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On Wide Seas: The U.S. Navy in the Jacksonian Era

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can be overwhelming; one struggles to imagine, for instance, the reader who is interested in individual summaries of the thirty-four offshore discharge exercises conducted between 1954 and 1962. The most significant issue, however, is one of omission. *U.S. Go Home* is told overwhelmingly from America's point of view, leaving the reader mostly guessing about French motives and perspectives; despite the book's title, we get precious little explanation of why France finally decided to send the United States packing. This is a shame, not only because the story itself is fascinating, but because the consequences of de Gaulle's decision continue to shape the bilateral relationship down to the present. As Henry A. Kissinger once observed, disputes between Washington and Paris often center "around the philosophical issue of how nations cooperate"; the trajectory of the U.S. military presence in France provides the illustration par excellence of this dynamic.

These shortcomings aside, however, the Egans have produced a unique and valuable guide to an often-overlooked chapter of America's Cold War history, one that those interested in the topic are likely to consult for some time to come.

LUKE NICASTRO



On Wide Seas: The US Navy in the Jacksonian Era, by Claude Berube. Tuscaloosa: Univ. of Alabama Press, 2021. 234 pages. \$54.95.

The popular image of President Andrew Jackson is usually one of a man of mercurial emotions who was an Anglophobe, prone to violence, and intent on pushing the limits of the United States ever westward. Jackson's populist

presidency is depicted as personality driven, and that personality made him temperamental and unpredictable. Jackson, the military hero of the Battle of New Orleans, is known for picking fights with Native Americans—most notably, in initiating war with Florida's Seminoles—and displacing whole tribes when he could get away with it. Jackson was sensitive to perceived slights to his honor and engaged in two duels, the first in 1802; in the second, in 1806, Jackson killed Charles Dickinson.

This is not the president Berube presents. *On Wide Seas* depicts a Jackson who, when it came to international and naval affairs, was much more deliberate, analytical, and balanced than his popular image would suggest. Understanding the importance of international commerce, Jackson carefully deployed his Navy to advance national interests, using force cautiously—only as a last resort, and against weaker nations. When dealing with stronger maritime powers, Jackson is depicted as diplomatic, preferring negotiations to fights that could not be won.

Although other scholars have discerned little naval interest on Jackson's part, Dr. Berube, focusing on Jackson's accomplishments, reveals the seventh president to have been a navalist. The author makes a well-researched, well-written, and compelling argument for his position. During Jackson's tenure, the U.S. Navy grew and the quality of its ships improved. Jackson took an active interest in the service. He personally reviewed many court-martial results and often intervened to reduce or otherwise mitigate punishments.

Jackson's Navy, like the country, was coming of age. Against a national backdrop of increasing scientific interest,

naval officers in general became frequent contributors to journals discussing matters perceived to be of maritime importance. More well traveled than their Army counterparts, naval officers wrote of their experiences while serving in the increasing numbers of naval squadrons deployed around the world.

Occasionally younger officers found themselves pitted against their naval seniors, particularly where emerging technologies such as steam propulsion were concerned. There was also a growing consensus that the nation needed a maritime college along the lines of the Military Academy at West Point. Although the Naval Academy would not open its doors until 1845, the demand for a centralized and standardized teaching facility accessible to all who qualified, irrespective of familial wealth, already was evident in the Jacksonian period. Berube argues that Jackson, having been exposed to the benefits of steam power during the events leading up to the Battle of New Orleans, as well as on his journey to his inauguration (which involved traveling on three separate steamboats), was pro-new technology. If so, he was at least philosophically aligned with the new generation of naval officers.

As the Navy increasingly modernized, so too did its associated supporting organizations. The Medical Corps made major strides, including via efforts to bring order to the selection and qualification processes for personnel to become seagoing and shore-bound surgeons and physicians. This period also saw the emergence of the Chaplain Corps, replacing a bevy of chaplains selected solely by local commanders with ordained ministers.

These supporting corps included the Marines. Jackson's presidency would present the Corps with perhaps its greatest challenge. Several senior naval officers argued that in a Navy made up of volunteers, Marines no longer were needed to protect the quarterdeck from mutiny. However, thanks to the efforts of Brevet Brigadier General Archibald Henderson, the Marines' longest-serving Commandant, and several senior Navy captains who valued shipboard Marines, the Corps was saved via Congress's passage in 1834 of the Act for the Better Organization of the Marine Corps.

Berube also looks at other factors that affected the Jacksonian Navy, including discipline, alcohol abuse, and slavery. The author reminds the reader that while the officer corps was for whites only, the Navy as a whole already was integrated. Its seamen were drawn from all over the world, and a surprising degree of equality prevailed within the crews. The record is less laudable when it came to shore establishments. The construction of naval dry docks and other labor-intensive work in southern shipyards often was performed by freed Black workers and by slaves who were rented out for the jobs. Although the Navy was unwilling to replace freed Black laborers, the reason was financial, not a sense of justice; freed Black craftsmen were paid less than their white counterparts.

During Jackson's presidency, the U.S. Navy became a global force, protecting American shipping and the country's economy, showing the flag, and conducting diplomatic missions—at times using combat power to do so. Berube provides a convincing argument that as U.S. frigates and sloops conducted operations around the world, the service's officers developed a sense of maritime destiny.

In the U.S. Navy's overall historical movement toward that destiny, it was propelled by presidents, such as John Adams and Theodore Roosevelt, who

were ardent navalists. Thanks to Berube's careful research and scholarship, it now is safe to add Andrew Jackson to that list.

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