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The Jacksonian Tradition

by Walter Russell Mead

In the last five months of World War II, American bombing raids claimed the lives of more than 900,000 Japanese civilians—not counting the casualties from the atomic strikes against Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This is more than twice the total number of combat deaths that the United States has suffered in all its foreign wars combined.

On one night, that of March 9-10, 1945, 234 Superfortresses dropped 1,167 tons of incendiary bombs over downtown Tokyo; 83,793 Japanese bodies were found in the charred remains—a number greater than the 80,942 combat fatalities that the

United States sustained in the Korean and Vietnam Wars combined.

Since the Second World War, the United States has continued to employ devastating force against both civilian and military targets. Out of a pre-war population of 9.49 million, an estimated 1 million North Korean civilians are believed to have died as a result of U.S. actions during the 1950-53 conflict. During the same war, 33,870 American soldiers died in combat, meaning that U.S. forces killed approximately thirty North Korean civilians for every American soldier who died in action. The United States dropped almost three times as much explosive tonnage in the Vietnam War as was used in the Second World War, and something on the order of 365,000 Vietnamese civilians are believed to have been killed during the period of American involvement.

Regardless of Clausewitz's admonition that "casualty reports . . . are never accurate, seldom truthful, and in most cases deliberately falsified", these numbers are too striking to ignore. They do not, of course, suggest a moral parallel between the behavior of, say, German and Japanese aggressors and American forces seeking to defeat those aggressors in the shortest possible time. German and Japanese forces used the indiscriminate murder of civilians as a routine police tool in occupied territory, and wholesale massacres of civilians often accompanied German and Japanese advances into new territory. The behavior of the German Einsatzgruppen and of the Japanese army during the Rape of Nanking has no significant parallel on the American side.

In the Cold War, too, the evils the Americans fought were far worse than those they inflicted. Tens of millions more

innocent civilians in communist nations were murdered by their own governments in peacetime than ever died as the result of American attempts to halt communism's spread. War, even brutal war, was more merciful than communist rule.

Nevertheless, the American war record should make us think. An observer who thinks of American foreign policy only in terms of the commercial realism of the Hamiltonians, the crusading moralism of Wilsonian transcendentalists, and the supple pacifism of the principled but slippery Jeffersonians would be at a loss to account for American ruthlessness at war.

Those who prefer to believe that the present global hegemony of the United States emerged through a process of immaculate conception avert their eyes from many distressing moments in the American ascension. Yet students of

American power cannot ignore one of the chief elements in American success. The United States over its history has consistently summoned the will and the means to compel its enemies to yield to its demands.

Through the long sweep of American history, there have been many occasions when public opinion, or at least an important part of it, got ahead of politicians in demanding war. Many of the Indian wars were caused less by Indian aggression than by movements of frontier populations willing to provoke and fight wars with Indian tribes that were nominally under Washington's protection—and contrary both to the policy and the wishes of the national government. The War of 1812 came about largely because of a popular movement in the South and Midwest. Abraham Lincoln barely succeeded in preventing a war with Britain

over the Trent Affair during the Civil War; public opinion made it difficult for him to find an acceptable, face-saving solution to the problem. More recently, John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon were all haunted by fears that a pullout from the Vietnam War would trigger a popular backlash.

Once wars begin, a significant element of American public opinion supports waging them at the highest possible level of intensity. The devastating tactics of the wars against the Indians, General Sherman's campaign of 1864-65, and the unprecedented aerial bombardments of World War II were all broadly popular in the United States. During both the Korean and Vietnam Wars, presidents came under intense pressure, not only from military leaders but also from public opinion, to hit the enemy with all available force in all available places. Throughout the Cold War

the path of least resistance in American politics was generally the more hawkish stance. Politicians who advocated negotiated compromises with the Soviet enemy were labeled appeasers and paid a heavy political price. The Korean and Vietnam Wars lost public support in part because of political decisions not to risk the consequences of all-out war, not necessarily stopping short of the use of nuclear weapons. The most costly decision George Bush took in the Gulf War was not to send ground forces into Iraq, but to stop short of the occupation of Baghdad and the capture and trial of Saddam Hussein.

It is often remarked that the American people are more religious than their allies in Western Europe. But it is equally true that they are more military-minded. Currently, the American people support without complaint what is easily the highest military budget in the world. In

1998 the United States spent as much on defense as its NATO allies, South Korea, Japan, the Persian Gulf states, Russia and China combined. In response to widespread public concern about a decline in military preparedness, the Clinton administration and the Republican Congress are planning substantial increases in military spending in the years to come.

Americans do not merely pay for these forces, they use them. Since the end of the Vietnam War, taken by some as opening a new era of reluctance in the exercise of American power, the United States has deployed combat forces in, or used deadly force over, Cambodia, Iran, Grenada, Panama, Lebanon, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Turkey, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Sudan, Afghanistan, the South China Sea, Liberia, Macedonia, Albania and Yugoslavia. This is a record that no other country comes close to

matching.

It is also generally conceded that, with the exception of a handful of elite units in such forces as the British Army, American troops have a stronger "warrior culture" than do the armies of other wealthy countries. Indeed, of all the nato countries other than Turkey and Greece, only Great Britain today has anything like the American "war lobby" that becomes active in times of national crisis—a political force that under certain circumstances demands war, supports the decisive use of force, and urges political leaders to stop wasting time with negotiations, sanctions and Security Council meetings in order to attack the enemy with all possible strength.

Why is it that U.S. public opinion is often so quick—though sometimes so slow—to support armed intervention abroad? What

are the provocations that energize public opinion (at least some of it) for war—and how, if at all, is this "war lobby" related to the other elements of that opinion? The key to this warlike disposition, and to other important features of American foreign policy, is to be found in what I shall call its Jacksonian tradition, in honor of the sixth president of the United States.

The School of Andrew Jackson

It is a tribute to the general historical amnesia about American politics between the War of 1812 and the Civil War that Andrew Jackson is not more widely counted among the greatest of American presidents. Victor in the Battle of New Orleans—perhaps the most decisive battle in the shaping of the modern world between Trafalgar and Stalingrad—Andrew Jackson laid the foundation of American politics for most of the nineteenth century,

and his influence is still felt today. With the ever ready help of the brilliant Martin Van Buren, he took American politics from the era of silk stockings into the smoke-filled room. Every political party since his presidency has drawn on the symbolism, the institutions and the instruments of power that Jackson pioneered.

More than that, he brought the American people into the political arena. Restricted state franchises with high property qualifications meant that in 1820 many American states had higher property qualifications for voters than did boroughs for the British House of Commons. With Jackson's presidency, universal male suffrage became the basis of American politics and political values.

His political movement—or, more accurately, the community of political feeling that he wielded into an instrument

of power—remains in many ways the most important in American politics. Solidly Democratic through the Truman administration (a tradition commemorated in the annual Jefferson-Jackson Day dinners that are still the high points on Democratic Party calendars in many cities and states), Jacksonian America shifted toward the Republican Party under Richard Nixon—the most important political change in American life since the Second World War. The future of Jacksonian political allegiance will be one of the keys to the politics of the twenty-first century.

Suspicious of untrammeled federal power (Waco), skeptical about the prospects for domestic and foreign do-gooding (welfare at home, foreign aid abroad), opposed to federal taxes but obstinately fond of federal programs seen as primarily helping the middle class (Social Security and Medicare, mortgage interest subsidies),

Jacksonians constitute a large political interest.

In some ways Jacksonians resemble the Jeffersonians, with whom their political fortunes were linked for so many decades. Like Jeffersonians, Jacksonians are profoundly suspicious of elites. They generally prefer a loose federal structure with as much power as possible retained by states and local governments. But the differences between the two movements run very deep—so deep that during the Cold War they were on dead opposite sides of most important foreign policy questions. To use the language of the Vietnam era, a time when Jeffersonians and Jacksonians were fighting in the streets over foreign policy, the former were the most dovish current in mainstream political thought during the Cold War, while the latter were the most consistently hawkish.

One way to grasp the difference between the two schools is to see that both Jeffersonians and Jacksonians are civil libertarians, passionately attached to the Constitution and especially to the Bill of Rights, and deeply concerned to preserve the liberties of ordinary Americans. But while 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, the right to bear arms, as the citadel of liberty. Jeffersonians join the American Civil Liberties Union; Jacksonians join the National Rifle Association. In so doing, both are convinced that they are standing at the barricades of freedom.

For foreigners and for some Americans, the Jacksonian tradition is the least impressive in American politics. It is the most

deplored abroad, the most denounced at home. Jacksonian chairs of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee are the despair of high-minded people everywhere, as they hold up adhesion to the Kyoto Protocol, starve the UN and the IMF, cut foreign aid, and ban the use of U.S. funds for population control programs abroad. When spokesmen for other schools of thought speak about the "problems" of American foreign policy, the persistence and power of the Jacksonian school are high on their list. While some of this fashionable despair may be overdone, and is perhaps a reflection of different class interests and values, it is true that Jacksonians often figure as the most obstructionist of the schools, as the least likely to support Wilsonian initiatives for a better world, to understand Jeffersonian calls for patient diplomacy in difficult situations, or to accept Hamiltonian trade strategies. Yet without Jacksonians, the

United States would be a much weaker power.

A principal explanation of why Jacksonian politics are so poorly understood is that Jacksonianism is less an intellectual or political movement than an expression of the social, cultural and religious values of a large portion of the American public. And it is doubly obscure because it happens to be rooted in one of the portions of the public least represented in the media and the professoriat. Jacksonian America is a folk community with a strong sense of common values and common destiny; though periodically led by intellectually brilliant men—like Andrew Jackson himself—it is neither an ideology nor a self-conscious movement with a clear historical direction or political table of organization. Nevertheless, Jacksonian America has produced—and looks set to continue to produce—one political leader and

movement after another, and it is likely to continue to enjoy major influence over both foreign and domestic policy in the United States for the foreseeable future.

The Evolution of a Community

It is not fashionable today to think of the American nation as a folk community bound together by deep cultural and ethnic ties. Believers in a multicultural America attack this idea from one direction, but conservatives too have a tendency to talk about the United States as a nation based on ideology rather than ethnicity. Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, among others, has said that the United States is unlike other nations because it is based on an idea rather than on a community of national experience. The continuing and growing vitality of the Jacksonian tradition is, for better or worse, living proof that she is at

least partly wrong.

If Jeffersonianism is the book-ideology of the United States, Jacksonian populism is its folk-ideology. Historically, American populism has been based less on the ideas of the Enlightenment than on the community values and sense of identity among the British colonizers who first settled this country. In particular, as David Hackett Fischer has shown, Jacksonian populism can be originally identified with a subgroup among these settlers, the so-called "Scots-Irish", who settled the back country regions of the Carolinas and Virginia, and who went on to settle much of the Old West—West Virginia, Kentucky, parts of Indiana and Illinois—and the southern and south central states of Tennessee, Missouri, Alabama, Mississippi and Texas. Jacksonian populism today has moved beyond its original ethnic and geographical limits. Like country music,

another product of Jacksonian culture, Jacksonian politics and folk feeling has become a basic element in American consciousness that can be found from one end of the country to the other.

The Scots-Irish were a hardy and warlike people, with a culture and outlook formed by centuries of bitter warfare before they came to the United States. Fischer shows how, trapped on the frontiers between England and Scotland, or planted as Protestant colonies in the hostile soil of Ireland, this culture was shaped through centuries of constant, bloody war. The Revolutionary struggle and generations of savage frontier conflict in the United States reproduced these conditions in the New World; the Civil War—fought with particular ferocity in the border states—renewed the cultural heritage of war.

The role of what we are calling Jacksonian

America in nineteenth-century America is clear, but many twentieth-century observers made what once seemed the reasonable assumption that Jacksonian values and politics were dying out. These observers were both surprised and discomfited when Ronald Reagan's political success showed that Jacksonian America had done more than survive; it was, and is, thriving.

What has happened is that Jacksonian culture, values and self-identification have spread beyond their original ethnic limits. In the 1920s and 1930s the highland, border tradition in American life was widely thought to be dying out, ethnically, culturally and politically. Part of this was the economic and demographic collapse of the traditional home of Jacksonian America: the family farm. At the same time, mass immigration from southern and Eastern Europe tilted the ethnic balance of

the American population ever farther from its colonial mix. New England Yankees were a vanishing species, limited to the hills of New Hampshire and Vermont, while the cities and plains of Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island filled with Irishmen, Italians, Portuguese and Greeks. The great cities of the United States were increasingly filled with Catholics, members of the Orthodox churches and Jews—all professing in one way or another communitarian social values very much at odds with the individualism of traditional Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Celtic culture.

As Hiram W. Evans, the surprisingly articulate Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, wrote in 1926, the old stock American of his time had become

a stranger in large parts of the land his fathers gave him. Moreover, he is a most unwelcome stranger, one much spit upon,

and one to whom even the right to have his own opinions and to work for his own interests is now denied with jeers and revilings. ‘We must Americanize the Americans,’ a distinguished immigrant said recently.

Protestantism itself was losing its edge. The modernist critique of traditional Biblical readings found acceptance in one mainline denomination after another; Episcopal, Presbyterian, Methodist and Lutheran seminaries accepted critical, post-Darwinian readings of Scripture; self-described "fundamentalists" fought a slow, but apparently losing, rearguard action against the modernist forces. The new mainline Protestantism was a tolerant, even a namby-pamby, religion.

The old nativist spirit, anti-immigrant, anti-modern art and apparently anti-twentieth century, still had some bite—Ku

Klux crosses flamed across the Midwest as well as the South during the 1920s—but it all looked like the death throes of an outdated idea. There weren't many mourners: much of H.L. Mencken's career was based on exposing the limitations and mocking the death of what we are calling Jacksonian America.

Most progressive, right thinking intellectuals in mid-century America believed that the future of American populism lay in a social democratic movement based on urban immigrants. Social activists like Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger consciously sought to use cultural forms like folk songs to ease the transition from the old individualistic folk world to the collective new one that they believed was the wave of the future; they celebrated unions and other strange, European ideas in down home country twangs so that, in the bitter words of

Hiram Evans, "There is a steady flood of alien ideas being spread over the country, always carefully disguised as American."

What came next surprised almost everyone. The tables turned, and Evans' Americans "americanized" the immigrants rather than the other way around. In what is still a largely unheralded triumph of the melting pot, Northern immigrants gradually assimilated the values of Jacksonian individualism. Each generation of new Americans was less "social" and more individualistic than the preceding one. American Catholics, once among the world's most orthodox, remained Catholic in religious allegiance but were increasingly individualistic in terms of psychology and behavior ("I respect the Pope, but I have to follow my own conscience"). Ties to the countries of emigration steadily weakened, and the tendency to marry outside the group

strengthened.

Outwardly, most immigrant groups completed an apparent assimilation to American material culture within a couple of generations of their arrival. A second type of assimilation—an inward assimilation to and adaptation of the core cultural and psychological structure of the native population—took longer, but as third, fourth and fifth-generation immigrant families were exposed to the economic and social realities of American life, they were increasingly "americanized" on the inside as well as without.

This immense and complex process was accelerated by social changes that took place after 1945. Physically, the old neighborhoods broke up, and the Northern industrial working class, along with the refugees from the dying American family farm, moved into the suburbs to form a

new populist mix. As increasing numbers of the descendants of immigrants moved into the Jacksonian Sunbelt, the pace of assimilation grew. The suburban homeowner with his or her federally subsidized mortgage replaced the homesteading farmer (on free federal land) as the central pillar of American populism. Richard Nixon, with his two-pronged appeal to white Southerners and the "Joe Six-pack" voters of the North, was the first national politician to recognize the power of this newly energized current in American life.

Urban, immigrant America may have softened some of the rough edges of Jacksonian America, but the descendants of the great wave of European immigration sound more like Andrew Jackson from decade to decade. Rugged frontier individualism has proven to be contagious; each successive generation has been more

Jacksonian than its predecessor. The social and economic solidarity rooted in European peasant communities has been overmastered by the individualism of the frontier. The descendants of European working-class Marxists now quote Adam Smith; Joe Six-pack thinks of the welfare state as an expensive burden, not part of the natural moral order. Intellectuals have made this transition as thoroughly as anyone else. The children and grandchildren of trade unionists and Trotskyites now talk about the importance of liberal society and free markets; in the intellectual pilgrimage of Irving Kristol, what is usually a multigenerational process has been compressed into a single, brilliant career.

The new Jacksonianism is no longer rural and exclusively nativist. Frontier Jacksonianism may have taken the homesteading farmer and the log cabin as

its emblems, but today's Crabgrass Jacksonianism sees the homeowner on his modest suburban lawn as the hero of the American story. The Crabgrass Jacksonian may wear green on St. Patrick's Day; he or she might go to a Catholic Church and never listen to country music (though, increasingly, he or she probably does); but the Crabgrass Jacksonian doesn't just believe, she knows that she is as good an American as anybody else, that she is entitled to her rights from Church and State, that she pulls her own weight and expects others to do the same. That homeowner will be heard from: Ronald Reagan owed much of his popularity and success to his ability to connect with Jacksonian values. Ross Perot and Pat Buchanan in different ways have managed to tap into the power of the populist energy that Old Hickory rode into the White House. In both domestic and foreign policy, the twenty-first century will be

profoundly influenced by the values and concerns of Jacksonian America.

The Jacksonian Code

To understand how Crabgrass Jacksonianism is shaping and will continue to shape American foreign policy, we must begin with another unfashionable concept: Honor. Although few Americans today use this anachronistic word, honor remains a core value for tens of millions of middle-class Americans, women as well as men. The unacknowledged code of honor that shapes so much of American behavior and aspiration today is a recognizable descendent of the frontier codes of honor of early Jacksonian America. The appeal of this code is one of the reasons that Jacksonian values have spread to so many people outside the original ethnic and social nexus in which Jacksonian America was formed.

The first principle of this code is self-reliance. Real Americans, many Americans feel, are people who make their own way in the world. They may get a helping hand from friends and family, but they hold their places in the world through honest work. They don't slide by on welfare, and they don't rely on inherited wealth or connections. Those who won't work and are therefore poor, or those who don't need to work due to family money, are viewed with suspicion. Those who meet the economic and moral tests belong to the broad Middle Class, the folk community of working people that Jacksonians believe to be the heart, soul and spine of the American nation. Earning and keeping a place in this community on the basis of honest work is the first principle of Jacksonian honor, and it remains a serious insult even to imply that a member of the American middle class is

not pulling his or her weight in the world.

Jacksonian honor must be acknowledged by the outside world. One is entitled to, and demands, the appropriate respect: recognition of rights and just claims, acknowledgment of one's personal dignity. Many Americans will still fight, sometimes with weapons, when they feel they have not been treated with the proper respect. But even among the less violent, Americans stand on their dignity and rights. Respect is also due age. Those who know Jacksonian America only through its very inexact representations in the media think of the United States as a youth-obsessed, age-neglecting society. In fact, Jacksonian America honors age. Andrew Jackson was sixty-one when he was elected president for the first time; Ronald Reagan was seventy. Most movie stars lose their appeal with age; those whose appeal stems from their ability to portray and

embody Jacksonian values—like John Wayne—only become more revered.

The second principle of the code is equality. Among those members of the folk community who do pull their weight, there is an absolute equality of dignity and right. No one has a right to tell the self-reliant Jacksonian what to say, do or think. Any infringement on equality will be met with defiance and resistance. Male or female, the Jacksonian is, and insists on remaining, independent of church, state, social hierarchy, political parties and labor unions. Jacksonians may choose to accept the authority of a leader or movement or faith, but will never yield to an imposed authority. The young are independent of the old: "free, white and twenty-one" is an old Jacksonian expression; the color line has softened, but otherwise the sentiment is as true as it ever was.

Mrs. Fanny Trollope (mother of novelist Anthony Trollope) had the misfortune to leave her native Britain to spend two years in the United States. Next to her revulsion at the twin American habits of chewing tobacco in public places and missing spittoons with the finished product, she most despised the passion for equality she found everywhere she looked. "The theory of equality", Mrs. Trollope observed,

> may be very daintily discussed by English gentlemen in a London dining-room, when the servant, having placed a fresh bottle of cool wine on the table, respectfully shuts the door, and leaves them to their walnuts and their wisdom; but it will be found less palatable when it presents itself in the shape of a hard, greasy paw, and is claimed in accents that breathe less of freedom than of onions and whiskey. Strong, indeed, must be the love of equality in an English breast if it can

survive a tour through the Union.

The third principle is individualism. The Jacksonian does not just have the right to self-fulfillment—he or she has a duty to seek it. In Jacksonian America, everyone must find his or her way: each individual must choose a faith, or no faith, and code of conduct based on conscience and reason. The Jacksonian feels perfectly free to strike off in an entirely new religious direction. "I sincerely believe", wrote poor Mrs. Trollope, "that if a fire-worshiper, or an Indian Brahmin, were to come to the United States, prepared to preach and pray in English, he would not be long without a ‘very respectable congregation.’" She didn’t know the half of it.

Despite this individualism, the Jacksonian code also mandates acceptance of certain social mores and principles. Loyalty to

family, raising children "right", sexual decency (heterosexual monogamy—which can be serial) and honesty within the community are virtues that commend themselves to the Jacksonian spirit. Children of both sexes can be wild, but both women and men must be strong. Corporal punishment is customary and common; Jacksonians find objections to this time-honored and (they feel) effective method of discipline outlandish and absurd. Although women should be more discreet, both sexes can sow wild oats before marriage. After it, to enjoy the esteem of their community a couple must be seen to put their children’s welfare ahead of personal gratification.

The fourth pillar in the Jacksonian honor code struck Mrs. Trollope and others as more dishonorable than honorable, yet it persists nevertheless. Let us call it financial esprit. While the Jacksonian believes in hard work, he or she also

believes that credit is a right and that money, especially borrowed money, is less a sacred trust than a means for self-discovery and expression. Although previous generations lacked the faculties for consumer credit that Americans enjoy at the end of the twentieth century, many Americans have always assumed that they have a right to spend money on their appearance, on purchases that affirm their status. The strict Jacksonian code of honor does not enjoin what others see as financial probity. What it demands, rather, is a daring and entrepreneurial spirit. Credit is seen less as an obligation than as an opportunity. Jacksonians have always supported loose monetary policy and looser bankruptcy laws.

Finally, courage is the crowning and indispensable part of the code. Jacksonians must be ready to defend their honor in great things and small. Americans

ought to stick up for what they believe. In the nineteenth century, Jacksonian Americans fought duels long after aristocrats in Europe had given them up, and Americans today remain far more likely than Europeans to settle personal quarrels with extreme and even deadly violence.

Jacksonian America's love affair with weapons is, of course, the despair of the rest of the country. Jacksonian culture values firearms, and the freedom to own and use them. The right to bear arms is a mark of civic and social equality, and knowing how to care for firearms is an important part of life. Jacksonians are armed for defense: of the home and person against robbers; against usurpations of the federal government; and of the United States against its enemies. In one war after another, Jacksonians have flocked to the colors. Independent and

difficult to discipline, they have nevertheless demonstrated magnificent fighting qualities in every corner of the world. Jacksonian America views military service as a sacred duty. When Hamiltonians, Wilsonians and Jeffersonians dodged the draft in Vietnam or purchased exemptions and substitutes in earlier wars, Jacksonians soldiered on, if sometimes bitterly and resentfully. An honorable person is ready to kill or to die for family and flag.

Jacksonian society draws an important distinction between those who belong to the folk community and those who do not. Within that community, among those bound by the code and capable of discharging their responsibilities under it, Jacksonians are united in a social compact. Outside that compact is chaos and darkness. The criminal who commits what, in the Jacksonian code, constitute

unforgivable sins (cold-blooded murder, rape, the murder or sexual abuse of a child, murder or attempted murder of a peace officer) can justly be killed by the victims' families, colleagues or by society at large—with or without the formalities of law. In many parts of the United States, juries will not convict police on almost any charge, nor will they condemn revenge killers in particularly outrageous cases. The right of the citizen to defend family and property with deadly force is a sacred one as well, a legacy from colonial and frontier times.

The absolute and even brutal distinction drawn between the members of the community and outsiders has had massive implications in American life. Throughout most of American history the Jacksonian community was one from which many Americans were automatically and absolutely excluded: Indians, Mexicans,

Asians, African Americans, obvious sexual deviants and recent immigrants of non-Protestant heritage have all felt the sting. Historically, the law has been helpless to protect such people against economic oppression, social discrimination and mob violence, including widespread lynchings. Legislators would not enact laws, and if they did, sheriffs would not arrest, prosecutors would not try, juries would not convict.

This tells us something very important: throughout most of American history and to a large extent even today, equal rights emerge from and depend on this popular culture of equality and honor rather than flow out of abstract principles or written documents. The many social and legal disabilities still suffered in practice by unpopular minorities demonstrate that the courts and the statute books still enjoy only a limited ability to protect equal

rights in the teeth of popular feeling and culture.

Even so, Jacksonian values play a major role in African-American culture. If anything, that role has increased with the expanded presence of African Americans in all military ranks. The often blighted social landscape of the inner city has in some cases re-created the atmosphere and practices of American frontier life. In many ways the gang culture of some inner cities resembles the social atmosphere of the Jacksonian South, as well as the hard drinking, womanizing, violent male culture of the Mississippi in the days of Davy Crockett and Mark Twain. Bragging about one's physical and sexual prowess, the willingness to avenge disrespect with deadly force, a touchy insistence that one is as good as anybody else: once over his shock at the urban landscape and the racial issue, Billy the Kid would find

himself surprisingly at home in such an environment.

The degree to which African-American society resembles Jacksonian culture remains one of the crucial and largely overlooked elements in American life. Despite historical experiences that would have completely alienated many ethnic minorities around the world, American black popular culture remains profoundly—and, in times of danger, fiercely—patriotic. From the Revolution onward, African Americans have sought more to participate in America's wars than to abstain from them, and the strength of personal and military honor codes in African-American culture today remains a critical factor in assuring the continued strength of American military forces into the twenty-first century.

The underlying cultural unity between

African Americans and Anglo-Jacksonian America shaped the course and ensured the success of the modern civil rights movement. Martin Luther King and his followers exhibited exemplary personal courage, their rhetoric was deeply rooted in Protestant Christianity, and the rights they asked for were precisely those that Jacksonian America values most for itself. Further, they scrupulously avoided the violent tactics that would have triggered an unstoppable Jacksonian response.

Although cultures change slowly and many individuals lag behind, the bulk of American Jacksonian opinion has increasingly moved to recognize the right of code-honoring members of minority groups to receive the rights and protections due to members of the folk community. This new and, one hopes, growing feeling of respect and tolerance emphatically does not extend to those,

minorities or not, who are not seen as code-honoring Americans. Those who violate or reject the code—criminals, irresponsible parents, drug addicts—have not benefited from the softening of the Jacksonian color line.

The Politics of the Culture

Jacksonian foreign policy is related to Jacksonian values and goals in domestic policy. For Jacksonians, the prime goal of the American people is not the commercial and industrial policy sought by Hamiltonians, nor the administrative excellence in support of moral values that Wilsonians seek, nor Jeffersonian liberty. Jacksonians believe that the government should do everything in its power to promote the well-being—political, moral, economic—of the folk community. Any means are permissible in the service of this end, as long as they do not violate the

moral feelings or infringe on the freedoms that Jacksonians believe are essential in their daily lives.

Jacksonians are instinctively democratic and populist. Hamiltonians mistrust democracy; Wilsonians don't approve of the political rough and tumble. And while Jeffersonians support democracy in principle, they remain concerned that tyrannical majorities can overrule minority rights. Jacksonians believe that the political and moral instincts of the American people are sound and can be trusted, and that the simpler and more direct the process of government is, the better will be the results. In general, while the other schools welcome the representative character of our democracy, Jacksonians tend to see representative rather than direct institutions as necessary evils, and to believe that governments breed corruption

and inefficiency the way picnics breed ants. Every administration will be corrupt; every Congress and legislature will be, to some extent, the plaything of lobbyists. Career politicians are inherently untrustworthy; if it spends its life buzzing around the outhouse, it's probably a fly. Jacksonians see corruption as human nature and, within certain ill-defined boundaries of reason and moderation, an inevitable by-product of government.

It is perversion rather than corruption that most troubles Jacksonians: the possibility that the powers of government will be turned from the natural and proper object of supporting the well-being of the majority toward oppressing the majority in the service of an economic or cultural elite —or, worse still, in the interests of powerful foreigners. Instead of trying, however ineptly, to serve the people, have the politicians turned the government

against the people? Are they serving large commercial interests with malicious designs on the common good? Are they either by ineptitude or wickedness serving hostile foreign interests—giving all our industrial markets to the Japanese, or allowing communists to steal our secrets and hand them to the Chinese? Are they fecklessly frittering away huge sums of money on worthless foreign aid programs that transfer billions to corrupt foreign dictators?

Jacksonians tolerate a certain amount of government perversion, but when it becomes unbearable, they look to a popular hero to restore government to its proper functions. It was in this capacity that Andrew Jackson was elected to the presidency, and the role has since been reprised by any number of politicians on both the local and the national stages. Recent decades have seen Ronald Reagan

master the role, and George Wallace, Ross Perot, Jesse Ventura and Pat Buchanan auditioning for it. The Jacksonian hero dares to say what the people feel and defies the entrenched elites. "I welcome their hatred", said the aristocratic Franklin Roosevelt, in his role of tribune of the people. The hero may make mistakes, but he will command the unswerving loyalty of Jacksonian America so long as his heart is perceived to be in the right place.

When it comes to Big Government, Jeffersonians worry more about the military than about anything else. But for Jacksonians, spending money on the military is one of the best things government can do. Yes, the Pentagon is inefficient and contractors are stealing the government blind. But by definition the work that the Defense Department does—defending the nation—is a service to the Jacksonian middle class. Yes, the Pentagon

should spend its money more carefully, but let us not throw the baby out with the bath water. Stories about welfare abusers in limousines and foreign aid swindles generate more anger among Jacksonians than do stories of $600 hammers at the Pentagon.

The profoundly populist world-view of Jacksonian Americans contributes to one of the most important elements in their politics: the belief that while problems are complicated, solutions are simple. False idols are many; the True God is One. Jacksonians believe that Gordian Knots are there to be cut. In public controversies, the side that is always giving you reasons why something can’t be done, and is endlessly telling you that the popular view isn’t sufficiently "sophisticated" or "nuanced"—that is the side that doesn’t want you to know what it is doing, and it is not to be trusted. If politicians have

honest intentions, they will tell you straight up what they plan to do. If it’s a good idea, you will like it as soon as they explain the whole package. For most of the other schools, "complex" is a positive term when applied either to policies or to situations; for Jacksonians it is a negative. Ronald Reagan brilliantly exploited this. As in the case of Andrew Jackson himself, Reagan’s own intuitive approach to the world led him to beliefs and policies that appealed to Jacksonian opinion right from the start.

Instinct, Not Ideology

Those who like to cast American foreign policy as an unhealthy mix of ignorance, isolationism and trigger-happy cowboy diplomacy are often thinking about the Jacksonian populist tradition. That tradition is stronger among the mass of ordinary people than it is among the elite.

It is more strongly entrenched in the heartland than on either of the two coasts. It has been historically associated with white Protestant males of the lower and middle classes—today the least fashionable element in the American political mix.

Although there are many learned and thoughtful Jacksonians, including those who have made distinguished careers in public service, it is certainly true that the Jacksonian philosophy is embraced by many people who know very little about the wider world. With them it is an instinct rather than an ideology—a culturally shaped set of beliefs and emotions rather than a set of ideas. But ideas and policy proposals that resonate with Jacksonian core values and instincts enjoy wide support and can usually find influential supporters in the policy process.

So influential is Jacksonian opinion in the

formation of American foreign policy that anyone lacking a feel for it will find much of American foreign policy baffling and opaque. Foreigners in particular have alternately overestimated and underestimated American determination because they failed to grasp the structure of Jacksonian opinion and influence. Yet Jacksonian views on foreign affairs are relatively straightforward, and once they are understood, American foreign policy becomes much less mysterious.

To begin with, although the other schools often congratulate themselves on their superior sophistication and appreciation for complexity, Jacksonianism provides the basis in American life for what many scholars and practitioners would consider the most sophisticated of all approaches to foreign affairs: realism. In this it stands with Jeffersonianism, while being deeply suspicious of the "global meliorist"

elements found, in different forms, in both Wilsonian and Hamiltonian foreign policy ideas. Often, Jeffersonians and Jacksonians will stand together in opposition to humanitarian interventions, or interventions made in support of Wilsonian or Hamiltonian world order initiatives. However, while Jeffersonians espouse a minimalist realism under which the United States seeks to define its interests as narrowly as possible and to defend those interests with an absolute minimum of force, Jacksonians approach foreign policy in a very different spirit—one in which honor, concern for reputation, and faith in military institutions play a much greater role.

Jacksonian realism is based on the very sharp distinction in popular feeling between the inside of the folk community and the dark world without. Jacksonian patriotism is not a doctrine but an

emotion, like love of one's family. The nation is an extension of the family. Members of the American folk are bound together by history, culture and a common morality. At a very basic level, a feeling of kinship exists among Americans: we have one set of rules for dealing with each other and a very different set for the outside world. Unlike Wilsonians, who hope ultimately to convert the Hobbesian world of international relations into a Lockean political community, Jacksonians believe that it is natural and inevitable that national politics and national life will work on different principles from international affairs. For Jacksonians, the world community Wilsonians want to build is not merely a moral impossibility but a monstrosity. An American foreign policy that, for example, takes tax money from middle-class Americans to give to a corrupt and incompetent dictatorship overseas is nonsense; it hurts Americans and does

little for Borrioboola-Gha. Countries, like families, should take care of their own; if everybody did that we would all be better off. Charity, meanwhile, should be left to private initiatives and private funds; Jacksonian America is not ungenerous but it lacks all confidence in the government's ability to administer charity, either at home or abroad.

Given the moral gap between the folk community and the rest of the world—and given that other countries are believed to have patriotic and communal feelings of their own, feelings that similarly harden once the boundary of the folk community is reached—Jacksonians believe that international life is and will remain both anarchic and violent. The United States must be vigilant and strongly armed. Our diplomacy must be cunning, forceful and no more scrupulous than anybody else's. At times, we must fight pre-emptive wars.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with subverting foreign governments or assassinating foreign leaders whose bad intentions are clear. Thus, Jacksonians are more likely to tax political leaders with a failure to employ vigorous measures than to worry about the niceties of international law.

Indeed, of all the major currents in American society, Jacksonians have the least regard for international law and international institutions. They prefer the rule of custom to the written law, and that is as true in the international sphere as it is in personal relations at home. Jacksonians believe that there is an honor code in international life—as there was in clan warfare in the borderlands of England—and those who live by the code will be treated under it. But those who violate the code—who commit terrorist acts in peacetime, for example—forfeit its

protection and deserve no consideration.

Many students of American foreign policy, both here and abroad, dismiss Jacksonians as ignorant isolationists and vulgar patriots, but, again, the reality is more complex, and their approach to the world and to war is more closely grounded in classical realism than many recognize. Jacksonians do not believe that the United States must have an unambiguously moral reason for fighting. In fact, they tend to separate the issues of morality and war more clearly than many members of the foreign policy establishment.

The Gulf War was a popular war in Jacksonian circles because the defense of the nation's oil supply struck a chord with Jacksonian opinion. That opinion—which has not forgotten the oil shortages and price hikes of the 1970s—clearly considers stability of the oil supply a vital national

interest and is prepared to fight to defend it. The atrocity propaganda about alleged Iraqi barbarisms in Kuwait did not inspire Jacksonians to war, and neither did legalistic arguments about U.S. obligations under the UN Charter to defend a member state from aggression. Those are useful arguments to screw Wilsonian courage to the sticking place, but they mean little for Jacksonians. Had there been no UN Charter and had Kuwait been even more corrupt and repressive that it is, Jacksonian opinion would still have supported the Gulf War. It would have supported a full-scale war with Iran over the 1980 hostage crisis, and it will take an equally hawkish stance toward any future threat to perceived U.S. interests in the Persian Gulf region.

In the absence of a clearly defined threat to the national interest, Jacksonian opinion is much less aggressive. It has not,

for example, been enthusiastic about the U.S. intervention in the case of Bosnia. There the evidence of unspeakable atrocities was much greater than in Kuwait, and the legal case for intervention was as strong. Yet Jacksonian opinion saw no threat to the interests, as it understood them, of the United States, and Wilsonians were the only segment of the population that was actively eager for war.

In World War I it took the Zimmermann Telegram and the repeated sinking of American ships to convince Jacksonian opinion that war was necessary. In World War II, neither the Rape of Nanking nor the atrocities of Nazi rule in Europe drew the United States into the war. The attack on Pearl Harbor did.

To engage Jacksonians in support of the Cold War it was necessary to convince them that Moscow was engaged in a far-

reaching and systematic campaign for world domination, and that this campaign would succeed unless the United States engaged in a long-term defensive effort with the help of allies around the world. That involved a certain overstatement of both Soviet intentions and capabilities, but that is beside the present point. Once Jacksonian opinion was convinced that the Soviet threat was real and that the Cold War was necessary, it stayed convinced. Populist American opinion accepted the burdens it imposed and worried only that the government would fail to prosecute the Cold War with the necessary vigor. No one should mistake the importance of this strong and constant support. Despite the frequent complaints by commentators and policymakers that the American people are "isolationist" and "uninterested in foreign affairs", they have made and will make enormous financial and personal sacrifices if convinced that these are in the nation’s

vital interests.

This mass popular patriotism, and the martial spirit behind it, gives the United States immense advantages in international affairs. After two world wars, no European nation has shown the same willingness to pay the price in blood and treasure for a global presence. Most of the "developed" nations find it difficult to maintain large, high-quality fighting forces. Not all of the martial patriotism in the United States comes out of the world of Jacksonian populism, but without that tradition, the United States would be hard pressed to maintain the kind of international military presence it now has.

Pessimism

While in many respects Jacksonian Americans have an optimistic outlook, there is a large and important sense in

which they are pessimistic. Whatever the theological views of individual Jacksonians may be, Jacksonian culture believes in Original Sin and does not accept the Enlightenment's belief in the perfectibility of human nature. As a corollary, Jacksonians are pre-millennialist: they do not believe that utopia is just around the corner. In fact, they tend to believe the reverse—the anti-Christ will get here before Jesus does, and human history will end in catastrophe and flames, followed by the Day of Judgment.

This is no idle theological concept. Belief in the approach of the "End Times" and the "Great Tribulation"—concepts rooted in certain interpretations of Jewish and Christian prophetic texts—has been a powerful force in American life from colonial times. Jacksonians believe that neither Wilsonians nor Hamiltonians nor anybody else will ever succeed in building

a peaceful world order, and that the only world order we are likely to get will be a bad one. No matter how much money we ship overseas, and no matter how cleverly the development bureaucrats spend it, it will not create peace on earth. Plans for universal disarmament and world courts of justice founder on the same rock of historical skepticism. Jacksonians just tend not to believe that any of these things will do much good.

In fact, they think they may do harm. Linked to the skepticism about man-made imitations of the Kingdom of God is a deep apprehension about the rise of an evil world order. In theological terms, this is a reference to the fear of the anti-Christ, who, many commentators affirm, is predicted in Scripture to come with the appearance of an angel of light—a charismatic political figure who offers what looks like a plan for world peace and

order, but which is actually a Satanic snare intended to deceive.

For most of its history, Jacksonian America believed that the Roman Catholic Church was the chief emissary of Satan on earth, a belief that had accompanied the first Americans on their journey from Britain. Fear of Catholicism gradually subsided, but during the Cold War the Kremlin replaced the Vatican as the center for American popular fears about the forces of evil in the world. The international communist conspiracy captured the old stock American popular imagination because it fit cultural templates established in the days of the Long Parliament and the English Civil War. Descendants of immigrants from Eastern Europe had their own cultural dispositions toward conspiracy thinking, plus, in many cases, a deep hatred and fear of Russia.

The fear of a ruthless, formidable enemy abroad who enjoys a powerful fifth column in the United States—including high-ranking officials who serve it either for greed or out of misguided ideological zeal—is older than the Republic. During the Cold War, this "paranoid tradition" in American life stayed mostly focused on the Kremlin—though organizations like the John Birch Society saw ominous links between the Kremlin and the American Establishment. The paranoid streak was, if anything, helpful in sustaining popular support for Cold War strategy. After the Cold War, it is proving more difficult to integrate into effective American policy. To some degree, the chief object of popular concern in post-Cold War America is the Hamiltonian dream of a fully integrated global economy, combined with the Wilsonian dream of global political order that ends the nightmare of warring nation-states. George Bush’s call for a "New World

Order" had a distinctly Orwellian connotation to the Jacksonian ear. Christian Coalition founder Pat Robertson, in his book The New World Order (1991), traces the call for that Order to a Satanic conspiracy consciously implemented by the pillars of the American Establishment.

The fear that the Establishment, linked to its counterpart in Britain and, through Britain, to all the corrupt movements and elites of the Old World, is relentlessly plotting to destroy American liberty is an old but still potent one. The Trilateral Commission, the Council on Foreign Relations, the Bilderbergers, the Bavarian Illuminati, the Rothschilds, the Rockefellers: these names and others echo through a large and shadowy world of conspiracy theories and class resentment. Should seriously bad economic times come, there is always the potential that, with effective leadership, the paranoid

element in the Jacksonian world could ride popular anger and panic into power.

Honor

Another aspect of Jacksonian foreign policy is the aforementioned deep sense of national honor and a corresponding need to live up to—in actuality and in the eyes of others—the demands of an honor code. The political importance of this code should not be underestimated; Americans are capable of going to war over issues of national honor. The War of 1812 is an example of Jacksonian sentiment forcing a war out of resentment over continual national humiliations at the hand of Britain. (Those who suffered directly from British interference with American shipping, the merchants, were totally against the war.) At the end of the twentieth century, it is national honor, more than any vital strategic interest, that

would require the United States to fulfill its promises to protect Taiwan from invasion.

The perception of national honor as a vital interest has always been a wedge issue driving Jacksonians and Jeffersonians apart. The Jeffersonian peace policy in the Napoleonic Wars became impossible as the War Hawks grew stronger. The same pattern recurred in the Carter administration, during which gathering Jacksonian fury and impatience at Carter's Jeffersonian approaches to the Soviet Union, Panama, Iran and Nicaragua ignited a reaction that forced the President to reverse his basic policy orientation and ended by driving him from office. What Jeffersonian diplomacy welcomes as measures to head off war often look to Jacksonians like pusillanimous weakness.

Once the United States extends a security

guarantee or makes a promise, we are required to honor that promise come what may. Jacksonian opinion, which in the nature of things had little faith that South Vietnam could build democracy or that there was anything concrete there of interest to the average American, was steadfast in support of the war—though not of the strategy—because we had given our word to defend South Vietnam. During this year's war in Kosovo, Jacksonian opinion was resolutely against it to begin with. However, once U.S. honor was engaged, Jacksonians began to urge a stronger warfighting strategy including the use of ground troops. It is a bad thing to fight an unnecessary war, but it is inexcusable and dishonorable to lose one once it has begun.

Reputation is as important in international life as it is to the individual honor of Jacksonians. Honor in the Jacksonian

imagination 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 that others treat us. Therefore, at stake in a given crisis is not simply whether we satisfy our own ideas of what is due our honor. Our behavior and the resolution that we obtain must enhance our reputation—our prestige—in the world at large.

Warfighting

Jacksonian America has clear ideas about how wars should be fought, how enemies should be treated, and what should happen when the wars are over. It recognizes two kinds of enemies and two kinds of fighting: honorable enemies fight

a clean fight and are entitled to be opposed in the same way; dishonorable enemies fight dirty wars and in that case all rules are off.

An honorable enemy is one who declares war before beginning combat; fights according to recognized rules of war, honoring such traditions as the flag of truce; treats civilians in occupied territory with due consideration; and—a crucial point—refrains from the mistreatment of prisoners of war. Those who surrender should be treated with generosity. Adversaries who honor the code will benefit from its protections, while those who want a dirty fight will get one.

This pattern was very clearly illustrated in the Civil War. The Army of the Potomac and the Army of Northern Virginia faced one another throughout the war, and fought some of the bloodiest battles of the

nineteenth century, including long bouts of trench warfare. Yet Robert E. Lee and his men were permitted an honorable surrender and returned unmolested to their homes with their horses and personal side arms. One Confederate, however, was executed after the war: Captain Henry Wirz, who was convicted of mistreating Union prisoners of war at Camp Sumter, Georgia.

Although American Indians often won respect for their extraordinary personal courage, Jacksonian opinion generally considered Indians to be dishonorable opponents. American-Indian warrior codes (also honor based) permitted surprise attacks on civilians and the torture of prisoners of war. This was all part of a complex system of limited warfare among the tribal nations, but Jacksonian frontier dwellers were not students of multicultural diversity. In their view, Indian

war tactics were the sign of a dishonorable, unscrupulous and cowardly form of war. Anger at such tactics led Jacksonians to abandon the restraints imposed by their own war codes, and the ugly skirmishes along the frontier spiraled into a series of genocidal conflicts in which each side felt the other was violating every standard of humane conduct.

The Japanese, another people with a highly developed war code based on personal honor, had the misfortune to create the same kind of impression on American Jacksonians. The sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, the gross mistreatment of American pows (the Bataan Death March), and Japanese fighting tactics all served to enrage American Jacksonians and led them to see the Pacific enemy as ruthless, dishonorable and inhuman. All contributed to the vitriolic intensity of combat in the Pacific theater. By the summer of 1945,

American popular opinion was fully prepared to countenance invasion of the Japanese home islands, even if they were defended with the tenacity (and indifference to civilian lives) that marked the fighting on Okinawa.

Given this background, the Americans who decided to use the atomic bomb may have been correct that the use of the weapon saved lives, and not only of American soldiers. In any case, Jacksonians had no compunction about using the bomb. General Curtis LeMay (subsequently the 1968 running mate of Jacksonian populist third-party candidate George Wallace) succinctly summed up this attitude toward fighting a dishonorable opponent: "I'll tell you what war is about", said Lemay in an interview, "You've got to kill people, and when you've killed enough they stop fighting."

By contrast, although the Germans committed bestial crimes against civilians and pows (especially Soviet pows), their behavior toward the armed forces of the United States was more in accordance with American ideas about military honor. Indeed, General Erwin Rommel is considered something of a military hero among American Jacksonians: an honorable enemy. Still, if the Germans avoided exposure to the utmost fury of an aroused American people at war, they were nevertheless subjected to the full, ferocious scope of the violence that a fully aroused American public opinion will sustain—and even insist upon.

For the first Jacksonian rule of war is that wars must be fought with all available force. The use of limited force is deeply repugnant. Jacksonians see war as a switch that is either "on" or "off." They do not like the idea of violence on a dimmer switch.

Either the stakes are important enough to fight for—in which case you should fight with everything you have—or they are not, in which case you should mind your own business and stay home. To engage in a limited war is one of the costliest political decisions an American president can make—neither Truman nor Johnson survived it.

The second key concept in Jacksonian thought about war is that the strategic and tactical objective of American forces is to impose our will on the enemy with as few American casualties as possible. The Jacksonian code of military honor does not turn war into sport. It is a deadly and earnest business. This is not the chivalry of a medieval joust, or of the orderly battlefields of eighteenth-century Europe. One does not take risks with soldiers' lives to give a "fair fight." Some sectors of opinion in the United States and abroad were both shocked and appalled during the

Gulf and Kosovo wars over the way in which American forces attacked the enemy from the air without engaging in much ground combat. The "turkey shoot" quality of the closing moments of the war against Iraq created a particularly painful impression. Jacksonians dismiss such thoughts out of hand. It is the obvious duty of American leaders to crush the forces arrayed against us as quickly, thoroughly and professionally as possible.

Jacksonian opinion takes a broad view of the permissible targets in war. Again reflecting a very old cultural heritage, Jacksonians believe that the enemy's will to fight is a legitimate target of war, even if this involves American forces in attacks on civilian lives, establishments and property. The colonial wars, the Revolution and the Indian wars all give ample evidence of this view, and General William Tecumseh Sherman's March to the Sea

showed the degree to which the targeting of civilian morale through systematic violence and destruction could, to widespread popular applause, become an acknowledged warfighting strategy, even when fighting one's own rebellious kindred.

Probably as a result of frontier warfare, Jacksonian opinion came to believe that it was breaking the spirit of the enemy nation, rather than the fighting power of the enemy's armies, that was the chief object of warfare. It was not enough to defeat a tribe in battle; one had to "pacify" the tribe, to convince it utterly that resistance was and always would be futile and destructive. For this to happen, the war had to go to the enemy's home. The villages had to be burned, food supplies destroyed, civilians had to be killed. From the tiniest child to the most revered of the elderly sages, everyone in

the enemy nation had to understand that further armed resistance to the will of the American people—whatever that might be—was simply not an option.

With the development of air power and, later, of nuclear weapons, this long-standing cultural acceptance of civilian targeting assumed new importance. Wilsonians and Jeffersonians protested even at the time against the deliberate terror bombing of civilian targets in the Second World War. Since 1945 there has been much agonized review of the American decision to use atomic bombs against Hiroshima and Nagasaki. None of this hand wringing has made the slightest impression on the Jacksonian view that the bombings were self-evidently justified and right. During both the Vietnam and Korean conflicts, there were serious proposals in Jacksonian quarters to use nuclear weapons—why else have them? The only

reason Jacksonian opinion has ever accepted not to use nuclear weapons is the prospect of retaliation.

Jacksonians also have strong ideas about how wars should end. "There is no substitute for victory", as General MacArthur said, and the only sure sign of victory is the "unconditional surrender" of enemy forces. Just as Jacksonian opinion resents limits on American weapons and tactics, it also resents stopping short of victory. Unconditional surrender is not always a literal and absolute demand. The Confederate surrenders in 1865 included generous provisions for the losing armies. The Japanese were assured after the Potsdam Declaration that, while the United States insisted on unconditional surrender and acceptance of the terms, they could keep the "emperor system" after the war. However, there is only so much give in the idea: all resistance must

cease; U.S. forces must make an unopposed entry into and occupation of the surrendering country; the political objectives of the war must be conceded in toto.

When in the later stages of World War II the Joint Chiefs of Staff discussed the prospect of an invasion of Kyushu, the southernmost of the major Japanese home islands, Admiral William Leahy projected 268,000 Americans would be killed or wounded out of an invasion force of 766,000. The invasion of the chief island of Honshu, tentatively planned for the spring of 1946, would have been significantly worse. While projected casualty figures like these led a number of American officials to argue for modification of the unconditional surrender formula, Secretary of State James M. Byrnes told Truman that he would be "crucified" if he retreated from this formula—one that received a

standing ovation when Truman repeated it to Congress in his first address as president. Truman agreed—wisely. His efforts to wage limited war in Korea cost him re-election in 1952. Similarly, Lyndon Johnson's inability to fight unlimited war for unconditional surrender in Vietnam cost him the 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 Bush's refusal to insist on an unconditional surrender in Iraq may have contributed to his defeat in the 1992 presidential election. For American presidents, MacArthur is right: there is no substitute for victory.

In Victory, Magnanimity

Once the enemy has made an unconditional surrender, the honor code demands that he be treated

magnanimously. Grant fed Lee's men from his army supplies, while Sherman's initial agreement with General Johnston was so generous that it was overruled in Washington. American occupation troops in both Germany and Japan very quickly lost their rancor against the defeated foes. Not always disinterestedly, GIs in Europe were passing out chocolate bars, cigarettes and nylon stockings before the guns fell silent. The bitter racial antagonism that colored the Pacific War rapidly faded after it. Neither in Japan nor in Germany did American occupiers behave like the Soviet occupation forces in eastern Germany, where looting, rape and murder were still widespread months after the surrender.

In both Germany and Japan, the United States had originally envisioned a harsh occupation strategy with masses of war crimes trials and strict economic controls—somewhat akin to the original Radical

Republican program in the post-Civil War South. But in all three cases, the victorious Americans quickly lost the appetite for vengeance against all but the most egregious offenders against the code. Whatever was said in the heat of battle, even the most Radical Reconstructionists envisioned the South's ultimate return to its old political status and rights. In the same way, soon after the shooting stopped in World War II, American public opinion simply assumed that the ultimate goal was for Germany and Japan to resume their places in the community of nations.

Not everybody qualifies for such lenient treatment under the code. In particular, repeat offenders will suffer increasingly severe penalties. Although many Americans were revolted by the harsh and greedy peace forced on Mexico (Grant felt that the Civil War was in part God's punishment for American crimes against Mexico), Santa

Anna’s long record of perfidy and cruelty built popular support both for the Mexican War and the peace. The pattern of frontier warfare, in which factions in a particular tribe might renew hostilities in violation of an agreement, helped solidify the Jacksonian belief that there was no point in making or keeping treaties with "savages."

In the international conflicts of the twentieth century, it is noteworthy that there have been no major populist backlashes calling for harsher treatment of defeated enemies. But when foreign enemies lack the good taste to surrender, Jacksonian opinion carries grudges that last for decades. Some of the roots of anti-China feeling in the United States today date back to mistreatment of American prisoners during the Korean War. U.S. food and energy aid to North Korea, indeed any engagement at all with that defiant

regime, remains profoundly unpopular for the same reason. The mullahs of Iran, the assassins of Libya and Fidel Castro have never been forgiven by Jacksonian opinion for their crimes against and defiance of the United States. Neither will they be, until they acknowledge their sins.

In the case of the Cold War, the failure of the Soviet Union to make a formal surrender, or for the conflict to end in any way that could be marked as V-USSR Day, has greatly complicated American policy toward post-Cold War Russia. The Soviet Union lost the Cold War absolutely and unconditionally, and Russia has suffered economic and social devastation comparable to that sustained by any losing power in the great wars of the century. But because it never surrendered, Jacksonian opinion never quite shifted into magnanimity mode. Wilsonians, Hamiltonians and Jeffersonians all favored

reconstruction support and aid; but without Jacksonian concurrence the American effort was sharply limited. Advice was doled out with a free and generous hand, but aid was extended more grudgingly.

This is far from a complete account of Jacksonian values and beliefs as they affect the United States. In economic as well as defense policy, for example, Jacksonian ideas are both influential and unique. Convinced that the prime purpose of government is to defend the living standards of the middle class, Jacksonian opinion is instinctively protectionist, seeking trade privileges for U.S. goods abroad and hoping to withhold those privileges from foreign exports. Jacksonians were once farmers; today they tend to be service and industrial workers. They see the preservation of American jobs, even at the cost of some unspecified

degree of "economic efficiency", as the natural and obvious task of the federal government's trade policy. Jacksonians can be convinced that a particular trade agreement operates to the benefit of American workers, but they need to be convinced over and over again. They are also skeptical, on both cultural and economic grounds, of the benefits of immigration, which is seen as endangering the cohesion of the folk community and introducing new, low-wage competition for jobs. Neither result strikes Jacksonian opinion as a suitable outcome for a desirable government policy.

The Indispensable Element

Jacksonian influence in American history has been—and remains—enormous. The United States cannot wage a major international war without Jacksonian support; once engaged, politicians cannot

safely end the war except on Jacksonian terms. From the perspective of members of other schools and many foreign observers, when Jacksonian sentiment favors a given course of action, the United States will move too far, too fast and too unilaterally in pursuit of its goals. When Jacksonian sentiment is strongly opposed, the United States will be seen to move too slowly or not at all. For anyone wishing to anticipate the course of American policy, an understanding of the structure of Jacksonian beliefs and values is essential.

It would be an understatement to say that the Jacksonian approach to foreign policy is controversial. It is an approach that has certainly contributed its share to the headaches of American policymakers throughout history. It has also played a role in creating a constituency abroad for the idea that the United States is addicted to a crude cowboy diplomacy—an idea

that, by reducing international faith in the judgment and predictability of the United States, represents a real liability for American foreign policy.

Despite its undoubted limitations and liabilities, however, Jacksonian policy and politics are indispensable elements of American strength. Although Wilsonians, Jeffersonians and the more delicately constructed Hamiltonians do not like to admit it, every American school needs Jacksonians to get what it wants. If the American people had exhibited the fighting qualities of, say, the French in World War II, neither Hamiltonians, nor Jeffersonians nor Wilsonians would have had the opportunity to have much to do with shaping the postwar international order.

Moreover, as folk cultures go, Jacksonian America is actually open and liberal. Non-

Jacksonians at home and abroad are fond of sneering at what must be acknowledged to be the deeply regrettable Jacksonian record of racism, or its commitment to forms of Christian belief that strike many as both unorthodox and bigoted. Certainly, Jacksonian America has not been in the forefront of the fight for minority rights, nor is it necessarily the place to go searching for avant garde artistic styles or cutting-edge philosophical reflections on the death of God.

But folk cultural change is measured in decades and generations, not electoral cycles, and on this clock, Jacksonian America is moving very rapidly. The military institutions have moved from strict segregation to a concerted attack on racism in fifty years. In civilian life, the belief that color is no bar to membership in the Jacksonian community of honor is rapidly replacing earlier beliefs. Just as

Southerners whose grandfathers burned crosses against the Catholic Church now work very well with Catholics on all kinds of social, cultural and even religious endeavors, so we are seeing a steady erosion of the racial barriers. Even on issues of modernist art, Jacksonian America is moving. The Vietnam Memorial in Washington, once widely denounced by Jacksonians for its failure to include figurative sculptures, has now become one of the most visited and revered sites in the capital. On Memorial Day, thousands of leather-clad representatives of the Jacksonian culture visit it on their Harley-Davidsons, many of them accompanied by their wives riding pillion.

Jacksonian America performs an additional service: it makes a major, if unheralded, contribution to America’s vaunted "soft power." It is not simply the Jeffersonian commitment to liberty and equality, the

Wilsonian record of benevolence, anti-colonialism and support for democracy, or even the commercial success resulting from Hamiltonian policies that attracts people to the United States. Perhaps beyond all these it is the spectacle of a country that is good for average people to live in: where ordinary people can and do express themselves culturally, economically and spiritually without any inhibition. The consumer lifestyle of the United States—and the consequences of federal policy to enrich the middle class and make it a class of homeowners and automobile drivers—wins the country many admirers abroad. For the first time in human history, millions of ordinary people have enough money in their pockets and time on their hands to support a popular culture that has more resources than the high culture of the aristocracy and elite. This culture is what hundreds of millions of foreigners love most about the United

States, and its dissemination makes scores of millions of foreigners feel somehow connected to or even part of the United States. The cultural, social and religious vibrancy and unorthodoxy of Jacksonian America—not excluding such pastimes as professional wrestling—are among the country's most important foreign policy assets.

It may also be worth noting that the images of American propensities to violence, and of the capabilities of American military forces and intelligence operatives, are so widely distributed in the media that they may actually heighten international respect for American strength and discourage attempts to test it.

This basically positive assessment would be incomplete without a description of the two most serious problems that the

Jacksonian school perennially poses for American policymakers. Both of them spring from the wide ideological and cultural differences that divide the Jacksonian outlook from the other schools.

The first problem is the gap between Hamiltonian and Wilsonian promises and Jacksonian performance. The globally oriented, order-building schools of thought see American power as a resource to be expended in pursuit of their far-reaching goals. Many of the commitments they wish to make, the institutions they wish to build, and the social and economic policies they wish to promote do not enjoy Jacksonian support; in some cases, they elicit violent Jacksonian disagreement. This puts Hamiltonians and Wilsonians over and over again in an awkward position. At best they are trying to push treaties, laws and appropriations through a sulky and reluctant Congress. At worst they find

themselves committed to military confrontations without Jacksonian support. More often than not, the military activities they wish to pursue are multilateral, limited warfare or peacekeeping operations. These are often unpopular both inside the military and in the country at large. Caught between their commitments (and the well-organized Hamiltonian or Wilsonian lobbies and pressure groups whose political clout is often at least partially responsible for these commitments) and the manifest unpopularity of the actions required to fulfill them, American policymakers dither, tack from side to side, and generally make an unimpressive show. This is one of the structural problems of American foreign policy, and it is exacerbated by the divided structure of the American government and Senate customs and rules that give a determined opposition many opportunities to block action of which it disapproves.

The second problem has a similar origin, but a different structure. Jacksonian opinion is slow to focus on a particular foreign policy issue, and slower still to make a commitment to pursue an end vigorously and for the long term. Once that commitment has been made, it is even harder to build Jacksonian sentiment for a change. This is particularly true when change involves overcoming one of the ingrained preferences in Jacksonian culture; it is, for example, much harder to shift a settled hawkish consensus in a dovish direction than vice versa. The hardest task of all is to maintain support for a policy that eschews oversimplification in favor of complexity. Having gotten Jacksonian opinion into a war in Vietnam or the Persian Gulf, it was very hard to get it out again without achieving total victory. Once China or Vietnam has been established as an enemy

nation, it is very difficult to build support for normalizing relations or, worse still, extending foreign aid.

These problems, which are responsible for many of the recurring system crashes and unhappy stalemates in American foreign policy, can never be fully solved. They reflect profound differences in outlook and interest in American society, and it is the job of our institutions to adjudicate these disputes and force compromise rather than to eliminate them.

Efforts by policymakers to finesse these disputes often exacerbate the basic problem, which is the cultural, political and class distance between Jacksonian America and the representatives of the other schools. Attempts to mask Hamiltonian or Wilsonian policies in Jacksonian rhetoric, or to otherwise misrepresent or hide unpopular policies,

may succeed in the short run, but ultimately they can lead to a collapse of popular confidence and the stiffening of resistance to any and all policies deemed suspect. When misguided political advisers persuaded the distinctively unmilitary Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis to put on a helmet and get in a tank for a television commercial, they only advertised how far out of touch with Jacksonian America they were.

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