James Jay Carafano, "Mobilizing Europe's Stateless: America's Plan for a Cold War Army", *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 1, Issue 2 (Spring 1999): 61-85.

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James Jay Carafano's essay on the Volunteer Freedom Corps (VFC), a secret 1950s American initiative to build a military force from displaced European nationals, offers historians of the Cold War an important and revealing look at some of the key dilemmas American foreign policy faced in Western Europe: namely, the tension between integration and nationalism, and between American and European definitions of threat. Carafano has used extensive archival materials to trace the evolution and abandonment of the VFC, demonstrating, in the process, the extent to which it expressed contradictory and ill-conceived tendencies in American policy toward Western Europe.

According to Carafano, the idea for the VFC originated with Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., who wanted to do something constructive with the unrepatriated nationals who had taken refuge in Western Europe. These groups were politically and economical destabilizing, often targeted by Western nationals as sources of crime, competition for scarce jobs and even revolutionary activity that might precipitate another European war. The Volunteer Freedom Corps, it was thought, could absorb some of these unhealthy energies and simultaneously help restore the conventional force balance in Europe. Indeed, the VFC appealed to a variety of different constituents, according to Carafano, and appeared to settle a number of problems in one gesture.

Although he does not list them, I could identify at least five distinct but overlapping motives for the VFC in the late 1940s and early 1950s. First, the VFC could be seen as symbolic of the willingness of the Europeans to defend themselves, to acquire the military and political autonomy the United States desperately wanted for its allies. This had been a central feature of the Congressional debate on NATO, and, as Marc Trachtenberg has argued, a consistent but neglected part of American strategic policy toward Western Europe. The desire for European self-defence was especially strong, though, among Republicans, who feared that the instruments of postwar American internationalism might take on a permanent character, forever limiting American autonomy. It was not surprising that Lodge was so enthusiastic, nor that he found a receptive audience in the Eisenhower administration.

Second, and similarly, the US military came to favour the VFC as a means of supplementing and possibly replacing American ground forces overseas. Space does not allow Carafano to provide enough material on the evolution of the military¹s position here, but he quotes Willis Crittenberger (who Eisenhower appointed to head an ad hoc committee on the VFC) who favoured "any plan, in which other nationals do some of the dying instead of American boys." This too had been a theme of the Republican critique of containment, and of the Korean War that was held to be containment¹s logical outcome. If ground defense is needed, conservative critics argued, let the allies do it, and save American strength in the form it belongs: atomic air power.

Third, although it does not feature prominently in his argument, Carafano cites General J. Lawton Collins hope that greater reliance on foreign nationals would mean that the US army would not need to enlist as many African-Americans, as it had been forced to do during the Korean War. As a supplementary motive, Collins¹ admission fits with Gerald Horne¹s recent article in Diplomatic History on the enduring motif of race in 20th century American foreign policy, showing how a sense of racial hierarchy (at home and abroad) conditions the range of options facing foreign policy decision makers. In a broader sense, I would argue that the way the United States wanted to structure the Cold War coalition, with its division of labour between allied conventional and American atomic forces, is indicative of an imperial mind-set that nonetheless uneasily complements the more liberal objective of promoting allied self-defence.

Fourth, the VFC aimed to promote European integration and erode the divisive claims of nationalism and ethnicity by integrating displaced groups into the Western coalition. As Carafano explains, however, this desire was offset by a series of contradictions. First, the expectation was that the displaced nationals would be motivated by a sense of "national" loyalty to their "occupied" homeland behind the Iron Curtain. It was not clear whether nationalism was actually a tool to be used to encourage revanchism, rather than integration. More oddly still, the original proposal offered American citizenship to anyone who served successfully in the VFC, surely not something consistent with developing a strong sense of European identity in the new force. Most importantly, though, the VFC made the allies deeply uncomfortable, many of whom saw it as needlessly provocative and domestically dangerous. Yet Crittenberger¹s committee ignored European sensitivities altogether, even though the State Department had concluded that it would be dangerous for the western alliance to become embroiled in the revanchist claims of Eastern European nationals. The lack of analysis of possible European responses was a stunning omission, inconsistent with the desire to promote integration.

Finally, although Carafano does not explore this explicitly, many of these motives were drawn together under Eisenhower because they meshed with the core ideas of the New Look: reducing US. overseas forces; shifting the burden of conventional defense to "indigenous" allies to save money and the risk of becoming embroiled in more Koreas; and promoting the idea of "rollback," or at least the appearance of a more dynamic policy to replace the passivity of containment. As Carafano suggests, the original motif of the New Look was fiscally responsible activism, and into such a strategic vision the VFC appeared to offer a number of advantages and very few risks.

But of course there were risks, namely alienating the NATO allies. Yet the Eisenhower administration¹s insensitivity to European anxieties -- which was consistent with the Republican critique of containment though not with Eisenhower¹s own experience as -- displayed the eagerness of a young administration wanting to promote an idea in which the political implications were not fully explored. There was a sense, in the early deliberations of the New Look, that some conservative constituents in any case regarded America¹s deference to its allies as a source of weakness, and something the New Look ought to overcome. As tensions of the EDC ratification mounted in 1954, that impatience became more palpable. But in a more general sense, I think, Eisenhower¹s insistence that the United States could adopt such a policy "quite our own," indicates the frustrations of adopting the hyperactive nationalism the Cold War generated

in the United States to the demands of managing a multilateral coalition. The New Look¹s early rhetoric, the debates between Dulles and Radford in the NSC over pursuing a more "dynamic" policy, and the enthusiasm for psychological warfare as a surrogate for rollback, are all expressions of the Republican search for a policy that is at once unilateral and multilateral.

In this sense, one is struck by the resemblance of the VFC to the Eisenhower administration¹s other schemes for recruiting expatriate anti-communist forces, namely in Guatemala and Cuba. Their use as a vanguard for rolling back communism confers legitimacy on projects that, if they were pursued by American forces, might provocative or risky or, worst of all, hegemonic. Multilateralism was essential to maintaining the democratic character of American policy even when, as in the VFC, the policy was initially pursued at the expense of allied interests, or at least with indifference to their concerns. As with much of the New Look, of course, the VFC is the story of rhetorical promise meeting harsh resistance and forcing gracious retreat. Just as Dulles was ultimately forced to concede that containment had much to offer, and that rollback was impractical, so too did the idea of the VFC die because it proved unrealistic and contradictory. Under those conditions, it was amazing that it was not canceled until 1960.

My only suggestion for this stimulating and impressively researched paper is that Carafano consider exploring more of the assumptions that guided American policy into this contradictory maze. He touches on many of these, but leaves the implications of his story open. The VFC could, for example, be tied more forcefully into the culture of the New Look in the first years of the Eisenhower administration. One is struck by the extent to which the ambitions of the New Look exposed the conflicting interests of the allies, forcing the United States to hope against hope that its plans for European integration on American terms could somehow be made palatable. The problem was the extent to which American plans kept veering toward an impatient, instrumental use of European resources. In other words, the desire for integration sometimes appeared to mean nothing more than allied acquiescence to a single strategic and political vision provided by the United States.

When Dulles spoke of the importance of western unity, he based it on a particular belief in political morality that he assumed to be both uniquely pervasive in the United States yet universal in its application. The morality of other states was continuously related to their adherence to American values which Dulles did not see as American per se, but universal. In such a solipsistic vision, the defense of American definitions of interest and security become the collective interest of the Free World. But the concerns and interests of the allies are legitimate only to the extent that they are reconciled with American policy. "In all sincerity," Dulles wrote his church friend Frederick Nolde, "emphasis has been laid on the need for united action and for cementing cooperation in a society of consent." But the consent was expected to be around American preferences, not European reticence. Dulles frequently described the goal of American foreign policy as being one of educating allies to understand what was presumably in their interests. Canada¹s Lester Pearson publicly derided Dulles for this very assumption in the wake of his Massive Retaliation speech, and indeed Dulles was forced to retreat on much of the unilateralism that the New Look seemed to signify.

The point is that while the United States sought at all times to build a "society of consent," in the West, its vigorous pursuit of its own interests frequently collided with the sovereign interests of

the allies whose security the United States had decided was central to its own. At times, this translated into a brash, clumsy instrumentalism, in which the allies existed to augment but not interfere with, the exercise of American power. In the thermonuclear age that dawned in the early 1950s, and after the frustrations of the Korean War, such impatience with multilateralism is perhaps understandable. Nonetheless, the VFC story shows the extent to which this instrumentalism pervaded American thinking. The allies should pull together, but if they failed, in fact, to develop the normative sense of unity required, the United States would push them together because it was in America's sense of security to see Europe behave as a single sphere. It was painfully transparent that Washington wanted to tap into Europe's power in its Cold War struggle; and it feared that disunity would so diminish that power as to force the United States to stretch itself thinly around the world. The Europeans needed to defend themselves, it was certainly argued with great consistency, but this was because integration was central to developing the power the United States wanted. Such a position is hardly sensitive to the diversity of interests the allies were entitled to hold if their sense of sovereignty was to remain intact.

In this sense, we can detect important ideological habits and dispositions that framed the meaning of the New Look, part nationalist, part internationalist, part unilateral, part multilateral, that might go a long way toward understanding the contradictions in the VFC, not to mention much of the variations in postwar American foreign policy. This deeper understanding is, I think, something to explore. Although Carafano's criticisms of the VFC are certainly borne out by the evidence he provides, it might be fruitful for historians of the Cold War to be less concerned with evaluating the merits of a given foreign policy. We have had a tendency to search the Cold War for lessons that guide policy, for a common frame of understanding that makes us see good and bad presidents, prudent and imprudent foreign policy makers. It is a habit that exposes, of course, our own ideological loyalties, which is in itself not a bad thing. But more than that, it is surely ethnocentric to assume that the community of historians who are concerned with international relations should concern themselves with determining and endorsing what is good for American foreign policy, rather than what is intelligible and significant.

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