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Contents

Introduction by Robert J. McMahon, Ohio State University	2
Review by Ryan Irwin, University at Albany, SUNY	4
Review by Mitchell Lerner, The Ohio State University	8
Review by Philip E. Muehlenbeck, George Washington University	12
Review by Stephen G. Rabe, University of Texas at Dallas.....	18
Author's Response by Robert B. Rakove, Stanford University	22
Response by Phil Muehlenbeck, George Washington University	34
Response by Brian McNeil, University of Texas at Austin	38

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Introduction by Robert J. McMahon, Ohio State University

Over the past generation, a rich scholarly literature has developed on the broad and complex subject of U.S. relations with the Third World, especially for the era of the Cold War. Robert B. Rakove's intensive investigation of U.S. policies toward the nonaligned nations during the presidencies of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson treats a key element of that wider topic. A number of newly independent states--India, Egypt, Indonesia, and Ghana prominent among them--eschewed Cold War side-choosing, opting instead for a policy of equidistance from the superpowers. They sought, for a range of practical and idealistic motives, to avoid entangling security commitments, to maximize their freedom of action in the global arena, and, most ambitiously, to forge a potentially catalytic third force in international politics. In the event, these nonaligned Asian, African, and Middle Eastern states forced the superpowers to compete for their attention and affection—and, as Rakove shows in arresting detail, inspired enormous consternation among policy makers in Washington. The latter deliberated about and launched various strategies for meeting the vexing challenges that the neutralist movement posed to U.S. interests at the very height of the Cold War.

The four contributors to this forum agree that *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Nonaligned World* stands as an important book on an important subject, rooted in thorough, multiarchival research. They concur as well that the breadth of Rakove's volume marks a significant advance in our understanding of U.S. relations with the nonaligned states and societies of the global south during the critical decade of the 1960s. They differ, however, on precisely how original—and persuasive-- his thesis regarding the efficacy of Kennedy's "engagement" strategy is; on whether the author is overly sympathetic to Kennedy, or perhaps unduly critical of Johnson; and on whether he has effectively identified the chief reasons for, and consequences of, the ultimate failures of Kennedy's Third World initiatives.

The reviewers also differ on how the story of U.S. policy toward the nonaligned nations should be told. This disagreement, which involves the salience of non-Western sources and perspectives, mirrors broader debates within our field about best practices in international history. The lively exchange that follows not only illuminates the core themes put forward in this impressive book; it also reminds us of how vibrant the study of the Cold War in the Third World has become.

Participants

Robert Rakove is a lecturer in International Relations at Stanford University. He received his Ph.D. in History at the University of Virginia in 2008. He is the author of *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Nonaligned World*, and is presently at work on a history of U.S.-Afghan relations in the decades preceding the Soviet invasion.

Robert J. McMahon is the Ralph Mershon Professor of History at Ohio State University. He is the author of several books, including *Dean Acheson and the Creation of an American*

World Order (Potomac Books, 2009) and *The Cold War: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2003), and is the editor, most recently, of *The Cold War in the Third World* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

Ryan M. Irwin is an Assistant Professor of History at the University at Albany, SUNY. He's the author of *Gordian Knot: Apartheid and the Unmaking of the Liberal World Order* (Oxford, 2012). He's currently writing an intellectual history of the twentieth century nation-state and a comparative biography that explores global governance during the mid-1970s.

Mitchell Lerner is associate professor of history and director of the Institute for Korean Studies at the Ohio State University. He is author of *The Pueblo Incident: A Spy Ship and the Failure of American Foreign Policy* (Kansas, 2002), and editor of *Looking Back at LBJ* (Kansas, 2005) and *A Companion to Lyndon B. Johnson* (Blackwell, 2012).

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). His current research projects are on US-USSR-Czechoslovak-British competition for African civil aviation markets and on Czechoslovak policies towards Africa from 1955-1968.

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America's Third World

Robert Rakove's *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Nonaligned World* is an ambitious reassessment of U.S. policy toward the nonaligned world during the 1960s. Drawing on copious research in U.S. government archives, the book looks at 'engagement,' a previously unnamed doctrine that Rakove feels oriented John F. Kennedy's foreign policy. In this retelling, Kennedy was a wise and prudent president—fully capable of separating communism from nationalism in the Third World—who spearheaded an unprecedented outreach effort toward neutral countries after 1961. This offensive marked a genuine departure from the Manichean tendencies of the time, Rakove argues, and while Kennedy's efforts carried certain misconceptions, the President was "right to regard nonalignment seriously in his day." Today's policymakers "would be equally prudent to study it closely in ours (264)."

Rakove's thesis engages two interlocking historiographical debates. First, the author revisits the controversy around Fredrik Logevall's landmark *Choosing War*.¹ That book, which devoted some 400 pages to the "Long 1964"—the year when Lyndon B. Johnson americanized the Vietnam War—hinted suggestively that Kennedy's diplomatic acumen might have led the United States down a different path in Southeast Asia. Whereas the thirty-fifth president was an original thinker who saw the world in shades of gray and engaged statesmen with different views and political agendas, his successor was a Washington insider who extended his transactional understanding of politics into the international arena.² Accepting this distinction, Rakove surveys Kennedy's policies in Africa and Asia in order to explicate precisely how Johnson's ascension altered the calculus around U.S. policy toward the nonaligned world. The resulting narrative nudges the reader toward Logevall's provocative conclusion. Had Lee Harvey Oswald missed, it's entirely possible that the Vietnam War would not have happened.

Second, *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Nonaligned World* engages the debate around Odd Arne Westad's *The Global Cold War*.³ Westad's book effectively reimagined the Cold War as a contest between two global empires—organized by potent yet incompatible theories of modernization—which played out as a series of overlapping military interventions in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. For Westad, Vietnam was the emblematic midpoint in an era defined by relentless warfare, revolutionary rhetoric, and broken dreams.⁴ Rakove has no

¹ Fredrik Logevall, *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

² Logevall, chap. 12.

³ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁴ Westad, chap. 5.

time for theory, which is unfortunate, but he's eager to complicate Westad's grand narrative by showing the explanatory limitations of ideology. 'Engagement' is Rakove's conceptual counterpoint to intervention, and *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Nonaligned World* subtly challenges *The Global Cold War's* middle chapters, specifically their emphasis on Cuba and Vietnam. Rakove's Kennedy viewed Fidel Castro and Ho Chi Minh not as existential threats but as single trees in a large, complex forest that needed to be treated with respect, tact, and patience. In exploring this forest—detailing the way U.S. policymakers addressed wide-ranging problems in Ghana, Egypt, Indonesia, and India, among other countries—Rakove casts the Kennedy team as flawed yet flexible. These were not mandarins of modernization, but apostles of pragmatism.

Rakove assembles his puzzle with admirable creativity. *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Nonaligned World* opens and closes with contextual explanations of Dwight D. Eisenhower and Vietnam, but the book's core chapters—where the author does his most original thinking and researching—review the conferences, crises, and meetings where U.S. officials worked out their understanding of nonalignment. Rakove begins by unfurling the personalities and ideas of the New Frontiersmen, placing the President's advisors in different groups. The National Security Council's McGeorge Bundy and Robert Komer were the administration's clear-eyed crisis managers; Undersecretary of State Chester Bowles, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Mennen Williams, and U.N. Ambassador Adlai Stevenson were the energetic idealists (with the NSC's Walt Rostow providing an economic viewpoint); and Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Under Secretary of State for Economic and Agricultural Affairs George Ball were the Europhiles, constantly checking the enthusiasm of their colleagues.⁵ Although Kennedy never explicated a grand strategy toward nonalignment, Rakove argues that the President used engagement to hold this team together, a policy which worked until Johnson arrived in the White House in late 1963. A less dexterous thinker, the new President let his insecurities erode the creative tension of the New Frontier.

To substantiate these claims, *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Nonaligned World* walks the reader through a series of thematic case studies. Focused roughly on 1961-1964, each chapter compares Kennedy and Johnson, contrasting the former's willingness to build relationships with neutral countries with the latter's ham-fisted insistence on rewarding supporters and punishing critics. Kennedy's patience took many forms. For instance, Rakove shows how

⁵ As Rakove explains, these figures played various roles during the Kennedy and Johnson years. Bundy was the White House's National Security Advisor until 1966; Komer served on his staff during that time and helped shape NSC policy toward nonaligned questions, before eventually getting involved in the Vietnam pacification campaigns of 1967-68. Bowles began 1961 as Undersecretary of State, but lost that position in December and served out the decade as the President's Special Adviser on African, Asian, and Latin American Affairs, an Ambassador-at-Large, and eventually U.S. Ambassador to India. Williams was Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs until 1966; Stevenson was U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations until his death in 1965. Rostow played a variety of roles on the NSC before replacing Bundy as Johnson's National Security Advisor in 1966. Rusk was Secretary of State for both Kennedy and Johnson. Ball was Undersecretary of State for Economic and Agricultural Affairs and became Undersecretary of State after Bowles removal. He served briefly as U.N. Ambassador in 1968.

the administration used bilateral meetings with nonaligned leaders to rehabilitate Washington's standing after the 1961 Belgrade conference, a major gathering among nonaligned countries. He also illustrates the way the President used compromise and symbolism to chart a middle path through colonial conflicts and regional disputes in Africa and Asia. Rakove even uses a chapter on American aid to demonstrate the gap between Kennedy's strategic generosity and Johnson's capricious parsimony. The New Frontier's successes were not unqualified; anticolonial sentiment and regional strife, especially in Africa, pushed the administration into numerous no-win situations in these years. But the breaking point did not arrive until 1964. On Vietnam, Kennedy simply "*would not* have rejected the counsel of nonaligned leaders and allies as vehemently or as punitively as Johnson did (257)." Rakove's emphasis underscores his book's ultimate conclusion: Johnson's war constituted a "repudiation" of his predecessor's legacy.

Kennedy, Johnson, and the Nonaligned World is impressively researched and provocatively argued. It deserves to be near the center of any scholarly discussion about the Vietnam War and U.S. policy toward nonalignment. The author moves comfortably through a dizzying number of bilateral relationships, exploring the U.S.-Togo connection with the same nuance he devotes to Kennedy's outreach in India, Egypt, and Indonesia. Rather than drawing on the secondary literature, Rakove's narrative is built around his impressive original research in the presidential libraries, the U.S. National Archive, and the relevant *FRUS* volumes, with some international research effectively blended into each chapter. This sort of synthesis—based on primary sources yet focused on several countries—is difficult and Rakove should be congratulated for his effort. The size and complexity of his archival evidence sets a standard for future scholars.

Kennedy, Johnson, and the Nonaligned World is not perfect. The book's organization lends itself to repetition and while Rakove's summary of the New Frontiersmen is useful, it sits awkwardly next to the messy realities he uncovers in his case studies. Komer, for instance, seems to have been pragmatic on some issues and idealistic on others, which prompts the question as to whether policymakers actually had a worldview on nonalignment or interlocking opinions about race, development, and neutrality that interacted as the world changed around them during the early 1960s. Rakove's use of personality archetypes allows him to avoid this question and simplify the way Kennedy's team actually built, maintained, and changed its interpersonal coalitions. The author's approach also distorts the role of context. His interpretation rests on the presupposition that "the challenges presented by nonaligned states in 1965 were not substantially different in character from what they had been in the 1950s (xxvii);" this in turn justifies his comparative analysis of Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson, but confuses the differences between pan-Asianism, pan-Arabism, and pan-Africanism and masks how these ideologies evolved in the decade after 1955. Did nonalignment really remain static in the face of African decolonization and American civil rights? Rakove's book would have been even stronger if it had given more attention to nonalignment's fluidity, context, and contradictions.

The book's central contribution, however, is its explication of U.S. thinking and behavior. On this front, Rakove deserves credit for recovering an important dimension of Kennedy's diplomacy and buttressing one side of the debate about Vietnam. His argument will not

convince every skeptic, but it invites a fascinating riddle: would engagement have collapsed if Kennedy had lived? Rakove does not proffer an answer, but his evidence suggests that Kennedy's outreach had hit a wall by November 1963. A gap existed between Washington's capacities and the decolonized world's expectations, and the New Frontiersmen had cultivated an unrealistic mindset about economic development and political plurality. Rakove's ultimate conclusion—that Manichean thinking led Johnson astray—is true, of course, but it seems to imply that 'engaged' Washingtonians would have sailed smoothly through the rough waters of the mid-1960s. Certainly some of the powerbrokers that Rakove writes about would have agreed, but his premise ignores the contributions of those who study decolonization. This was a unique moment, rife with deeper ambiguities that many scholars are beginning to appreciate.

Kennedy, Johnson, and the Nonaligned World successfully illuminates U.S. policy toward neutral countries in the period just before the Vietnam War. In the coming years, scholars will hopefully build on Rakove's insights by raising new questions and utilizing novel historiographies. The international community has nearly quadrupled in size since 1945: what role has the United States played in shaping the intellectual contours and political contradictions of this process? How did neutrality and nonalignment interact with other contemporary internationalisms? Why did this interaction process change over time? Few books will tackle these questions without including *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Nonaligned World* in their footnotes. With verve and nuance, Rakove has written a useful and important diplomatic history of Kennedy's foreign policy. His book makes a lasting contribution to the evolving conversation about international life in the mid-twentieth century.

Review by Mitchell Lerner, The Ohio State University

Ann Owens was a Peace Corps volunteer in a small African village when she learned of John F. Kennedy's assassination. She was devastated. "I feel now as if a member of my family had died," she wrote her mother.¹ Owens was not the only one so affected. Local villagers mourned, and the school where she was teaching was closed for days to honor Kennedy's memory. Others across the continent mourned as well. "The only people I have ever trusted," Guinea's Sékou Touré told Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs G. Mennen Williams, "were you and Kennedy."² Although Kennedy's overall foreign policy has come under increased criticism over the past few decades, Rob Rakove's new book, *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Nonaligned World*, suggests that Touré and the inhabitants of Ann Owens' village had good reasons for such feelings.

Rakove offers a detailed look at American policymakers in the 1960s as they worked to develop a strategy towards the emerging nonaligned states. The book focuses on some of the largest and most influential members of this bloc, notably India, Indonesia, and Egypt, but it goes beyond these more obvious targets to address policy towards Goa, Ghana, and beyond. While leveling criticism where appropriate, Rakove generally finds much to praise in Kennedy's approach, one that reflected the President's belief that the U.S. needed to engage the neutral powers with a more flexible and positive approach than had been implemented by his predecessors. This belief, Rakove asserts, led Kennedy to implement a strategy rooted in personal diplomacy, economic assistance, and a willingness to reconsider the U.S. position on critical colonial questions, and which, despite some hiccups, "made real headway in improving the tenor of bilateral relations with a range of nonaligned states" (255). These positive steps, though, proved to be fleeting, as a combination of factors that included an overestimation of the impact of foreign aid, the difficult terrain of Cold War and regional alliances and rivalries, the Vietnam War, and the varying demands and pressures unique to each of the emerging nations saw this promising effort quickly collapse. One factor, though, stands above all else in Rakove's rendition of its demise: the fact that Kennedy's successor lacked his "intuitive grasp of the nonaligned world," and hence embraced a more traditional approach that emphasized Cold War alliances at the expense of the nonaligned world and favored coercion over more subtle methods when necessary (257). Kennedy may not have fully trusted Indonesian President Sukarno, for example, but in these pages he appears to have been at least willing to take half-hearted steps to maintain moderate relations through economic aid and personal connections; Lyndon B. Johnson, on the other hand, quickly dismissed the Indonesian leader as a bully and a liar, and sacrificed any chance for better relations in order to placate Great Britain and American congressmen. This reversal was repeated across the globe, and with it came the end of the brief period of promise that had marked the Kennedy years. The result, Rakove concludes, was "grave and lasting consequences for the United States and the world" (xxviii).

¹ *New York Times*, March 9, 2010, p. 12.

² G. Mennen Williams Oral History, Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library, p. 11

This is a strong and convincing argument, although one that is perhaps more persuasive regarding Kennedy's positive role than Johnson's more negative one. Rakove's research is thorough, his writing is clear, and his thesis is well supported. In addition to the often excellent case studies that fill the pages of the book (I liked the South Asia sections, in particular), a few areas are particularly noteworthy, including the discussion of the two distinct intellectual frameworks (embodied by the liberals and the pragmatists) within the administration and the competition for influence between their respective champions; the analysis of the role played by internal divisions between and within the nonaligned states themselves; and the connections between Kennedy's commitment to Third World engagement and the influence of modernization theory within the administration. I do wonder if Rakove has not exaggerated the extent of Kennedy's willingness to adopt new approaches a bit; when Cold War demands forced him to choose between emerging nationalist leaders and more traditional allies he typically chose the traditional path, siding with the Saudis against Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser in Yemen, for example, and backing down from an effort to pressure Portugal to grant independence to Angola when the Salazar government threatened not to renew the lease on the U.S. military base in the Azores. Still, *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Nonaligned World* ranks as one of the best works to date on the Kennedy administration's vision of the world beyond America's shores.

Yet, although the book provides a significant contribution to our understanding of Kennedy's policies, it is somewhat less convincing in its more negative portrayal of the Johnson administration, one that I think may go too far in finding differences between the two administrations. On the most immediate level, it is hard to read Rakove's analysis without concluding that the critical factor was not the Kennedy-Johnson transition, but instead the inherent and largely unavoidable conflict between the raised expectations of the Third World and the political/economic/strategic constraints within the United States, which made the American efforts unsustainable by the late 1960s regardless of who was in office. Rakove, to his credit, acknowledges this throughout the book, noting that Kennedy's early policies "fueled anticipation among nonaligned leaders that a greater commitment to decolonization was forthcoming—even as Washington grew increasingly chary of the costs of alienating European opinion" (97). He also points to numerous cases where a specific post-1963 falling out had its roots in pre-1963 events; Egypt's involvement in Yemen in late 1962, he concludes, did not "entirely derail" Kennedy's efforts at engagement, but it did "cost the White House the momentum achieved earlier, paving the way for a crisis in U.S.-Egyptian relations during 1964" (157). It is hard, then, to square such conclusions with the larger claim that the failure of engagement was "a direct consequence of the transition between Johnson and Kennedy" (257).

Beyond this larger question of responsibility, however, the book's specific focus on traditional elements of diplomacy at the expense of soft power and cultural efforts does something of a disservice to Johnson. Rakove, to be fair, is absolutely correct that Kennedy's personal meetings with Third World leaders were successful and important steps, ones that were largely missing from Johnson's strategy. But cultural diplomacy consists of much more than the occasional meeting between heads of state, and here I would argue that Johnson's Third World efforts were more significant than those of his

predecessor. Consider Africa, for example, where, in early 1965, Johnson ordered his staff to prepare a “new and critical look” at American policy. “He wants,” Dean Rusk informed his staff, “Department to shape future US policy towards Africa with same energy and imagination that generated programs of ‘The Great Society’ at home”; of particular focus were recommendations that sought to stimulate “cooperation and development.”³ The list of such programs that followed is lengthy: an effort to eradicate measles in Upper Volta that vaccinated over 700,000 children; an Agency for International Development AID program that revolutionized the Nigerian system for raising chickens and storing eggs; the dispatch of two astronauts on a goodwill tour that generated such enthusiasm that the Malagasy embassy called it the “most impressive demonstration [of] US–Malagasy friendship ever achieved.”⁴ Although Kennedy also supported such programs, it would be hard to argue that Johnson was not at least as supportive, a claim that is again demonstrated by outreach efforts in Africa, where Food for Peace spending increased from \$99 million in 1962 to \$165 million by 1967, where Voice of America broadcasts grew from 35 hours per week in 1963 to 66.5 hours in 1968, and where a dramatic increase in funding for English language teaching centers helped spark an enrollment increase of 45 percent between 1963 and 1967.⁵ Although Rakove is certainly right that Johnson had neither the skill nor the commitment that his predecessor had in terms of personal outreach, his less glamorous efforts nevertheless seemed genuine and significant, and reflect perhaps a greater concern with Third World relations than Rakove suggests.

Nor was it simply soft power approaches where Rakove’s account seems to overlook Johnson’s development efforts towards the nonaligned nations. His chapter on foreign aid does an excellent job of articulating the growing congressional opposition to such programs and the battle that the Kennedy administration likely faced in 1964 and beyond to appropriate adequate funds. Rakove speculates that Kennedy was so committed to the program that he would have maintained such aid, but of course there is no way to know. Meanwhile, he writes that Johnson was more focused on the links between such programs and domestic politics, and hence was more likely to make foreign aid contingent on certain reforms from the receiving nation that he could use to placate political opposition (60). I would agree somewhat with this description, although I find it a bit overly focused on the foreign aid bill rather than the total dispensation of funds; after the Congressional cuts from the 1968 bill, for example, Johnson manipulated money wildly to ensure that development programs continued to receive funds--the true foreign aid bill for that year, wrote the *Chicago Tribune*, included another \$6 billion hidden in 14 separate budget items.⁶ Regardless, however, such criticism of Johnson misses the point that such strings

³ State Department telegram #2156 to Ambassadors or Principal Officers, 6 May 1965, LBJL, NSF, Country File, Africa, Box 76 [1 of 2], Africa—General, memos & misc [2 of 2] Vol. I, 2/64-6/64 folder.

⁴ See Mitchell Lerner, “Climbing off the Back Burner: Lyndon Johnson’s Soft Power Approach to Africa,” *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 22:4, 578-607; Malagasy embassy in Haynes memorandum to Johnson, 27 September 1965, LBJL, NSF, Ulrich Haynes files, Box 1, CHRONO 3/1/65-6/15/66 (2 of 3) folder.

⁵ Lerner, “Climbing off the Back Burner.”

⁶ *Chicago Tribune*, 2 April 1967, p. 5.

were necessary in order to keep the program afloat at all. By the late Johnson years, congressional hostility to foreign aid had become implacable. The Republican congressman Harold Gross of Iowa called it “the worst swindle ever perpetrated on the American people” and denounced “those chiseling foreigners,” while Republican Senator Everett Dirksen described aid recipients as “mendicants with the tin cup out.”⁷ The fact that Johnson was able to achieve all that he did in foreign aid despite such fervid opposition, I would argue, should be seen as a testament to his commitment to Third World outreach rather than as a break with Kennedy’s policies. To do otherwise is to take the decision-making process out of the changing historical contexts in which both men pursued fairly similar agendas under different circumstances.

Still, these disagreements are fairly small, as Rakove generally acknowledges these continuities, both positive and negative, even while he weighs them somewhat differently than I would have. They do nothing to discredit the work’s larger argument, or the significant contribution it makes to our understanding of the Kennedy administration, modernization, and the Third World. *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Nonaligned World* will likely stand as one of the definitive works on the United States and the nonaligned movement during this critical period.

⁷ Gross in *Chicago Tribune*, 14 July 1966, p. D7, and *New York Times*, 15 July 1966, p. 1; Dirksen in *Washington Post*, 21 July 1966, p. 1.

When John F. Kennedy entered the White House in January 1961, the equilibrium of international relations which had underpinned the Cold War for the previous decade and a half was in transition. That year the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was formally established at a conference in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, which gave developing world countries an alternative to joining either of the Cold War blocs. It thus empowered these states, most of which had been recently decolonized, by providing them a greater opportunity for playing the superpowers off against each other. The difference in how Kennedy approached this challenge of relations with the non-aligned world compared to Dwight D. Eisenhower or Lyndon B. Johnson is perhaps the most significant divergence in their foreign policies.

The historiography of Kennedy's relations with the developing world began with the so-called 'court historians'—members of the Kennedy administration such as Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Ted Sorensen, and William Attwood—who wrote two-to-three years after Kennedy's death, and who (as might be expected) wrote with outward adoration for Kennedy's policies toward the developing world and with very little criticism.¹ They described Kennedy's foreign policy as a significant departure from that of his predecessors and cited his appointment of liberals interested in the developing world to high ranking positions in the administration, a dramatic increase in foreign aid to the global south, vocal criticism of European colonialism, and Kennedy's efforts at personal diplomacy with African and Asian nationalist leaders as major innovations in United States foreign policy.

With the declassification of Kennedy administration documents at both the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and the National Archives, in the mid-1980s revisionist scholars began to reappraise Kennedy's policies towards the developing world. Led by Thomas Paterson, Thomas Noer, Steve Rabe, and Gabriel Kolko, this generation of scholars contended that nothing substantial changed in U.S. foreign policy towards the developing world under Kennedy's watch.² Rather than viewing Kennedy's foreign policy as enlightened, they instead painted Kennedy as the consummate Cold Warrior who irresponsibly supported military coups, pursued misguided economic development programs, and at the end of the day always stood behind his European allies at the expense

¹ See Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965); Theodore Sorensen, *Kennedy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965); William Attwood, *The Reds and the Blacks* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).

² See Thomas Paterson, ed., *Kennedy's Quest for Victory: American Foreign Policy, 1961-1963* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Thomas Noer, *Cold War and Black Liberation: The United States and White Rule in Africa, 1948-1968* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1985) and Noer, "The New Frontier and African Neutralism: Kennedy, Nkrumah, and the Volta River Project" *Diplomatic History* 8:1 (1984): 61-79; Stephen G. Rabe, *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy Confronts Revolution in Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999) and Rabe, *John F. Kennedy: World Leader* (Washington: Potomac Books, 2010); Gabriel Kolko, *Confronting the Third World* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988).

of the developing world. They maintained that Kennedy's pledge of support for African and Asian nationalism during the 1960 presidential campaign was little more than a shrewd political move in an effort to appeal to liberals and African-Americans—two groups that were unenthusiastic about his candidacy. Many of these detractors asserted that relations with the global south never became more than a peripheral concern for Kennedy, due to his belief in the importance of sustaining a cohesive North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and winning the Cold War.

With the publication of this book Rob Rakove has positioned himself at the forefront of the next wave of historiography on Kennedy and the developing world. Characterized by multi-national research as well as the utilization of recently-declassified U.S. sources that were not available to earlier generations of historians, it moves the needle on our view of Kennedy somewhere in between the two previous schools of thought—but most certainly closer to that of the 'court historians.'

According to Rakove, the Kennedy administration utilized three main tactics to implement its engagement policy: personal diplomacy, economic assistance programs, and the readjustment of U.S. foreign policy on the issues that were most important to the non-aligned world, the most notable of which was European colonialism. These factors align closely with my conception of what I term Kennedy's four-pronged approach towards Africa which consisted of opposing European colonialism, accepting non-alignment in the Cold War (which was by definition implicit in the engagement policy that Rakove describes), increasing development aid, and personal diplomacy between Kennedy and African leaders.³ In many ways, then, the scholarship that Rakove and I have produced is complimentary. *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Nonaligned World* takes a wider view, places Kennedy's engagement policy in broader global context, and systematically compares Kennedy's policies to those of his successor, Lyndon Johnson; while *Betting on the Africans* focuses more narrowly on Africa, but in the process provides more detailed case studies of how Kennedy's engagement policy impacted bilateral relations between the United States and newly-independent decolonized states.

A few years into his administration, Kennedy faced a dilemma with regard to his handling of European colonialism, economic aid for the non-aligned world, and regional conflicts fought between established U.S. allies and the non-aligned states that he sought to court through his policy of engagement. Kennedy had attempted to pursue policies which appealed to the non-aligned nationalists of the world without going so far as to alienate traditional NATO allies and important regional allies like Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Australia. This was a difficult balancing act that Rakove argues "brought short-term successes but long term challenges" and ended with Kennedy "getting the worst of both worlds" (97, 132). Siding mostly with the developing world on colonial issues led to intense criticism domestically, while "Kennedy's halfway steps toward a consistent policy on decolonization had come at a real cost to European alliances" (132). Conversely, tempering

³ Philip E. Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans: John F. Kennedy's Courting of African Nationalist Leaders* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

support of anti-colonialism in deference to European allies and privileging the fight against Communism over the fight against neocolonialism had by 1963 partially eroded the Kennedy administration's popularity in the developing world as well. Even U.S. economic strength could at times become a weakness as both Congressional critics of Kennedy's aid policy and fiercely loyal U.S. foreign allies complained that giving aid to non-aligned countries was in effect favoring the 'bad boys' over the 'good boys,' while non-aligned leaders receiving U.S. aid (the so called 'bad boys') felt compelled to periodically behave badly by criticizing the U.S. in order to preserve their image as being independent in the Cold War and to counteract criticism of them being 'Western stooges.'⁴

Ultimately, Rakove bases the failure of Kennedy's engagement policy on three factors. First was the fact that Lyndon B. Johnson "preferred Ayubs to Nehrus" (171) while his National Security Advisor Walt Rostow thought that "the future belongs to the Houphouets and the Ankrahs" (249). As a result, Johnson largely abandoned Kennedy's strategy of personal diplomacy towards non-aligned leaders of the developing world whom Kennedy had worked so hard to court. Instead, Johnson favored those leaders who were solidly pro-American (the so called 'good boys'). In modern political parlance this was akin to shoring up the political base at the expense of appealing to independent voters. Secondly, by 1963 the policy of engagement and providing foreign aid to countries that were not fully aligned with the United States in the Cold War had come under considerable criticism domestically and Congress dramatically reduced Kennedy's foreign aid budget. Finally, Rakove views the unwillingness of Kennedy and Johnson to accept a neutral Vietnam in order to remove it as a Cold War issue, and their opting instead for a protracted ground war, which irreparably damaged the image of the United States in the non-aligned world and just as importantly made Washington less willing to support non-aligned countries in regional and colonial conflicts, as the final death blow for Kennedy's engagement policy. Nonetheless, Rakove is clear in his final judgment that "the failure of engagement came as a direct consequence of the transition between Kennedy and Johnson" (257). I agree with this assessment. As I have previously analogized elsewhere, Kennedy was like a baseball pitcher who left the mound in the fifth inning with his team in the lead, and so he received a 'no decision' result, while those who relieved him (Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon) deserve credit for the 'loss' accorded to the policy of engagement.⁵

The strengths of this book are many, as it is well researched, organized, and written. I particularly enjoyed Rakove's biographical sketches of the key Kennedy administration officials involved with the engagement policy. It was refreshing to see Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Undersecretary of State George Ball referred to as 'the skeptics' rather than the almost universal characterization of the two men as 'Europeanists.' I have always felt that the latter term is insufficient for describing their viewpoints, which lay somewhere in the middle of the John Foster Dulles to Chester Bowles spectrum of acceptance of Third

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ H-Diplo Roundtable Review: Philip E. Muehlenbeck. *Betting on the Africans: John F. Kennedy's Courting of African Nationalist Leaders*, Volume XIV, No. 3 (1 October 2012).

World nationalism. I also found Rakove's description of both the downturn in relations between the United States and the key non-aligned states like Egypt and Ghana (and Kwame Nkrumah's tensions with his neighbors along with the U.S. attitude towards it), to be the most nuanced, yet at the same time succinct, account of these topics that has been published.

I do, however, have a few interpretative disagreements with Rakove. The first is with his viewpoint that "the end of the 1950s witnessed a general improvement in relations with several key uncommitted states" (22). While one could argue that there was perhaps a slight improvement in relations with India, Yugoslavia, and to a lesser extent Egypt, I do not think that this statement is accurate in the case of Indonesia or for the entire region of sub-Saharan Africa, where Eisenhower's policies towards Congo and Algeria had U.S. prestige at an all-time low when Kennedy entered the White House. Second, I feel that Rakove does not give enough emphasis to the importance of Kennedy's decision to fund Ghana's Volta River Project (VRP). In my view this episode is perhaps the strongest evidence demonstrating Kennedy's commitment to his policy of engagement with the non-aligned world. Kennedy made the decision to fund the VRP against the opposition of Congress and even his own family (both his father, and brother, Robert, were against U.S. participation in the project) and despite Ghana's apparent lurch towards the East in the Cold War. I have no doubt that under these circumstances neither Eisenhower nor Johnson would have continued funding for the project. In fact, because of Ghana's seemingly pro-Soviet actions, Eisenhower had suspended U.S. participation in the VRP prior to leaving the presidency and Kennedy had to make the active decision to unfreeze U.S. funding for the project.⁶ Yet Rakove fails to mention this key point and instead writes as if the die was already cast on the VRP and that Kennedy was simply finishing what Ike had started. Perhaps the greatest omission of the book is Rakove's failure to discuss how important co-opting the perceived strength of African and Asian nationalism was to Kennedy's engagement policy. Unlike Johnson, Kennedy most certainly did not favor the Ayubs over the Nehrus. But left unstated by Rakove is the fact that this consisted of more than favoring non-aligned leaders over aligned leaders; Kennedy sought to distance the United States from autocratic leaders (regardless of whether they were aligned or non-aligned) whom he saw as relics of the past, instead choosing to identify the United States with nationalist leaders whom he viewed as being the wave of the future.

There are a few misleading statements in the book as well. Rakove criticizes the Kennedy administration for not doing more to pressure Portugal over Angola, noting that it "could have restricted arms exports to [António de Oliveira] Salazar's government" (131). In fact, Kennedy terminated commercial arms sales to Lisbon and reduced U.S. military aid to Portugal from \$25 to \$3 million—which I think qualifies as a 'restriction' of arms exports.⁷ It would perhaps have been better in this case to have conveyed the fact that while Kennedy did reduce military aid to Portugal, African nationalists were unsatisfied with

⁶ Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, chapter four.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 46.

anything short of a complete break in the military relationship between Washington and Lisbon (although in Kennedy's defense this was not possible given the obligations of NATO membership).

Elsewhere Rakove claims that "foreign aid to Nigeria far exceeded that given to any other sub-Saharan African state, totaling nearly thirty percent of the disbursements made to the continent by 1963" (140). It is not clear to me from the wording of this sentence whether Rakove is claiming that Nigeria received 30% of U.S. aid to Africa during the period 1961-63 or in FY1963 alone, but in either case the figure is far off the mark. From 1961-63 Nigeria received \$66.3 million in total assistance from the United States, which was only 3.7% of the \$1.81 billion sent to the continent and 8% of total U.S. aid sent to sub-Saharan Africa. If we focus on FY1963 alone, Nigeria received \$30.1 million in U.S. aid which accounted for only 4.8% of total aid sent to the continent and 11% of what was given to the countries south of the Sahara. Far from Nigeria "far exceeding" the amount of aid given to other sub-Saharan African states, it actually received 3.5 times less aid than did Congo-Kinshasa and only 73% of that sent to Ghana during the Kennedy administration.⁸ This factual error relates to an interpretive disagreement between Rakove and myself. Rakove claims that "Nigeria was the most important to Kennedy's African strategy" (139), a point he also raised in his H-Diplo review of my recent book.⁹ I disagree with this assessment. Kennedy devoted more of his personal time to Congo, Ghana, and Guinea than he did Nigeria and gave more total aid to both Congo and Ghana and ten times more per capita aid to Guinea. Nigeria was an important state to Kennedy, but not the most important to his African strategy.

While it is inherently unfair for reviewers to make criticisms based on the book that they *wish* the author would have written, it is also a time-honored tradition in which I feel obligated to partake. I wish that Rakove had consulted more sources from the developing world (archival research, oral history interviews, and newspapers), since doing so would have allowed him to more persuasively demonstrate how the non-aligned leaders who are discussed in the book themselves viewed Kennedy's engagement policy. It would also have been helpful for Rakove to have provided a list of which countries he considers to have been non-aligned and part of Kennedy's engagement policy. He focuses mostly on the 'big three' of India, Egypt, and Indonesia and along the way lists Ghana, Guinea, Mali, and Yugoslavia as other states targeted as part of this policy. Were there others? Were Morocco, Senegal, Nigeria, Sudan (all of which professed to be neutral states, but leaned heavily towards the West) or any other Asian states part of this policy? The book would also have been enhanced by a more in-depth case study of the Kennedy administration's attempt to engage a smaller non-aligned state like Guinea or Mali so as to compare and contrast how

⁸ See *U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants [Greenbook] Database*. Rev. December 18, 2012 [Online]. Available: <http://gbk.eads.usaidallnet.gov/>. While Nigeria received \$66.3 million in US aid from 1961-63, Congo received \$232.5 million and Ghana \$90.7 million.

⁹ H-Diplo Roundtable Review: Philip E. Muehlenbeck. *Betting on the Africans: John F. Kennedy's Courting of African Nationalist Leaders*, Volume XIV, No. 3 (1 October 2012). <http://www.h-diplo.org/~diplo/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-XIV-3.pdf>

the policy was applied towards large (India, Egypt, Indonesia) and smaller states. Finally, as the saying goes, ‘a picture is worth a thousand words’—including pictures of Kennedy’s numerous meetings with non-aligned leaders, which would have helped to illustrate the success of his use of personal diplomacy in courting African and Asian nationalist leaders.

These minor quibbles aside, Rakove has authored an important study. He effectively portrays Kennedy as the first (I would argue the only, with the current office holder a possible exception) U.S. president to understand the Afro-Asian world, adding that the “Africans and Asians who mourned him did so for good reason” (36). Kennedy understood the potential power of Third World nationalism and, unlike other U.S. presidents, distinguished it as something distinctly separate from international communism. Rakove’s argument that Kennedy’s policy of engagement was “a lost alternative” to subsequent decades of U.S. support for Third World proxy wars is persuasive (259). *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Nonaligned World* should become the standard-bearer of the next wave of emerging historiography on the Kennedy administration’s policies towards the developing world.

Robert B. Rakove's dense study, *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Nonaligned World*, can be readily summarized. Rakove asserts that scholars who have analyzed the foreign policies of the John F. Kennedy presidency have largely ignored Kennedy's remarkable efforts to conciliate nonaligned or neutral Third World nations, such as Egypt, India, and Indonesia. According to Rakove, Kennedy gave first priority to winning the Cold War. He worried about major nonaligned nations drifting into the Communist camp. But Kennedy and many of his advisors rejected what they judged the unsympathetic and counterproductive policies of the Dwight D. Eisenhower administration. In particular, Eisenhower's formidable Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, had questioned the morality of nonalignment and declined to assist the Egypt of Gamal Abdel Nasser in the construction of the Aswan Dam. President Kennedy adopted a policy of "engagement" (xxi) with major Third World nations. He conducted presidential diplomacy with nonaligned leaders, pushed Congress to fund economic development projects in Third World nations, and expressed understanding on key Third World issues such as anti-colonialism. Kennedy, for example, supported assisting major infrastructure projects like the Volta dam project in Ghana and a state-owned steel project at Bokaro in the Indian state of Orissa, even when nonaligned leaders either criticized U.S. Cold War policies or violated basic U.S. principles of foreign economic policy. Rakove concedes that Kennedy's approach to the Third World was faltering by 1963. The President became frustrated with the mercurial behavior of Third World leaders such as Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, and the U.S. Congress resisted funding countries that regularly denounced the United States. Regional conflicts also undermined U.S. efforts to conciliate Third World nations. Egypt invaded Yemen in October 1962, alarming Saudi Arabia, a traditional U.S. ally. Rakove further asserts that President Lyndon Johnson lacked his predecessor's subtlety when it came to the Third World and that "Johnson never established himself in the nonaligned world in the way that his predecessor did" (217). The U.S. war in Vietnam also alienated many Third World nations and deprived the United States of the resources to aid the development of nonaligned nations.

Rakove has based his study on extensive research in archives in the United States, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. He apparently did not conduct archival research in the Third World countries that President Kennedy sought to woo. He also does not cite published sources like newspapers from countries such as India in order to measure Third World reaction to Kennedy and Johnson's policies. As such, some scholars (but not me) might label Rakove's work as being 'traditional.' He does not employ the analytic tools of race, class, gender, and ideology to explore U.S. policies toward the Third World. Much of the content of the book revolves around the internal debates among luminaries—Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Under Secretary of State George W. Ball, Undersecretary of State Chester Bowles, National Security Council officers Robert Komer, Walt W. Rostow, and Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs G. Mennen Williams—about the proper policies to pursue toward the neutrals. Whereas Rakove does not fall into the trap of reciting 'what one clerk said to another clerk,' his study, as indicated by the title, focuses on the attitudes of officials in Washington. What did catch my attention about Rakove's

analytic approach was the infrequent references to the role of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in the implementation of U.S policy toward the Third World. During his brief time in office, President Kennedy authorized over 160 covert interventions, more than double the interventions authorized by President Eisenhower. Not all of these interventions were in Latin America.

The author asserts that he has made a substantial contribution to the historiography of the Kennedy presidency. He aligns himself with “third-wave” Kennedy scholars like Robert Dallek, Fredrik Logevall, and Timothy Naftali who highlight Kennedy’s caution and prudence in crises. In fact, Mark J. White first pointed to the “prudent” Kennedy in his 1998 edited collection of essays that was published in 1998.¹ But White added that Kennedy would not have had to display his prudence, if he had not recklessly plunged the United States into crises like the Bay of Pigs. These third-wave scholars are to be distinguished from the “far-flung extremes” of Kennedy scholars who are either hagiographers like Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. or those who are unduly critical of Kennedy’s aggressive Cold War militancy (xxii).² In the latter group are me and my mentor, Thomas G. Paterson, a past president of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations and a recipient of the Norman and Laura Graebner Award for distinguished service to the historical profession.³ I was amused to read, some forty pages later that I had gone from being “extreme” to having written an “astute” overview of Kennedy’s foreign policies. (34). Like a bottle of fine wine, my balance and clarity has evidently improved during the time it took Rakove to complete the introduction and compose the first two chapters. Rakove is somewhat less interested in engaging scholars like Mitchell B. Lerner and Randall B. Woods who have offered that Johnson more than Kennedy showed empathy to the developing world. As Woods noted in his comprehensive biography of Johnson, “the great difference between Kennedy and Johnson was that the Texan believed that idealism ought to be the driving force behind U.S. foreign policy, whereas the Kennedy administration saw social justice and democracy as tools with which to defeat Sino-Soviet imperialism.”⁴

Rakove’s primary thesis that President Kennedy tried to establish a productive relationship with nations such as India and Egypt cannot be disputed. Kennedy could be remarkably

¹ Mark J. White, ed., *Kennedy: The New Frontier Revisited* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

² Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965).

³ Stephen G. Rabe, *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy Confronts Communist Revolution in Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Stephen G. Rabe, *John F. Kennedy: World Leader* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2010); Thomas G. Paterson, ed., *Kennedy’s Quest for Victory: American Foreign Policy, 1961-1963* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

⁴ Randall B. Woods, *LBJ: Architect of American Ambition* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 385; Mitchell B. Lerner, “‘A Big Tree of Peace and Justice’: The Vice Presidential Travels of Lyndon Johnson,” *Diplomatic History* 34 (April 2010): 357-93.

flexible and innovative in international affairs when he did not perceive an issue or a nation through a Cold War prism. Scholars like Douglas Little have documented the extraordinary personal and public efforts Kennedy made to conciliate President Nasser.⁵ Kennedy wrote often to Nasser, and his administration discussed inviting Nasser for his first-ever state visit to Washington. In 1962, Kennedy authorized a generous three-year \$500 million Public Law 480, “Food for Peace,” package for Egypt.⁶ The president further pushed for a just and humanitarian resolution of the Palestinian refugee issue, appointing Joseph E. Johnson of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace to address the issue. Kennedy was also not uncritical of Egypt’s *bête noire*, the state of Israel. Kennedy sold to Israel high performance Hawk anti-aircraft (surface-to-air) missiles to protect Israel from bombers that had been supplied to Egypt by the Soviet Union. In October 1963, he also wrote to Levi Eshkol, Israel’s new Prime Minister, offering a *de facto* security guarantee to Israel. Nonetheless, Kennedy adamantly opposed Israel’s development of nuclear weapons. If he had lived beyond November 1963, Kennedy likely would have confronted Israel over the purposes of the nuclear reactor at Dimona.⁷

President Kennedy’s personal diplomacy with Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru proved unsuccessful. The President would later characterize his November 1961 meeting with the Indian Prime Minister as “a disaster . . . the worst head-of-state visit I have had.”⁸ Vice President Johnson had, however, a successful visit in May 1961, and Prime Minister Nehru luxuriated in the beauty, charm, and intelligence of Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy, the President’s spouse, who visited New Delhi in 1962. The Prime Minister also valued the \$3 billion in budgetary support, development assistance, and food shipments Kennedy authorized from 1961 to 1963. Nehru embraced the Peace Corps volunteers who flooded into India during the 1960s. He appreciated that volunteers lived and worked in the impoverished villages of rural India. The Kennedy administration’s military support of India during the Sino-Indian War, which broke out in October 1962, added to Nehru’s growing respect for the President. Relations between the democratic nations of India and the United States hit a high point during the Kennedy presidency.

Central to Rakove’s case is the argument that Kennedy’s approach to the nonaligned world was unique and kept apart from his approach to the rest of the world. As the author notes, “Kennedy and his advisors tolerated nonaligned foreign policies only outside the Western alliance system.” No ally or country within a U.S. sphere of influence could be permitted to develop an independent foreign policy, for “the logic of the domino effect applied as strongly to allies slouching toward neutralism as it did to states in the throes of Communist

⁵ Douglas Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

⁶ Little, *American Orientalism*, 183-185, 238-239, 276-278.

⁷ Rabe, *Kennedy*, 159-164.

⁸ Kennedy quoted *ibid.*, 146.

subversion” (216-217). Maintaining a favorable balance of power was essential to containing the Soviet Union and winning the Cold War. Engagement with the post-colonial states was tactically necessary to insure, at a minimum, that influential nonaligned nations did not drift into the Communist bloc. As such, in Rakove’s judgment, Kennedy “opposed neutralism within the American alliance system and saw no inconsistency in this” (36).

President Kennedy’s limited tolerance for diversity disappointed nonaligned leaders. He proved hesitant on the critical issue of anti-colonialism, not wishing to alienate U.S. allies. In 1961, he decided “to sit this one out,” when it came to taking the lead in urging France to relinquish its hold on Algeria. The president used virtually the same language on the question of ending Portuguese colonialism in Angola. The president suggested to aides that “we should so far as possible, sit back and let others take the lead.”⁹ In mid-1963, the United States abstained on a United Nations resolution calling for the end of Portuguese colonialism and a ban on supplying military weapons to the Portuguese. The President also did not fundamentally alter U.S. policy toward the apartheid regime in South Africa. The Kennedy administration opposed a trade embargo and mandatory sanctions against South Africa. It continued to conduct joint naval exercises with what Undersecretary of State Chester Bowles dubbed “the most unpopular nation outside the Communist world.” And CIA agents reportedly alerted South African security officials to the location of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, the activist, lawyer, and prominent official in the African National Congress. South African authorities arrested Mandela on 5 August 1962 and subsequently sentenced him to life imprisonment for sabotage.¹⁰

Notwithstanding Rakove’s appropriate appeal that scholars assess President Kennedy’s policies toward the neutral nations, it is questionable whether his study will substantially alter the prevailing historiography on the Kennedy presidency. As the author fully admits, Kennedy never made engagement with the nonaligned “an explicit policy goal.” (36) He chose not to deliver a major public address on the issue, and he failed to institutionalize the policy within the foreign-policy bureaucracy (36). The crisis-events—the Bay of Pigs, the showdown over Berlin, the Cuban Missile Crisis—will inevitably continue to capture the attention of scholars and the educated public. Kennedy’s responsibility for two of the major U.S. failures of the Cold War—the war in Vietnam and the Alliance for Progress—will also remain central to any interpretation of Kennedy’s foreign policies. Historians will always want to probe the Kennedy administration’s fascination with covert intervention, including sponsoring assassination plots. And scholars will forever debate the ‘what if Kennedy had lived’ issue, wondering whether he would have altered U.S. policies toward Fidel Castro’s Cuba, limited U.S. involvement in Vietnam, and embarked on a policy of détente with the Soviet Union.

⁹ Rabe, *Kennedy*, 167-177.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 167-177.

Author's Response by Robert B. Rakove, Stanford University

I would like to thank Ryan Irwin, Mitchell Lerner, and Philip Muehlenbeck for their careful, thoughtful, and warm reviews of my book. Their collected responses offer abundant ground for discussion. I regret that Stephen Rabe's review has not engaged the book as thoroughly as those of his peers. His review does raise some key concerns, which I will also address. Each of my four reviewers has made a vital contribution to our understanding of the 1960s, and I hope that this discussion serves to illuminate some of the ways by which this pivotal decade remains relevant to our understanding of modern history and the contemporary world.

I wrote this book because I perceived an opportunity to add to our understanding of the 1960s, to complement the more familiar Cold War narratives of the John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson administrations with a comparative discussion of how they responded to decolonization and the pluralization of world politics. I wrote it in good company. Historians such as Odd Arne Westad, Matthew Connelly, Robert McMahon, Andrew Rotter, Douglas Little, H. W. Brands, Thomas Noer, Thomas Borstelmann, and Bradley Simpson led the way.¹ Ryan Irwin and Philip Muehlenbeck were at work on related projects (giving me some encouragement to keep my own moving along).² Taken together, these books aspire to explain the origins of our contemporary world, particularly the pluralization of world politics.

Research for this book began in earnest in 2006, three long years into the Iraq War. As fate would have it, the first folder I opened upon arrival at the Kennedy Library on my primary trip there aggregated responses to his assassination compiled throughout the nonaligned world. The expressions of grief and regret I encountered on that July day were moving and thought-provoking – all the more so when read amid the poisonous atmosphere of the George W. Bush years. Along with other evidence I encountered, they hinted at the possibility of a different relationship between the United States and the postcolonial world.

¹ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Matthew J. Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Robert J. McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery: The United States, India, and Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University, 1994); Andrew J. Rotter, *Comrades at Odds: The United States and India, 1947-1964* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000); Douglas Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); H. W. Brands, *The Specter of Neutralism: The United States and the Emergence of the Third World, 1947-1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989); 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, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001); Bradley R. Simpson, *Economists with Guns: Authoritarian Development and U.S.-Indonesian Relations, 1960-1968* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).

² Ryan M. Irwin, *Gordian Knot: Apartheid and the Unmaking of the Liberal World Order* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Philip E. Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans: John F. Kennedy's Courting of African Nationalist Leaders* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Facets of this story had been covered, generally in bilateral or regional studies, but the task of interweaving the familiar and less familiar in pursuit of a broader argument remained.

It proved a more complicated story than I might have thought. Taking the ever-sage advice of my graduate advisor, Melvyn Leffler, I approached my protagonists biographically, while working to comprehend the ideologies, strategic outlooks, and memories of their era. To understand the roots of Kennedy's policy, I had to examine what came before it. I found that Dwight Eisenhower's approach to nonalignment was subtler than I might have expected, though hobbled by serious internal contradictions. Policymakers emerged in different, unexpected ways here. National security advisor McGeorge Bundy and his aide Robert Komer, both closely associated with Johnson's disastrous Vietnam policies, showed greater prudence in their approach to other parts of the postcolonial world. Undersecretary of State George Ball, generally lionized as the in-house dove of the Johnson White House, proved less astute in this instance. Kennedy, above all, was surprising. The bold statements of the inaugural address masked his profound sense of the limitations of American power in the nonaligned world.

Though it built somewhat on progress made during the Eisenhower years, Kennedy's policy toward the nonaligned departed substantially from Cold War precedent, representing a distinct moment in the U.S. encounter with the postcolonial world. As is so often the case in history, it is a story of miscalculation, misperception, and unintended consequences. There are elements of myopia and arrogance in it, alongside instances of wisdom and nobility. Kennedy's policy served, over time, to heighten the expectations placed by the nonaligned world upon the United States. Its failure, subsequently, sowed the seeds for a lasting division between the United States and much of the Third World.

One central question surfaces in the reviews: was the decline in U.S.-nonaligned ties inexorable during Kennedy's last year, or Johnson's first? This is not an easy question; indeed, it is one I struggled with during the writing of this book. While a case can be made that engagement had run its course by autumn 1963, I believe that the critical damage occurred in 1964. My own "Long 1964" – borrowed from Fredrik Logevall – stretches from autumn 1963 to the middle of 1965.³

1963 posed new challenges to the policy. Pakistan responded angrily to Kennedy's outreach toward India, putting the New Frontiersmen on the defensive for much of the year. Egypt descended further into its developing quagmire in Yemen. African appeals to the Kennedy administration for "concrete assistance" on the problems of Portuguese colonialism and South African apartheid escalated.⁴ U.S.-Ghanaian relations were marred by the murder of Togolese President Sylvanus Olympio, and subsequent tensions between

³ Fredrik Logevall, *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of the War in Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

⁴ See Letter, Sekou Touré to Kennedy, June 17, 1963, National Security Files, box 102, "Guinea, General, 8/63" folder, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

Ghana and its neighbors. Finally, Indonesian President Sukarno embarked upon his policy of ‘confronting’ Malaysia. Most of these problems contributed to the mounting domestic backlash against Kennedy’s foreign aid program – particularly those appropriations directed toward the nonaligned world.

One could look at the net sum of these myriad crises and expect Kennedy to have abandoned the policy – and few contemporaries would have faulted him for doing so, with his own reelection battle coming into view. Yet this is not what he did. Kennedy broadly affirmed his support of engagement that fall. He surely did not do so because he thought it would help him against Senator Barry Goldwater in the following year’s election.

To seize upon a revealing case in point, the reviewers tend to treat the Yemen conflict as spelling the effective end of Kennedy’s policy of outreach toward Gamal Abdel Nasser’s Egypt. I believe it posed a significant obstacle, and that it cost the administration considerable momentum, but I do not think the evidence supports their assertion. The deployment of fighter jets to Saudi Arabia was not intended to confront Nasser, but was part of a broader strategy toward achieving a mutual disengagement from the conflict. Although the operation has often been depicted as a warning to Nasser against menacing the kingdom; it was intended as well to drive a wedge between Saudi Arabia and its Yemeni proxies.⁵

This is why Nasser’s policies toward Libya, Cyprus, the Jordan waters question, and the Congo posed such problems in 1964. Komer, the chief architect of engaging the UAR, continued his advocacy after Dallas, telling Bundy that Nasser remained the most sensible Middle Eastern leader (157). At the end of 1964, as Nasser’s Port Said address reverberated, Komer even suggested including the Egyptian leader on the following year’s list of invited foreign leaders.⁶ Hope springs eternal, perhaps, but such evidence argues to me that Yemen was not the end of the story. Cairo and Washington worked to right the relationship after the tumult of 1964, achieving some modest progress in 1965, after Nasser’s withdrawal from the Congo. Komer’s NSC successors, Harold Saunders and Harold Wriggins, only termed the Kennedy experiment in Egypt to be “over” in December 1966 – more than four years after the beginning of the Yemen war.⁷

⁵ See, for example, Letter, Phillips Talbot to William Bundy, November 6, 1963, in Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Vol. 18: Near East, 1962-1963* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1995) 769-770; Paper, Bureau of Near East and South Asian Affairs, December 11, 1963, in *ibid.*, 837-840.

⁶ Memorandum, Robert Komer to Lyndon Johnson, December 21, 1964, National Security File, Robert W. Komer Papers, box 51, “UAR December 1963-1964 (1 of 4)”, Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library—hereafter cited as LBJL.

⁷ Memorandum, Harold Saunders and Howard Wriggins to Johnson, December 1, 1966, in Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968, Vol. 18: Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1964-1967* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2000) 694-697.

Similar patterns may be observed in other cases: the summer and fall of 1963 added new stresses to particular bilateral ties, but did not bring their rupture. As Bradley Simpson has noted, Kennedy maintained his interest in engaging Indonesia until his death.⁸ Komer wrote, on the morning of November 22, that Kennedy wanted to “get on with our Indian enterprise” (167). Though he had eschewed direct pressure on Portugal, he did not think Lisbon’s position was tenable; “world events” made it “necessary” for the Portuguese to “take a positive and affirmative attitude” toward the question of self-determination (127). The available evidence affirms that engagement had encountered new headwinds by the end of the Kennedy presidency; it does not support the thesis that the policy had been reversed or halted. The key thesis undergirding the policy, Kennedy’s belief in the diffusion of power and the waning influence of both superpowers, had only been affirmed by recent events.

This is a problem in writing histories of the Kennedy presidency. Its sudden, tragic ending forces verdicts upon historians that turn calculated half-steps backward into abandonment, and that seize on the tactical moves of a pre-election autumn as evidence of longer-term policy trends. Our need for concluding statements imposes a false finality that the New Frontiersmen did not themselves perceive, as they steadied themselves in the final weeks of 1963.

Admittedly, I did not step into the speculative territory of imagining U.S.-nonaligned relations had Kennedy lived. Would engagement still have imploded if Kennedy had lived and then won a second term? Although I do not think Kennedy would have abandoned it, my suspicion is that the better days of the policy were behind it. Nonetheless, I do not think that the landing needed to be as rough as it ultimately was. Critical choices and transitions in Washington helped to worsen the ensuing acrimony.

If there is a single book I regret not addressing in *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Nonaligned World*, it is Frank Costigliola’s provocative and groundbreaking *Roosevelt’s Lost Alliances*, which was published a month before I submitted final revisions. In his depiction of the interpersonal networks that Franklin Roosevelt constructed, Costigliola offers a persuasive argument for careful consideration of how leaders relate. He persuasively reconstructs the internal and international networks that Roosevelt employed to secure the Grand Alliance and implement policy at home. Kennedy, I now think, tried something similar in his contacts with the nonaligned world. He maintained an avid interest in meeting fellow heads of state. When he could not meet them, he maintained an active correspondence, as he did with Nasser. They intrigued him as individuals. In so doing, he was creating his own web of interpersonal connections. The eulogies nonaligned leaders accorded him in November 1963 attested to the strength of these bonds and hint at the effect that a continued Kennedy presidency might have had.⁹

⁸ Simpson, *Economists with Guns*, 122-134.

⁹ I deal with them briefly; for a definitive account, see Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans*, 226-231.

Setting aside the interpersonal dimension, we might also consider the concrete policy choices that a hypothetical post-Dallas Kennedy might have made. Acknowledging the usual caveats about the limits of counterfactual speculation, I do think that the weight Kennedy accorded to the nonaligned world would have influenced his Vietnam policy. A more clear-cut distinction can be made on the question of foreign aid. Kennedy was reluctant to exert obvious pressure on aid recipients. He said as much in his final press conference, on November 14, 1963 (189). That Kennedy largely refrained from doing so during his presidency does not attest to the lack of frustrations he felt from the nonaligned world.

Johnson felt differently, and here I think he believed that there was an inherent, fundamental reciprocity to aid relationships. In all likelihood, this extended naturally from his experience as Senate majority leader. Whereas this sense of reciprocity served him relatively well with European allies, as Thomas Schwartz argues, I do not think it aided him with the leading states of the nonaligned world.¹⁰ He was compassionate, surely, yet also less flexible than his predecessor. When he felt wronged by an aid recipient, he responded with characteristic self-righteousness.

Lerner is surely correct to ascribe much of Johnson's motivation here to his concern about shepherding aid bills through a hostile Congress, particularly after the calamity that befell the 1963 aid bill. Yet there was also something vindictive about how Johnson went about it. His aides often expressed bafflement about his aid policy, giving increasing voice to dissent in their private memoranda. Komer suggested that there was "more to Johnson's reluctance than Congress" (193). Howard Wriggins complained that punitive, parsimonious aid policies put Johnson "in a bad light."¹¹ Kennedy was able to finesse the distinction between the executive and legislative branches, letting Congress play the bad cop in the relationship. Johnson micromanaged the implementation of aid policy from the White House, erasing the distinction altogether. He left both aides and recipients in the dark about his motivations; at times Komer and Bundy seemed scarcely better informed about what the president wanted than the Egyptians or Indians. Aid recipients, whose economic planning depended on candor as well as generosity, waited on Johnson in increasingly irate suspense.

Lerner's recent article on Johnson and Africa is impressive and worthy of careful consideration.¹² Yet left unstated is the most fundamental fact of Johnson's policy toward Africa: a shift from engagement to reinforcement. The pattern of shifting from seemingly ungrateful nonaligned states to anti-communist allies is also apparent here. To paraphrase

¹⁰ Thomas A. Schwartz, *Lyndon Johnson and Europe: In the Shadow of Vietnam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003) 223-237.

¹¹ Memorandum, Wriggins to Rostow, April 19, 1967, National Security File, Country File, box 116, "Afghanistan, Vol. 1, Cables," LBJL.

¹² Mitch Lerner, "Climbing Off the Back Burner: Lyndon Johnson's Soft Power Approach to Africa", *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 22 (2011), 578-607.

Muehlenbeck, Johnson was betting on a different group of Africans. The Johnson years witnessed a shift in emphasis from the major nonaligned states of Africa toward those seen as more supportive of U.S. policy.

National security advisor Walt Rostow's ascendance was critical to this transition. Rostow sought models of development above all else. This imperative, coupled with Johnson's punitive tendencies, shifted aid and emphasis away from outspoken nonaligned states, and toward more quiescent, pro-Western regimes. Rostow believed that the African future belonged to the "Houphouets and the Ankrahs (249)." Here, as elsewhere, he yielded to a dangerous optimism, one linked to his belief that the Vietnam War was both winnable and linkable to progress elsewhere.¹³ Ghanaian President Joseph Ankrah was not long for power, and leaders like Ivorian President Félix Houphouët-Boigny contributed less to the subsequent direction of African politics than nonaligned counterparts, like Tanzania's President Julius Nyerere.

With this shift came a fermenting sentiment that is more easily classifiable as pre-Nixon than post-JFK. John P. Roche, a special advisor to Johnson, wrote scornfully in a memo about South Africa of "people who normally mean dictatorship of the majority when they talk of 'majority rule'."¹⁴ Secretary of State Dean Rusk shifted from urging Portugal to consider self-determination for its colonies in 1961 to reassuring the Lisbon regime that he had "no interest in the disappearance of the Portuguese presence from Africa" (248). Very little separates these sentiments from those of the incoming Nixon administration.

Of course, such sentiment flowed in response to the widening torrent of nonaligned criticism of the United States – which was, itself, a new development. Responding to Irwin's review, I did not intend to imply that there was anything static about nonalignment. Indeed, I argue that the nonaligned caucus shifted dramatically over the time I survey. I write, "In key ways, the challenges presented by nonaligned states in 1965 were not substantially different in character from what they had been in the 1950s (xxvii)." This is meant fairly broadly: within the framework established by my later chapters. The Eisenhower team faced comparable equivalents to the problems that confronted the New Frontiersmen. They had to deal with colonial disputes, such as Goa and West New Guinea, and with regional enmities in the Middle East and South Asia. Eisenhower waged his own frustrating battle in defense of aid to nonaligned states. Within these admittedly broad categories (and with the mitigation offered by the opening clause of the statement) I believe the comparison stands.

¹³ See, in particular, David Milne, *America's Rasputin: Walt Rostow and the Vietnam War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008), 252-253.

¹⁴ Memorandum, John P. Roche to Bill Moyers, December 8, 1966, White House Central Files, Container 6, CO 1-1, "Africa 1966" folder, LBJL. Roche, along with his Johnson administration colleague Eugene Rostow, were subsequently major figures within the neoconservative movement.

The ideological stakes and intensity of these conflicts did indeed change in the ensuing decade, but all too often in ways undetected by the New Frontiersmen, who persisted in using the terms 'neutral' or 'neutralist.' This is what I attempt to convey in my discussion of the 1964 Cairo Conference in my fourth, fifth, and seventh chapters: even as the New Frontiersmen drew away from earlier policy, the nonaligned caucus was shifting toward a more militant model of nonalignment, inspired by statesmen like Indonesia's President Sukarno. These simultaneous shifts coincided with the gradual abandonment of engagement by the Johnson White House, feeding a vicious cycle of mutual alienation. This was also where U.S. failures to comprehend the nature of nonalignment, particularly the centrality and growing urgency of the anti-colonial mission, were most significant. While I recognize the changing nature of nonalignment, I feel this is best juxtaposed alongside the changing outlook within the White House.

Muehlenbeck also asks important questions about both how I define both nonalignment and the outer limits of engagement. At a Princeton University workshop on nonalignment in August 2011, we tried to do just this: attempting to list the defining traits of nonalignment. Someone (usually Bradley Simpson) would dryly note an exception and we would try again thirty minutes later. Consequently, I am reluctant to offer too precise a definition of nonalignment. For now, I think it best to link it to formal membership in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and an avowedly uncommitted stance in the Cold War. Even then, the lines are difficult to draw. While I have a hard time classifying Cuba as truly nonaligned, Fidel Castro's embrace of the NAM was sincere. While researching in Canberra last July, I found that the Gough Whitlam government was earnestly pursuing an Australian role within the NAM! Much of the NAM's stated mission holds a universal appeal, and further research will, I think, explore the ways by which it has been enticing to aligned states.

Engagement was as fluid as nonalignment, and the policy drove its practitioners – who were initially concerned with larger states – to consider the importance of small states as well. Concern with India militated some interest in Nepal. A sense of broader Cold War symbolism made Guinea “a big small country” to Kennedy (90). The logic of engagement broadened its focus over time, even as the domestic American backlash against it gathered steam. Indeed, the Clay Committee, in its assault on the foreign aid program, took particular aim at programs directed toward small states.

Here I will turn to a point by Irwin, who wonders how well the New Frontiersmen sit within the categories I have established for them, citing the changing outlook of Robert Komer in particular. Their views were not static, and - in some places - I try to account for how they shifted over time. Komer's evolution demonstrates how the ideas behind engagement changed over time. Initially disinterested in Africa, Komer applied himself with increasing vigor to the problem of white minority rule in 1965, attempting to steer policy toward confronting Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith. Yet I do not think idealism drove him. Komer was quick to belittle the soaring, missionary prose of his liberal colleagues, G. Mennen Williams or a Chester Bowles, yet there was something symbiotic in his relationship with them. He managed to develop coolly pragmatic rationales for the

pursuit of liberal objectives. In his own way, after Kennedy's assassination, Komer developed a greater appreciation of soft power.

Returning to a contention made by Muehlenbeck, I see the Kennedy administration betting on nationalism, but not necessarily on democracy. Some of India's appeal stemmed from the nature of its constitutional system, but it remained an outlier within the nonaligned world. The Rostovian emphasis on economic development came well ahead of constitutional development, and as Bradley Simpson has noted, militaries often seemed powerful agents of modernization.¹⁵ The New Frontiersmen put little stock in monarchies, believing that they were inflexible, anachronistic institutions. They were more accepting of nationalist autocracies, as cases like Egypt, Indonesia, and Guinea illustrate. To a degree, they were too accepting of nonaligned dictatorships. Ambassador Howard Jones in Jakarta faced incessant charges that he had fallen under Sukarno's spell. British observers in Guinea, less invested in wooing the Touré regime, proved far more alert to its despotic qualities than their U.S. counterparts.¹⁶ When it came, the American rejection of engagement was often garbed as a repudiation of Third World dictatorships; 1970s denunciations of the NAM rarely failed to make this argument.

Turning briefly to the question of Nigeria, I do think that a revealing distinction may be drawn between it and Ghana. The New Frontiersmen saw much promise in West Africa's largest state; when they spoke of moderate, responsible leadership in Africa, they had Nigeria in mind. Rostow's particular interest in it is apparent – he compared it to India in terms of importance. By my research it *was* the largest FY 1963 recipient of Agency for International Development funds (as distinguished from overall aid) (139-140). The greater attention accorded to Guinea, Ghana, and the Congo, as measured by Muehlenbeck, is explained in large part by the problems posed by the latter two. Attention is often a testament to concern or frustration, not amity. Nigeria, a moderate voice within the nonaligned caucus, and a contributor to the Congo mission, never evoked the concerns Ghana did. Thus, its counsel received a far more favorable hearing in Washington after the death of Togolese President Olympio, which drove a wedge between Kennedy and Nkrumah over the course of 1963. "What is this guy?" Kennedy asked of the Ghanaian, "Some kind of a nut?"¹⁷

Inevitably one faces the question of sources left un-consulted. As this is a story of U.S. policy, depicting how Americans perceived and faced the nonaligned world, I thought it appropriate to conduct my initial research in American archives. Publications from nonaligned countries were of further assistance, as was research in Britain, France, and Germany. I would have enjoyed doing additional research – and I am eager to employ new

¹⁵ Simpson, *Economists with Guns*, 3-4.

¹⁶ See, for example, Letter, C. M. LeQuesne to Roger Stevens, February 26, 1962, FO 371/161671, The National Archives (Kew).

¹⁷ Richard Mahoney, *JFK: Ordeal in Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 186.

resources now emerging in nonaligned archives on current and future projects – but I think the evidence in hand provides a sturdy foundation for the book. My nonaligned protagonists were many things, but they were not reticent. They employed rhetoric expansively and vehemently: to signal approval, or to fire shots across the bow. In their drive to influence the White House, the Nassers, Nehrus, Sukarnos, and Nyereres of the nonaligned world employed candor strategically. Direct interpersonal relationships conferred a kind of equality upon governments that were acutely conscious of their lack of power. This explains some of the anger they expressed when prior promises of developmental aid were twisted into coercive measures: they perceived a fundamental breach of trust.

I am a big fan of Stephen Rabe’s earlier work on Kennedy and Latin America, so it is with some regret that I must turn to his review of my book. He seems to have misconstrued a passage that referred to the stark difference between first and second-wave Kennedy scholarship. Had I realized that the wording could have been read this way, I would have made some minor adjustment, but I will hope that no other readers interpret it in this manner.

Admittedly, there are real disagreements between our scholarship, and I think they are revealing. Rabe’s recent book about Kennedy built on his prior scholarship on Kennedy and Latin America. This accounts, in my opinion, for his suggestion that my book should accord more emphasis to the CIA. Yet Tim Weiner’s figure of 163 covert actions, which Rabe cites, occurs in a section predominantly focused on the Caribbean, with some mention of Diem and South Vietnam.¹⁸ It is a big number, but devoid of meaningful qualification: by region, type, or target. Neither Weiner, nor Rabe in his own 2010 Kennedy book, specify covert action in the states I examine (though I do note CIA activity in Ghana and the Congo).¹⁹ Might the concept of flexible response have entailed some regional variation in the use of such methods?

In fact I argue that the Kennedy team largely perceived the nonaligned world as winnable, and covert action as counterproductive toward that end. They came to office in the wake of Eisenhower’s disastrous operation in Indonesia, and the experience informed their thinking. When CIA legend Richard Bissell advocated further action against Sukarno, Komer stormed, “I disagree with so many of the half judgments in Bissell’s Indonesia paper that I don’t know where to begin.”²⁰ He wrote later, “We tried to get rid of Sukarno in 58—

¹⁸ Tim Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA* (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 180, 586-587.

¹⁹ Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes*, 171-221; Stephen G. Rabe, *John F. Kennedy: World Leader* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2010), 141-171.

²⁰ Memorandum, Komer to McGeorge Bundy and Walt Rostow, March 27, 1961, in Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Vol. 23: Southeast Asia* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1994), 333-334.

and failed. Unless we think we can do so again we simply have to sweat him out.”²¹ As was so often the case, Komer carried that argument. Were covert action a meaningful component of the Kennedy approach to nonalignment, it would have been employed in the case of Indonesia, where the CIA clearly felt it had unfinished business.

Rabe’s review, while neatly recapping points previously made in his book, skirts around our core disputes. In his book, he argues that Kennedy “invariably chose” colonialists over “popularly elected leaders or nationalists.”²² I do not think the evidence supports this contention. Here, again, we should consider Indonesia (a country unmentioned in Rabe’s book). Kennedy undertook the difficult and personally distasteful work of engaging Sukarno, helping the Indonesian leader achieve a near-total victory in his dispute with the Netherlands over West New Guinea. This was not an isolated case. Kennedy’s policy toward the Congo frustrated European allies. His policy toward Portuguese Africa, while stopping short of what the Africans wanted, sorely tested the alliance with Salazar.

Although *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Nonaligned World* primarily examines the foreign policies of the two administrations, I devote considerable attention to the domestic forces that obstructed engagement. Kennedy’s reticence about this policy and his choice not to institutionalize it reflected a fear of calling too much attention to it, as well as his general preference for informality. Rabe discounts domestic factors entirely, and thereby misses a substantial part of my argument. Cold War ideology (coupled with the racial and cultural factors influencing it) is actually a large part of the story I tell. Different views of the American role in the world guided proponents and opponents of engagement alike, pitting Manichean anti-communism against a long-established belief in a distinct anti-colonial mission. I do not think these methodological lenses should be applied in mutually exclusive ways. The challenge before us is to find ways to employ them in concert: meaningfully, fluidly, and synthetically.

There seems to be an implication in Rabe’s review that I am primarily concerned with the question of Kennedy and Johnson’s respective moral character. The question of who held purer intentions at heart toward the Third World is not the one I set out to answer – I was interested in the question of who implemented a more prudent, effective policy. I do not doubt Johnson’s capacity to empathize with peoples in Africa and Asia, indeed I explicitly discuss this trait in my second chapter. The more interesting question is why this noble impulse failed to stay his hand from punitive manipulation of aid policies and explosions of pique over criticism of his war. By the same coin, I think it more appropriate to ask what the most effective policy to advance Algerian independence was in 1961 – when so much depended on French President Charles de Gaulle’s fragile hold on power. The New

²¹ Memorandum, Komer to Kennedy, January 19, 1963, in Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963, Vol. 8: National Security Policy* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office,) 456-457.

²² Rabe, *John F. Kennedy*, 18.

Frontiersmen clearly thought it best not to jostle *Le General* in his talks with the *Front de libération nationale* (FLN) while he faced far-right coup plots.²³

If I find Rabe's assertion that only minor distinctions separate U.S. policy toward the nonaligned world from Kennedy's aggressive response to the specter of Latin American revolution unconvincing, it is because his own earlier work is so persuasive. Kennedy referred to Latin America as no less than "the most dangerous area in the world," posing "the greatest danger to us."²⁴ At no point, while researching this book, did I encounter him referring to any other postcolonial region in such superlative, alarmist terms. Latin America, by virtue of its extreme poverty, volatility, and proximity to the United States seemed far more threatening than any other area. Elsewhere, dealing with popular nationalist regimes, the New Frontiersmen perceived considerable opportunities alongside potential threats. Time, as Komer, Rostow, Bowles, and Williams liked to argue, was on the side of the United States, if it played its cards right.

Their confidence was mistaken, but it at least illuminates the range of possibilities apparent to Americans and others in the early 1960s. At times, describing my research to others, I have faced incredulity that the American relationship with nonalignment was ever amicable. Although the case involves untold hypotheticals, I do not believe that a sharp breach was inevitable. Irwin, the author of *Gordian Knot*, a deeply impressive book about the apartheid issue in this era, thinks it was, and he has a strong case to make. Muehlenbeck's remarkable survey of Kennedy's Africa policy, *Betting on the Africans*, comes to rest on a similar note of ambivalence. Although this debate cannot be resolved, it will continue to be compelling, for reasons both historical and contemporary.

Odd Arne Westad's masterwork on the Cold War in the Third World, *The Global Cold War*, tallies up the grim consequences of superpower intervention. I hoped to complement the presentation in his fourth and fifth chapters, by elucidating the fate of another response. Engagement represented a lost alternative to intervention, and its protagonists clearly understood it as such. Today, it is a contentious word, and the notion of presidential meetings with unfriendly leaders is more controversial than it was in Kennedy's era.

Similar misconceptions attach themselves to the Non-Aligned Movement. We live in a world shaped by the NAM, which includes nearly two-thirds of the world's recognized sovereign states. States like Iran and Venezuela have used their membership in the NAM to advance their ambitious international agendas. China pays the movement close attention. The United States does not. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice observed in 2006, "I've never quite understood what it is they would be nonaligned against at this point. I mean,

²³ Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution*, 253.

²⁴ Stephen G. Rabe, *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy Confronts Communist Revolution in Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 18-22.

you know, the movement came out of the Cold War.”²⁵ Each successive nonaligned summit produces another round of premature obituaries for the movement, or cartoonish descriptions of it.²⁶ Its endurance long after the Cold War ought to have taught policymakers something about the politics of the postcolonial world, and the limits of U.S. power – lessons that Kennedy instinctively discerned in his own time.

I thank Irwin, Lerner, and Muehlenbeck for their warm praise and probing questions. Although we have profound disagreements here, I would like to emphasize that I have much respect for Rabe’s scholarship, which was of substantial inspiration to me at the earliest stages of this project. Finally, considerable thanks are due to Robert McMahon, both for introducing this panel, and for his outstanding work in charting the course of the Cold War in the Third World. Each has made substantial contributions to the understanding of modern history and I am grateful for their time and attention.

²⁵ <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/26/washington/26rice-transcript.html?pagewanted=print&r=0>

²⁶ Brian Williams of *NBC Nightly News*, described the Havana summit as “all of the enemies of the United States, really, gathered in one room.” See Transcript, *NBC Nightly News*, National Broadcasting Company, 6:30 p.m., September 15, 2006.

Response by Phil Muehlenbeck, George Washington University

A Response to “Nigeria and the New Frontier,” Comment by Brian E McNeil, University of Texas at Austin, <http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=H-Diplo&month=1307&week=b&msg=HVVuSrt4fJZfwzUuWW3cvg&user=&pw=> (or <http://goo.gl/LfCyc>).

I was pleasantly surprised to see that the recent H-Net Roundtable responses between Rob Rakove and myself had been interesting enough to draw a lengthy and significant response from Brian McNeil.¹ Certainly the number of scholars studying U.S. relations with Africa has come a long way in the past decade, which is an exciting development indeed. It’s also a bit unexpected that Rakove and I have somehow become juxtaposed in a quasi-historiographical debate over Nigeria’s role in the New Frontier, when in reality our overall viewpoints on Kennedy’s foreign policy are quite similar and neither of us discusses Nigeria much in our respective recent books.

I will briefly respond to a few of the points made by McNeil in his posting in order to clarify my position on this topic and correct a few facts.

First, I do not think that Nigeria was “simply a nation among nations in Kennedy’s African strategy” as McNeil suggests. In fact, as I wrote in my contribution to Rakove’s H-Net Roundtable, “Nigeria was an important state to Kennedy, but not the most important to his African strategy.” I do not think that Kennedy viewed Nigeria as just another state, but nor do I think that he viewed Nigeria as one of the two or three most important countries in his overall strategy for “Betting on the Africans” (I believe that there were 4-5 African states which Kennedy valued more than Nigeria).

I am hardly alone in this assessment. A quick review of some of the most prominent historians of the Kennedy administration (Robert Dallek, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr, and Theodore Sorensen), Kennedy’s foreign policy (James Giglio), and Kennedy’s African policies (Richard Mahoney, Thomas Noer, & William Attwood) reveals that in 3,237 pages of combined text these eminent authors reference Nigeria a grand total of ONCE in their books (Sorensen mentioned Nigeria once in passing, but not to discuss U.S.-Nigerian relations but simply in reference to a Peace Corps volunteer who was posted there).² In contrast, Ghana, Guinea, and Congo received substantial coverage in these books.

¹ For the two H-Net Roundtable Reviews please see <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-XIV-3.pdf> and <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-XIV-39.pdf>

² Robert Dallek, *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy, 1917—1963* (Boston: Little, Brown, 2003); Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965); and Theodore Sorensen, *Kennedy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965); James N. Giglio, *The Presidency of John F. Kennedy* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1991); Richard D. Mahoney, *JFK: Ordeal in Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); Thomas J. Noer, “New Frontiers and Old Priorities in Africa” in Thomas G. Paterson, ed. *Kennedy’s Quest for Victory: American Foreign Policy, 1961-1963*, pp. 253-83 (New York:

Second, perhaps the crux of my disagreement with Rakove and McNeil on this topic is the distinction between Kennedy as an individual and the “Kennedy administration” (the bureaucrats at the Departments of State, Defense, etc.). All of the evidence that Rakove and McNeil present relate to how the Kennedy *administration* viewed Africa and Nigeria. For example, the “bellwether report” that McNeil mentions in his response as indicating that “the president” saw Nigeria as the most important state on the continent is in actuality a State Department report. I am unaware of any evidence that President Kennedy himself agreed with this State Department analysis—or that he even read this particular report. I do concur that the Kennedy administration (and by this I mean the State Department, etc.) *did* view Nigeria as the most important state in Africa. I continue to maintain, however, that this did not hold true for President Kennedy himself.

McNeil writes “Ghana, Guinea and Congo...were lumped with a second group of countries that had a much lower priority for the Kennedy administration. Kennedy did not want to provide large amounts of direct American aid to these countries... [they] were simply deemed less important to the United States during the Kennedy years.” Again, he is correct that this was the view in the State Department. Yet from FY61-63 Nigeria received 3.5 times less aid than did Congo-Kinshasa and only 73% of the aid sent to Ghana. On a per capita basis Guinea received ten times more aid than did Nigeria.³ How can one reconcile this contradiction? How did the “much lower priority” “second group” of states end up receiving more aid from the U.S. than those favored by State Department analysts? It’s simple, the State Department wanted to focus on Nigeria while Kennedy wanted to focus on Ghana, Guinea, and Congo—it should not come as a surprise that President Kennedy’s priorities were implemented over those of a mid-level State Department official.

Between the years 1961-1963 Nigeria never ranked any higher than third in USAID aid amongst sub-Saharan African states. Yet after Kennedy’s assassination it ranked first in that category in four out of six years between 1964 and 1969 and ranked second in the other two years.⁴ I would suggest that this is because Presidents Johnson and Nixon deferred their African aid policies to the State Department to a much greater degree than Kennedy, and hence the aforementioned State Department analysis on Nigeria’s importance now carried the day.

Third, McNeil makes a good point about countries in crisis drawing more of a president’s attention than states which are not on the front burner because of a crisis. Indeed, this is

Oxford University Press, 1989); and William Attwood, *The Reds and the Blacks* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).

³ See *U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants [Greenbook] Database*. Rev. July 11, 2013 [Online]. Available: <http://gbk.eads.usaidallnet.gov/>. While Nigeria received \$66.3 million total military and economic aid from the U.S. from 1961-63, Congo received \$234.7 million, Ghana \$90.7 million, and Guinea \$26.5 million.

⁴ See *U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants [Greenbook] Database*. Rev. July 11, 2013 [Online]. Available: <http://gbk.eads.usaidallnet.gov/>.

exactly the point I made in *Betting on the Africans* and is the reason why I included case studies of countries like Liberia, Ivory Coast and Tanganyika in that study. The Congo and Portuguese Africa were the only crises in Africa at this time. Setting those issues aside, Kennedy spent more time thinking about Ghana, Guinea, and probably even Mali and the Ivory Coast than he did Nigeria. He had more personal correspondence with the heads of state of those countries than he did with Nigerian leaders and was clearly more interested in meeting in person with Kwame Nkrumah, Sekou Toure, Mobido Keita, and Julius Nyerere than he was in meeting either Nnamdi Azikiwe or Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (the president and prime minister of Nigeria). Furthermore, Kennedy was personally and intimately involved in several policy making decisions regarding funding for the Volta River Dam and responses to a capsid blight in Ghana; funding for the Konkoure Dam project in Guinea; the purchase of excess coffee crops from Ivory Coast and other similar issues. Perhaps either Rob Rakove or Brian McNeil could inform me of examples in which Kennedy personally participated in discussions of specific projects for Nigeria—because I am unaware of any.

Another factor to consider is Kennedy's choice of ambassadors to each of these African states. Kennedy sent personal friends to become the ambassadors of Ghana (William Mahoney), Guinea (William Attwood), Congo (Ed Guillon), and the Ivory Coast (Jim Wine). Kennedy kept in frequent correspondence with these ambassadors, met with them several times in Washington, and often went over the head of the State Department to personally approve initiatives proposed by these ambassadors. In contrast, Kennedy did not even name an ambassador to Nigeria. Instead he simply kept career diplomat Joseph Palmer—an appointee of Eisenhower—as the U.S. ambassador to Nigeria for the entirety of his presidency. I am unaware of any personal correspondence between Kennedy and Palmer. It is well known by Kennedy scholars that Kennedy had a bit of disdain for career diplomats and as a result sent New Frontiersmen to the countries that were the most important to him (John Kenneth Galbraith to India for example). Had Nigeria really been the most important African country for Kennedy then surely he would have selected a New Frontiersman as his envoy in Lagos.

Fourth it is unclear to me why McNeil singles out USAID aid (as opposed to overall total economic and military aid) as the best “way to gauge the importance of African states to American policymakers...[but] certainly the amount of funds sent through USAID is the best, not to mention most objective, place to start.” McNeil then cites Congo having received only \$9.2 million in USAID aid from 1961-63, when in reality it received \$172.5 (almost three times more than Nigeria)—perhaps he confused Congo-Brazzaville for Congo-Kinshasa when looking at the data.⁵ But more importantly, from FY61-63 Liberia received nearly as much USAID aid as did Nigeria and much more than Nigeria in FY1963 when Liberia received more USAID funding per capita than any country in the world.⁶ To use the

⁵ See *U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants [Greenbook] Database*. Rev. July 11, 2013 [Online]. Available: <http://gbk.eads.usaidallnet.gov/>.

⁶ Letter from President John F. Kennedy to Liberian President William V. Tubman, June 4, 1963, National Security Files, Box 139 “Countries Series: Liberia,” Folder “Liberia, General, 1962,” JFKL .

argument put forth in McNeil's piece, would signify that Liberia was the most important country in the world to the United States in 1963. I don't think that anyone would seriously argue that, so I'm not sure why the same logic would apply to Nigeria.

Fifth, it is relevant to mention the difference between the amounts of money budgeted for foreign aid and the amount of money actually dispersed. Contemporary documents from the Kennedy library almost always give data for money budgeted, but from those records it is difficult to ascertain how much money was actually dispersed. Relations between states ebb and flow and sometimes aid is reduced when tensions arise or additional unbudgeted aid disbursed in times of emergency such as a natural disaster or famine. The USAID "Greenbook" data that I site in my responses attempts to report the amount of aid actually distributed to each country. This, in part, explains differing figures in aid cited in this exchange.

The most important point to come out of this dialogue over Nigeria's place in U.S. foreign policy is to highlight the fact that we currently lack an intensive scholarly study of U.S. relations with Nigeria—the most populous and arguably most influential country in sub-Saharan Africa (although South Africa certainly could also lay claim to that distinction).⁷ McNeil's doctoral research on the Nigerian Civil War makes a step toward filling this gap, but it is my hope that one of the graduate students reading this exchange will embark upon a more comprehensive study of this topic.

⁷ Political scientist Bassey Ate published a book on U.S.-Nigerian relations, but given that it was authored by a political scientist and published in the 1980s it is not the type of historical archive based research that this important topic deserves. See Bassey E. Ate, *Decolonization and Dependence: The Development of Nigerian-U.S. Relations, 1960-1964* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987).

Dear Editors at H-Diplo,

Judging a country's international position within Kennedy's foreign policy prioritization may seem like a mundane task, but at the heart of it lies a larger historiographical debate over how historians interpret Kennedy's policies toward Africa. Philip Muehlenbeck is correct in saying that Nigeria has largely been left out of the historiography of America's relations with Africa during the Kennedy years. I am a bit more cautious in giving this any sort of larger significance, however, or in using it to buttress a claim that Nigeria was less important to an overall strategy.

Still, Muehlenbeck brings up a good point. If, as I conclude, Nigeria was so important to the Kennedy administration's vision for Africa, then why has there not been more work on Kennedy and Nigeria? I can only offer initial remarks. Nigeria was not a site of Cold War competition in the same way as Guinea or Ghana; unlike the Congo, Nigeria was not home to any foreign meddling or any major crises during the Kennedy years; and the race problems that defined the southern part of the continent were absent in Nigeria. Perhaps those reasons, which have been the primary modes of analyses for historians of U.S. foreign affairs with Africa, can explain why Nigeria received less attention within the historiography?¹ Put simply, Nigeria was a Western-leaning state that toed the Anglo-American line in the Cold War, was generally uncritical of apartheid, sent troops to support the United Nations operation in the Congo, and led the more "conservative" Monrovia group of African states against the more "radical" Casablanca group. From an historian's perspective Nigeria might very well appear, frankly, boring during the Kennedy years when compared to other African states.

But what might have made Nigeria dull to historians probably made the country enticing to American officials in the Kennedy administration. Nigeria was "the hope if there was a hope," for American officials working with Africa, according to Edward Hamilton, who worked in the international division of the Office of Management and Budget in the White House during the Kennedy administration and later joined the National Security Staff as a specialist on Africa under Johnson.² Nigeria was a large, poly-ethnic state that had a

¹ This is not to say that Nigeria has been altogether absent. In recent years many historians have, in one way or another, looked at America's relationship with Nigeria and come to a similar conclusion as mine about Kennedy and Africa. See, Bassey E. Ate, *Decolonization and Dependence: The Development of Nigerian-U.S. Relations, 1960-1984* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1987); Robert B. Shepard, *Nigeria, Africa, and the United States from Kennedy to Reagan* (Bloomington and Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1991); Geoge A. Obiozor, *Uneasy Friendship: Nigeria/U.S. Relations*, (Enugu, Nigeria: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 2003); John A. Ayam, "The Development of Nigeria-U.S. Relations," in *Journal of Third World Studies* no. 2 Vol. 25, 117-134; Larry Grubbs, *Secular Missionaries: Americans and African Development in the 1960s* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010); Robert B. Rakove, *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Non-Aligned World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

² Interview with Edward Hamilton, 9 April 2013.

population of 35 million at independence, meaning that one out of every six Africans was Nigerian. American policymakers believed Nigeria to be politically and economically stable. American officials during the Kennedy years described Nigeria as a state with “significant world power potential”;³ “the best economic development potential in Tropical Africa”;⁴ and “the most important country in Tropical Africa.”⁵ And the Peace Corps, which Muehlenbeck describes as “the cornerstone of Kennedy’s Third World development plans,” sent the largest contingent of volunteers to Nigeria.⁶ The Kennedy administration, no doubt, saw something in Nigeria that belies the historiographical trend.

Even Kennedy himself, when meeting with Nigerian Prime Minister Abubakar Balewa, noted that Nigeria was just “the type of country that the U.S. would like to help with a multi-year appropriation” for development.⁷ Kennedy explained to the prime minister that because of its development potential and leadership in regional affairs he personally grouped Nigeria with an elite group of non-aligned nations like India, Pakistan, and Brazil. In this Kennedy was serious: he extended Nigeria a \$225 million long-term development loan to go toward Nigeria’s development and modernization. Kennedy was betting on a long-term relationship between the United States and Nigeria. Far from an abrupt change in priorities from Kennedy to Johnson, as Muehlenbeck suggests, heavy American long-term development investment in and prioritization of Nigeria began under Kennedy.

Kennedy’s promise of long-term development aid distinguished Nigeria from other African states. As Kennedy explained, the Act for International Development was “a departure from previous patterns in economic aid programs,” precisely because it emphasized “long-term plans and programs designed to develop economic resources and increase productive capacities.”⁸ While Muehlenbeck rightly remarks, for example, that the United States sent \$172.5 million to Congo during the Kennedy years, 95% of that aid was short-term “Supporting Assistance” intended to stabilize the country and not part of a larger, long-

³ G. Mennen Williams to George Ball, 23 March 1961, Nigeria, General 2/61-5/61, Box 144, NSF, CO, JFKL.

⁴ ICA Congressional Presentation Paper, no date, Nigeria, General 6/61-7/61, Box 144, NSF, CO, JFKL.

⁵ “Peace Corps: Program Proposals for Nigeria,” 13 March 1961, Nigeria, General 2/61-5/61, Box 144, NSF, CO, JFKL.

⁶ Philip Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 48. By May 1967 there were 790 PCV in Nigeria, which was the second largest contingent behind only India. See, State to Lagos, 7 December 1967, POL 27 Biafra-Nigeria, 12-1-67, Box 1875, RG 59, CFPF, 1967-1969, NARA.

⁷ The President’s Meeting with the Prime Minister of Nigeria,” 25 July 1961, Nigeria, General, 8/61-10/61, Box 144, NSF, CO, JFKL.

⁸ *Executive Communication, Transmitting the Legislation to Provide for Aid to Social and Economic Development Under an Act for International Development and to Provide for Military Assistance Under an International Peace and Security Act* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), 1-2.

term development initiative.⁹ Supporting Assistance, Hamilton explained to me, “looked and smelled like economic aid but was for different purposes and had different measures of success.” Often called “slush” by American officials working in foreign aid, Supporting Assistance was almost universally grants (not loans) thrown at a country to keep it afloat. In other words, it was about creating stability in a nation, and in the case of the Congo to keep it from collapsing.¹⁰

While Supporting Assistance was certainly important (and crucial in places like Congo and Turkey), it was a different sort of aid than the kind given to more stable nations like Nigeria. Supporting Assistance, then, would of course require more short-term financial aid. After all, it was propping up an entire state. And the fact that one country principally receives Supporting Assistance speaks more about the instability of the nation than it does to its broader significance to Kennedy’s vision of Africa.

More interesting results, then, come from comparing apples to apples and from examining what was truly unique about Kennedy’s plan for the transformation of Africa into a constellation of strong, independent, and self-reliant nation-states. By separating out different types of foreign aid and looking exclusively at long-term assistance we can begin to see more clearly what Kennedy was hoping to achieve on the continent and where, ultimately, his administration’s priorities were located. As a result, we can surmise that Kennedy reserved a different class of priority for Nigeria.¹¹

⁹ Supporting Assistance, which was relabeled “Economic Support Fund” in the 1970s, had four major objectives: to help the United States maintain base rights in a country; to prevent the complete economic breakdown of nations; to provide an alternative source of capital to dependence on Sino-Soviet aid; and “to help the host government support a substantial military burden.” Supporting assistance, while certainly providing economic development, was a different kind of foreign aid aimed as a stop valve in areas under economic or political duress. See, *The Act for International Development: A Program for the Decade of Development: Objectives, Concepts, and Proposed Programs*, p. 24. It can be found here: http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pnaax630.pdf.

¹⁰ Interview with Edward Hamilton, 17 July 2013.

¹¹ Muehlbenbeck also brings up Ghana, Guinea, and Liberia as counters to my interpretation of Nigeria. Ghana is a special case because the obligation to fund the Volta River Project began under the Eisenhower administration. In *Betting on the Africans*, Muehlenbeck argues that Eisenhower would have cut funding for the VRP, and therefore we must give credit to Kennedy for getting it funded. He makes a compelling case, and I agree that Kennedy deserves credit for keeping the obligation open. But we simply do not know if Eisenhower, or anyone else, would have cut funding and cannot assume that it would have. Thomas J. Noer, for example, offers a different interpretation of Kennedy and the VRP. See, Thomas J. Noer, “The New Frontier and African Neutralism: Kennedy, Nkrumah, and the Volta River Project,” *Diplomatic History*, vol 8, no. 1 (Winter 1984): pp. 61-80. Guinea did receive more aid per capita as Muehlenbeck says, but much of that aid comes from the same Supporting Assistance that went to Congo. Regardless, I am not sure if per capita spending is even important. The budgeted amount for Nigerian development was the same per capita as budgeted per capita for India. See, Walt Rostow to Kennedy, 21 July 1961, Nigeria, General 6/61-7/61, Box 144, NSF, CO, JFKL. As for Liberia, I agree that is something that I cannot explain. I do know that the Johnson administration said that Liberia, like Ethiopia, was a special case due to its traditional ties to the United States, and that Johnson sent more aid than it deserved as a result. See, Clark Clifford Group Investigating Foreign Aid to President Johnson, 16 December 1965, Foreign Aid (re1965 outside TF), Box 15, Files of McGeorge Bundy, NSF, Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963-1969, LBJL. Luckily, I do not

Muehlenbeck is correct in saying that, ultimately, the most significant difference between our respective interpretations is in how we distinguish between Kennedy and the Kennedy administration. Muehlenbeck argues that Kennedy personally spent more time on other African states than Nigeria, in his spare time gave more thought to these other countries, and appointed New Frontiersmen to ambassadorial posts in nations other than Nigeria. This is all suggestive stuff. From it, Muehlenbeck concludes that Nigeria was lower on the totem pole of priority for Kennedy than other African countries.

I am left unconvinced that we can divorce the two in the way that Muehlenbeck suggests, as if somehow the rest of the world remained open to influence from Kennedy's cadre of Ivy League advisers but Africa remained Kennedy's personal fiefdom during his thousand days in office. First, I disagree with the premise that time spent on a country has a correlation to importance to overall strategy. Second, even if I did agree, I am not sure how we measure or determine what leaders or countries Kennedy spent more time thinking about. Third, I am not sure how much weight can be placed on the appointment of ambassadors in relations to a nation's significance. Moreover, I do not know how to look at the fact that an ambassador was not replaced and impart on that any sort of significance.

While all of those points might make sense, might be intuitive, and might, in fact, be true, historians must base their conclusions on something more objective and substantive to gauge how Kennedy approached Africa. Take, for example, the report in which the Kennedy administration did in fact divide Africa into two distinct groups—bellwethers and non-bellwethers—and named Nigeria as the leading bellwether in sub-Saharan Africa. It is unfair, as Muehlenbeck does, to dismiss it simply as a "State Department Report." After all, it was the "Guideline for Policy and Operations: Africa," the paper that served as the blueprint for how America's Foreign Service Officers deal with Africa during the Kennedy years. Far from an unassuming report, it was "for the guidance of all concerned in the conduct of U.S. foreign policy and operations" during his tenure in office.¹² I would argue that it is an incredibly important document not only for understanding how the State Department approached Africa but also for understanding Kennedy himself because it was the actual policy that his administration carried out.

I am not alone in thinking that the Kennedy administration actually separated countries into bellwethers and sent the vast amount of aid to countries like Nigeria that had the highest priority for the president. For instance, G. Mennen "Soapy" Williams, Kennedy's assistant secretary of state for African affairs, was concerned about this policy. Williams noted that the "pronouncements of the President, in particular, have raised widespread

say that foreign aid is the only place to find importance but the best place to start. If officials in the Kennedy administration talked about Liberia in the same way that they talked about Nigeria, then I would be open to revising my interpretation of Liberia's role in African affairs during the Kennedy administration.

¹² "Guidelines for Policy and Operations, Africa," March 1962, Africa, General 3/62-4/62, Box 2A, NSF, CO, JFKL.

expectations” in Africa and as a result was “concerned by what appears to be a disposition to agree to the expenditure of funds in few countries to the neglect of a great many.” Williams warned that this administration’s policy toward Africa—Kennedy’s policy—had the potential to turn the “Decade of Development” into the “Decade of Disappointment.”¹³ There is something to this bellwether concept as it alludes to how Kennedy himself prioritized underdeveloped African nations.

But let us assume, as Muehlenbeck does, that we cannot know, or indeed that we cannot even assume, that Kennedy read the report and cannot assign its sentiment to that of the president. If that is the case, then Muehlenbeck offers two strikingly different portraits of Kennedy. On the one hand, there is the Kennedy who sought to revolutionize America’s relations with Africa, the man who single-handedly rescued African affairs from the doldrums of the American foreign policy establishment, and the man that took a hands-on role with his administration’s policy toward the continent. On the other, there is the Kennedy who could not be bothered to read the document providing guidelines to his Foreign Service Officers, the man who had no say or opinion on the guidelines laid out by and for his State Department, and the man who disagreed mightily with his own foreign policy toward Africa as it was carried out. It cannot be both, nor does it have to be an “either/or” proposition. I suggest there is a middle ground.

The middle ground, I would argue, is very similar to Muehlenbeck’s own interpretation. It recognizes that Kennedy cared about Africa and played an important role in American foreign policy toward Africa. It also notes the important role that personal diplomacy played and the feeling of importance that Kennedy gave to African leaders even when the United States had little to offer. The middle ground also recognizes, however, that State Department officials, especially Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Williams, played an even larger role in shaping Kennedy’s relations with Africa (and how Africans viewed Kennedy), that Kennedy often, but not always, deferred to his European allies on African policy matters, and that, in the end, he was not as strong an advocate of African nationalism as Muehlenbeck seems to suggest. Kennedy, in other words, did not go all in with Africa but rather hedged his bets, gambling on a few high priority targets—especially Nigeria—that his administration believed would be successful.

There have been many myths about Kennedy since his assassination in November 1963. Indeed, Ulric Haynes, a National Security Staff member during the Johnson administration, argued that Johnson should perpetuate one of them. Johnson “should capitalize on the increasingly popular ‘Kennedy Myth’ in Africa,” Haynes said, noting, “the myth will constitute part of the reservoir of U.S. good will in Africa.”¹⁴ There can be little doubt that Kennedy was adored across Africa. Even so, getting past the myth and toward the middle ground offers a better appraisal of Kennedy’s policy toward Africa.

¹³ “Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (Williams) to the Under Secretary of State (Bowles),” 29 September 1961, *FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XXI*, 304.

¹⁴ Rick Haynes to McGeorge Bundy, 8 March 1965, Africa, General Vol. II, Memos & Misc [1 of 3], 7/64-6/65, Box 76 [1 of 2], NSF, CO, Africa, LBJL.

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