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From the mid-1940s to the late 1960s, the US government used public diplomacy to cement its partnership with France. A range of different state actors, from the US Information Agency (USIA) to the Psychological Strategy Board, competed for control over this specific policy area with the ultimate goal of implementing what François Doppler-Speranza calls a “parabellicist” (28) agenda: they aimed to keep French public opinion alert to the threat of Soviet Communism and thereby guarantee that the country’s leaders would remain committed to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949. The stakes were high. With NATO headquarters located just outside of its capital and several US Air Force bases on its territory, France was the linchpin of the transatlantic alliance. *Une armée de diplomates* chronicles the role of US cultural strategy in this larger effort, focusing more specifically on the role of the military.

US officials had long been aware of the need for public diplomacy in their relationship with France. As early as World War II, the Army circulated pamphlets to help G.I.s understand French customs and ensure that their presence would not be resented by the local population. After the surrender, public exhibitions sponsored by Washington touted the alliance that had bound the two countries in their war against the Axis. The display of military equipment used during the conflict served to advertise American military might. In addition, the US government distributed various newsletters about its presence in France and the role of NATO in an effort to counter the criticism of the powerful French Communist Party as well as the strong undercurrents of anti-Americanism in French society. The latter phenomenon was fueled by the larger context of decolonization, in which US officials frequently condemned France’s efforts to retain its empire. To overcome this hostility and improve relations with their local neighbors, in the 1950s and 1960s US military bases organized parades, published journals, held “open door” days, and established their own sports teams. However innocuous and spontaneous many of these activities may have seemed at the time, they all served the same purpose of promoting the US presence in France, thereby fulfilling Washington’s strategic interest of strengthening the transatlantic alliance.

Doppler-Speranza’s work sits at the intersection of three overlapping bodies of scholarship. First, it makes a valuable addition to the wealth of publications on the bilateral relationship between the United States and France in the post-World War II period. Besides the extensive literature on inter-governmental relations, scholars such as Richard Kuisel and Philippe Roger have produced valuable works of cultural history, focusing

respectively on Americanization and anti-Americanism.¹ *Une armée de diplomates* adds depth to this scholarship by focusing on the role of military actors. Second, the book reflects the transformation of diplomatic history, which in recent decades has expanded beyond the traditional study of diplomats and statesmen to include a wider range of actors and processes.² The study of US public diplomacy is but one of the many fruitful paths of inquiry that scholars have pursued. Since the publication of Nicholas Cull's work on the USIA in 2008, several monographs have been published not only about this agency in particular but also about Cold War propaganda in many different European countries.³ Last but not least, Doppler-Speranza contributes to the ongoing metamorphosis of the field of military history, which not unlike its diplomatic cousin has expanded its purview beyond the customary study of officers and campaigns to embrace the interaction between war and society in all its dimensions—political, intellectual, economic, and cultural.⁴ *Une armée de diplomates* brilliantly encapsulates the key insight at the heart of this new approach, namely that warfare has been far too important a force in US history to be left to military historians alone.

The methodological heterogeneity of the field of 'war and society' is well-represented in the variety of sources and actors studied by Doppler-Speranza. Although the military plays a central role in his narrative, the debates of French intellectuals over their country's relationship with the United States also feature heavily, as do those among civilian officials over the course of US cultural strategy. Among the questions that these bureaucrats and experts grappled with are the following: Should this policy area be driven by an independent agency or by the president? Which degree of autonomy should each country enjoy in its implementation? And where should the proper balance between military and civilian interests lay? Though the back-and-forth between those multiple actors can at times be challenging to follow, its inclusion allows Doppler-Speranza to recover the full complexity of civil-military relations both within the United States and in its relations with France.

The concept of "parabellicism," which is central to this book's analytical framework, is drawn from a 1949 article by writer and philosopher Jacques Brosse (106-110).⁵ Its use in this book presents the advantage of

¹ Richard F. Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Philippe Roger, *The American Enemy: A Story of French Anti-Americanism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); on governmental relations, see for instance Irwin M. Wall, *The United States and the Making of Postwar France, 1945-1954* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

² Erez Manela, "The United States in the World," in *American History Now*, ed. Eric Foner and Lisa McGirr (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), 201–20.

³ Nicholas John Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-1989* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Cedric Bierganns, *Geistige Nachrüstung: Ronald Reagan und die Deutschlandpolitik der U.S. Information Agency 1981-1987* (Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2021); Agnes Hartmann, *Kalter Krieg der Ideen: die United States Information Agency in Westdeutschland von 1953-1960* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2015); Nicholas J. Schlosser, *Cold War on the Airwaves: The Radio Propaganda War against East Germany* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2015); Mikael Nilsson, *The Battle for Hearts and Minds in the High North: The USIA and American Cold War Propaganda in Sweden, 1952-1969* (Boston: Brill, 2016); Maud Quessard, *Stratégies d'influence et guerres de l'information: propagande et diplomatie publique des États-Unis depuis la guerre froide* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2019).

⁴ For an overview, see Robert M. Citino, "Military Histories Old and New: A Reintroduction," *The American Historical Review* 112, no. 4 (October 2007): 1070–90; Robert M. Citino and Tami Davis Biddle, "The Role of Military History in the Contemporary Academy," Society for Military History White Paper, November 2014, <https://www.smh-hq.org/docs/Statements/SMHWhitePaper.pdf>.

⁵ The article was written under the *nom de plume* Jacques Ayencourt ; see "L'Américain, son information, la guerre et la paix," *Esprit* vol. 18, no. 6, 1949.

allowing us to better understand the suspicious, if not outrightly hostile perspective that many French observers adopted toward US cultural policy at the time, which they tended to see as merely an effort to lay the groundwork for a future military confrontation with the Soviet Union. However, it also tends to hide its antecedents in the US past. The author alludes to the older roots of parabellicism, but the book as a whole conveys the message that this agenda emerged only in the post-World War II period.⁶ A broader discussion of the scholarship on military preparedness, a term more widely used by scholars of US history and whose meaning does not appear to be significantly different from that of parabellicism, would have suggested a longer trajectory. As a handful of recent works have shown, military preparedness was already quite popular in the 1910s, when men like General Leonard Wood organized training camps in upstate New York in order to convince the federal government of the need to recruit more military reservists, and societies like the National Security League spread similar views in civilian circles.⁷ Throughout the interwar period, veterans' groups like the American Legion or the Veterans of Foreign Wars perpetuated this legacy, insisting for instance that the United States should maintain a strong merchant marine to prepare for the possibility of another global conflagration.⁸ Historian Laura McEnaney has also shown how nuclear defense infused Americans' everyday life in the 1950s, producing a kind of "grassroots militarization."⁹ In other words, for all the insights that the term parabellicism affords into contemporary French attitudes toward US policy, it also leads the book to exaggerate the novelty of many of the phenomena that it describes.

The other issue raised by the use of this concept has to do with the larger argument of the book. Doppler-Speranza's argument seems to underscore Jacques Brosse's perspective, for *Une armée de diplomates* stresses the deep impact of US cultural policy on the French public, going so far as to call the array of actors involved in its elaboration a "network of cultural coercion" (152), a term that seems too strong. Indeed, even though it is important to point out that what passed at the time for benign local initiatives were in fact actively coordinated from the top with the intent of advancing US foreign policy goals, one cannot help but wonder how effective these different efforts at public diplomacy actually were in practice. The various programs described in his book never managed to neuter the strong winds of anti-Americanism that swept through postwar France. They failed to convince French policymakers to follow the leadership of the United States on several significant occasions, from the National Assembly's rejection of the European Defense Community in 1954 to President Charles de Gaulle's decision to withdraw France from NATO's integrated command structure in 1966, which led to the closure of all US military bases on its soil. It should not surprise us that US cultural policy had only a limited impact, given how the book itself shows that it was never really directed with a strong hand from Washington and that it was often met with suspicion from the French public. This is not to say that we should not pay attention to the efforts described in this volume, for they still tell us a lot about civilian-military relations. It does suggest, however, that we should not accept at face value the overly positive claims of those in the US government who were responsible for its public diplomacy—nor, for that

⁶ Its first section is entitled "The Cultural Policy of the United States and the Emergence of Parabellicist Practices, 1944-1953."

⁷ J. Garry Clifford, *The Citizen Soldiers: The Plattsburg Training Camp Movement, 1913-1920* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2015); Manuel Franz, "Preparedness Revisited: Civilian Societies and the Campaign for American Defense, 1914-1920," *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 17, no. 4 (2018): 663-76.

⁸ Stephen R. Ortiz, *Beyond the Bonus March and GI Bill: How Veteran Politics Shaped the New Deal Era* (New York: New York University Press, 2010); William Pencak, *For God & Country: The American Legion, 1919-1941* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1989).

⁹ Laura McEnaney, *Civil Defense Begins at Home: Militarization Meets Everyday Life in the Fifties*, Politics and Society in Twentieth-Century America (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000).

matter, the overly negative ones of some French intellectuals who had an exaggerated idea of what Washington could accomplish.

With these caveats in mind, readers will nonetheless find in *Une armée de diplomates* an invaluable guide to a hitherto-neglected aspect of Franco-American relations in the postwar period, and a welcome reminder of the long shadow that the US military has cast on areas well beyond its immediate purview. One can only hope that it will prompt other scholars to follow the trail that it has blazed.

Olivier Burtin is an Associate Professor in US History and Civilization at the University of Amiens, France. He is a historian of the modern United States, with particular interests in the relationship between the state and society, war and peace, and the United States in the world. His first book, *A Nation of Veterans: War, Citizenship, and the Welfare State in Modern America* (University of Pennsylvania Press), is coming out in September 2022.