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John H. Matsui


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AND THE RADICALIZATION
OF THE CIVIL WAR

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John H. Matsui : The First Republican Army: The Army of Virginia and the Radicalization of the Civil War (A Nation Divided: Studies in the Civil War Era) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The First Republican Army: The Army of Virginia and the Radicalization of the Civil

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Although much is known about the political stance of the military at large during the Civil War, the political party affiliations of individual soldiers have received little attention. Drawing on archival sources from twenty-five generals and 250 volunteer officers and enlisted men, John Matsui offers the first major study to examine the ways in which individual politics were as important as military considerations to battlefield outcomes and how the experience of war could alter soldiers' political views. The conservative war aims pursued by Abraham Lincoln's generals (and to some extent, the president himself) in the first year of the American Civil War focused on the preservation of the Union and the restoration of the antebellum status quo. This approach was particularly evident in the prevailing policies and attitudes toward Confederacy-supporting Southern civilians and slavery. But this changed in Virginia during the summer of 1862 with the formation of the Army of Virginia. If the Army of the Potomac (the major Union force in Virginia) was dominated by generals who concurred with the ideology of the Democratic Party, the Army of Virginia (though likewise a Union force) was its political opposite, from its senior generals to the common soldiers. The majority of officers and soldiers in the Army of Virginia saw slavery and pro-Confederate civilians as crucial components of the rebel war effort and blamed them for prolonging the war. The frustrating occupation experiences of the Army of Virginia radicalized them further, making them a vanguard against Southern rebellion and slavery within the Union army as a whole and paving the way for Abraham Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation.

The First Republican Army is a significant work of original scholarship. Such an analysis of the personnel who made up the various field armies is an exciting new frontier in Civil War history, and the Army of Virginia is a particularly interesting case, since its significance is not only sociological but also political. (Steven E. Woodworth, Texas Christian University, author of *Manifest Destinies: Westward Expansion and the Road to the Civil War*) This thought-provoking and original study analyzes the political culture of citizen soldiers in the Union Army of Virginia and the Army of the Potomac. Led by Democrat George B. McClellan in 1861–62, the Potomac army resisted the growing pressure for an antislavery war policy, while General John Pope's short-lived Army of Virginia paved the way toward an antislavery 'hard war' in congruence with the demands of radical Republicans. As John Matsui makes clear, the absorption of the Army of Virginia into the Army of the Potomac after the Second Battle of Bull Run leavened the North's principal army with a growing commitment to emancipation. (James M. McPherson, Princeton University, author of *The War That Forged a Nation: Why the Civil War Still Matters*) The First Republican Army examines John Pope and his Army of Virginia as part of the Union's turn toward more revolutionary policies that profoundly disrupted the Confederacy's slaveholding society. Careful attention to the high command, as well as to subordinate officers and soldiers in the ranks, underscores the degree to which the army differed from the more famous Army of the Potomac. Anyone interested in the military and political history of the Civil War will find much of interest in this provocative study. (Gary W. Gallagher, University of Virginia, author of *The Union War*) John's Matsui's *The First Republican Army* constructs a reasoned argument that General John Pope's command had an influence and significance to the course of war that belied its short-lived status and catastrophic military failure, enough to make it richly deserving of its own study. (Civil War Books and Authors) John H. Matsui examines the interaction of political beliefs of the soldiers with military considerations. (Richmond Times-Dispatch) About the Author John H. Matsui is Assistant Professor of History at the Virginia Military Institute.