat (construed in this instance as both physical and economic) and Jacksonian conceptions of “honor,” as the Islamic State constitutes an inherently dishonorable adversary, justifying the deployment of all and any means to destroy them.

Third, Trump also vociferously argued that major initiatives and agreements designed to establish and maintain an open global economic system and championed by successive U.S. Administrations in the post-Cold War era, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and World Trade Organization (WTO), have led to the economic “rape” of middle class America. President Bill Clinton’s lobbying for “China’s disastrous entry” into the WTO, for instance, provided the conditions for Beijing’s currency manipulation and intellectual property theft “adding another trillion dollars to our trade deficit.” The proposed remedy to this situation—imposing high tariffs on imports, pursuing a “trade war” against China, and scrapping the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)—presented a throwback to the protectionism and “tariff wall” of nineteenth-century American policymakers to which Jacksonian opinion is predisposed.

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45 See, for instance, Marc-William Palen, The ‘Conspiracy’ of Free Trade: The Anglo-American Struggle over Empire and Economic Globalisation, 1846-1896 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016). Walter Russel Mead also notes, “Historically, Jacksonians have never liked international economic agreements or systems that limit the U.S. government’s ability to
Critics were quick, however, to point out the flaws in such positions. Michael O’Hanlon and Kathleen Hicks, for example, argued with respect to the issue of U.S. alliance systems that they were not only “a very good investment,” but also “the central characteristic of its global leadership” providing Washington with “nearly 60” allies encompassing two-thirds of global GDP and two-thirds of global military spending. In contrast, they continued, Washington’s most likely peer competitors, Russia and China, were “blessed with the likes of Belarus and North Korea” as formal security partners. While undoubtedly valid, such arguments do not engage effectively the major elements of the Jacksonian tradition embodied in Trump’s positions nor recognize their internal consistency. Indeed, with respect to alliances, as Mead notes, that although Jacksonians “value allies and believe that the United States must honor its word, they do not believe in institutional constraints on the United States' freedom to act, unilaterally if necessary, in self-defense.”

Jacksonianism and the Future of American Foreign Policy

While some international relations scholarship is often reticent to acknowledge the role of domestic politics in shaping a state’s foreign policy program, clearly with the rise of Jacksonian sentiment, such reticence will be an obstacle to generating greater understanding of the forces that will shape U.S. foreign policy under the next administration. Notwithstanding the significant international or systemic level challenges that the next president will confront, we suggest that the return of the Jacksonian tradition could have two interrelated implications: 1) there will be difficulty reestablishing a foreign policy consensus; and 2) this could contribute to the perception of American decline.

The post-World War II foreign policy consensus has moved through the beltway with such fluidity that many have come to accept America’s role in molding and shaping the international order. As Derek S. Reveron and Nikolas K. Gvosdev stated, “There is an enduring consensus about America’s role in the world, which is due to the fact that while administrations may change, fundamental interests have not.” From this view flow two possible outcomes when the next president takes control of the White House. First, the influence of the Jacksonian tradition will dissipate in a Clinton Administration. Second, Donald Trump would “moderate” his foreign policy agenda in accordance with the liberal order if he were to become the next president. This outlook is not shared by all foreign policy pundits. Many have viewed the 2016 campaign as so toxic that it will lead to a disintegration or restructuring of American politics with implications for the policymaking of the next administration.

47 Mead, “The Tea Party and American Foreign Policy.”
administration. As Sarah Kendzior lamented, the traumas of the presidential campaign will leave an enduring legacy of “suffering” across America, whereby the country will continue to “look a lot like the America we have now.” For Kendzior, the election “has exposed deep rifts within both the Democratic and the Republican parties and highlighted the prevalence of radical views on both the right and left that range from neo-Nazism to anarchism.” Yet, for others, it is not so much the “rifts within the Democratic and Republican parties,” but the divide between elite or “establishment” positions on a range of domestic and foreign policy issues and that of the public writ large. In the foreign policy setting, this divide is most apparent with respect to one core question: the continued U.S. underwriting of the liberal international order. As Anatol Lieven recently noted, this divide has cut across the Left and Right of American politics:

The likelihood of the enduring power and influence of Trump’s ideology in the United States is underlined by the fact that […] while the followers of Democratic challenger Bernie Sanders differ bitterly from Trump’s on issues of social and economic justice, the role of the state, race, inclusivity and cultural diversity, they are in some ways very similar when it comes to economic nationalism and their support for a reduction in American commitments and engagements abroad (attitudes, fairly or unfairly, dubbed by the bipartisan U.S. foreign and security-policy establishment as ‘isolationism’).

These arguments are instructive for the role that domestic politics plays in influencing foreign policy behavior. In doing so, they affirm the veracity of Gideon Rose’s assessment that “leaders and elites do not always have complete freedom to extract and direct national resources as they might wish,” and “understanding the links between power and policy requires close examination of the contexts within which foreign policies are formulated and implemented.” The return of Jacksonian sentiment, and the specific foreign policy that such opinion demands, will make it difficult for the next administration to reconstruct a bipartisan consensus around the strategy of primacy. Indeed, Mead suggests in this respect, “In times like the present, when a surge of populist political energy coincides with a significant loss of popular confidence in establishment institutions. […] Jacksonian sentiment diminishes the ability of elite institutions and their members to shape national debates and policy.”

In the struggle to rebuild or redefine U.S. foreign policy strategy over the next four

52 Mead, “The Tea Party and American Foreign Policy.”
years, the next administration may do well to consider that “where limits to American primacy exist, they are more likely to be ideational as they are material.”\textsuperscript{53}