

2012

H-Diplo

H-Diplo Roundtable Review

www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables

Volume XIV, No. 3 (2012)

1 October 2012

Roundtable Editors: Thomas Maddux and Diane Labrosse
Roundtable Web/Production Editor: George Fujii

Commissioned for H-Diplo by Thomas Maddux
Introduction by Andy DeRoche

Philip E. Muehlenbeck. *Betting on the Africans: John F. Kennedy's Courting of African Nationalist Leaders.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. ISBN: 9780195396096 (hardback, \$55.00).

Stable URL: <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-XIV-3.pdf>

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Introduction by Andy DeRoche, Front Range Community College

The following thoughtful and insightful roundtable in response to Phil Muehlenbeck's new book should prompt a lively discussion, which this excellent study on such an important subject as John Kennedy's policy toward Africa deserves. My own detailed analysis will be appearing separately as a review in *Diplomatic History*, so I will refrain from the temptation to comment at length here on Muehlenbeck's work. A few brief points about the book, though, should be made before I turn to introducing the roundtable essays.

On the plus side, Muehlenbeck has provided by far the most thorough and compelling assessment of Kennedy's interactions with a wide range of nationalist leaders in Africa. In addition to wonderful sections in which he revisits Kennedy's relationships with Ghana's leader Kwame Nkrumah and Tanzania's leader Julius Nyerere, which have been covered by previous scholars, Muehlenbeck has filled major gaps in the literature by discussing Kennedy's efforts to court French-speaking statesman such as Felix Houphouet-Boigny of Ivory Coast and Arab-African figures such as Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt. We have known for decades that Kennedy made impressive connections with Nyerere and Nkrumah, but now thanks to *Betting on the Africans* we can appreciate the real range of his successful attempts to reach out to African politicians from all across that complex continent.

While I did not find as much to criticize in Muehlenbeck's tome as some of the roundtable reviewers, there is one weakness that cannot escape my mention even in this brief intro. In his generally very sound discussion of relations with Africa during the Dwight Eisenhower presidency, Muehlenbeck has repeated the old myth that vice president Richard Nixon essentially single-handedly created the State Department's new Bureau of African Affairs. A roundtable session chaired by Tim Borstelmann at the 2009 SHAFR conference, as well as follow-up publications by George White and myself, have shown convincingly that Nixon does not deserve this credit for establishing the Africa Bureau, and that instead the lion's share should go to Congresswoman Frances P. Bolton (R-Ohio).¹

One last quick comment from me, and a word of thanks, is in order. Muehlenbeck enriched his book with numerous never-before-published photographs which he discovered in the G. Mennen "Soapy" Williams collection at the University of Michigan. Prompted by his discoveries, I was thrilled to ascertain that a photo of Kennedy with future Zambian president Kenneth Kaunda also resides in Michigan. It will be a prominent image in my forthcoming book, perhaps even on the cover, and for this I owe Muehlenbeck profound gratitude. I have also sent the photo via email to Kaunda's assistant, who responded excitedly that he would be sharing it with Kaunda, now 88, who has never seen it.

¹ George White, Jr., "Big Ballin!?: Vice President Nixon and the Creation of the Bureau of African Affairs in the U.S. Department of State," *Passport: The Newsletter of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations* (September 2010), 5-11; Andrew DeRoche, "Frances Bolton, Margaret Tibbetts, and the US Relations with the Rhodesian Federation, 1950-1960," in Jan-Bart Gewald, Marja Hinfelaar, and Giacomo Macola, editors, *Living the End of Empire: Politics and Society in Late Colonial Zambia* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 299-325.

Among the four reviewers, Arrigo Pallotti provides the most critical assessment. Pallotti does acknowledge that *Betting on the Africans* “sheds new light” on Kennedy’s Africa policies. Pallotti also commends Muehlenbeck for clearly contrasting Eisenhower and Kennedy. The majority of the review is spent pointing out weaknesses in Muehlenbeck’s study of Kennedy’s policies, some of which Pallotti considers to be quite significant.

The first major question Pallotti raises is whether Kennedy should be praised for his relations with Ghana, considering the totalitarian turn taken by Nkrumah and the subsequent cancellation of U.S. support for the Volta River Project. Pallotti’s second criticism, also quite insightful, is that Muehlenbeck should have included examples from the Horn of Africa. Close cooperation with Ethiopia inspired partly by a desire to maintain control of the Kagnew listening station meant that Kennedy “sacrificed U.S. relations with Eritrean and Somali nationalism on the altar of the Cold War.”

Pallotti also finds fault with Muehlenbeck’s positive assessment of Kennedy’s approach to southern Africa, but in this case perhaps was a bit overly critical. In my study of U.S./Zimbabwe relations and my biography of Andrew Young, my conclusions certainly support the guarded praise for Kennedy found in *Betting on the Africans*. The final specific criticism by Pallotti is that while Muehlenbeck found much to celebrate in Kennedy’s courting of Nasser, the Egyptians turned to the Soviet Union for assistance eventually anyway. Pallotti’s review concludes by arguing that Kennedy’s approach to Africa was hamstrung by a “basic contradiction” of trying to deal with the continent outside of the Cold War context but ultimately failing to do so. Muehlenbeck is simply too optimistic, according to Pallotti.

Thomas Noer, one of the esteemed founding fathers of the U.S./Africa subfield in the American diplomatic history genre, similarly concludes that Muehlenbeck’s analysis of Kennedy is too optimistic. In an eloquent and thoughtful commentary that provides a wonderful big-picture overview of Kennedy’s place in the history of the United States, in which he cites Carl Becker, Steven King, and Ernest Hemmingway, Noer contends quite convincingly that while Kennedy may have attempted to support African nationalism out of moral principles, in the end the “pragmatic” Cold Warrior in him won out. Noer challenges the extent of Muehlenbeck’s claims, and like Pallotti sees inherent contradiction in Kennedy’s efforts to keep African nationalism and Cold War concerns separate.

On the plus side of the ledger, Noer lauds Muehlenbeck for his portrait of the Eisenhower administration, and even more so for his compelling picture of Kennedy’s “personal diplomacy” towards Africans. Noer returns to a more critical note when evaluating Muehlenbeck’s interpretation of Kennedy on civil rights at home and apartheid in South Africa. Noer ended his excellent essay by admitting that he does not agree with Muehlenbeck’s interpretation, but that he greatly admires the work that went into the book. While unconvinced by the argument in *Betting on the Africans*, Noer is impressed by the fact that it is “extremely well written and researched.”

Rob Rakove contributes a generally positive assessment. He sees Muehlenbeck's book as in some ways as "the most comprehensive account of Kennedy administration policy toward Africa to date." He singles out the chapter on South Africa as "particularly interesting." Overall he praises the topical breadth of *Betting on the Africans*, which he characterizes as "exceptionally useful."

Rakove then raises some thought-provoking questions for all of us, beginning with a query about whether or not Kennedy's engagement with Africans could have survived the challenges of 1964 and 1965, such as a U.S. presidential election and Rhodesian leader Ian Smith's unilateral declaration of independence. Likewise he questions whether Kennedy's optimism would have withstood the shocks of the late 1960s. Another important question that Rakove poses is simple but crucial: why has no other president been able to match Kennedy's popularity in Africa?

The essay by Rakove also includes concrete constructive criticism. He argues that this book does not pay enough attention to the fact that over time, progressive figures such as Williams lost influence with the White House. He also wonders why there is almost no discussion of the National Security Council. Where was McGeorge Bundy during all of these meetings, if they were so important? Rightfully, Rakove regrets the absence of a chapter on Nigeria. His final paragraph praises Muehlenbeck for the energy of his research and writing, and predicts that this work will "foster worthwhile debate."

The fourth reviewer, Ryan Irwin of Yale University, finds much to applaud in Muehlenbeck's publication, but also makes several insightful criticisms. He begins by commending the clear argument in *Betting on the Africans*, which makes it crystal clear to readers that Kennedy cared about Africa. He praises the book as "the best holistic assessment of Kennedy's involvement with African leaders." However, he believes that in discussing these meetings, Muehlenbeck gives too much credit to the president and neglects to fully analyze the importance of advisors such as "Soapy" Williams.

Furthermore, Irwin makes some useful suggestions about ways to widen the perspective, which he sees as being based on traditional top-down diplomatic history. He contends that a key aspect of Kennedy administration relations with Africa was that they provided a way to move debates and issues onto the agenda of the rapidly expanding United Nations. In addition to calling for more attention to the UN, Irwin advocates for more of an "international history" that thoroughly takes into account the views of more countries. He thinks that one positive result of doing so would be shedding more light on the way that superpowers interacted with small states during the Cold War. In spite of his critique, however, Irwin ends his essay by strongly stating that this book "deserves a wide audience." I could not agree more, and hope that this roundtable will generate lively discussion and bring *Betting on the Africans* to the attention of professors and students around the globe.

Participants:

Philip E. Muehlenbeck, a Professorial Lecturer in History at George Washington University, is the author of *Betting on the Africans: John F. Kennedy's Courting of African Nationalist Leaders* (Oxford University Press, 2012), and editor of *Religion and the Cold War: A Global Perspective* (Vanderbilt University Press, 2012) and *Race, Ethnicity, and the Cold War: A Global Perspective* (Vanderbilt University Press, 2012).

Andy DeRoche teaches history at Front Range Community College and international affairs at the University of Colorado. He currently serves as an H-Diplo editor for African topics. His major publications include a study of U.S./Zimbabwe relations and a biography of Andrew Young. He is working on a book about Zambia's relations with the United States during the Kaunda era.

Ryan M. Irwin is the Associate Director of International Security Studies at Yale University. His *Gordian Knot: Apartheid and the Unmaking of the Liberal World Order* will be published with Oxford University Press in September 2012. He's currently working on a project about the nation-state and writing a collection of essays on the mid-1970s. In December, he will become an Assistant Professor at the University at Albany-SUNY.

Thomas J. Noer is Valor Distinguished Professor of Humanities at Carthage College, Kenosha, Wisconsin. He is the author of *Briton, Boer, and Yankee, Cold War and Black Liberation*, and *Soapy: A Biography of G. Mennen Williams*.

Arrigo Pallotti is Associate Professor of African History and Institutions, Department of Politics, Institutions, History, University of Bologna (Italy). His current research interest is in the history of Tanzania's foreign policy during the Cold War, with a focus on the role of the Tanzanian government in the decolonization of Zimbabwe. He has recently co-authored (with Mario Zamponi) *L'Africa sub-sahariana nella politica internazionale*, (Florence, Le Monnier-Mondadori, 2010), and has been guest editor of a special issue of the Italian peer-reviewed journal *afriche e orienti* on "Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1970s. Crises, Conflicts and Transformations" (2011).

Robert Rakove is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Sydney's United States Studies Centre. He has taught at Colgate University and Old Dominion University, and holds a doctorate in history from the University of Virginia. His book, *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Nonaligned World*, will be published by Cambridge University Press later this year.

The early 1960s marked a watershed moment in global history. Between 1957 and 1967, the final remnants of British and French imperialism collapsed in the Caribbean and Africa, remaking the international community in ways that foreshadowed the arrival of a new sort of polycentric Cold War. Decolonization was hardly a novel phenomenon, but this burst of independence, which led to the creation of nearly forty new nation-states, differed from the transformations that had brought South Asia, parts of the Pacific, and the Middle East into the post-imperial world. For centuries, the black Atlantic had been a crucial part of Europe's capitalist system—first as a source of cheap labor and cash crops, and later as a resource hub of the second industrial revolution—as well as a potent discursive foil that shaped how European elites framed notions of citizenship, political order, and civilization. The sudden rise of energized African diplomats, eager to upend stereotypes and rebalance global affairs, heralded the birth of the Third World project and planted seeds for the ambiguities that would eventually define the post-Cold War era.

Philip Muehlenbeck's *Betting on the Africans* examines this moment through the lens of U.S.-African relations. His organizing question is a good one: In the midst of this tumult, did President John Kennedy care about Africa? Muehlenbeck answers with a resounding yes, and offers a portrait of the thirty-fifth president that places Africa at the center of his daily considerations. The book is a top-down foreign relations history, so the archival materials are mostly drawn from presidential libraries and the U.S. National Archives, and its argument is organized around the differences between the Kennedy and Dwight D. Eisenhower administrations. In a nutshell, the latter adopted a shortsighted and aloof stance toward the African continent, while the former actively and wisely courted nationalist leaders through personal diplomacy. Kennedy's grand strategy was motivated by his enlightened nature and Irish-Catholic heritage, according to Muehlenbeck, and it was designed to protect Africa from the cold winds of the superpower contest (235). The president's approach might have worked, had it not been for Kennedy's death and the ascendance of less-enlightened leaders such as Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon.

Betting on the Africans pushes simultaneously in three historiographical directions. First, Muehlenbeck challenges the view that modernization theory drove U.S. relations in the decolonized world during the early 1960s. This paradigm has been advanced by a constellation of historians recently, including Nick Cullather, Michael Latham, Amy Staples, and Odd Arne Westad.¹ For Muehlenbeck, Kennedy's understanding of the global south was neither monolithic nor social scientific. While Latin America's "military dictators (with

¹ Nick Cullather, "Miracles of Modernization: The Green Revolution and the Apotheosis of Technology", *Diplomatic History* 28:2 (2004): 227-254; Michael Latham, *The Right Kind of Revolution: Modernization, Development, and U.S. Foreign Policy from the Cold War to the Present* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011); Amy Staples, *The Birth of Development: How the World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization, and the World Health Organization Changed the World, 1945-1965* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2006); Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

whom [Kennedy] did not want to be closely identified)” pushed the president toward impersonal theories of development, Africa’s political vibrancy and democratic traditions led the White House to embrace one-to-one exchanges and high-level diplomacy (xv). Politics was about people, in other words, not just ideology, and the president used a range of techniques to engage the Third World.

This argument hints at the book’s second historiographical intervention: the claim that Kennedy was not a typical Cold Warrior. Dismissing the president’s credentials as a Europhile, *Betting on the Africans* offers an interesting reassessment of his commitment to containment doctrine. Muehlenbeck’s Kennedy saw the world not as a geopolitical chessboard but as an electoral arena, within which Africans functioned as undecided voters. Like any good politician, the president adopted a policy that balanced between shrewd outreach and bold symbolism. In Muehlenbeck’s retelling, Kennedy dismissed conservative Africans as being out of step with nationalist sentiment and focused his energies instead on charismatic figures such as Kwame Nkrumah, Sékou Touré, Julius Nyerere, and Gamal Abdel Nasser. “In the same way a politician in a close election expends energy on undecided voters, Kennedy dedicated himself to courting the leaders of the Non-Aligned Movement rather than those who had already fully committed to the Western camp (xviii).” Hoping to expand his base of popular support, Kennedy worked deliberately to cultivate the goodwill of influence-makers across the continent.

The book’s third contribution elaborates on the implications of this mindset. Muehlenbeck admits that the president’s African relationships competed with other aspects of his foreign policy agenda, and acknowledges that crises in Cuba, Berlin, Vietnam, and the Congo distracted Washington from African affairs. But Kennedy never lost sight of the big picture—nationalism’s inevitable triumph in the Third World—even when his initiatives conflicted with the priorities of Western allies such as Great Britain, France, Portugal, and South Africa. For Muehlenbeck, Kennedy’s ability to stay focused on Africa’s importance defined his legacy. By November 1963, “the image of the United States in Africa had not only rebounded [from the Eisenhower years] but reached heights that have not since been matched (xvii).” *Betting on the Africans*, in this regard, is framed as a tale of tragedy. Had the president lived, Muehlenbeck suggests, U.S.-African relations may have continued along a positive trajectory, stymieing the anti-Americanism that became so widespread in the final decades of the twentieth century.

These are big claims. Muehlenbeck’s book is probably the best holistic assessment of Kennedy’s involvement with African leaders, and it fills an important gap in the literature on U.S.-Third World relations. However, this reviewer was left with a few conceptual questions. First, how did Kennedy find so much time to think about Africa? Presumably, the president was a busy person who relied on staffers and bureaucrats to help formulate and implement various objectives. Muehlenbeck’s tendency to attribute the actions of the Kennedy administration to the will of the president simultaneously blurs the distinctions between mid-level initiatives and top-level edicts and obscures the relationship between Kennedy’s convictions and the views of his various advisors. The book might benefit from a more precise explication of causality’s relationship to process. In Muehlenbeck’s retelling, an enlightened White House created and guided a multi-pronged outreach

program that determined most facets of U.S-African relations. But is that really how large governments work? What would this story look like if told from below, specifically from the vantage point of the State Department's newly created African Bureau and its outspoken leader Mennen Williams, who harbored presidential ambitions and often complained that the president did not pay enough attention to "his" continent? Muehlenbeck praises Kennedy for possessing detailed knowledge of Africa and a willingness to meet Africa's heads of state, but Williams arranged these meetings, composed Kennedy's briefing papers, and sat next to the president as he chatted up his visitors. Did Kennedy care about Africa or create space for his political appointees to make it appear that he cared? It is a minor distinction with important implications.

Similarly, what drew the Kennedy administration to Africa? Altruism seems too simplistic, as does the argument that the president's team viewed foreign relations as an electoral game. Something is missing. By focusing so closely on Kennedy's personal relationships with specific African leaders, *Betting on the Africans* elides the sheer drama that surrounded the nation-state's arrival in the black Atlantic. Nationhood and statehood were fluid categories in the early 1960s, deployed and appropriated in dizzying ways by a cross-section of leaders with revisionist views about international order. The Kennedy administration looked to the United Nations to manage this tumult. Arguably, Africa mattered not on its own terms, but because African leaders—with twenty plus seats at the General Assembly—were "more concerned with rapid change on colonial and racial issues [than] orderly procedure." The president's one-to-one meetings were designed explicitly to "influence, by personal persuasion, [those individuals] who [spoke] on behalf of the African nations and whose behavior and style will set the tone of the Security Council hearings," explained one Kennedy official. The purpose of the entire exercise was to underscore that "while there [was] nothing sacrosanct in particular democratic procedures, or indeed in the democratic institution per se, the unique and invaluable asset of [a] democratic institution [like the United Nations was] not simply that it provide[d] a system of *order* but a system which [could] *induce change* by non-violent stages."² The president's decision to bet on the Africans stemmed from this plan to direct the Third World's demands through the mechanisms of the United Nations.

A final conceptual question: What would this story look like as an international history? The relationship between methodology and argumentation glides just under the surface of *Betting on the Africans*, and Muehlenbeck's unrelenting emphasis on top-level politics begs a set of counter-questions about timing, structure, and context. Is it fair, for instance, to lambaste Eisenhower's African policies without acknowledging that most African nation-states did not exist before the final months of 1960? More broadly, would any president—even Eisenhower—have taken an interest in the continent during the early 1960s, simply because of the exigencies of the black Atlantic's independence? Conversely, would any president—even Kennedy—have *lost* interest in Africa as the contradictions and limitations of decolonization came into sharper focus during the late 1960s? It would be

² Memo from Harlan Cleveland to Thomas Wilson, July 12 1963, Box 114, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, emphasis in original.

interesting to see Muehlenbeck's response to these questions and their implications. His book is focused primarily on the president, so it comes as no surprise that Kennedy emerges as the principal architect of U.S. behavior toward Africa. But an international history of this period, rooted in the viewpoints of multiple countries, institutions, and interests, might suggest an alternative interpretation of presidential power, which might illuminate the way superpower demands interacted with small state initiatives during the middle decades of the twentieth century. Do outcomes move in tandem with the will of powerful individuals? For scholars inclined to answer yes, *Betting on the Africans* will be welcomed as a definitive historiographical statement on U.S. relations with Africa. Others will probably view the book as a relatively small piece of a much larger puzzle.

Either way, Muehlenbeck's work deserves a wide audience.

In his famous 1931 speech “Every Man His Own Historian,” Carl Becker argued that “we do not impose our version of the human story on Mr. Everyman; in the end it is rather Mr. Everyman who imposes his version on us.”¹ The gap between historians and the public on the presidency of John Kennedy has shown Becker to have been prophetic.

The historical reputation of Kennedy has vacillated among professional historians, but not with the general public. In the past two decades historians have generally ranked Kennedy in the “average” presidential category, while the American people have consistently ranked him among the greatest individuals to ever hold the office. A 2000 ABC News poll found him second only to Abraham Lincoln and in a 2011 Gallup poll Kennedy was judged the fourth greatest president.²

Two recent bestselling books have confirmed the public’s desire to remember time of the Kennedy administration as an idealistic gap between the grim 1950s and the divisions of the later 1960s. Stephen King’s novel *11/22/63* argues had Kennedy lived America would have been spared much of the trauma and conflict that followed. Chris Matthews’ *Jack Kennedy: Elusive Hero* reads like a return to the “Camelot” image of Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. and Theodore Sorensen.³

While scholars can debate the reasons for the public’s desire to see Kennedy as a hero, I suspect most would agree that Kennedy’s foreign policy towards Africa was not a crucial element in their evaluation. Even among historians of U.S. foreign relations, the New Frontier’s efforts in Africa were a relatively minor area. The Bay of Pigs invasion, the Berlin Wall, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, the conflict in Laos and escalation in South Vietnam were far more significant than relations with the former colonial nations of Africa.

Despite the dominance of other issues, examining Kennedy’s diplomacy in Africa is a useful way to evaluate the man and his administration. Much of the debate over Kennedy concerns style versus substance. Even his strongest critics acknowledge that Kennedy was dynamic, articulate (at least in reading the words of Ted Sorensen), stylish, and projected an image of action and passion. The debate concerns whether or not his “style” was matched by substantial accomplishment.

¹ Carl Becker, “Everyman His Own Historians,” *American Historical Review*, Vol. 37 (1932): 221-236.

² ABC News, “Presidential Greatness”, February 2002.

³ Stephen King, *11/22/63* (New York, 2011); Chris Matthews, *John F. Kennedy: Elusive Hero* (New York, 2012); Theodore Sorensen, *Kennedy* (New York, 1965); Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston, 1965).

In his study of Kennedy's interaction with African leaders, Phillip Muehlenbeck contends that he not only changed the image of America held by African leaders, but had an unwavering commitment to African nationalism, accepted neutralism on the continent, and was willing to defy his European allies by promoting African political and economic independence. Not only did he break dramatically with Eisenhower's neglect of African issues, but "devoted more time and effort toward relations with Africa than any other American president" (xiii). His death not only led to a retreat from his commitment to Africa but began a global rejection of American acceptance of nationalism: "The abandonment of Kennedy's Third World policies in favor of a policy dominated by Cold War concerns of anticommunism ultimately led to increased anti-Americanism in the developing world, culminating in the events of September 11, 2001" (p. xiv). We are often told that had Kennedy lived there would have been no war in Vietnam and no urban riots but this is the first I have read that had Lee Harvey Oswald missed, there would have been no attack on the World Trade Center.

The title and introduction make it clear that the book is not a detailed analysis of the New Frontier's interaction with Africa. Muehlenbeck's focus is on Kennedy's perceptions of African nationalism and non-alignment and his relations with African leaders. The author notes that Kennedy's response to Africa was shaped by Nikita Khrushchev's January 6, 1961 speech on "wars of national liberation" that convinced the president that "the Cold War could be won or lost on the continent" (xi). A few pages later he argues that "this book places the Cold War at the periphery of Kennedy's African policies" (xv). This seems a bit contradictory: If Kennedy was convinced that the "Cold War could be won or lost" in Africa, how could the conflict "be at the periphery of Kennedy's African policies"? The author attempts to explain this by asserting that Kennedy's commitment to African nationalism and the continent's neutrality transcended his hawkish policies elsewhere.

The book begins with an excellent chapter documenting the inattention and covert racism of the Eisenhower administration's approach to Africa. Characterized by neglect and deference to Europe, Ike and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles resisted de-colonization, viewed most African nationalists as potential agents of Moscow, and denounced neutralism as communism. The author argues the New Frontier rejected this approach and was a dramatic and fundamental shift in U.S. perception and assumptions about the continent.

There is much to criticize in Eisenhower's dealings with Africa and Muehlenbeck's critique is justified. It must be noted, however, that until the final year of Ike's administration, most of Africa was still under European rule while when Kennedy took office, nearly all of the British, French, and Belgian colonies on the continent were independent or moving towards de-colonization. The situation in 1961 was far different from that of the 1950s and Africa was clearly far more significant than in the Eisenhower years.

The author then devotes a chapter to Kennedy's view of Africa, his selection of "pro-African" advisors, and his commitment to de-colonization and African neutralism. He argues that the appointments of the flamboyant and outspoken G. Mennen "Soapy" Williams as Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Chester Bowles as Undersecretary of State, and a group of young, aggressive U.S. ambassadors to the new

independent African nations indicated a major change in Washington's approach to the continent. He also contends that Kennedy recognized the importance of African nationalism and did not view neutralism in the Cold War as hostile to American interests.

Four chapters analyzing Kennedy's personal diplomacy and a range of African leaders are the most significant in the book. Muehlenbeck does an excellent job of showing Kennedy's effectiveness in individual meetings; the president often greeted African leaders at the airport and introducing them to his wife and children. Such personal attention was important to dramatize the contrast with Eisenhower's past inattention and to show the new tone in Washington.

In each of these chapters the author also tries to show how Kennedy's rapport with African leaders had an impact on Washington's policies toward the continent. The results were decidedly mixed. The assumed U.S. involvement in the assassination of Congolese leader Patrice Lumumba, the continued embarrassment of American racial segregation, and the reluctance of Washington to force the end of white rule in South Africa and in the Portuguese colonies all worked to weaken Kennedy's efforts. The president did approve funding of the Volta River project in Ghana, despite the opposition of many in his administration to the mercurial and egomaniacal Kwame Nkrumah. He also was able to at least temporarily moderate the "radicalism" of Guinea's Sekou Touré. Kennedy also made an effort to establish contact with North African leaders Gamal Nasser of Egypt and Ahmed Ben Bella of Algeria. It is significant, however, that when faced with a choice of support for these nationalist leaders or other nations, Kennedy sided with traditional American allies. When Nasser and Saudi Arabia backed opposite sides in a civil war in Yemen, Kennedy aligned with the Saudis. Muehlenbeck concludes that "being a pragmatist" the president made his decision "because of the amount of oil held by Saudi Arabia" (136). Similarly, relations between America and Algeria deteriorated when Kennedy expanded arms sales to Israel and Congress passed the Gruening Amendment aimed directly at Egypt and Algeria that prohibited aid to nations "engaging or preparing for" military efforts against the U.S. or its allies (meaning Israel). The author admits that "by October 1963 Ben Bella had become noticeably less receptive to the West." (3) It would seem that despite verbal acceptance of Arab nationalism, when it came to a choice, Kennedy "the pragmatist" triumphed over Kennedy the advocate of third world nationalism.

This is the major dilemma of the book. While the author is effective in documenting the pro-African rhetoric of the New Frontier and in demonstrating the success of Kennedy's personal diplomacy with African leaders, he has to deal with the problem that in crucial policy decisions Kennedy was never willing to put African issues ahead of Cold War strategy and continued cooperation with European allies. This is illustrated most dramatically in his policies towards the racist government of South Africa, the Portuguese empire in Africa, and his lukewarm commitment to racial equality at home.

In a chapter titled "The View from Pretoria," Muehlenbeck presents a detailed and nuanced analysis of Kennedy's response to the continued apartheid regime in South Africa. He notes that nearly all African leaders viewed U.S. policy towards the white regime in Pretoria as a test case of Washington's commitment to Africa and to majority rule on the continent. He

quotes at length verbal denunciations of apartheid by Soapy Williams and others in the administration and South Africa's fear that America would lead the efforts to dismantle apartheid by imposing economic sanctions. He concludes, however, that Kennedy viewed the "get-tough" policies urged by Williams and others as "impractical and dangerous" and did not consider sanctions. Instead he "took a number of symbolic actions" to show American opposition to South Africa. (182) Washington continued its verbal assault on apartheid, voted for a number of UN resolutions condemning South Africa, and imposed an arms embargo on the nation. Kennedy refused stronger actions fearing they would provoke even more harsh policies in South Africa and racial violence. Most telling is the fact that Kennedy, like Eisenhower, viewed the African National Congress as "communist-dominated" and refused all contacts with ANC leaders. (190) Despite the rhetoric and the UN votes, Kennedy rejected any stronger actions against apartheid. You can make the case that this was Kennedy the "pragmatist" but where is Kennedy the advocate of African nationalism, majority rule, and racial equality?

Kennedy's policies toward Portugal show a similar pattern. While other European nations had accepted de-colonization, Portuguese dictator Antonio Salazar was adamant that he would never grant independence to Angola, Mozambique and other African territories. Salazar's intransigence was a continued embarrassment for the U.S. and its announced commitment to 'Africa for the Africans.' As with South Africa, the New Frontiersmen launched a verbal assault on Lisbon and provoked the wrath of conservatives and European allies by voting in favor of UN resolutions calling for the end of the Portuguese empire. These symbolic gestures were not followed by stronger policies. Portugal was a member of NATO and used American weapons to battle Angolans. It also controlled a key military base in the Azores, which was considered crucial in supplying U.S. forces in Europe. Continued pressure on Lisbon risked conflict within NATO and a refusal to renew the lease on the Azores. After a futile attempt to "buy" Angolan freedom with a massive aid package for Portugal (Salazar dismissed the plan by announcing: "Portugal is not for sale."), Kennedy abandoned the verbal assault on Portugal and ordered the U.S. to abstain on UN resolutions calling for Angolan freedom.

Muehlenbeck acknowledges Kennedy's diplomatic retreat on South Africa and Angola, but argues that he did more than Eisenhower, and many other nations were also hesitant to confront Portugal. This may be true, but does not offer much support for Kennedy as a committed supporter of African nationalism and someone dedicated to 'Africa for the Africans.'

No issue was more of a burden for Kennedy in Africa than the lingering problem of American segregation and the author devotes a chapter to this issue. He admits that the president was hesitant to confront segregation and argues that foreign policy was a major element in Kennedy's eventual decision to act on civil rights. Many historians have argued the Kennedy saw civil rights largely as a political rather than a moral issue. The fact that he defined the struggle for racial equality as an element in foreign relations rather than an essential part of the American creed seems to confirm this view. To Muehlenbeck, Kennedy "apparently had an epiphany on the subject of civil rights" in 1963. (196) It may well be that the "epiphany" was due largely to political considerations. It was only after the march

on Washington in August 1963 (which Kennedy tried to derail) and the resulting groundswell of support for equal rights that the president became an outspoken advocate of equality. In the previous two years the administration did little to lead the battle against segregation and refused to protect civil rights workers being brutalized in the South.

Even though the author accepts Kennedy's hesitancy on civil rights, he tries to make a case that the president did move against racism at home but, at times, the evidence is selective. He notes that Kennedy appointed Thurgood Marshall as a federal judge, but ignores the fact that he also appointed a number of outspoken segregationist judges. He argues Kennedy moved to end discrimination against African diplomats in restaurants and hotels on Route 40 between Washington and New York. When the president called his chief of protocol, Angier Biddle Duke, on the subject, Duke immediately began to explain that he was "working very actively" on the problem, but Kennedy interrupted him: "That's not what I'm calling you about! I'm calling to tell those African Ambassadors to fly! You tell them I wouldn't think of driving from New York to Washington. Why the hell would anyone want to drive down Route 40 when you can fly today? Tell them to wake up to the world and fly!" Duke phoned Harris Wofford, Kennedy's advisor on civil rights, and asked: "Are you sure the President is fully behind our efforts?" (Duke Oral History, John F. Kennedy Library)

Kennedy's abandonment of a tough line against South Africa and Portugal and his hesitation and timidity on civil rights detract from the interpretation that he was a bold and uncompromising advocate of African nationalism and racial equality. One can argue that these were pragmatic decisions, but Kennedy wrote *Profiles in Courage*, not "Profiles in Pragmatism".

Two of the final chapters seem rather unrelated to the rest of the book. "The Kennedy-De-Gaulle Rivalry in Africa" is an interesting account of the battle between the two leaders to gain popularity and influence on the continent. Another chapter focuses on U.S.-Soviet rivalry for civil aviation markets in Africa, a topic of little direct connection to the courting of African leaders.

Although I clearly disagree with Muehlenbeck's interpretation of Kennedy, this book has much to recommend. It is extremely well written and researched and the author does an excellent job of showing Kennedy's personal diplomacy with Africans. He makes a strong case for the contrast between Eisenhower's inattention and Kennedy's strong interest in Africa.

I remain, however, unconvinced that "JFK's championing of African nationalism and domestic civil rights was an act of political courage" (224) and that he was "a passionate supporter of African nationalism abroad and civil rights at home" (236). We may want an image of John Kennedy as deeply committed to Africa, dedicated to racial equality, supportive of African nationalism, and an outspoken critic of white minority rule. The evidence may not support this but, as Jake Barnes says in the last line of Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*: "Yes, isn't it pretty to think so."

The African policy of President John F. Kennedy has been the subject of extensive academic literature. Through the analysis of primary sources in U.S., European and African archives, *Betting on the Africans* sheds new light on Kennedy's efforts to chart a new course in U.S.-Africa relations within the context created by the decolonization process in Africa.

In the book, the author refrains from an in-depth investigation of issues and conflicts which were strictly intertwined with the Cold War in Africa – and which have already been extensively analyzed in the literature – such as the U.S. role in the catastrophe that followed the decolonization of the Congo, the U.S. position towards the colonial and racist regimes of Southern Africa, or Kennedy's policy in the Horn of Africa.¹ This choice is motivated by Muehlenbeck's attempt to show that Kennedy "saw the courting of Third World nationalism – and African nationalism in particular – as a policy that transcended the Cold War" (xiv). To this end, the book focuses on Kennedy's diplomatic efforts aimed at building cordial relations with a number of African leaders, and highlights both the novelty of Kennedy's approach to Africa and the discontinuity with the African policy of the Eisenhower administration.

In the first part of the book Muehlenbeck describes the central elements of both Eisenhower's and Kennedy's African policies and then investigates the latter's relations with a number of African leaders. The second part of the book is devoted to the analysis of the U.S.-French rivalry in Africa, U.S.-South African relations, the relationship between Kennedy's African policy and his support for the civil rights movement in the U.S., and the U.S.-Soviet quest for hegemony in African civil aviation markets.

The rapid transformations that the decolonization process had set in motion in Africa, and the risks of Soviet penetration of the continent, made Kennedy feel the urgent need for a new and pro-active U.S. policy towards the continent. In the first chapters of the book Muehlenbeck shows that while Eisenhower had a profound distrust of African nationalistic movements (that he considered too close politically to or, in the worst cases, a direct creation of the Soviet Union) and had constantly preferred to subordinate his African policy to the strategic calculations of the European colonial powers, Kennedy sought to support decolonization and to intensify U.S. diplomatic relations with African nationalistic leaders. In addition, the new U.S. administration not only considered non-alignment as a legitimate

¹ Richard D. Mahoney, *JFK. Ordeal in Africa* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1983); John Kent, *America, the UN and Decolonisation. Cold War Conflict in the Congo* (London: Routledge, 2010); Thomas Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation: The United States and White Rule in Africa, 1948-1968* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1985); Andy DeRoche, *Black, White, and Chrome: The United States and Zimbabwe, 1953-1998* (Trenton: African World Press, 2001); J. Lefebvre, "The United States, Ethiopia and the 1963 Somali-Soviet Arms Deal: Containment and the Balance of Power Dilemma in the Horn of Africa" in *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 36:4 (1998).

option for African governments, but also provided the latter with substantial amounts of development aid.

Muehlenbeck emphasises that Kennedy did not consider the consolidation of relations with “conservative” leaders (such as Felix Houphouët-Boigny of Ivory Coast and William Tubman of Liberia) a priority of his African policy, not only because the U.S. needed to gain the support of “radical” leaders in order to win the Cold War on the continent (141), but also because too close of an association with the former would compromise relations with the latter (152).

In West Africa, relations with Guinea and Ghana were the top priorities of the Kennedy administration. In the case of Guinea, Kennedy promptly decided to fill the vacuum left by the French abrupt withdrawal from the country. Thanks to the U.S. aid programme and his personal relationship with SékouTouré, Kennedy managed to reduce the Soviet influence on Guinea and to get SékouTouré’s diplomatic support on a number of African and international issues. In spite of the fact that Kennedy considered the establishment of a cordial relationship with Ghana the “cornerstone” of his African strategy (73), U.S. relations with Kwame Nkrumah faced many difficulties. The Ghanaian leader had publicly castigated the U.S. policy on the Congo², and seemed determined to skilfully exploit the U.S.-URSS competition in order to get the financial support he needed to realize the Volta River Project (VRP). After much hesitation, and under the advice of both British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan and Senegalese President Léopold Senghor, Kennedy decided to finance the VRP. However, neither of the two leaders reaped the long-term benefits of the project. The VRP was terminated in January 1966. A few weeks later, Nkrumah was toppled by a military coup.

The author notes this turn of events, but its implications are not fully investigated in the book. Although in the short term, as Muehlenbeck aptly remarks, Kennedy’s West African policy played some dividends, since both SékouTouré and Nkrumah supported the U.S. during the Cuban missile crisis, more general questions could have been asked on the long-term effects of U.S.-African relations on the nature of African postcolonial experiments in state-building. Muehlenbeck argues that the fall of Nkrumah was partly the result of his authoritarian tendencies, and “partly a by-product of his strained relations with the United States” (96). In the light of the book’s attempt to demonstrate Kennedy’s interest for nationalism in Africa, it would have been interesting to know a little more on the role Kennedy’s economic aid to Ghana played in the consolidation of Nkrumah’s authoritarian model of state-building.

More generally, it could be argued that, far from being an hard ‘fact’ which developed in isolation, nationalism in Africa was deeply influenced by the actors and dynamics of the

² E. Nwaubani, “Eisenhower, Nkrumah and the Congo Crisis” in *Journal of Contemporary History*, 36:4 (2001).

international system.³ This was, for example, demonstrated by Jeffrey A. Lefebre's analysis of Kennedy's policy in the Horn of Africa, a geographical area that unfortunately is not covered in Muehlenbeck's book.⁴ Indeed, Lefebre highlighted not only the central role of military aid in Kennedy's policy in the Horn, but also the fact the Kennedy sacrificed U.S. relations with Eritrean and Somali nationalism on the altar of the Cold War. In particular, U.S. access to the Kagnew Station in Eritrea played a crucial role in shaping Kennedy's policy in the Horn, to the benefit of Ethiopia.

The shortcircuit between support for Africa nationalism and the imperative to win the Cold War also became evident in Southern Africa. Muehlenbeck examines the trajectory of Kennedy's vocal support for the independence of Portugal's African colonies in the chapter devoted to the analysis of U.S.-Tanganyikan relations. Cold War considerations and, in particular, the strategic relevance of continued U.S. access to the Azores islands led Kennedy to abandon the public pressures he had exerted on Lisbon in the early years of its mandate. In light of Muehlenbeck's emphasis on the rise of anti-Americanism in the Third World during the Johnson and Nixon administrations (xiv), it is unfortunate that the author does not investigate the consequences that this policy shift had on African perceptions of the U.S. administration.

Southern Africa also presented Kennedy with the problem of apartheid in South Africa. Muehlenbeck shows that the Kennedy administration did not hesitate to vocally criticize the racial policies of the South African government. Although this policy provoked some alarm in Pretoria, it was not followed up by the adoption of any effective measures aimed to isolate the South African regime. In addition, the Kennedy administration did not provide aid to the African National Congress, since it regarded the latter as a communist-dominated organisation (190). In the end, South Africa's strategic importance ruled out the possibility of addressing the country's racial problems outside the lenses of the Cold War. Although Muehlenbeck argues that "unlike any other American president, John F. Kennedy at least made an effort to support African self-determination with something more than empty rhetoric" in Southern Africa, the practical impact of Kennedy's "abrupt break with the [policy of the] Eisenhower administration" (120) was quite short-lived. It could also be noted that an investigation of Kennedy's policy towards the Central African Federation would have raised further questions concerning the U.S. president's commitment to supporting nationalism in Southern Africa.

The novelty of Kennedy's African policy was more appreciable in north Africa, where the U.S. president tried to establish friendly relations with the standard bearers of Arab nationalism. However, the conflict in the Congo and, in particular, the civil war in Yemen strained relations between the U.S. and Egypt. In effect, Kennedy's courting of Gamal Abdel Nasser had an intrinsic limit: while Nasser pressed for a reconfiguration of power relations in the Arab world, Kennedy could not jeopardize U.S. alliances in the Middle East and, in

³ Elizabeth Schmidt, *Cold War and Decolonization in Guinea, 1946-1958* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2007).

⁴ Lefebre, "The United States, Ethiopia and the 1963 Somali-Soviet Arms Deal."

particular, U.S. relations with Israel and oil supplies from Saudi Arabia. As for U.S.-Algeria relations, when still a senator, Kennedy had harshly criticized Eisenhower's support for the French policy in the country, arguing that it contributed to the radicalization of the anti-colonial movements and the consolidation of Soviet influence on them (36). However, and in spite of Kennedy's efforts to maintain friendly relations with Ben Bella after Algeria's independence, in the early 1960s the Algerian government became increasingly closer to the Soviet Union and Cuba. Although in late 1963 U.S. relations with both Egypt and Algeria appeared in a state of flux, Muehlenbeck efficaciously demonstrates not only that Kennedy's policy had revived the U.S. political presence in north Africa, but also that African governments' determination to pursue non-alignment (and exploit Cold War rivalries to get international aid) constantly put at risk the effectiveness and credibility of Kennedy's policy on the continent.

Kennedy's new approach to Africa was also apparent in Francophone Africa, an area that Paris considered its *précarré*, and where the U.S. president did not hesitate to put into question the status quo. Muehlenbeck shows that Kennedy rapidly abandoned his initial preference for a strong U.S.-French cooperation in the area due to his personal rivalry with French president Charles de Gaulle. In effect, the policy aims of the two leaders were poles apart. While de Gaulle thought that France-African relations could shield France's former colonies from the destabilizing effects of the Cold War, Kennedy considered the consolidation of U.S.-African relations as instrumental in reducing France's neo-colonial influence on its former colonies (163). In the case of Gabon, intra-NATO relations added further urgency to Kennedy's efforts aimed to consolidate U.S.-Gabonese relations, as the U.S. tried to hamper France's access to the uranium it needed for its nuclear force. In spite of the very uncertain results of this policy and the vast financial resources it required, at the end of 1963 Kennedy seemed determined to continue its implementation. However, the Johnson presidency would mark a discontinuity in U.S. policy towards Africa in general and Francophone Africa in particular, as the continent returned to occupy a very marginal position in the US foreign policy.⁵

Kennedy's courting of African nationalistic leaders was abruptly ended by his assassination in November 1963. Muehlenbeck's book aptly shows that until the very end, Kennedy's African policy remained prisoner of a basic contradiction. On the one hand, Kennedy realized that the decolonization process was the outcome of truly nationalistic upheavals, and resolved to cultivate friendly relations with the newly independent African governments. On the other, a number of international (the Cold War), regional (France's relationship with its former colonies, the strategic relevance of South Africa and Portugal's determination to cling to its colonial empire), and national (U.S. internal politics) factors limited Kennedy's ability – and weakened his determination – to provide new impetus to the African policy of the United States. The support African governments provided to the U.S. during the Cuban missile crisis and their moderation on the Congo issue (224) lead

⁵ T. Lyons, "Keeping Africa off the Agenda", in William I. Cohen & Nancy Bernkopf Tucker (eds), *Lyndon Johnson Confronts the World: American Foreign Policy, 1963-1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

Muehlenbeck to conclude with an optimistic tone his analysis of Kennedy's African policy. It could be argued that by ending the analysis with Kennedy's assassination and downplaying the pressures that the Congo crisis created, the book is rather more optimistic than is warranted about the success of Kennedy's courting of African leaders. Also, further research on the Johnson administration's dealings with Portugal, South Africa, and in the Congo itself might help to show the real constraints such a strategy faced.

It is the best of times and worst of times for scholars interested in John F. Kennedy. Even as memories of the Cold War fade, popular interest in the thirty-fifth president remains remarkably high (witness the recent spate of popular books and TV programming on Kennedy). We can take for granted an atypically high level of student and public interest in the Kennedy presidency. At the same time, we are still struggling to develop some level of consensus within our own ranks. Discussion of Kennedy's foreign policies often seems constrained, focused on a Cold War-centered narrative that highlights the Berlin and Cuba crises and his policies in Southeast Asia, to the general exclusion of his policies toward the rest of the world.

This focus on crises and the road to the Vietnam War leads scholars and students toward particular verdicts. The charge that the Kennedy administration approached the world predominantly through a crisis management outlook – made by David Halberstam and Henry Fairlie and expanded upon by subsequent writers – gains considerable strength in histories that focus on the most prominent Cold War battlefields of the early 1960s.¹ It loses explanatory power, however, when we start to examine Kennedy administration policy outside of recognized crisis areas. So, too, does the post-Vietnam depiction of Kennedy as a relentless Cold War hawk, heedless of the concerns of Third World nationalism. Philip Muehlenbeck argues emphatically in his new book, *Betting on the Africans*, that a thorough understanding of Kennedy's Africa policy casts him in an entirely different light: as a president perceptive of prevailing sentiment in the Third World who pursued a prudent long term strategy of courting African nationalist leaders.

Scholarship on Kennedy's African policy has understandably focused on the Congo crisis and the problems posed by colonial and white supremacist regimes on the continent. These were clearly critical events, yet a crisis and conflict-driven approach to Kennedy's African policy obscures the broader contours of administration policy toward the newly decolonized continent. Building upon and complementing earlier accounts by Richard Mahoney, Thomas Noer, Thomas Borstelmann, and Madeleine Kalb among others,² *Betting on the Africans* offers us in some ways the most comprehensive account of Kennedy administration policy toward Africa to date. Muehlenbeck argues convincingly that Kennedy comprehended the force of African nationalism and distinguished it clearly from pro-Soviet sentiment. Kennedy, Muehlenbeck argues, pursued an ambitious policy of

¹ David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest* (New York: Random House, 1972); Henry Fairlie, *The Kennedy Promise* (New York: Dell, 1974); also, for example, Bruce Miroff, *Pragmatic Illusions: The Presidential Politics of John F. Kennedy* (New York: McKay, 1976); Louise FitzSimons, *The Kennedy Doctrine* (New York: Random House, 1972)

² Richard D. Mahoney, *JFK: Ordeal in Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); Thomas J. Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation: The United States and White Rule in Africa, 1948-1968* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1985); Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Madeline Kalb, *The Congo Cables: The Cold War in Africa* (New York: Macmillan, 1982).

outreach toward African national leaders, without regard to their alignment in the Cold War. This was not panic-driven crisis management, but, rather, a substantial and prescient realignment of U.S. policy toward an entire continent. Africa, Muehlenbeck suggests, posed ordeals for the administration. Yet it also yielded real successes, which thus far have received only occasional recognition.

Betting on the Africans helpfully offers a set of bilateral case studies on relationships with such states as Ghana, Guinea, Egypt, Algeria, Ivory Coast, Liberia, and Tanzania. These are followed by four chapters framed around continental topics including the Franco-American rivalry in Africa, the African dimension of Kennedy's civil rights policy, and Soviet-American competition over civil air routes on the continent. A particularly interesting chapter offers the "View from Pretoria," convincingly conveying the unease with which the apartheid government of South Africa regarded the New Frontiersmen.

This is an appealingly far-reaching book, one that accords considerable attention to previously neglected relationships and events. While interested readers may be familiar with episodes such as Kennedy's extension of funding for the Volta River dam and his personal courtship of Sekou Touré, both of which received early attention from administration memoirists, I would wager that relatively few, including this reviewer, had read of his policies toward states such as Liberia and Ivory Coast, or of the geopolitical significance of the February 1964 coup in Gabon. Muehlenbeck's chapter on the key relationship between Kennedy and Julius Nyerere is a much-overdue addition to the literature. The same may be said of the lively chapters on the Franco-American rivalry and the administration's efforts to extend containment to the field of civil aviation, which assumed critical importance during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Such topical breadth makes this an exceptionally useful book, and one that may spark any number of subsequent inquiries by other scholars.

A question that I have to ask – one I grapple with in my own forthcoming book on Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson's approach to the nonaligned world – is whether outreach to Third World nationalists was ultimately sustainable. Muehlenbeck believes, as I do, that Kennedy retained an interest in engaging these states into his final days in office. Nonetheless, he writes, "Toward the end of his life, Kennedy realized that the courting of African nationalist leaders was more complicated than he had originally anticipated" (222). In 1963 he grew "increasingly closer to those who wished to see him stand firmly behind his European allies" (223). I do not disagree with either of these statements, but they raise fundamental questions, if not about Kennedy's commitment to the policy, then about its capacity to endure the shock of events in the mid-1960s.

Muehlenbeck alludes to the growing challenges facing Kennedy's African agenda in his conclusion, in his South African chapter, and also in his chapter on Kennedy and Nyerere. He observes that Kennedy's retreat from full espousal of self-determination in southern Africa did not constitute his "finest hour." (120). Yet the Kennedy administration, by his reckoning, did more to discomfit both the Portuguese and the South Africans than its predecessors or immediate successors (120). I tend to agree, but this still begs the question of whether administration policy would have sufficed as events in Africa – notably the

eruption of revolts in Mozambique and Portuguese Guinea, Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence, and the implosion of the Adoula government in the Congo – continued to drive a wedge between Washington and its erstwhile African partners. I wonder, moreover, whether the favorable interpersonal dynamics that benefited Kennedy in his early interactions with African leaders might have withered over time. Kennedy's personal touch clearly helped forge, for example, a new relationship with Guinea's president, Sekou Toure, but Toure's paranoia and brutality beg the question of whether this bond would have been durable. This is not to ask a series of hypothetical questions about what Kennedy's policy toward Africa might have been in the key year of 1964, but merely to observe that the combined force of an increasingly militarized African response to colonialism and Kennedy's mounting election year concerns (which Muehlenbeck notes) might have undermined the accomplishments of 1961 and 1962, regardless of who sat in the White House (though Johnson's choices worsened relations substantially). African praise of Kennedy after the successes of his first two years often came accompanied with the warning that such progress could be undone if the United States did not take a forthright stand on the outstanding questions of colonialism and apartheid.

At the same time, however, I must credit this book for the considerable attention it provides to the power of Kennedy's personal diplomacy with African leaders. As Muehlenbeck makes clear in a detailed and striking passage, African leaders mourned Kennedy as a friend, often with genuine emotion (226-30). In large part this attests to Kennedy's personal courtship of a wide range of African leaders, his willingness to invite them to Washington, and also to solicit their views on a wide range of issues. Sprinkled generously throughout this book are convincing examples proving that this effort to personalize African diplomacy worked to great effect. While prior books have intermittently touched on Kennedy's interpersonal style, this book makes a convincing case that there was substance behind the style, that the calculated effort to host African heads of state reaped real dividends.

This, in turn, begs another question. Muehlenbeck makes the case that no Cold War-era president was as widely regarded in Africa or as interested in the continent (223). This contention may somewhat shortchange the Carter administration's concern with South Africa and Rhodesia, but there is a broader question to be asked on this basis. Certainly other presidents, during and after the Cold War, took an interest in the continent. Mitch Lerner, for example, makes a credible case that Johnson was more interested in Africa than has previously been recognized, even allowing for the distractions posed by Vietnam.³ Presidential diplomacy toward Africa assumed a somewhat greater visibility in the wake of the Cold War: both Bill Clinton and George W. Bush undertook multiple trips to the continent. One may ask why no president (perhaps aside from the current one) has equaled Kennedy's success in Africa. Is it primarily a testament to the generally prudent and perceptive policies of Kennedy toward the continent, or to other international factors at work in the early 1960s? I have wondered about this, myself, and would welcome Muehlenbeck's thoughts on the matter.

³ Mitch Lerner, "Climbing off the Back Burner: Lyndon Johnson's Soft Power Approach to Africa," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 22:4 (2011): 578-607.

Considering one line of criticism this book may encounter, I would also welcome Muehlenbeck's commentary on the changing balance of influence within the Kennedy administration. The author rightly notes the impact of key ambassadors like William Attwood and William Mahoney, as well as Assistant Secretary of State G. Mennen Williams, but the ability of these liberal voices to make themselves heard in the White House was by no means constant. As Noer documents, Williams experienced profound frustration at the hands of more Eurocentric peers and considered resigning at least once.⁴ What is one to make, moreover, of the atypical absence of a strong National Security Council voice on African issues during most of the Kennedy years? Although one encounters memos from NSC staff members Carl Kaysen and William Brubeck on African issues, the body accorded comparatively little time to the continent during the Kennedy years.

In closing, I would offer a few more minor points, neither of which detract from Muehlenbeck's accomplishment. While I think his chapter examining the relationships with Ivory Coast and Liberia usefully casts Kennedy's special concern with nonaligned states into relief, the picture is not complete without full consideration of another relationship. Arguably the Kennedy administration accorded more importance to its relationship with Nigeria than to either Ghana or Guinea: it was the largest sub-Saharan state, a helpful partner in the Congo, and also a state seemingly able to exert real influence within its immediate region.⁵ Consideration of the generous attention given to Nigeria would somewhat refine Muehlenbeck's assessment of the focal points of Kennedy's African strategy.

Second, while this book bolsters the case made by Noer, Borstelmann, and George White, Jr., that the Eisenhower administration's approach to Africa was fundamentally shaped by both prejudice and disinterest, the case can be made that Eisenhower's policy toward both African and nonalignment was as often ambivalent.⁶ While Secretary of State John Foster Dulles did indeed deem nonalignment "immoral," I believe that that he was doing so with a domestic audience in mind; the speech in question featured an extended defense of aid to Yugoslavia. The Eisenhower administration's thinking on nonalignment, while tortured, was sometimes fairly tolerant of the phenomenon and comprehending of its potential utility. Eisenhower's response to Guinean independence betrayed occasional impatience and irritation with French policy which had, after all, pushed a newly independent state toward the Soviet Union. While Eisenhower-era policy was clearly more deferential to the United States' European allies on African matters, Ike's frustration with the problems posed by colonial questions is worth noting.

⁴ Thomas J. Noer, *"Soapy": A Biography of G. Mennen Williams* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 254.

⁵ One may note, for example, that aid to Nigeria comprised thirty percent of the total allotted to Africa in 1963. See Memorandum, Ralph Dungan to John F. Kennedy, March 6, 1963, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Vol. 21: Africa* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1996), 329-330.

⁶ George White Jr., *Holding the Line: Race, Racism, and American Foreign Policy toward Africa, 1953-1961* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005).

This well-researched book makes the case for breadth in understanding Kennedy's African policy, and for factoring Africa into our overall assessment of Kennedy's approach to the world. One must salute the energy with which it was researched and written, notably Muehlenbeck's use of Liberian and South African records, and the ways in which he ventures far beyond the beaten path. Most provocative of all is Muehlenbeck's observation that Kennedy's African policy represented a lost alternative to previous and subsequent policies of intervention (xiv). This book will foster worthwhile debate as we continue to reassess this short, pivotal presidency – and as the current occupant of the White House pursues his own policies of engagement.

On a panel commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the State Department's African Bureau at the 2009 SHAFR Annual Meeting, Thomas Noer, who might rightly be called the Dean of U.S.-Africa diplomatic historians, recalled a SHAFR meeting in the 1980s at which attendees were asked to split up into discussion groups based upon the geographical focus of their research interests. Noer was the lone scholar at the meeting whose primary focus was Africa. Little had changed when I first began my graduate studies in the early 2000s. At the 2004 International Graduate Student Conference on the Cold War, I presented on a panel entitled, "The Cold War in Latin America and Africa." Out of the twenty papers given at the conference, I was the only scholar working on Africa, thus my paper was added to a panel which was otherwise exclusively focused on Latin America. Six years later, however, the field had changed dramatically. When I served as a panel chair and discussant at the same conference in 2010, seven out of the conference's twenty eight papers were related to Africa. Following in the footsteps of path blazing scholars such as Noer, Tim Borstelmann, and Richard Mahoney, in the early 2000s Piero Gleijeses and Andy DeRoche became the first diplomatic historians to internationalize the study of U.S.-African relations through the use of African archival research.¹ Today a new generation of historians such as Ryan Irwin, Kyle Haddad-Fonda, Will Bishop, Jamie Miller and myself are doing the same. It is in this light, as the first study of John F. Kennedy's Africa policies to incorporate African primary sources, that I envisioned *Betting on the Africans* making its most significant impact.

I thank Tom Maddux for organizing this roundtable, Andy DeRoche for providing the introduction, and Diane Labrosse for editing it. I owe an apology to Andy for having "repeated the old myth" about Richard Nixon's involvement in the creation of the State Department's Africa Bureau, for I attended his SHAFR presentation about Francis Bolton's role in the process, yet failed to correct my manuscript to reflect this. I hope that indirectly leading him to find the image of Kenneth Kaunda's meeting with John F. Kennedy makes up for this transgression. I am honored to have had such a distinguished panel of scholars as Ryan Irwin, Tom Noer, Arrigo Pallotti, and Rob Rakove engage with my scholarship and offer their constructive critiques. The scholarship of few, if any, recent Ph.D.s has impressed me more than the work being done by Irwin and Rakove. I also appreciate the unique opportunity this forum provides to receive Pallotti's non-American perspective. I

¹ Thomas J. Noer, "New Frontiers and Old Priorities in Africa," in *Kennedy's Quest for Victory*, ed. Thomas G. Paterson, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) also see from Noer *Cold War and Black Liberation: The United States and White Rule in Africa, 1948-1968* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1985) and "The New Frontier and African Neutralism: Kennedy, Nkrumah, and the Volta River Project" *Diplomatic History* 8:1 (1984): 61-79; Thomas Borstelmann, *Apartheid's Reluctant Uncle: The United States and Southern Africa in the Early Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) and *Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); Richard Mahoney, *JFK: Ordeal in Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Andrew DeRoche, *Black, White, and Chrome: The United States and Zimbabwe, 1953 to 1998* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2001).

am most appreciative, however, of the review provided by Noer, not only because, as previously noted, he is a legendary figure in the field of U.S.-Africa diplomatic history, but more importantly because it allows me in my response to offer the readers of this roundtable a clearer understanding of the ways in which *Betting on the Africans* departs from the previous historiographical school on Kennedy's Africa policies to which Noer's work belongs.

With the declassification of Kennedy administration documents at both the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and the National Archives, revisionist scholars writing in the mid-1980s began to reappraise Kennedy's African policies. They maintained that nothing substantial changed in U.S. foreign policy towards Africa during Kennedy's administration, asserting that African affairs never became more than a peripheral concern for Kennedy, due to the fact that his worldview was dominated by his belief in the importance of sustaining a cohesive NATO and winning the Cold War. The consensus of the revisionist historians was that Kennedy's Africa policies amounted to little more than symbolic gestures, which represented a change in style but not in policy goals, and that when forced to choose between supporting African or European allies, Kennedy always sided with the Europeans.²

Noer was the most prominent critic of Kennedy's Africa policies and his criticisms of my study in this roundtable reflect traditional revisionist arguments. For Noer, "Kennedy was never willing to put African issues ahead of Cold War strategy and continued cooperation with European allies." I find this line of argumentation, used to discount the sincerity or effectiveness of Kennedy's Africa policies, perplexing, for did not such crises reduce attention towards all non-Cold War hotspots on every continent? In my opinion, Kennedy's revisionist critics err in viewing this as a zero sum either/or proposition. In their estimation, since Kennedy did not make Africa a higher priority than Europe, he did not drastically change U.S. policy toward Africa. I find this to be an unreasonable standard upon which to judge the changes Kennedy made toward the continent. I agree with such scholars that Africa did not ascend to the top spot on Kennedy's list of foreign policy priorities, but I disagree that we must demonstrate that Africa became *more* important than either Europe or Cold War crises in order to make the argument that Kennedy made a profound change in U.S. relations with Africa and greatly elevated the continent's importance in the overall scheme of U.S. foreign policy.

Revisionist scholars typically point to Kennedy's handling of the Angola issue, in which he initially voted against Portuguese colonial rule and in support of Angolan self-

² Revisionist critics of Kennedy's African policy include: Thomas J. Noer, "New Frontiers and Old Priorities in Africa," Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation*, and Noer, "The New Frontier and African Neutralism: Kennedy, Nkrumah, and the Volta River Project"; Peter J. Schraeder, *United States Foreign Policy Towards Africa: Incrementalism, Crisis, and Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Steven Metz, "American Attitudes Toward Decolonization in Africa," *Political Science Quarterly* 99:3 (Fall 1984): 515-533; David A. Dickson, "U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Southern and Central Africa: The Kennedy and Johnson Years," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 23:2 (Spring 1993); and Gabriel Kolko, *Confronting the Third World* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988).

determination at the United Nations during 1961, but later abstained on similar resolutions in mid-1962 and 1963 after Lisbon threatened to not renew the U.S.'s lease of a key military base in the Azores, as demonstrating that at the end of the day Kennedy's policies towards Africa were not significantly different from those of Eisenhower. In reality, this was a major departure from Eisenhower-era policies. It was the first time that the United States had ever voted against one of its European NATO allies on a colonial issue in the UN and it was accompanied by the termination of commercial arms sales to Lisbon, a reduction in Washington's military aid program to Portugal from \$25 million to \$3 million, authorization for the CIA to initiate modest financial support to Angolan nationalists, and funding for an educational program at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania for refugees from Portuguese Africa.

The fact of the matter is the only reason scholars today can debate the way in which Kennedy handled the Angola/Azores issue is because Kennedy dramatically changed U.S. policy towards Portuguese Africa. Had this not been the case then the Portuguese would not have felt backed into a corner and would not have attempted to blackmail the U.S. over continued access to the Azores military base. Had Kennedy not departed from the Eisenhower administration's policies towards European colonialism of Africa then the Azores would have never been an issue in U.S.-Portuguese bilateral relations in the first place.

One significant difference between my study and the revisionist scholarship is that *Betting on the Africans* adds an 'African voice' to this historiographical debate. While previous histories of Kennedy's African policies relied almost exclusively on U.S. sources (and a handful of British sources), *Betting on the Africans* was the first study of Kennedy's African policy to utilize African archival research (along with more in-depth research in the British archives) as well as several oral history accounts by Kennedy's African contemporaries. I also consulted more than forty interviews of low-level State Department, USIA, and USAID officials who were involved with Kennedy administration policy towards Africa either in Washington or on the ground in Africa itself. As a result, I concluded that while the revisionist historians may not view Kennedy's African policies as a significant departure from those of the Eisenhower administration, there is an almost unanimous consensus among both those who carried out his policies as well as those towards whom they were directed that the Kennedy administration represented a dramatic and immediate shift in U.S. policy towards the continent.

Such feelings were also common among Europeans and white Africans. I conducted primary source research in the South African government archives in order to ascertain what the South African government itself thought about John F. Kennedy's policies towards both its country and Africa as a whole. Regardless of whether or not historians believe that Kennedy's policies represented significant departure from those of Eisenhower, the South African government itself absolutely did, viewing the New Frontier's Africa policy in apocalyptic terms, going so far as to fear a possible Bay of Pigs-type invasion to overturn apartheid. French, Belgian, Portuguese, and to a lesser extent British representatives felt the same way. The level of animosity the Portuguese felt toward Kennedy's policies on Angola is demonstrated by the fact that after Kennedy's death, Portugal was one of only

two countries in the world (Communist China being the other) to not send Washington its condolences for his assassination.³ Furthermore, upon becoming president, Richard Nixon told Portuguese Foreign Minister Franco Nogueira, “Just remember, I’ll never do to you what Kennedy did.”⁴ Had there been no difference in policy towards Portuguese Africa from the Eisenhower-Nixon administration to the Kennedy administration then Nixon would not have felt the need to have said this. So again, while revisionist historians may not view Kennedy’s handling of Portuguese Africa as much of a departure in U.S. foreign policy, Lisbon (as well as Richard Nixon) surely did.

Noer also views my contention that Kennedy saw Africa as both integral to the Cold War as well as something which transcended the superpower contest as somehow contradictory. But policymaking is more nuanced and complicated than Noer’s analysis would allow for. I argue that many in the Kennedy administration, Kennedy included, believed that if the U.S. continued the same trajectory of relations with Africa as the Eisenhower administration that it could be a decisive turning point in the Cold War and give the Soviets the upper hand. But they also thought that Africa, and the rest of the developing world for that matter, was important irrespective of the Cold War, believing that even if the USSR did not exist continued American neglect of the global south would alienate the developing world and contribute to the growth of anti-Americanism. I fail to see how these two ideas contradict each other.

Additionally, there are a few places in Noer’s review in which he misinterprets my arguments. Most surprising is his implication that I suggest that if Lee Harvey Oswald was a poorer marksman that 9/11 would have been averted. While this makes for a witty punch line in a review, it grossly exaggerates the point I made in my book. The sentence to which he refers, in which I wrote: “The abandonment of Kennedy’s Third World policies in favor of a policy dominated by Cold War concerns of anticommunism ultimately led to increased anti-Americanism in the developing world, culminating in the events of September 11, 2001” (xiv) is not a sustained or central argument made in my book, but rather a one-sentence statement made in passing. My point was simply that the policies of the Kennedy administration improved the image of the United States in the Third World and particularly in Africa. In contrast, the policies of his successors, through a lack of interest in Africa and the sponsoring of proxy wars in the developing world, damaged the image of the U.S. in the Third World. This in no way suggests that 9/11 would not have occurred had Kennedy not been assassinated, but rather that the rejection of his policies towards the Third World by the administrations that followed him increased anti-Americanism in the world—a point which in my opinion is irrefutable.

³ Further discussion of Portuguese furor at Kennedy’s actions on the Angola issue, based upon Portuguese archival research, can be found in Luis Nuno Rodrigues, “To the ‘Top of the Mountain’ and ‘Down to the Valley’: The United States and Portugal During the Kennedy Administration” Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2000.

⁴ Mahoney, p. 243.

Noer also writes that I painted Kennedy as a “bold and uncompromising advocate of African nationalism and racial equality.” While it is true that I view Kennedy’s support of African nationalism as bold, given that it was opposed by his NATO allies, most of Congress, the majority of the State and Defense departments, and even his own father, I think my study makes clear that I see Kennedy as a pragmatic and compromising, not “uncompromising,” advocate for African nationalism. I also state that Kennedy was soft on domestic racism until 1963. Finally, while Noer contends that “Kennedy aligned with the Saudis” against Egypt during the Yemeni civil war, I concluded that he attempted to take a middle course between two important allies. But ultimately, unlike Eisenhower or the British, he leaned towards Nasser—not the Saudis—and the British and Jordanians, in particular, were not happy with this fact. Nor, of course, were the Saudis.

Irwin asks how much of the Kennedy administration’s sympathy towards African nationalism can be attributed to the president himself as opposed to advisors such as the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs G. Mennen Williams. Here again consulting oral history interviews is instructive. What one finds is that in countless oral history interviews of American officials they attribute the change in U.S. policy towards Africa as starting with the president himself. Kennedy called country desk officers at the State Department to ask specific questions about minute details on issues affecting African nations. He asked his staff to compile for him reports on Africa, which he then personally reviewed. He circumvented the State Department and had direct correspondence with a number of his ambassadors to Africa. No other U.S. president did any of this. Kennedy not only met with more African heads of state than any other U.S. president, but I’m sure that he also met with more ambassadors from African countries than any other occupant of the White House. Moreover, let us not forget that Kennedy took an interest in Africa and became a public supporter of African nationalism before virtually any other U.S. politician with his speech on Algeria in 1957 which he then followed up with by becoming the chairman of the Senate’s Foreign Relations African Subcommittee, through which he met with numerous African politicians before ascending to the presidency.

Similarly, Irwin asks if Kennedy was merely ‘at the right place at the right time, wondering, “would any president—even Eisenhower—have taken an interest in the continent during the early 1960s”? I would contend that had another president been in office at the start of the 1960s he would have been *unlikely* to have taken as much interest in Africa as Kennedy did. Again, Kennedy showed more interest in Africa in the late 1950s than any other prominent U.S. politician, advocating for a change in policy not only towards Algeria but also towards Guinea. Furthermore, Eisenhower and Johnson both occupied the White House during the same era and under similar circumstances and their attitudes toward the continent were drastically different. Finally, given his almost complete disinterest in African nationalism and his support for white supremacy as president later on, it goes without saying that had Richard Nixon defeated Kennedy in the 1960 presidential election he would not have shown the same sort of interest in the continent that Kennedy did.

Rakove raises an interesting hypothetical question about what Kennedy’s Africa policies may have looked like in 1964, as he faced reelection, had he not been assassinated. My own view is that the trajectory of his policies in 1963 would have continued in 1964 through the

November election. This means, for example, that policy towards Portuguese Africa would have resembled that of the second half of his first term, with less public criticism of Lisbon and continuing the policy of abstaining on votes on Portuguese colonialism in the United Nations. However, the available documentary evidence (along with the memoirs of Ted Sorensen) indicate that once freed of the constraints of getting reelected, Kennedy would again have turned up the heat on the Portuguese and returned to his policies of 1961 in openly pressing for self-determination in Portuguese Africa.⁵ Kennedy's Africa policies were not popular with the American public or within Congress, but he pursued them because he believed they best served the long-term interests of U.S. foreign policy. He understood that his support for African nationalism would not gain him many votes for reelection, but he was mindful of the fact that if he lost access to the Azores, the Republicans would use that as a campaign issue by arguing that his support of African nationalists had imperiled U.S. military preparedness for a war in Europe, the Middle East, or Africa. This is not to suggest that domestic political considerations were the primary reason for Kennedy's change of policy towards Portuguese Africa, but rather that they were a contributing factor.

I will not say much here about Rakove's inquiry as to why no other U.S. president has rivaled Kennedy's success in Africa, except to say that Africans revered Kennedy for the sympathy he conveyed for their causes—even more so than was warranted. The Camelot mystique was strongly felt in Africa, probably even more so than in the U.S. As one U.S. Foreign Service Officer who served in Africa told me, "Africans were revolutionaries overthrowing colonial powers—and that is what Kennedy was in their mind, he was a revolutionary leader—young and overthrowing the colonial powers. That was their image of him,"⁶ This is not to say that Kennedy did not merit the admiration that Africans gave him, but rather that his legacy on the continent was aided by both the magnetism of his public persona and his tragic death. While the differences in his policies towards the continent were recognized and appreciated, for Africans it was Kennedy's *words* and *style* that spoke louder than his *actions*. The main factor in Kennedy's success on the continent was the fact that through personal diplomacy he was able to convince Africans that he was genuinely interested in their continent.

Rakove and Pallotti lament that my study did not include coverage of Kennedy administration relations with Nigeria and Ethiopia respectively. Rakove makes a legitimate case for Nigeria being the most important state in Sub-Saharan Africa and therefore, in his opinion, it should have been included in my study. He is not alone in this view; a Nigerian taxi driver once told me the same, going even further proclaiming the without a chapter on Nigeria my book was worthless. My reasons for not including a case study on Nigeria were twofold. First, with my emphasis on Kennedy's usage of personal diplomacy as the lynchpin of his Africa policy it became a bit problematic to study Nigeria since there was no clear-cut leader in the country as power was divided between President Nnamdi Azikiwe and Prime

⁵ Theodore Sorensen, *Kennedy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 538.

⁶ Vince Farley, interview with author, 10 December 2003, via telephone.

Minister Abubakar Tafewa Balewa. Second, Nkrumah of Ghana and Touré of Guinea were more interesting figures and more integral components of Kennedy's efforts to court African nationalism than were the Nigerians. Given the fact that Liberia and the Ivory Coast are the best examples of African conservative states to study and that West Africa is already overrepresented geographically, I made the decision to omit a case study on Nigeria.

There is no case study on Ethiopia for an altogether different reason. Ethiopia was the one African country that the Kennedy administration gave substantial military aid to, receiving over seventy percent of U.S. military aid to sub-Saharan Africa from 1961-1964.⁷ Furthermore, Emperor Haile Selassie was the type of conservative, authoritarian relic of the past that Kennedy typically distanced himself from. Simply put, a case study of U.S. relations with Ethiopia during the Kennedy administration would not have supported my thesis in *Betting on the Africans*, as U.S. policy towards the country was largely the same as that during the Eisenhower administration, one of supporting an autocratic ruler largely through military aid. Let me add, however, that I do not believe this disproves my thesis in *Betting on the Africans*. I contend that Ethiopia and South Africa are two anomalies in which U.S. policy under Eisenhower and Kennedy was not much different. This still leaves over forty countries in Africa for which Kennedy radically changed U.S. policy. The differences were the most pronounced in the countries which scholars had not previously studied since there was no Cold War crisis over them. Such countries were represented by the Ivory Coast, Liberia, and Tanganyika in my study.

Noer describes my chapter on the role of Africa in the Cuban missile crisis as “rather unrelated to the rest of the book” and “a topic of little direct connection to the courting of African leaders.” In contrast, I see that chapter as the most original and important in *Betting on the Africans* for it demonstrates concretely the effect that Kennedy's courting of African nationalism had on African views of the United States. When Kennedy entered the Oval Office, the reputation of the United States on the African continent had sunk to its lowest level in history as a result of Washington's support of the French colonial war in Algeria, its perceived complicity in the death of Patrice Lumumba, and its deference to its European allies on colonial issues in the United Nations. At that time states such as Guinea, Ghana, and Egypt had harshly criticized U.S. foreign policy, had distanced themselves from the United States, and were openly moving closer into the Soviet camp. Yet, less than two years later every African state supported the United States during the tensest moment of the Cold War—the Cuban missile crisis—and nearly all of the key African players explained their position on the basis of their personal friendship with Kennedy. Kennedy's courting of African nationalist leaders directly impacted Africa's decision to side with the United States during the Cuban missile crisis.

Pallotti and Irwin both ask what the story told in *Betting on the Africans* would have looked like if it was extended into the Johnson presidency. They wonder whether the downturn in

⁷ US Overseas Loans and Grants [Greenbook] Database [Online], rev. July 9, 2012. Available: <http://gbk.eads.usaidallnet.gov/>. Data analysis by author.

U.S.-African relations during the Johnson administration is attributable to the failure of Kennedy's policies. I would argue that it does not. It would be more accurate to use a baseball analogy and think of Kennedy as a pitcher who left the mound in the fifth inning with his team in the lead. Kennedy received a 'no decision' while those who relieved him (Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon) lost the game.

I've welcomed the opportunity that this forum has provided for discussing my research, both its strengths and its flaws. It is my hope that future scholars may build on my study by further internationalizing this historiography through the incorporation of archival research in other African or pertinent European archives or through case studies of Kennedy administration relations with other key African countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, or Ethiopia for which there are currently no studies.

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