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U.S. Go Home: The U.S. Military in France, 1945–1968

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Nicastro et al.: U.S. Go Home: The U.S. Military in France, 1945–1968

U.S. Go Home: The U.S. Military in France, 1945–1968, by M. David Egan and Jean Egan. Atglen, PA: Schiffer, 2022. 608 pages. $39.99.

In March 1966, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs called Charles E. Bohlen, the U.S. ambassador in Paris, to the Quai d'Orsay for an impromptu meeting. Ambassador Bohlen likely guessed the reason for the summons; two weeks earlier, French president Charles de Gaulle had announced his government's intent to rethink its defense relationship with the United States and NATO. On Bohlen's arrival, his hosts confirmed his suspicion. France, they explained, had decided "to recover the entire exercise of sovereignty over her territory, which is at present infringed by the permanent presence of allied military elements." The implication was clear; all foreign troops under non-French command would need to vacate the country as quickly as possible.

For the United States, this would be no small task. As M. David Egan and Jean Egan comprehensively document in *U.S. Go Home: The U.S. Military in France, 1945–1968,* the U.S. military had spent the previous two decades building up an extensive defense infrastructure in the country. By the time of de Gaulle's decision, France had become host to millions of tons of American matériel and tens of thousands of American personnel, and the presence of these capabilities was seen widely as key to the defense of Western Europe against potential attack.

The Egans trace the origins of this presence to the waning days of World War II, when the United States began to use French soil to land supplies, house refugees and prisoners of war, and support the other noncombat functions that had become necessary in the aftermath of victory. These efforts were intended at first to be temporary; once the dust had cleared and democratic Europe was on its feet, the need for American boots was expected to vanish. That this did not happen can be attributed to the growth of Soviet power; by the late 1940s, U.S. planners had become convinced that Communist aggression in Europe could be deterred only by a robust and enduring American presence on the Continent.

In view of France's strategic position and considerable resources, the Egans write, the country was identified as "a natural operational headquarters and logistical hub for the defense of the West." In 1951, France became the home of NATO's Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe. Later that same year, the United States was permitted to begin construction and deployments in support of a permanent military presence. Within three years, nearly fifty thousand Army and Air Force personnel were stationed in France; U.S. installations popped up from the industrial northeast to the sunny Mediterranean coast.

The Egans, who were stationed in France during the early 1960s, are clearly interested in their topic. Making admirable use of troves of previously neglected materials, including sources ranging from base newsletters and Pentagon press releases to interviews with surviving veterans, the authors develop a comprehensive picture of the U.S. footprint in France. The makeup and assignments of units, layout and function of installations, and routines of everyday life for servicemembers and families alike all are laid out in bounteous detail, aided by dozens of helpful maps, diagrams, and photographs. While this aspect is mostly a strength, at times the sheer amount of information

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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,