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Robert G. Kaufman. *Dangerous Doctrine: How Obama's Grand Strategy Weakened America.* Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2016. 304 pp. \$40.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8131-6720-6.

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Donald Trump's surprising political victory in the 2016 presidential election has caused foreign policy observers to turn with alarm, apprehension, or anticipation to the new president's foreign policy. In doing so, they have understandably shifted their attention away from his predecessor. However, Robert G. Kaufman's recent ambitious book does a major service in identifying and critiquing not only the foreign policy doctrine developed and pursued by President Barack Obama but also the manner in which this represented a profound break from the post-World War II mainstream of muscular internationalism and in the author's judgment damaged America's national security and endangered its allies (p. 197).

Kaufman, in focusing on the period from the January 2009 inaugural through the 2014 midterm congressional elections, dismisses arguments that Obama's policies reflected inexperience or absence of a real foreign policy strategy. Instead, he identifies a coherent Obama doctrine, derived from a synthesis of classical realism, neorealism, and liberal multilateralism, adding that this doctrine appropriates the most problematic features of these paradigms without their countervailing virtues (p. 185). The unifying theme that runs through Kaufman's work is a critique of retrenchment in Obama's foreign policy.[1]

In seeking to categorize Obama's foreign policy orientation, Kaufman opts not to utilize any of the four designations that Walter Russell Mead set out a decade and a half ago in his widely cited work, *Special Providence*. [2] Mead's menu of categories—Jeffersonian, Hamiltonian,

Jacksonian, and Wilsonian—might seem tempting, for example, in suggesting that Obama's policies could in some respects be considered Jeffersonian in his preference for a less interventionist foreign policy with more emphasis on domestic concerns, but Kaufman finds that Obama does not belong to any of these schools of thought. Instead, a particular virtue of Kaufman's book is that he embeds his analysis of American foreign policy and the Obama doctrine in contemporary international relations theory (chapter 2). Here the author notes that while the Obama doctrine defies easy categorization, in effect it synthesizes elements from several foreign policy paradigms. He identifies Obama as an unrealistic defensive realist with a strong pre-disposition to multilateralism minus the grace of liberalism (p. 38). In practice this meant a disinclination to promote liberal democracy and a dangerous disinterest in regime type—a significant difference from Reinhold Niebuhr, whose philosophy the 43rd president claimed to embrace. As a consequence, Obama was prone to conciliate America's adversaries without taking sufficiently into account the challenges and threats they posed.

To buttress his case for an alternative foreign policy strategy, Kaufman reaches back to draw on traditional geopolitical thinkers' work, including Halford J. Mackinder's 1904 essay, "The Geographical Pivot of History," [3] which warned that any power gaining control over Eurasia, the "World Island" or "Heartland," would possess resources enabling it to dominate the world, and Nicholas Spykman's 1942 book, *America's Strategy in World Politics: The United States and the Balance of Power*, arguing instead for the importance of the "Rimland," the