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Jacksonian Consular Reform and the Forging of America's First Global Bureaucracy

Abstract: As revolutions swept across Central and South America in the 1820s and 1830s, Andrew Jackson's administration undertook a landmark reform that transformed the US foreign policy apparatus into the nation's first global bureaucracy. With the introduction of Edward Livingston's 1833 consular reform bill to Congress, the nation embarked on a long path toward the modernization of its consular service in line with the powers of Europe and the new American republics. Despite the popularity of Livingston's plan to turn a dated US consular service comprised of mercantile elites into a salaried professional bureaucracy, the Jacksonian consular reform dragged on for more than two decades before the passing of a consular bill in 1856. Contrary to Weberian models positing a straightforward path toward bureaucratization, the trajectory of Jacksonian consular reform demonstrates the power of mercantile elites to resist central government regulation just as much as it highlights how petty partisans—the protégé consuls appointed via the Jacksonian “spoils system”—powerfully shaped government policy to achieve personal advantages. In the constant tug-of-war between merchant-consuls and Jacksonian protégés, both groups mobilized competing visions of the “national character” in their correspondence with the Department of State and in the national press. Ultimately, the Jacksonian reform vision of an egalitarian and loyal consular officialdom prevailed over the old mercantile model of consulship as a promoter of national prestige and commercial expertise, but only after protégé consuls successfully exploited merchant-consuls' perceived inability to compete with the salaried European officials across the sister-republics of the southwestern hemisphere.

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On March 2, 1833, US Secretary of State Edward Livingston inaugurated the creation of America's first global bureaucracy. In his comprehensive report on the US consular system, Livingston (see [Figure 1](#)) outlined a detailed reform endeavor that sought to transform "the worst consular system in the world" into a modern foreign policy apparatus, the first such body in American history.¹ As Livingston's bleak assessment of the state of US consulship suggested, his reform plan was long overdue. For decades, US consuls had complained to the federal government about the lack of salaries, clear institutional hierarchies, and competent instructions from Washington, all of which hampered the fulfillment of their representative duties in foreign



Figure 1. *Edward Livingston*, c. 1827. By Anson Dickinson. Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

countries. Livingston took these grievances to heart, devising a list of provisions that stretched from the broad outlining of consuls' hierarchical ranks and the mode of their remuneration to the more minute matters of standardizing the consular uniform and regulating the manner of correspondence with the Department of State. With President Andrew Jackson's approval, Livingston's consular reform plan found its way to Congress, initiating an intense interinstitutional negotiation that stretched over the entire antebellum period.²

Why did Jacksonians, the champions of *laissez-faire* government and the ostensible enemies of a big federal state, advocate the creation of the nation's first global bureaucracy?³ To answer this question, this article examines the complex genealogy of Jacksonian consular reform from its origins in the early 1830s to its culmination in the consular reform bill of 1856.⁴ Rather than being the one-time creation of government fiat, the push for consular reform was the product of a decades-long Jacksonian war on privilege involving federal officials, US consuls, shipmasters, mariners, and traveling citizens across hundreds of US consular stations worldwide. Though Livingston and Jackson laid the foundations of consular reform at the heart of the federal government, none of them foresaw how long and arduous it would be to see this reform project to its completion, nor did they predict that when Congress finally passed a consular reform bill in 1856, it would be under terms very different from those proposed in 1833.

Quite strikingly, the making of the nation's first global bureaucracy, a process involving hundreds of consular offices and thousands of consular officials, has received no systematic treatment by historians. In contrast to European scholars, who have provided detailed studies of the creation of their national consular services, the making of the early US consular service still lacks a comprehensive analysis.⁵ For all their attention to early American post offices, customhouses, banks, and other "internal" institutions, scholars have missed the way in which state officials outside the national borders built the US foreign policy state "from the outside in." Focusing on a largely neglected part of the federal state, this article advances the "internal" histories of the American state by interrogating the international stakes of Jacksonian state-building and by placing scholarship on the early American state in a new set of conversations with Latin Americanists, Europeanists, and scholars of globalization.⁶

It is the main contention of this article that the major shift toward the modernization of the US consular system stemmed from the interplay

between specifically national political developments and international processes.⁷ Such domestic political developments as the institution of a new system of Democratic patronage (the “spoils system”) took on a very different shape across dozens of US consulates filled by merchants accustomed to a practical monopoly on consulship.⁸ Though conceived as an important instrument in the Jacksonian war on privilege, the “spoils system” generated recurring clashes between an old class of merchant-consuls extolling the value of mercantile expertise and a new set of protégé consuls espousing a competing vision of a disinterested and egalitarian “national character.” As the disruptions of the “spoils system” threatened to undermine national respectability abroad, Jacksonian reformers considered implementing foreign, especially European, consular policies in the North American republic. In a period marked by intense international debates on the need for reforming a growing body of consulates around the world, Jacksonian reformers struggled to reconcile the dynamics of the “spoils system” with the new demands of conducting hemispheric and global foreign policy. To make sense of the impact and trajectory of Jacksonian consular reform, then, we need to account for how national politics and international developments influenced each other, precipitating certain policy changes (while forestalling others) at the national center.

To outline the in- and outbound processes that helped shape the US foreign policy state, this article discusses them in two discrete sections. The first section situates the Jacksonian movement for consular reform in a wider Atlantic context, demonstrating how antebellum consuls used their familiarity with European consular systems to invoke new arguments about tariff standardization and salarization, the pivots of the bureaucratic reform envisioned by Livingston. The matter of turning dated European and North American consular services into effective components of an integrated system of trading goods, documenting immigrants, and exchanging information became a measure of great significance to Atlantic powers in the early nineteenth century. The imperative of reforming consulship took on an even greater significance with the ascendancy of new Latin American states forcing reformers to reconsider the Eurocentric frame of their policy proposals. Indeed, the article shows that the formation of Latin American states was one of the main catalysts for the emergence of the modern US foreign policy apparatus.⁹

If the first part of the article situates the push for Jacksonian consular reform in a hemispheric and Atlantic frame, the second embeds this

movement in antebellum politics and a shared concern for reforming a ubiquitous yet elusive “national character.”¹⁰ Indeed, as became clear during Jackson’s and Livingston’s inquiries in the early 1830s, what distinguished the US consular system from its European peers, what made it “the worst consular system in the world,” was the fact that its historical entwining with mercantile interests made it resilient to the Jacksonian war on privilege and to the type of bureaucratizing reforms passed by other powers. Instead of remedying this problem, the introduction of the “spoils system” exacerbated it by creating a hybrid consular system that pitted an old class of merchant-consuls against a new group of political protégés. By means of their correspondence with Washington and their use of the public press, both groups left their imprint on the making of the modern US foreign policy apparatus.

Taken together, both parts of the article demonstrate that the convoluted development of America’s first global bureaucracy belied the simplistic Weberian model of linear state bureaucratization driven by central administrators.¹¹ The process of turning a dated system of mercantile privilege and discretionary state power into a well-regulated foreign policy infrastructure was by no means straightforward and teleological. Taking place in a rapidly integrating global context, Livingston’s consular reform endeavor had to reckon not merely with the heritage of decades of administrative mismanagement and the challenges of a globalizing and modernizing state system but also with the vicissitudes of national party politics wrought global.

REFORMING THE CONSULAR SYSTEM: THE FEE SYSTEM, SALARIZATION, AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE US FOREIGN POLICY STATE

By the time Andrew Jackson and Edward Livingston took it upon themselves to devise a plan for consular reform, “the worst consular system in the world” had been five decades in the making. With the exception of two dated pieces of legislation from the 1780s and the early 1800s, the US consular system lacked any federal regulations outlining the rights and duties of consuls, establishing standardized fees for their services, or prescribing the duties and responsibilities of American citizens in relation to their consuls in foreign ports. The lack of federal regulation caused incessant frictions throughout the expanding US consular network. It is indeed in response to these disputes between US consuls and merchants that President Jackson ordered Edward Livingston

to devise a reform plan that would serve Congress as the platform for legislative changes.

After two years of corresponding with consuls, merchants, and mariners, Livingston submitted a comprehensive plan addressing the most recurrent and conspicuous shortcomings of the consular system. Among all the grievances Livingston acknowledged in the course of his correspondence with consuls and citizens, “that which create[d] the most frequent cause of misunderstanding between the Consuls and masters of vessels,” was “the want of a bill of fees extending to all the acts which a Consul may be called on to perform.”¹² Livingston pondered two possible solutions to this problem: the creation of a standardized table of consular fees or the introduction of salaries (“salarization”). Among the two options, he clearly advocated the latter. In his report to Congress, Livingston expressed “no hesitation in giving a decided opinion, that the exaction of fees has been the source of misunderstandings between our Consuls and the masters of vessels, injurious to the reputation of the country, that it is degrading to the officer who is obliged to wrangle for them,—is unequal in its operations,—oppressive to our commerce,—and ought either to be wholly abolished, or so modified as to make the operation of the system more equal.”¹³

To offset these disadvantages of the fee system, the Secretary proposed instituting annual salaries of \$2,000 for the thirty US consuls and, tentatively, of \$1,000 for the 126 vice-consuls and commercial agents across the globe. “When it is considered that not only the respectability of the Government and security of its citizens abroad will be promoted by this change, but that it is chiefly intended for the protection and extension of that commerce from which the whole revenue of the country is derived,” argued Livingston, “the expense will not be thought too great for the objects.” The US government simply could not afford to risk leaving a large part of its revenue, which it derived from customs duties on foreign commerce, at the mercy of merchants who often placed their private interests above their official duties.¹⁴

Livingston’s case for salarizing consular officials, then, paradoxically rested upon a rational calculation in the best spirit of cost-effective governance. And yet, despite the Secretary’s reassurance that this would end up being the least costly among the available options, his rationale for substituting consular fees with fixed salaries was a revolutionary proposition bound to create frictions with adherents to the status quo. For over half a century, the imposition of fees had been the bedrock of the US consular system, providing additional revenue for the merchants who held a practical monopoly on consular appointments. Over time, the fee system had created a lucrative

source of income, especially for those consular officials holding offices in the busiest ports of Europe.

The consuls and vice-consuls in these locales became the fiercest opponents of the new reform plan, channeling their disapproval to the federal administration. In a representative correspondence to Livingston's successor Louis McLane, the US consul in Dublin argued that the introduction of salaries—especially those attributed to vice-consuls—would not suffice to attract men “of the same class or rank in Society as those who now fill these situations.” What troubled consul Wilson was not so much that the salaries were small but that, in conjuncture with the measure of prohibiting consuls' commercial pursuits, they would be insufficient “to induce a ‘respectable’ citizen to leave his home and settle in a strange country.” As the overwhelming majority of the US consular officials were engaged in some form of commercial enterprise, the prohibition to pursue their business interests while receiving a salary from the federal government unleashed fierce resistance from established consular officials such as Wilson.¹⁵ To pass their consular reform agenda in spite of these entrenched private interests, federal administrators would have to rely on a new rationale for dislodging the mercantile class from its monopolistic control of consulship; something that, as we will see in the next section, Jacksonian administrations only achieved by the gradual integration of consular appointments into the “spoils system.”

Radical though it seemed to US merchant-consuls across Europe, Livingston's salarization policy was in fact representative of a transatlantic consular reform trend. In the 1820s and the early 1830s, such powers as Great Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, Russia, Brazil, and Mexico were all beginning to recognize the need for reforming their consular systems by first and foremost establishing unified consular tariffs and regular salaries. Keeping abreast of such international developments, those US consuls who resented the status quo seized an opportunity to pressure federal administrators into bringing the dated US consular system up to the standard of its Atlantic peers.¹⁶

Not surprisingly, some of the most vocal calls for federal reform came from the comparatively marginal new US consulates in Central and South America. In 1835, for example, the influential *Evening Post* reported an embarrassing clash involving the issue of fees in the recently established consulate in Campeche (Mexico), mounting a “protest against [the US] government ... for not placing American Consulates on a footing with the English and French officers ... and for not endowing the Consuls with rank, salary, uniform and privileges equal to the highest civil or military authorities in the respective districts, in order to prevent those many grievous injuries

which can never be effectually addressed.”¹⁷ In a similar vein, John Macpherson, the first US consul to Cartagena (Colombia), claimed that while consular fees in some European ports were such “as to enable the Gentlemen holding the appointments, to support their families and make that appearance in society, which is expected from men holding high and responsible trusts,” in Cartagena these fees were “so trifling, that [he] never thought it worthwhile to keep an account of these.”¹⁸

In another exposé on the subject, Macpherson wrote that “[n]o person who ever left the United States but must be sensible that the Consuls, should be placed on a footing, different to that on which they have stood, since the formation of the Federal government. At that time, our trade was in its infancy; we are *now*, in proportion to our population, the most commercial nation on Earth.” Contrasting the United States with its greatest European rival in South America, Macpherson claimed that it was “impossible duly to appreciate the advantages Great Britain derives from the Consular establishments; while the Consuls of the United States, comparatively speaking, are of little use, either to their Government or to their fellow citizens—the natural consequence of their being engaged in mercantile business and of their dependent situations.” Macpherson then drove the point home by concluding: “An American Consul, entangled in commercial pursuits (and this observation applies particularly to South America) is afraid of doing or saying anything that may possibly give offence.”¹⁹

Ever since the establishment of the federal government, the unfair and unequal way in which the consular fee system operated had been a major source of aggravation for both merchants and consuls. This problem reached new proportions with the expansion of the US consular system to Central and South America, whose recently emancipated port cities offered more limited opportunities for sustaining consular operations from the collection of fees. In the absence of adequate regulation from the national capital, consuls across these new geographies took the initiative in crafting a more equitable regional fee system. “I have been endeavouring to establish a uniformity in the consular acts and consular charges, between this place, Tampico, and Havana,” explained the US consul to Veracruz (Mexico) in the summer of 1824, yet such attempts to unify the consular tariff system “from the outside in” faced the problems of geographic distance, disparate commercial turnovers, and unpredictable rotations in office.²⁰ In addition, as the next section will explore in more detail, the introduction of the “spoils system” militated against these consular experimentations by establishing new consular offices filled by inexperienced and oftentimes unpopular appointees.

As a result of these institutional deficiencies, even the most entrepreneurial US consuls in Latin America found themselves advocating the abolition of the fee system. The most extensive testimony to this effect came from Henry Hill, an influential veteran with decades of consular experience in Havana, San Salvador, and Rio de Janeiro spanning the first decades of the nineteenth century. Though as a wealthy planter Hill hardly had to fear the grim prospects of US consuls dependent on their consular fees alone, he shared the opinion of his less fortunate colleagues in Mexico and Colombia that salarization was the only way for US consuls in the Americas to sustain their operations and compete with their European rivals. Unlike many other consuls who had just arrived in the wake of Latin American independence, Hill's intimate knowledge of the region dated back to the colonial period, which lent his critique the weight of informed expertise. In 1805, Hill had assumed his first consular office in Havana from a predecessor who "had just escaped from prison as [Hill] arrived there ... on a charge of contraband trade. The Consul at that time at Santiago [de Cuba], although a worthy and respectable Man previously, [had been] subjected to the same correction, upon a similar impeachment." Hill also related the story of another "Consul so dependent and degraded as he must have been ... even in his own opinion, as to have placed under the arms of the United States, inconspicuous Letters,—Commission business done here—with a shop board hung out, of the notions he had to sell."²¹

Hill's tongue-in-cheek reference to James Anderson, a former consul in Havana who had subsequently assumed the consulate at Cette (France), revealed how damaging the pursuit of private gains had been to the exercise of public functions. So notorious were Anderson's exploits, first as a commissioned trader of official information and later as a contraband smuggler of wines and spirits for federal officials, that Hill simply pointed to them without explicitly mentioning the office-holder in the probable assumption that the two federal clerks responsible for the consular correspondence would immediately identify him. Yet, amid all the notoriety of his deed, consul Anderson had "acquired a reputation for having made a fortune; the fees of office at that time, being equal to 1,200 Dollars per annum; and which," Hill sarcastically added, "I foolishly relinquished to a sense of National right and official duty."²²

Coupled with the problem of creating perverse private incentives, the fee system also aggravated existing disparities among consular establishments. "[F]rom the extent and regularity of our commerce with the principal Ports of Europe, and the practices which in many places the Consuls have introduced, of charging agency—or their fees for passports, for residents certificates, for

the imprisonment of Seamen, and for certificates to Invoices etc.," Hill concluded that some consuls' emoluments "must be very considerable, and place them beyond pecuniary necessities and dependence." He calculated that the consulate in Liverpool might yield more than 10,000 Dollars annually, and those of "London, Hamburg, Amsterdam, Havre, Bordeaux, Cadiz, Gibraltar, and doubtless many others, must produce sufficient for dignified living." These material considerations made the chief European ports "an object to respectable applications ... in the selection of persons to fill them," which "would appear not to be the care for many other situations, and particularly for most of the Ports in America."²³ The disparity of consular fees in Europe and the Americas created incentives to have a much more competitive selective process in the former than in the latter, which in turn undermined US commerce and foreign policy in the western hemisphere.

Coming from an experienced New England merchant with intimate ties to Cuban and Brazilian slaveholders, this harsh assessment of US consuls' predilection for placing private gains above public duties was perplexing and revealing all at once. Despite his privileged mercantile background, Hill found himself in the unlikely position of having to criticize the fee system, one of the pivots of mercantile privilege in the consular system. Conscious of this tension, Hill professed "not [to] mention [him]self, any farther than to say, that [he had] necessarily been obliged to engage in Commission and other business as a Merchant, and very often in such as to feel a degradation of public character." At its heart, the policy of allowing consuls to engage in commerce presented a significant obstacle as consuls' commercial pursuits inadvertently tarnished their public character, which in turn was of essential importance to respectable businessmen.

In a curious mirroring of Livingston's argument, Hill suggested that allowing merchants to monopolize the consulate was in fact bad for business. In Hill's assessment, standardizing the fee system would help resolve discrepancies among consular offices but it would not really address the wider issue of disentangling private gain and public interest, a key component of the Jacksonian war on privilege. "The Salaries of Consuls," Hill concluded, "may be fixed by the President, according to the relative importance of their situations, distance from their Country, climate, deprivations, characters and services, and the advantages they derive from Emoluments of office—and they should have some prospect from a routine of advancement."²⁴ The nuanced differences in Livingston's and Hill's arguments for salarization, then, led to very different policy proposals, with the former emphasizing a standardized salary as a means to assuring equal competency and greater fairness on the

part of the federal government and the latter advocating a more sophisticated and competitive system attuned to geographical differences and individual merits.

Notwithstanding their disparate commercial interests, political investments, and geographic locations, US consuls across the western hemisphere painted a strikingly similar picture of a widening Atlantic chasm that placed them in a sensible disadvantage to their colleagues in the Old World. Whereas US consuls in lucrative ports across Europe could rely on a steady income from fees and certificates, the prospects for their colleagues in the recently emancipated Spanish American republics, Brazil, and the Caribbean were much more uncertain. The novelty and force of these arguments “from the south” was compounded by a changing global political geography of antebellum consulship. As US consulates spread across Latin America and new regions of the globe, they challenged the outdated Eurocentric structure of the federal administration, pushing consular reform to the front of the national political agenda. Within Andrew Jackson’s presidential tenure, US consulates in Central and South America came to equal the number of those in Europe, accentuating the hemispheric dynamics of the US foreign policy state’s formation (see Figure 2). Though no longer the focal point of the US consular system, Europe nonetheless retained a great importance in the realm of Jacksonian consular reform, becoming a ubiquitous reference point for successive reform endeavors across the Atlantic.

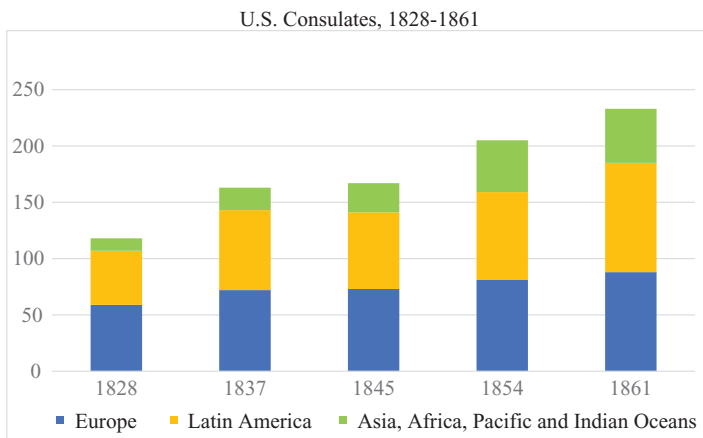


Figure 2. Number of US consulates. 1828–1861, select years.²⁵

Given these disparities, it is hardly surprising that US consuls in the Americas played a crucial role in placing a more revolutionary vision of consular reform high on the federal agenda. Indeed, their strategic arguments for standardized salaries and tariffs dovetailed with Andrew Jackson's and Edward Livingston's interest in crafting a more coherent and advantageous US foreign policy approach to the Americans of the south. With unprecedented commercial opportunities beckoning in places such as Mexico and Cuba and Creoles eagerly embracing consular relations as a pathway toward diplomatic recognition and reciprocity, consular reform emerged not only as an "internal" state imperative but as a major marker of global prestige and an essential tool for attaining commercial advantages in a competitive global setting.

The tenor of these US consular voices from the western hemisphere was remarkably synchronous: The unfair and dated fee system had been problematic enough across Europe, but the emergence of independent Latin American nations made it simply unsustainable. The dynamics of nation-building in the western hemisphere necessitated much more energetic policy changes in Washington than the sustainment of commercial relations in Europe. First and foremost, the differentiation between the consul's public and private functions, attainable through salarization and a ban on mercantile pursuits, was of the utmost importance in the fluid, open-ended environment in the wake of Latin American independence. If the United States desired to make the most of this historic opportunity, the federal administration and Congress had no other option but to empower US consuls into full-fledged agents of an aggressive foreign policy state eager to project its commercial vision across the continent. Only in a revolutionary setting bristling with unprecedented opportunities could merchants earnestly propagate the idea that the universal salvation for US commerce was to turn the public agent of the merchant community into a salaried federal employee. To explain why reformers were eventually successful in their pursuits, and why it took three decades to institutionalize their policy proposals on the federal level, the next section interrogates the consular reform agenda against the backdrop of a signal political development in the Jacksonian era, the institution of the "spoils system."

THE "SPOILS SYSTEM" AND THE POLITICS OF CONSULAR REFORM

If what undermined Livingston's consular reform plan of 1833 was the radical nature of its salarization scheme, then what militated against its subsequent adoption was its incompatibility with certain key features of the Jacksonian political patronage system commonly referred to as the "spoils system."

Scholars of the antebellum state regard President Jackson's practice of dismissing rival office-holders and replacing them with his political protégés as an important turning point in the history of the early American state.²⁶ This practice, they argue, sought to institute an unprecedented partisan following directly beholden to the President, and create a major power base for the establishment of Democratic hegemony in the 1830s. What remains rather vague in these scholarly accounts is how political patronage *worked*: Did political appointees turn into presidential underlings, and how pliant were they to pressure from the federal administration? How did the "spoils system" affect those federal officials working thousands of miles away from the national territory? Were these faraway offices tangential or impervious to partisan changes at the nation's center?

Several aspects of the consular service make it a particularly inviting site for interrogating how the "spoils system" worked. To begin with, the practice of recalling and substituting consuls had been quite common in the decades prior to Jackson's ascendancy.²⁷ The seemingly low political stakes of these offices and their lower prestige vis-à-vis "domestic" appointments made them particularly suitable for a large body of men close enough to the political power-holders to warrant a federal office but not close enough to render their services indispensable to the day-to-day operations of government (or so the power-holders oftentimes thought). But the logistical intricacies of the office further complicated these general political calculations to a point where it was oftentimes unclear—both to the administrator appointing the consul and the consul himself²⁸—whether the appointment was a reward or a punishment. The geographic distance and the idiosyncrasies of the consular service—a tedious bureaucratic task not appealing to many elites—seemed to render consular appointments eminently feasible as a type of political ostracism rather than as a badge of loyal partisanship. Indeed, it oftentimes seemed as if the greatest practicability of assigning political protégés to the consulate was the impracticability of leaving dozens of such offices across the world, along with the compounded power they entailed, in the hands of political rivals. All these intricacies complicated the way in which the "spoils system" operated, creating new challenges and opportunities for consuls and consulship seekers to navigate a complex institutional framework whose rules, norms, and conditions were largely of the consuls' own making.

The integration of the consular system into the political patronage apparatus instituted by Andrew Jackson therefore operated along lines fundamentally different from those of domestic politics. Nowhere else did the stakes of politicizing consulship seem higher and more threatening to the

entire Jacksonian reform project than in Latin America. The political bickering among Creole nation-builders and the absence of proper diplomatic agents in the region created numerous opportunities for foreign consuls to assume, as Livingston put it, “occasionally diplomatic functions,” something that jeopardized their strictly commercial responsibilities.²⁹ Recognizing the dangers arising from the politicization of a fundamentally commercial agency, Livingston instructed all US consuls in this region “to abstain from all participation whatever, direct or indirect, in the political concerns of the countries to which they are appointed.” Drawing attention to “the disturbed and unsettled condition of the Republics of the South American and United Mexican States,” Livingston specifically reminded US consuls in those states to “forbear intermeddling with their political or local affairs in the smallest degree whatever.”³⁰

Despite Livingston’s admonition, the unsettled political landscape across Latin America rendered it a major site for all kinds of experiments with political appointments. In a lengthy and embarrassing series of Jacksonian protégés—some of whom we will discuss shortly—nobody came close to the notoriety of Nicholas Trist, a great-grandson of Thomas Jefferson who assumed the US consulate in Havana in 1833. In a manner that markedly differed from the established pattern of consular appointments, President Jackson personally instructed Trist in the execution of his consular duties, manifesting the political nature of his decision. In contrast to other offices in the hemisphere, the US consulate in Havana was among the most sought-after posts in the federal administration. With US-Cuban commerce booming, the consulate in the island’s capital promised a lucrative income and the opportunity to exercise political power in one of Spain’s last colonial bastions in the Americas.³¹

Not a man to miss an opportunity of this magnitude, Trist began using his consular office as an instrument for strengthening the ties between slaveholding elites in the United States and Cuba. Away from the territorial jurisdiction of his country, Trist openly neglected Livingston’s *General Instructions*, an updated set of regulations that established a basic framework for the conduct of consular duties. In spite of Livingston’s attempt to update and standardize this important part of every consul’s induction into his service, the deficiencies of the *General Instructions* and the stagnation of consular reform in Washington left consuls with plenty of space to misinterpret or simply abuse these federal regulations as they saw fit. Conceived as a consultative body of provisions, the *Instructions* lacked binding character which made them practically unenforceable. Empowered by the lack of executive or legislative

control over his actions, Trist began openly neglecting those of them that hampered his political goals. Chief among these was the instruction empowering consuls with the policing of the slave trade, one of the most lucrative economic activities in mid-nineteenth-century Cuba. Initially alarmed at "the unusual activity of the Slave trade, and the number of vessels brought from the United States to be put under the Spanish flag," Trist effectively exempted himself from policing the slave trade by stating "that no man's life would be at all safe after his appearing against [those engaged in the slave trade] as an informer." "So well persuaded am I of this," the consul stated, "that I should deem it a very cruel and unpardonable breach of personal confidence, to communicate to my government even, without his express sanction, the name of any individual who might have relied so far upon my discretion and honor as to put his life into my hands by making any disclosures in relation to the doings of these gentry."³²

Although Trist's involvement with Cuban slavers gained international notoriety, the mandate of having a Jacksonian protégé consul in Havana seemed to outweigh the great damage Trist was inflicting upon his nation's reputation in an Atlantic World marked by ascendant anti-slaving sentiments. Proclaiming Livingston's instructions "a dead letter," Trist in fact turned the inability of the federal administration to guide its consuls and enforce its will into an argument for completely disempowering the national center in all matters consular. Using the opacity of the *General Instructions*, and often-times sarcastically mocking their impotence, Trist began granting his consular certificates to Cuban slavers, who used US consular papers in their illegal transatlantic voyages. In the late 1830s, the US consul breached yet another federal regulation by assuming the office of Portuguese consul in Havana, which further augmented Cuban slavers' ability to circumvent international agreements. After the establishment of the Republic of Texas in 1835, Trist brokered arrangements of shipping liberated Africans from Havana to this new slaveholding republic, where these unfortunate individuals faced re-enslavement and the harsh reality of plantation labor. During the 1830s, Trist's neglect of federal regulations gradually morphed into outright hostility toward the federal administration accompanied by notorious breaches of federal and international law. For a man interested in proving how useless the federal administration was, Trist did a marvelous job by breaking as many of its regulations as he was capable of, and then blaming the administration for it. Trist's example set an important precedent for other political protégés to push their authority beyond the limits recognized by federal or, for that matter, international law.³³

Though Trist's appointment to the consulate helped facilitate US slaveholding interests in Cuba, his methods deeply divided the local mercantile and maritime community. US mariners routinely complained of Trist's and his colleagues' divisive attempts to place private enrichment and political favoritism above the time-honored consular duty of providing for the wellbeing of the national diaspora. In 1839, 96 American mariners accused Trist of "casting [them] into hen coops or dungeons," despotically "refusing and depriving [them] of choosing or dictating [their] place of abode," and dividing the gains with local landlords.³⁴ A group of sixty-one merchants and shipmasters joined their protest by claiming that Trist's conduct had a "tendency to monopoly."³⁵ In the face of mounting resistance and an impending congressional investigation, Trist left Havana in 1840. His excesses in the position of US consul became a notorious example of the quandaries of the "spoils system" and the necessity of radical consular reform.

Though Trist's case gained particular notoriety, similar clashes between merchants, mariners and protégé consuls recurred throughout a variety of locales in the antebellum period. In Trinidad, Cuba's third major town, the consular appointment of Democratic protégé Hiram Hastings enraged local merchants who detested the politicization of their hitherto monopolistic hold of the consulate. One of them opined that Hastings was "in every way totally unfit for the situation—which every merchant and resident of the place will confirm." On the grounds that he was "more extensively engaged in the trade to that place, than anyone else," the merchant-petitioner believed "that any change whatsoever, that could be made in the Consulship, would tend to increase the respect of the inhabitants for the United States, and would be gladly received by every merchant and sailor that ever entered the harbor."³⁶ Similar to Trist's sacking, this cross-class coalition in Trinidad successfully effected Hastings's recall.

As these examples show, the "spoils system" complicated the Jacksonian movement for consular reform by mobilizing mercantile defiance and creating new venues for cross-class resistance. Time and again, Jacksonian consular appointees met the collective resistance of the mercantile community whose members either circumvented certain politically allocated posts or openly challenged political appointees' consular authority.³⁷ By depriving protégé consuls of their income in fees and certificates, merchants skillfully exploited their collective bargaining power even against their most recalcitrant rivals. By striking at consular finances, these mercantile strategies drove protégé consuls into seeking alternative sources of income via the exploitation of mariners' labor and controversial arrangements with local authorities.

Mariners bore the brunt of the frictions precipitated by the introduction of the “spoils system” across the expanding geography of antebellum consulship. The 1840s witnessed a particularly dramatic reversal of mariners’ bargaining power in their interactions with merchants, ship masters, and federal officials. In an act regulating the shipment and discharge of seamen and the duties of consuls (July 20, 1840), a Democratic Congress revised the dated federal legislation regulating consuls’ responsibilities in relieving sailors. With the most recent acts on the subject reaching back to the War of 1812, Congress provided for a dramatic extension of consular authority over US mariners in foreign ports. Mandating the delivery of uniform ship papers to consuls and stipulating the involvement of consuls in all disputes arising from the contractual obligations of mariners, ship masters, and merchants, the act of 1840 made consuls into universal arbiters of maritime conflicts.

Mariners immediately began taking advantage of this provision by drawing on consuls’ authority in the numerous examples of shipmasters’ excesses. In 1841, for example, the US consular appointee to Baracoa, Fritz McGready, intervened on behalf of William Johnson, a free colored cook who wished to escape an abusive captain, by ensuring that the former was “taken good care of by the Governor,” and released as soon as possible. McGready did the same for several other of his unfortunate compatriots and an English doctor whom he sheltered in his house.³⁸ On other occasions, this reconfiguration of power at the US consulate led to mercantile backlashes. In 1843, for example, a US merchant in Trinidad (Cuba) accused a Jacksonian consular appointee of “illegally discharg[ing] the cook of [a] vessel” and detaining the man for three months as a means of reimbursing outstanding consular fees and services.³⁹ Using their newly acquired power over mariners, Jacksonian consuls were thus able to strike back at those merchants who refused to recognize their authority.

Though this tension between consuls and merchants created new opportunities for mariners to escape excessive violence and play off these groups against each other, their prospects were nevertheless circumscribed by yet another provision of the act of 1840 which freed merchants of their obligation to pay three months’ worth of wages in cases of dismissing mariners or terminating their contracts. Dating back to 1803, when the Jeffersonian administration had invested its consuls with the power to protect national sailors against the impressment of its European rivals, the provision of three months’ advance wages for discharged sailors was one of the chief protections for US mariners against the predatory practices of ship captains and merchants. Instead of merely empowering Jacksonian consuls to act as mediators

between merchants and sailors, the act of 1840 thus created an inherently charged constellation in which consuls, merchants, and sailors all acquired new incentives to regard their interrelationships as a zero-sum game of opposed interests and strategic combinations.

Frustrated though they were with having to contend with a new class of protégé consuls, mercantile elites nonetheless proved remarkably adaptive to these changes in consular regulations. In less than a decade after the passing of the act of 1840, merchants effectively managed to transfer the costs of deporting US sailors to the federal treasury, prompting the protest of Secretary of State James Buchanan. “When the master of a vessel employs [seamen] on a foreign voyage,” Buchanan reasoned in his 1846 report on the consular system, “it is but fair that he should stipulate for their safe return. On him, and not upon the government, ought to devolve the charge of bringing them back to their country.”⁴⁰ With the abolition of the three months’ wage clause, merchants were not only able to outsource the costs of relieving sailors to the federal government but also to exploit mariners’ resentment against the transformation of their ancient protector into a salaried federal employee. In cases of unpopular consular appointments such as those of Trist and Hastings, merchants used their better position at the bargaining table to conspire with mariners for the dismissal of their institutional protectors.

As merchants could not fully explore the contradictions of the “spoils system” in their correspondence with often hostile Democratic administrations, they took their fight to more receptive outlets. Exploiting reformers’ disagreements about remuneration and drawing on widespread hostility toward the “spoils system,” opponents of comprehensive consular reform argued that the policies advanced by their Jacksonian peers harmed US commerce and the ubiquitous national character instead of promoting them. In a series of articles published on the subject in several 1846 issues of the influential *New York Daily Tribune*, “A Merchant” could simply not “perceive that the merchant’s interest would be protected any better by a salaried Consul than one engaged in trade, *under the present system of appointments.*”⁴¹ “Surely,” the author claimed, “a practical merchant is more fitted to be a Commercial Agent (a Consul is no more) than one of any other profession, *provided always, that he be selected with strict reference to his abilities and character.*” Political appointments in remote Caribbean ports, rather than the fee system, were undermining the utility of US consular representation. The editors of the newspaper agreed with the anonymous author: “The plan of making our Consuls salaried officers will increase the burdens [*sic*] of the People, tend to increase the number of Consuls, and depreciate the quality.”

“Now we often have the right sort of men appointed, where the emoluments are no object,” the editors argued. “[U]nder the salary system,” the newspaper predicted, “they would all be hack politicians.”⁴²

In an article published several days later, “Merchant” contended that “[t]he idea of removing or obviating the difficulties with which our countrymen are beset in the more obscure Consulates of the United States, by salaried officers, is a vagary of the imagination.”⁴³ “Merchant” observed that “where the duties of a Consul were confided to a merchant of standing,” there “was no cause of complaint, but the moment that they devolved upon the person of an adventurer ... all confidence was lost.”⁴⁴ The writer even recollected “an instance in one of the ports of the island of Cuba of a Consul who had nothing but the perquisites of his office to depend upon for a support, and they would not suffice for the wants of a New York beggar, yet he was content to remain there and pick up a precarious subsistence by squeezing out a few extra dollars” from every mariner unfamiliar with the fee system. “[O]nce make these petty Consulates salaried officers,” the author of the letter predicted, “and there will be no end of abuses of this kind.”⁴⁵ In response to ongoing conversations on Buchanan’s consular reform bill, the *Daily National Intelligencer* likewise described US consuls as “mere commissioned paupers,” whose “dependent situation” put them at a disadvantage to the “very handsome commissions” extracted by foreign consuls. The article’s author explained that consular insolvency undermined legitimacy, expressing “a sincere desire that our consuls should be rendered comfortable, and, above all, *respectable*, abroad, that they may have due influence, and that they may be able to protect their countrymen when occasion requires.”⁴⁶

The various antebellum outlets provided crucial venues for merchants to voice their politically informed critique of consular reform and the structures of political patronage. To achieve greater public impact, merchants mobilized a competing version of the national character so powerfully invoked by Jacksonian reformers in their plans and memoranda. Both proponents and opponents of consular reform thus shared a common understanding of the US consular system as a chief agency promoting the “national character” abroad, and both groups recognized respectability as the foremost characteristic distinguishing American citizenship abroad. Where they differed was in identifying the chief impediments toward achieving respectability, and, accordingly, in devising appropriate solutions. The majority of Jacksonian officials and protégé consuls advanced corruption and inequality as the chief ills of the existing consular system, which they hoped to combat by introducing a uniform system of salaries that would eliminate consuls’ private interests

in the discriminative extraction of fees. In one report after another, proponents of Jacksonian reform argued that only salarization would address these issues and promote the best version of an egalitarian and disinterested national character.

From a very early point, these strategic deployments of national respectability sidelined potentially powerful allies who advocated a more gradual transition to salarization. More moderate proposals seeking to offset the costs of salarization by devising elaborate schemes of channeling consular fees to a common salary fund neither solved the problem of ensuring the promotion of a respectable “national character” at commercially marginal ports nor did they address the root issue of constant fee disputes between consuls and merchants.⁴⁷ Speaking for the majority of his peers across these more marginal locations the US consul to Trinidad (Cuba) explained: “The compensation by *fees* to a Consul is totally inadequate to his support, and tends to lessen him in the eyes of his countrymen; who cannot but view him in the light of an individual maintained at their expense; much of that utility and influence which his station should command, is consequently lost.”⁴⁸ To solve this inherent and irreconcilable tension between his public duty and the trappings of commerce, the US consul needed to receive his subsistence from the federal government.

By contrast, the mercantile defenders of the status quo regarded commercial inexperience and political commitments as the gravest threats to promoting a respectable national character in foreign lands. Using the excesses of the “spoils systems” as evidence for the inability of the federal government to promote national commerce and protect the “national character” from relapsing into dependency, merchant-consuls mounted highly successful resistance against Jacksonian reform endeavors. Far from being on the defensive, this old mercantile lobby in fact saw its position strengthened in the decades following Livingston’s reform plan, both in its capacity to dismiss or co-opt sailors and in its ability to manipulate consuls. It may very well be that this old mercantile lobby, already established in the Old World but only slowly gaining a foothold in the Americas, would have emerged victorious and retracted the entire Jacksonian reform agenda. What prevented this outcome was both the unpredictable and flexible way in which the “spoils system” operated, and the constant pressure protégé consuls were able to exercise on the federal administration by forging a perception that America was lagging behind its thoroughly bureaucratized, salaried European rivals.

CONCLUSION

As these clashes between merchants and consuls demonstrate, the establishment of the first global American bureaucracy was a convoluted historical process entailing intense debates and mercantile backlashes. Contrary to Max Weber's linear model of bureaucratization, salarization and the fee system did not represent historically successive, mutually exclusive, or indeed incompatible phenomena. Rather, the successive clashes between the conservative merchant-consuls and the radical proponents of consular reform eventually brought about a hybrid, protean system of remuneration. In confirmation to what Nicholas Parrillo has observed for the national interior, a "mixed regime of salaries and bounties" came to characterize the antebellum US foreign policy apparatus. However, the careful examination of the protracted conflicts around consulship complicates Parrillo's assertion that "the spoils system made officers into creatures of the national party and not of the local mercantile community."⁴⁹ Political patronage undermined the mercantile monopoly of the consulate in the 1830s and 1840s, but what is striking is that merchants actively opposed, and often effectively overturned, the transition to political patronage. Because merchants stood at the heart of consulship prior to the apex of political patronage, their backlash against the "spoils system" was actually as formative to the emergence of the US foreign policy state as was the "spoils system" itself.

Though the "spoils system" introduced a transformative dynamic in the negotiation of consulship between commercial and political elites, it is important to stress that Jacksonian America was by no means exceptional in its reconsideration of the consular institution. Contrary to repeated assertions in consular correspondence and the national press, the U. S. consular system was *not* that different from those of Great Britain, Spain, Austria, or Brazil.⁵⁰ The 1830s and 1840s witnessed a peak in international debates about consular reform and remarkably similar arguments about the necessity of salarizing consulship, standardizing its practices, and regulating its mode of interaction with central administrations. Jacksonian reformers interested in modernizing their state were emphatically aware of these global developments and regularly drew unfavorable comparisons between exaggerated images of indigent or affluent US consuls relying on a broken system of fees and their salaried European counterparts.

Where the dynamics of US policy changes diverged from those in Europe and across Latin America was in United States' traditionally established mercantile monopoly of consulship and the subsequent politicization of this

institution in the wake of the “spoils system.” The resulting mosaic landscape of mercantile and political appointments represented a dynamic and inherently destabilizing amalgamation of political and economic interests, of a constant tug-of-war between mercantile elites and party protégés espousing very different notions of the relationship between public duty and private interest, and of the ubiquitous “national character.” Given their traditionally dominant position in crafting foreign policy in all matters consular, it is perhaps less surprising that wealthy US capitalists successfully resisted Jacksonian reform by drawing on new commercial opportunities in Latin America, augmenting their power over sailors, and forestalling consular bureaucratization.

At the same time, even the powerful capitalists had to reckon with the gradual demise of their collective power and the loss of their consular monopoly at the hands of an increasingly bureaucratized consular service pledging fealty to the federal administration. No other reflection captured the gravity of this change better than John Clayton’s retrospective 1853 remark on the decades-long stalling of that most iconic of all hemispheric projects, the construction of a trans-continental canal. Looking back at the early 1830s, when Central American independence from Spain presented a unique opportunity for linking the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, this former Whig Secretary of State remembered his hope that Jackson’s administration would empower “William Radcliff, the former consul at Chagres, who had devoted much of his life to the examination of this great subject,” with the completion of this grand continental project. “But, unfortunately,” Clayton exclaimed in retrospect, “[Radcliff] was no politician,” and the commission went to an incapable Jacksonian appointee.⁵¹ Clayton’s casual reference to consul Radcliff’s lack of political experience vividly captured the vanishing hope that a reformed consular system would place the United States at the vanguard of the western hemisphere, and the bitter, offhand recognition that consulship had instead morphed into yet another appendage of the “spoils system.”

Having failed to prohibit consuls’ participation in mercantile pursuits or institute consular salaries, Jacksonian reformers nonetheless integrated the consulate into the system of political appointments they vigorously deployed to ensure their hold on power. At its best, patronage enabled political opportunists of middling prominence to pursue specific partisan objectives, thwart political rivals’ access to power or capital, or at the very least owe Democratic powerholders a favor. At its worst, the “spoils system” multiplied the number of disposable political careerists whose aspirations never remained more than a passing concern to administrators, who never quite fully grasped just how

much damage these petty partisans did to their nation in their never-ending struggle for power, capital, and personal prestige.

Neither merchants nor salaried officials, these Jacksonian protégés became the point of countless sailors' and merchants' petitions and newspaper reports, which depicted them as a synecdoche of a failed consular system in desperate need of reform. Livingston himself, having witnessed these men's incompetence all across the Americas, had been the first to unsuccessfully pressure Congress into limiting their affronts against the national character and the federal treasury. And yet, by 1856, it was the proliferation of these Jacksonian protégés—and not a vague memory of Livingston—that led Congress to the counterintuitive conclusion that the best—perhaps only—way to prevent the damage they were doing was to give them what they had desired all along: a distinction of their loyalty in the form of a federal handout. Ironically, it was these men whom Livingston had so passionately despised, and whom he had wished to legislate out of existence, that brought his reform to its unlikely conclusion.

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NOTES

1. C. Edwards Lester, *The Artist, the Merchant, and the Statesman of the Age of the Medici, and of Our Own Times*, vol. 1 (New York: Paine and Burgess, 1845), 158.

2. Edward Livingston, "Report to the President of the United States," in Andrew Jackson, *Message from the President of the United States in Relation to the Consular Establishment of the United States, March 2, 1833* (Washington, DC: F. P. Blair, 1833). President Andrew Jackson supported Livingston's consular reform plan as crucial to attaining hemispheric foreign policy objectives. Cf. Andrew Jackson, "Fifth Annual Message," in *The Principles of American Statesmanship. The Theory, Development, and Administration of Government in America as Shown in the Writings of American Statesmen*, ed. Francis Newton Thorpe (New York: Tandy-Thomas, 1909), 288.

3. On Jacksonians as advocates of small or limited government, see Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Age of Jackson* (Boston, 1945), 315–17; Robert V. Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Freedom* (Baltimore, 1981), 116–42; Jon Meacham, *American Lion: Andrew Jackson in the White House* (New York, 2008), 48; David S. Reynolds, *Waking Giant: America in the Age of Jackson* (New York, 2008), 3; Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848* (Oxford, 2007), 364. For a more critical appraisal of the traditional description of Jackson's Democratic Party as a champion of "small" or "limited" government, see Sean Wilentz, *Andrew Jackson* (New York, 2005), 5. Wilentz's observation that "both Jackson Democrats and their Whig Party opponents favored minimal government on some issues but not on others" is suggestive of the limits inherent in reducing the antebellum party system to a

dichotomy of “small” vs. “big” government. Instead, Wilentz insists that we need to understand Jackson’s position on the role of the federal government against the backdrop of his critique of monied elites and his advocacy of democratization. “Jackson,” writes Wilentz, “sought to sever the connection of government and private business,” yet “he did so because he wanted to discourage the rise of a small elite of monied men who enjoyed disproportional political power.” This observation holds especially true in the case of the US consular system, a government branch practically monopolized by mercantile elites by the time Jackson entered office. Going beyond the question of *why* Jackson sought to reform government, this article investigates *how* he sought to achieve his reform agenda and considers the agency of other federal officials who helped shape the Jacksonian project.

4. The legislative and executive landmarks of US consular reform were Livingston’s “Report” of 1833; John Forsyth, “Consular System of the United States,” 9 July 1838, *Index to the Executive Documents, 25th Congress*, 2nd sess., Document 467 (Washington, DC, 1838); James Buchanan, “Report on the Consular System,” 12 December 1846, in *The Works of James Buchanan, Comprising his Speeches, State Papers, and Private Correspondence*, ed. John Bassett Moore, vol. 7, 1846–48 (Philadelphia/London: J. B. Lippincott, 1909), 154–66; and “An Act to regulate the Diplomatic and Consular Systems of the United States,” 18 August 1856, *United States Statutes at Large*, vol. 11, ed. George Minot and George Sanger (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1859), 52–64.

5. Some overview works include Charles S. Kennedy, *The American consul: a history of the United States consular service, 1776–1914* (New York, 1990); Nicole Phelps, *Sovereignty transformed: US–Habsburg relations from 1815 to the Paris Peace Conference* (Cambridge, 2013); idem, “One Service, Three Systems, Many Empires: The US Consular Service and the Growth of US Global Power, 1789–1924,” in *Crossing Empires: Taking US History into Transimperial Terrain*, ed. Kristin Hoganson and Jay Sexton (Durham, 2020), 135–58; Ferry de Goey, *Consuls and the institutions of global capitalism, 1783–1914* (London, 2014); Nicholas M. Keegan, *US Consular Representation in Britain since 1790* (London, 2018).

6. My interrogation of Jacksonian consular reform builds on a growing body of scholarship on the early American state. See, for instance, Richard John, “Rethinking the Early American State,” *Polity* 40, no. 3 (July 2008), 332–39; idem, “Governmental Institutions as Agents of Change: Rethinking American Political Development in the Early Republic, 1787–1835,” *Studies in American Political Development* 11, no. 2 (Fall 1997): 347–80; William J. Novak, “The Myth of the ‘Weak’ American State,” *American Historical Review* 113, no. 3 (June 2008): 752–72; Brian Balogh, *A Government Out of Sight: The Mystery of National Authority in Nineteenth-Century America* (Cambridge, MA, 2009); Eliga Gould, *Among the Powers of the Earth: the American Revolution and the Making of a New World Empire* (Cambridge, MA, 2012); Matthew Taylor Raffety, *The Republic Afloat: Law, Honor, and Citizenship in Maritime America* (Chicago, 2013); Brian Rouleau, *With Sails Whitening Every Sea: Mariners and the Making of an American Maritime Empire* (Ithaca, 2014); Tyson Reeder, “‘Sovereign Lords’ and ‘Dependent Administrators’: Artisan Privateers, Atlantic Borderwaters, and State Building in the Early Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of American History* 103, no. 2 (September 2016): 323–46; Gautham Rao, *National Duties: Custom Houses and the Making of the American State* (Chicago, 2016); Matthew Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire: Slaveholders at the Helm of American Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, MA, 2016); Special issue on “the state,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 38, no. 1 (Spring 2018); David

F. Ericson, "The United States Military, State Development, and Slavery in the Early Republic," *Studies in American Political Development* 31, no. 1 (April 2017): 130–48; Nancy Shoemaker, "Extraterritorial United States to 1860," *Diplomatic History* 42, no. 1 (2018): 36–54; Stephen W. Campbell, *The Bank War and the Partisan Press: Newspapers, Financial Institutions, and the Post Office in Jacksonian America* (Lawrence, KS, 2019); Lindsay Schakenbach Regele, *Manufacturing Advantage: War, the State, and the Origins of American Industry, 1776–1848* (Baltimore, 2019); Johann Neem, "Social Capital, Civic Labor, and State Capacity in the Early American Republic: Schools, Courts, and Law Enforcement," *Journal of Policy History* 31, no. 3 (July 2019): 326–53.

7. In line with Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 332–66; Seth Rockman, "Jacksonian America," *American History Now*, ed. Eric Foner and Lisa McGirr (Philadelphia, 2011), 52–74; and Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York, 2006), 314–19, I maintain that we can only account for the specific course of the movement for Jacksonian consular reform by embedding it in the international context, by understanding its ideological commitments to a new definition of the "national character," and by examining the way in which the introduction of political patronage ultimately transformed this reform's meaning and trajectory.

8. Most scholars interested in the spoils system have studied its impact within the United States, but its impact on the US foreign policy apparatus was profound. On the spoils system, see Schlesinger, *Age of Jackson*, 45–47; Campbell, *Bank War*, 14–32; Richard J. Ellis, *The Development of the American Presidency* (London, 2012), 425–26; Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 332–66; Richard R. John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge, MA, 1995), 227–44; Meacham, *American Lion*, 81–85; Wilentz, *Rise of American Democracy*, 314–19.

9. For more on the subject, see Edward Rugemer, *The Problem of Emancipation: The Caribbean Roots of the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge, 2008); Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire*; Caitlin Fitz, *Our Sister Republics: The United States in an Age of American Revolutions* (New York, 2016).

10. For an insightful approach to the politicization of "national character," see David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776–1820* (Chapel Hill, 1997), chap. 3. Though Waldstreicher's analysis deals with an earlier period, the 1790s, the politics of "national character" experienced a reinvigoration in the 1820s, a period in which, as this article contends, revolutionary turmoil in the Caribbean, South, and Central America powerfully reconfigured the way US foreign policy and party consolidation worked. The movement for reforming consulship was part of a larger Jacksonian phenomenon of sociopolitical reform. For an overview of Jacksonian reform, see Schlesinger, *Age of Jackson*, 46–47; Remini, *Andrew Jackson*, 116–42, 181–202, 248–56; Rockman, "Jacksonian America," 52–74; Kyle Volk, *Moral Minorities and the Making of American Democracy* (Oxford, 2014).

11. See Max Weber, *Essays in Sociology*, ed. Hans Heinrich Gerth and Charles Wright Mills (New York, 1946), 84.

12. Livingston, "Report," 6.

13. Livingston, "Report," 7.

14. Livingston, "Report," 10. On the importance of customs duties for the funding of the federal government, see Rao, *National Duties*, Introduction.

15. Keegan, *US Consular Representation*, 27.
16. New research on the variety of early nineteenth-century European and South American consular systems suggests that US consuls' depictions of uniformly salaried foreign consuls were gross exaggerations. Claiming the mantle of experts, consuls often distorted information on foreign states in order to boost their own arguments for or against a specific type of remuneration. For some instructive contemporaneous and later references on the subject, see Agustín de Letamendi, *Atribuciones consulares o manual para los consulados de España en países extranjeros* (Madrid: Sancha, 1835); idem, *Tratado de Jurisprudencia Diplomático-Consular y Manual Práctico para la Carrera de Estado* (Madrid: Repullés, 1843); Anonymous, "Outline of a consular establishment for the United States of America, in Eastern Asia," *Chinese Repository* 6 (1838): 69–82; *Commercial Advertiser*, 28 November 1850; Leopold Neumann, *Handbuch des Consulatswesens, mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Österreichischen, und einem Anhang der Verordnungen* (Vienna: Tendler and Co., 1854), 60–66; E. W. A. Tuson, *The British Consul's Manual: Being a Practical Guide for Consuls ...* (London: Longman and Co., 1856), 4; Eli T. Sheppard, *American Consular Service* (Berkeley, 1901), 416–17; Flavio Mendez de Oliveira Castro, *História da Organização do Ministério das Relações Exteriores* (Editora Universidade de Brasília, 1983); Jesús Pradells Nadal, *Diplomacia y comercio: La expansión española en el siglo XVIII* (Alicante, 1992); Jorge Manuel Martins Ribeiro, "Comércio e diplomacia nas relações luso-americanas (1776–1822)," Ph.D. diss. (Porto: University of Porto, 1997); Raúl Figueroa Esquer, "La creación de la red consular española en México, 1838–1848," in *México y España en el siglo XIX: Diplomacia, relaciones triangulares e imaginarios nacionales*, ed. idem and Agustín Sánchez Andrés (Morelia, 2003), 53–76; John Dickie, *The British Consul: Heir to a Great Tradition* (New York, 2008), 14; Tatiana Zonova, "The Consular Service in Russia: Past Problems, New Challenges," in *Consular Affairs and Diplomacy*, ed. Jan Melissen and Ana Mar Fernández (Leiden, 2011), 173–98.
17. *Evening Post*, 26 June 1835.
18. Macpherson to Henry Clay, Cartagena, 16 May 1826, Despatches from United States consuls in Cartagena (henceforth DUSC [city]), NARA microfilm, r. 1.
19. John Macpherson to Henry Clay, Cartagena, 16 May 1826; idem to Martin Van Buren, 14 December 1829, DUSC Cartagena, r. 1.
20. William Taylor to Secretary of State, Alvarado, 4 June 1824, DUSC Veracruz, r. 1.
21. Henry Hill to Secretary of State, 1 January 1822. On Hill, see Tyson Reeder, *Smugglers, Pirates, and Patriots: Free Trade in the Age of Revolution* (Philadelphia, 2019), 138–46, 163–79. For more on Hill's predecessors in Havana, see Simeon Andonov Simeonov, "With What Right Are They Sending A Consul?: Unauthorized Consulship, US Expansion, and the Transformation of the Spanish American Empire, 1795–1808," *Journal of the Early Republic* 40, no. 1 (Spring 2020): 19–44.
22. Henry Hill to Secretary of State, 1 January 1822.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. The data is available in *The American Almanac and Repository of Useful Knowledge* (Boston: Charles Bowen, 1828; 1837; 1845; 1854; 1861). Total US consulates 1828: 118, of which Europe: 59, Spanish America, and Brazil: 29, Caribbean: 19, Asia, Africa, Pacific and Indian Oceans: 11.

1836: 163, of which Europe: 72; Americas: 47; Caribbean: 24; Asia, Africa, Pacific and Indian Oceans: 20.

1845: 167 consuls, of which Europe: 73; Americas: 46; Caribbean: 22; Asia, Africa, Pacific and Indian Oceans: 26.

1854: 205 consuls, of which Europe: 81; Americas: 54; Caribbean: 24; Asia, Africa, Pacific and Indian Oceans: 46.

1861: 233 consuls, of which Europe: 88; Americas: 72; Caribbean: 25; Asia, Africa, Pacific and Indian Oceans: 48.

26. See Wilentz, *Rise of American Democracy*, 314–15; Campbell, *Bank War*, 14–15; J. Robert Moskin, *American Statecraft: The Story of the US Foreign Service* (New York, 2013), 120–44.

27. In 1801, for example, President Thomas Jefferson made twenty-four consular appointments while the Senate was in recess. See *Annals of Congress*, 13th Congress, May 24, 1813–April 18, 1814 (Washington, DC: Gales and Seaton, 1854), 2669–72.

28. The use of the masculine pronoun denotes the fact that all consular officeholders in the antebellum period were men.

29. See Matthew Brown, *The Struggle for Power in Post-Independence Colombia and Venezuela* (New York, 2012).

30. Livingston, “Report,” 38–39.

31. See Stephen Chambers, *No God But Gain: The Untold Story of Cuban Slavery, the Monroe Doctrine, and the Making of the United States* (New York, 2015).

32. Nicholas Trist to Louis McLane, DUSC Havana (3 May 1834); Nicholas Trist to John Forsyth, DUSC Havana (8 December 1835).

33. After Trist’s recall in 1839, the British Commissioners in Sierra Leone exclaimed that Trist’s vice-consul was “zealously endeavoring, month after month, with perfect impunity, and to a far greater extent than it was possible for Mr. Trist to have done, to degrade his national flag, and to brutalize the character of American seamen, by encouraging them to engage in a contraband and inhuman traffic.” See H. M. Commissioners to Viscount Palmerston, Sierra Leone, 28 August 1839, *British Parliamentary Papers. Class A. Correspondence With the British Commissioners at Sierra Leone, the Havana, Rio de Janeiro, and Surinam, Relating to the Slave Trade* (London: Clowes and Sons, 1841), 96.

34. “Memorial of G. F. Russell and others, against the conduct of N. P. Trist, American Consul at Havana,” *US House of Representatives, Committee on Commerce*, 26th Cong., 1st sess., *Report No. 707* (Washington, DC: US Congress, 1840), 17–18.

35. *Ibid.*, 18–19.

36. Cf. Clement Freeman [?] to President John Tyler, Philadelphia, June 1st, 1841, DUSC Trinidad. Less than a week later, Freeman’s letter was echoed by another complaint, demanding “a new set of Consuls general and a new system of duties.” See S. Shel [...] to Daniel Webster, 7 June 1841, DUSC Trinidad; Charles Con[nery?] to Daniel Webster, 18 April 1843, *ibid.*

37. See, for example, Masters to James Buchanan, 30 March 1846, DUSC Matanzas, in which dozens of US merchants and shipmasters in Matanzas opposed a new fee levied by consul Simeon Johnson, asking for Johnson’s recall. On another occasion, a newly appointed consul complained that a certain Francis Fabars, “a coloured gentleman of Saint Domingo,” who did “nearly half of the American business” in Santiago de Cuba, refused “to

have any official or personal intercourse” with him, thereby depriving the consul of his income. See John Holding to James Buchanan, 15 February 1847, DUSC Santiago de Cuba.

38. Fritz Henry McGready to Daniel Webster, 15 November 1841, DUSC Baracoa, r. 1.

39. Charles Con[nery?] to Daniel Webster, 18 April 1843, DUSC Trinidad. In a note attached to the letter, a federal clerk noted: “The charges in the bill of the Consul (with the exception of the extra wages) do not appear to be unauthorized or unusual for such services as were rendered by [the Consul].”

40. Buchanan, “Report,” 162.

41. *New York Daily Tribune*, 20 December 1845.

42. *Ibid.*

43. *New York Daily Tribune*, 26 December 1845.

44. *Ibid.*

45. *Ibid.*

46. *Daily National Intelligencer*, 17 February 1847.

47. For a similar proposal and critique, see George Washington Montgomery, “Memorial to the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States,” 16 March 1838; John Forsyth, “Consular System of the United States,” 9 July 1838, *Index to the Executive Documents, 25th Congress, 2nd sess.*, Document 467 (Washington, DC, 1838).

48. Edmund Watmough to John Forsyth, 9 November 1836, DUSC Trinidad.

49. Nicholas Parrillo, *Against the Profit Motive: The Salary Revolution in American Government, 1780–1940* (New Haven, 2013), 233.

50. Dickie, *British Consul*, 14.

51. John M. Clayton, *Speech delivered in the Senate of the United States* (Washington, DC: Kirkwood and McGill, 1853), 20–21.