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The United States and the Liquidation of European Colonial Rule in Tropical Africa, 1941-1963*

“Some of those who lived in the former colonial territories were certain”, according to Davidson Nicol, “that the process of decolonization would have been considerably slowed down, or would have taken a different course, had there not been pressure from the United States”. Nicol himself (1978: 365) contends that “Presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman, as spokesmen for their people, were unwilling to support the continuation of colonial empires”. This viewpoint is commonplace enough, especially in popular mythology.

Studies of United States diplomacy in Africa reveal no consensus on the role played by the United States in the liquidation of European colonial rule in Africa. Thomas Noer (1985: 17, 64, 60) found that the Second World War image of the United States “as an anticolonial advocate was inaccurate”. Washington, he added, “was not prepared to exert strong pressure on the Europeans to divest themselves of colonies”. With the Cold War, the United States position on decolonization, says Noer, “grew more conservative”. United States leaders now saw independence for the colonies not only as inimical to Western European recovery and the anti-Soviet alliance, but also believed that it “would create weak nations unable to resist penetration and subversion by Moscow”. The Kennedy administration, he stresses, did not “represent major, new departures” in United States policy towards Africa. Thus Noer concluded that all through the period 1948-1968, the United States adopted “a Europe first approach”, which while ensuring “immediate support for America’s Cold War efforts”, also identified Washington with European colonialism. Writing more recently, David Gibbs (1995: 307, 309) has quarreled with the notion that United States policy lacked any dynamism. He asserts that as a result of United States

* In a geographical sense, this paper is concerned with Africa south of the Sahara, excluding the former white-dominated enclaves of Southern and Central Africa.

anticolonialism, the colonial administrations were “persuaded... to introduce political reforms”. Kennedy, he claims, “opposed European efforts to forge neo-colonial ties with former colonies”.

Focusing on how the United States affected the end of the British Empire in tropical Africa, Wm. Roger Louis and Ronald Robinson (1982: 48-49) argue that while the United States “tended to act more often than not as a guarantor of Europe’s remaining colonies”, it also insisted on “liberal advances toward independence”. Consequently, they conclude that “In the shadow of their powerful American ally, the British followed certain golden rules more warily than ever: handle the colonies with kid gloves, concede to subjects rather than risk confrontations with them; and above all avoid all dangers of possible uprisings, armed repressions, and colonial wars. Only thus could the possibility of American intervention in the African empire be averted”.

Derived from a larger study of United States involvement in sub-Saharan Africa, a study based on an extensive study of the more recently declassified materials in United States repositories (Nwaubani 2001), this paper intends to offer an empirically-based interpretation and thus bring some clarity as to what the United States did and did not do in the course of Africa’s transition to independence. For this purpose, each of the administrations—from Franklin Roosevelt to John Kennedy—will constitute a chronological block.

In *The United States and Decolonization in West Africa, 1950-1960*, I have demonstrated how a variety of factors—notably, the personalities in charge of policy; racial postures derived from domestic race relations; the legitimation of the international status quo, which included the European empires; the overly European orientation of policy-makers; the importance of Africa, in the 1950s, for European recovery and prosperity as well as a source of raw materials for the United States; and European responses to United States interest and presence in their colonies—all combined to shape United States policy towards Africa. Space constraints do not allow me, in this paper, to capture this multi-dimensional nature of the subject-matter; for the same reason, Guinea and Angola serve as case studies during the Eisenhower and Kennedy presidencies respectively.

Franklin D. Roosevelt (1933-1945)

“An important phase of the foreign policy of Franklin D. Roosevelt”, according to one early assessment, “was a vigorous and persistent opposition to colonialism” (Dulles & Ridinger 1955: 1-8). No doubt, Roosevelt voiced a strong anticolonial position and thus gave the impression that his administration was against European empires. However, recent scholarship reveals neither vigor nor persistence in his anticolonialism (LaFeber 1975; Sbrega 1986; Thorne 1976; Venkataramani 1974; Bills 1990: 5-22; Louis 1978).

For example, following his study of the United States role in Indonesia's transition to independence, Robert McMahon (1981: 45) concluded that anti-colonialism "was never an overriding principle of American foreign policy" before or during the Second World War. Roosevelt's anticolonialism was, according to Scott Bills (1990: 6-19, 204), "non-committal". He found that Roosevelt "was anticolonial in everything he said and in little that he did". What follows is a historiographical overview of this perspective, drawing on the various dimensions of Roosevelt's anticolonialism.

The Atlantic Charter

In the case of Africa, the Atlantic Charter is identified as encapsulating Roosevelt's anticolonialism. In the circumstance, the charter provides the appropriate starting point for this discussion. On 9-12 August 1941, Roosevelt met with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill on the coast of Newfoundland, Canada. From that meeting emerged the Atlantic Charter. Article 3 of the charter committed both leaders to "respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live", and "to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them"¹. This clause was vague as to the range of its geographical applicability and was therefore subject to various interpretations. In much of the British-ruled territories, nationalist elements embraced Article 3 quite literally. By contrast, the (British) Colonial Office, which was not consulted before the issuance of the charter, "had misgivings about Article 3's implications of precipitate and uniform decolonization" (Porter & Stockwell 1987: 26). A clarification was offered by Churchill in the House of Commons on 9 September 1941. First, he showed that the charter, and especially Article 3, was just one and not the only or major issue discussed at the meeting. This way, he diminished the significance of the contentious clause. Then he took pains to exclude the British Empire from the implications of the charter. Their concern at the meeting, he said, was "primarily, the restoration of sovereignty, self-government and national life of the States and nations of Europe now under the Nazi yoke"².

Roosevelt's counter came five months later. To mark the anniversary of George Washington's birthday, he made a broadcast which included the explanation that "We of the United Nations are agreed on certain broad principles in the kind of peace we seek. The Atlantic Charter applies not only to the parts of the world that border the Atlantic but the whole world"³. This interpretation of the charter was designed for a number of propaganda purposes. There was, at the time, a strong domestic pressure

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1. For contemporary accounts of the meeting and the Atlantic Charter see LANGER & GLEASON (1953: chap. 21, esp. 677-688); WILSON (1969: chap. 9).
 2. *House of Commons Debates*, 9 September 1941.
 3. *The Times* (London), 24 February 1942.

that the White House should do something about the British in India⁴. Roosevelt needed to mollify the pressure, and for that, an invocation of the Atlantic Charter was convenient enough. More importantly, a careful reading of the broadcast shows that it was primarily intended to combat isolationism and rally Americans for the global war effort⁵. It was in this light that London understood the broadcast. Thus, Churchill ignored the obviously innocuous and ritualistic allusion to the Atlantic Charter and cabled Roosevelt the day after the broadcast: “Warmest congratulations on your heartening declaration” (Kimball 1984: 370).

Any suggestion that Roosevelt seriously meant to see the charter applied in the colonial areas as well and that there was therefore a sharp divergence between the United States and British interpretations would be misleading. On 26 November 1942, the prime minister of Burma, Maung Saw, then on a visit to the United States, wrote to Roosevelt, urging him to affirm the charter’s universality. Saw did not even receive an acknowledgment of his letter. Secretary of State Cordell Hull held that Burma was a British dependency, and therefore that Saw was not competent to deal directly with foreign governments. Consequently, he advised Roosevelt, “it is considered that the letter... does not require an answer” (Venkataramani 1974: 25).

There is indeed some hint that at their meeting in 1941, the two men understood that the charter applied only to Europe. On 9 August 1942, Churchill requested Roosevelt to send him an advance copy of any message he wished to release to mark the charter’s anniversary, reminding him: “We considered the wording of that famous document line by line together and I should not be able, without mature consideration, to give it a wider interpretation than was agreed between us at the time. Its proposed application to Asia and Africa requires much thought” (Kimball 1984: 557; Churchill 1950: 890).

Two neglected points are worthy of attention here. First, at the meeting in August 1941, the British produced the first draft of the Atlantic Charter, which included the substance of Article 3. The clause was thus a British conception⁶. Second, the extant accounts show no evidence that Roosevelt

4. On 25 February 1942, Assistant Secretary of State Breckinridge Long reported that “there appeared a serious undercurrent of anti-British feeling” that morning at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. India was the a major cause: the senators held that the United States had done much for Britain through Lend-Lease “as to authorize us to require England to make adjustments of a political nature within the framework of her Empire. We should demand that India be given a status of autonomy”. See Memorandum by the assistant secretary of state (Long) to the under secretary of state (Welles), 25 February 1942, *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1942*, vol. 1 (1960), 606-607.
5. As a news analysis by the *Times* of London, 25 February 1942, put it, the broadcast “was directed mainly to combating a section of his critics, that the United States could best defend itself by withdrawing from the war in other parts of the world and concentrating upon the defense of its own coasts”.
6. Churchill later noted, “Considering all the tales of my reactionary, Old World outlook, and the pain this is said to have caused the President, I am glad it

was critical of the political aspects of British colonial rule at the meeting. Of all those present at the meeting, only Elliot Roosevelt (the president's son), reported of the colonial issue raising difficulties between Roosevelt and Churchill. Yet, a careful reading of Elliot's own account also shows that there was divisiveness only over the exclusion of the United States from Britain's imperial economy (Roosevelt 1946: 35-36). The records of Sumner Welles (1945: 175-177; 1946: 7-8, 12-16), the United States undersecretary of state, also show, as Churchill's⁷, that acrimony was generated only by Roosevelt's pressure that Britain dismantle its imperial preferences to assure the United States an open door into the British Empire⁸.

On the whole, there is as yet no evidence of sustained effort by the United States to uphold the universality of the Atlantic Charter, nor is there any evidence of the causal consequence of the charter on British colonial policy. One may recall Churchill's obtuse forthrightness in 1942: "That there be no mistake about it in any quarter. We intend to hold what we have. I have not become the King's First Minister to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire."⁹ Wm. Roger Louis (1978: 430) has shown that in the 1940s, in the face of United States anticolonial rhetoric, "Englishmen generally held strong feelings about Empire"; and that not only Churchill and the Conservatives, but members of the Labour Party "also held strong convictions".

On Roosevelt's Leverage: India, Indochina, and International Trusteeship

The Atlantic Charter raises the issue of the degree of leverage which Roosevelt had on British colonial policy. In this regard, there is nothing on the African side for illustrative purposes; India is a more appropriate case study. India was of special interest to Roosevelt: it was one place he seriously felt that the British should make fundamental political concessions so as to secure local support for the Allied war effort. On the other hand, Churchill was generally contemptuous of United States meddling in India—he believed that Americans did not understand the difficulties involved

should be on record that the substance and spirit of what came to be called the 'Atlantic Charter' was in its first draft a British proclamation cast in my own words" (CHURCHILL 1951: 434).

7. According to CHURCHILL (1951: 434), the "only serious difference" between the British draft of the charter and the United States revision was on Article 4, which ended up as "they will strive to bring about a fair and equitable distribution of essential produce not only within their territorial jurisdiction, but between the nations of the world". For Churchill's account of the meeting, see CHURCHILL (1951: chap. 4).
8. This view, it must be noted, is substantiated by recent scholarship. For example, see DOBSON (1984); PRESSNELL (1986: chap. 3 and Appendices 3-8).
9. *The Times* (London), 11 November 1942.

in accommodating India's heterogeneity, and that India was not an issue in which "the satisfying of public opinion in the United States could be a determining factor" (Churchill 1950: 209-214, 219-220; Kimball 1984: 402-404). In any case, Roosevelt was not prepared to take a position on India that was at odds with Churchill's.

In December 1942, Churchill visited Washington, and Roosevelt, for the first time, brought up India with him. Churchill (1950: 209), by his own account, "reacted so strongly and at such length" that Roosevelt never raised it again. At Teheran on 28 November 1943, Roosevelt confessed to Joseph Stalin (the Soviet leader) that, on account of Churchill's sensitivity, he had totally given up on any effort to influence Britain's position on India (Louis 1978: 283). The retreat had actually been made some months earlier. Following the collapse of the Stafford Cripps Mission, the Indian National Congress (in April 1942) demanded that Britain must "Quit India" and organized demonstrations and riots. British authorities promptly arrested and detained Congress leaders¹⁰. Chiang Kai-shek, the Chinese generalissimo, "sent voluminous protests" to Roosevelt who duly passed them on to Churchill. The latter made clear his resentment of the Chinese intrusion to which, according to Churchill, "The President responded helpfully" (Churchill 1950: 507-508; Kimball 1984: 558). In a letter of 9 August 1943, Roosevelt told Churchill of his response to the generalissimo: "I have emphasized the fact that we would of course not wish to pursue any course of action which would undermine the authority of the [British] Indian Government at this critical moment" (Kimball 1984: 556).

At the core of Roosevelt's format for ending European colonial rule was his prescription, mooted by November 1941, for an international superintendency over the colonies. By August 1942, the State Department Advisory Committee on Postwar Foreign Policy had worked out the details (Louis 1978: chap. 8-9). The trusteeship system, operating under the umbrella of an international organization, would eliminate the European hold over the colonies, coordinate development programs and prepare the latter for independence (*ibid.*: chap. 8-9). More specifically, Roosevelt frequently talked about depriving France of Indochina and placing it under an international trusteeship (Hull 1948: 1595-1598). "His broad anti-imperialism had", according to Christopher Thorne (1976: 79), "attached itself to this particular issue as to no other (except, perhaps, to the cause of greater self-rule for India in 1942)". Yet, by 1944, Roosevelt had considerably modified his position on this matter, to the point of conceding that France could

10. The February/March 1942 Japanese blitzkrieg leading to the fall of Singapore, Hong Kong, and Rangoon compelled Churchill to seek accommodation with Indian nationalists in order to ensure effective defense of the territory. For this, Stafford Cripps, the Lord Privy Seal, went to India in March 1942. The mission ended in a deadlock: the Indian National Congress wanted immediate full government, which Britain was not prepared to grant until after the war (MENON 1957: chap. 5, 7).

return to Indochina (*ibid.*: LaFeber 1975; Louis 1978: 351-377). At Yalta in February 1945, the United States proposed a diluted trusteeship system that applied only to the former League of Nations mandated territories and to parts of the Italian colonial empire; other colonies were to be voluntarily placed under trusteeship by the colonial powers. It was this system that was later incorporated into the UN Charter.

The Failed Attempt at a Declaration on the Colonies

Retreat was the defining feature of other aspects of Roosevelt's anticolonialism. In August 1942, Lord Halifax, the British ambassador in Washington, reported that Secretary of State Hull wanted to develop, in concert with Britain and other European colonial powers, a declaration on the colonies (Morgan 1980: 6-9). The British draft, made available to Washington in February 1943, insisted on Britain's obligation to administer its colonies and guide and develop their social, economic, and political institutions until they [the colonies] were able to discharge the "responsibilities of government". The United States draft, dated 9 March 1943, emphasized the applicability of the Atlantic Charter "to all nations and to all peoples", fixing dates for the attainment of independence by the colonies, and an international trusteeship administration (similar to the 1919 mandates system) to safeguard the interests of those colonies that were not ready for, or incapable of, independence (Williams 1976; Louis 1978: chap. 6-7, 14-15; Russell 1958: chap. 4).

Hull and British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden could not reconcile these divergent positions when they met at the first Quebec Conference in August 1943. The hurdle was Washington's insistence on the word "independence" and on setting specific dates for its attainment. It was the Americans who retreated from their position. In January 1944, Edward Stettinius, the under secretary of state, led American officials to London for a Three Power (Britain, Soviet Union, United States) Conference. When the Americans met their British counterparts on colonial issues, the former were no longer pressing for a timetable for the attainment of independence or even for political independence itself: Washington was now content with "self-government" and the improvement of social and economic conditions in the colonial territories, a position that was in harmony with London's (*ibid.*). Later in the year, Secretary of State Cordell Hull proposed that Roosevelt should press for "early, dramatic, and concerted announcements" by Britain, France, and the Netherlands "promising independence or self-rule" for the colonies in Southeast Asia "and establishing timetables toward those ends". Garry Hess (1987: 368-369) found that Roosevelt "never acted on Hull's recommendation. He had become very cautious in dealing with his colleague Winston Churchill on colonial issues".

The Open Door: The Root of Roosevelt's Anticolonialism

In January 1943, Roosevelt stopped over in Bathurst (now Banjul), capital of The Gambia, on his way to and from a conference in Casablanca. He was greatly appalled by what he saw: "it's the most horrible thing I have ever seen in my life... With a little study, I got the point of view that for every dollar that the British, who have been there for two hundred years, have put into Gambia, they have taken out ten. It's plain exploitation of those people." He found "no education whatsoever" and that "the agriculture there is perfectly pitiful. The one main asset is peanuts, and the natives grow a lot of peanuts. How do they grow them? They have been growing them now for years, and they still use a pointed stick. Nobody ever saw a plow in Gambia. The British have never done a thing about it". Road development was no better: "The only road out of Bathurst", to the airport, was built by the United States (Rosenman 1969: 68-69). Roosevelt also observed that the Africans going to work in the morning were in "rags... glum-looking." He was disturbed to learn that each of them received, as a wage, "one shilling, nine pence (less than fifty cents) a day and a half-cup of rice". With palpable uneasiness, he recited their predicament: "Dirt. Disease. Very high mortality rate", and a life expectancy of twenty-six years. "These people", he concluded, "are treated worse than their livestock. Their cattle live longer!" (Roosevelt 1946: 75).

In general, Roosevelt believed that European colonial policy was being run in an eighteenth-century mold: "a policy which takes wealth in raw materials out of a colonial country, but which returns nothing to the people of that country". To rectify this, he advocated, not the abolition of colonial rule, but the adoption of twentieth-century colonial methods which "involves bringing industry to these colonials... increasing the wealth of a people by increasing their standard of living, by educating them, by bringing them sanitation—by making sure that they get a return for the raw wealth of their community" (*ibid.*: 36). However, Roosevelt left little doubt that his prescription meant no more than the substitution of United States economic penetration for European imperialism.

In a speech during his 1932 presidential election campaign, Roosevelt observed that the United States had arrived at a great watershed in its capitalist development: "Our industrial plant is built... Our last frontier has long since been reached, and there is practically no more free land." Furthermore, "the independent businessman is running a losing race", because the economy was "dominated by some six hundred odd corporations who (sic) controlled two-thirds of American industry". The solution, Roosevelt believed, lay not in discovering or exploiting natural resources, not even in producing more goods, but largely in "seeking to reestablish foreign markets for our surplus production, of meeting the problem of underconsumption"¹¹. In

11. Quoted in HOFSTADTER (1962: 325). Roosevelt's analysis is in step with Martin Sklar's argument that in the 1920s, the United States economy shifted from one based on the accumulation of capital to one based on the disaccumulation of

this sequence, the “economic and political significance of European colonialism increased”, in Roosevelt’s worldview, “after the British government sought, from 1931, to overcome serious balance-of-payments problems by restricting trade between imperial colonies and third countries outside the British Empire” (Orders 2000: 66).

Roosevelt’s conceptualization of the crisis that plagued the American economy in the 1930s, his prescription for addressing that crisis, and his aversion to British imperial preferences provide the context for much of his anticolonialism. This conclusion builds off Lloyd Gardner’s suggestion that Roosevelt’s New Deal represented a fundamental shift in United States foreign policy, a shift which focused on the global expansion of United States foreign trade and investment. This shift did not occur in a vacuum. According to Gardner (1964), haunted by the specter of the Great Depression of the 1930s, United States leaders became convinced that their country’s well-being depended on a liberal international economic regime; and they set out, during World War II, to create one. This goal, Gardner contends, disposed Washington to oppose colonial empires with their imperial preferences.

Roosevelt’s commitment to the global expansion of American capitalism was shared by Cordell Hull, his secretary of state. A Wilsonian idealist in search of a stable world order, Hull recalled that by 1916, he had embraced the philosophy that “unhampered trade dovetailed with peace; high tariffs, trade barriers, and unfair economic competition with war” (Hull 1948: 81). Thus, although operating from somewhat different premises, Roosevelt and Hull reached the same conclusion: that the creation of a multilateral, nondiscriminatory world political economy should be a cardinal principle of United States diplomacy. This explains why, at the Roosevelt-Churchill meeting which gave rise to the Atlantic Charter, the United States—as already pointed out—insisted on the termination of British imperial preferences. For the rest of the Second World War, the United States pressed Britain, in and out of season, for the elimination of trade barriers (Herring 1971; Dobson 1986; Gardner 1969; Woods 1990).

To be sure, Africa was taken into account in Roosevelt’s Open Door diplomacy. In 1944, the State Department recalled that United States “traditional policy in the past with regard to Africa, as well as the Far East,

capital. Sklar (1992) attributes this shift to structural innovations—notably the new methods in industrial organization introduced by Henry Ford and Frederick Taylor as well as the replacement of steam and human muscle by electricity and internal combustion—which generated the paradox of simultaneous rising productivity and high unemployment. Producers, he says, tried to cope with the resulting crisis of profit realization by seeking export markets, but as the world market itself was also contracting, the United States plunged into a depression which could not be resolved within the existing framework of American capitalism. According to Sklar, it was World War II—through the creation of an expansive artificial demand for new goods and labor via military service—that solved this problem of disaccumulation.

has been that of the ‘Open Door’“ and gave a clear indication that the policy remained in sharp focus: “Overseas trade”, the department stressed, “will be more important than ever before to this nation in maintaining our vaunted standard of living... Our country will not be able to maintain our heretofore standard of living or even to approximate it unless we can produce more, export more, and help by our overseas trade to all lands to raise the standard of living of backward peoples so that they may absorb more and more of the products of American agriculture and industry.” Consequently, the department emphasized that Washington had “the most vital national interest” in achieving an Open Door in Africa and in the Far East and that this goal predisposed the United States to oppose “agreements which would relegate in any area of the world American influence to a secondary position”¹².

Roosevelt’s working proposition was that “British and German bankers have had world trade pretty well sewn up in their pockets for a long time... Well, now, that’s not so good for American trade” (Roosevelt 1946: 24). He saw in World War II an opportunity to get them to disgorge this loot for America’s benefit. At dinner on 22 January 1943, Roosevelt drew the attention of Sultan Sidi Mohammed b. Youssef of Morocco to how the “past relationship between French and British financiers combined into self-perpetuating syndicates for the purpose of dredging riches out of colonies”. Roosevelt raised the possibility of oil deposits in Morocco; the sultan was excited but regretted the dearth of indigenous personnel who would run the oilfields. At that point, Roosevelt proposed that Moroccans could be trained in the United States under some exchange program, and that Morocco could engage American firms for its development projects “on a fee or percentage basis”. Such an arrangement, Roosevelt pressed, would enable Morocco to retain “considerable control over its resources, obtain the major part of any incomes flowing from such resources, and, indeed, eventually take them over completely”. The sultan could possibly not have heard any European talk to him in that manner, which made Roosevelt especially agreeable to him (*ibid.*: 110-112). Charles de Gaulle, the French leader, was later to cynically inquire from the sultan: “When President Roosevelt jingled the marvels of independence before your Majesty at Anfa, what did he offer you beyond the cash and a place among his customers?” (de Gaulle 1984: 923).

Complicating Factors

It is fair to acknowledge that Roosevelt was preoccupied with a worldwide war and major domestic concerns such as the revival of United States domestic economy as well as the security of his country—and that each of

12. 888.00/9-1343, Department of State Memorandum, 13 September 1943 (NA).

these had the potential of restraining his anticolonialism or distracting him from this end. Nonetheless, he was in the habit of speaking on colonial matters in an expansive and speculative manner that went beyond the official policy of his administration. In a radio broadcast on 23 July 1942, Hull presented the administration's position on independence for European colonies. "We have always believed", he said, "that all peoples without distinction of race, color, or religion, who are prepared and willing to accept the responsibilities of liberty, are entitled to its enjoyment." After pointing out that the United States had "striven to meet squarely own responsibility in this respect" in Cuba and the Philippines, he sought to balance the demand for independence against the capacity for responsibility, emphasizing that it was the administration's objective "to use the full measure of our influence to support the attainment of freedom by all peoples who, by their acts, show themselves worthy of it and ready for it"¹³. In his memoir, Hull (1948: 1599) reiterated that during his tenure, the United States position was that independence "would come after an adequate period of years, short or long depending on the state of development of respective colonial peoples, during which these peoples would be trained to govern themselves". Roosevelt himself pointed to the United States experience in the Philippines to substantiate his view that independence should be preceded by a long period of institution-building (Rosenman 1969: vol. 11, 474-475).

Roosevelt's failure to realize his original trusteeship intentions has been attributed to two main factors. First, there was hardly any international support for the idea. Stalin alone endorsed it; Chiang Kai-shek was unenthusiastic: he declined Roosevelt's invitation that China should assume trusteeship over Indochina (*ibid.*: 283-285, 279). The crucial factor was that Britain, unwilling to place its colonies under any form of international supervision, never embraced the trusteeship system and worked hard to frustrate its realization¹⁴. For example, London ensured that its draft formed the basis of the Cairo Declaration of 1 December 1943. The declaration said nothing on any European colony; it only mentioned returning to China its territories (Manchuria, Formosa and the Pescadores) that were under Japanese occupation (Louis 1978: 282). The problem was Roosevelt himself: John Sbrega (1986: 78-82) notes that up till and at Yalta, he made no effort to win over the other powers "beyond the superficial generalities of 1943 summit meetings in Cairo and Teheran" and even then, he occupied himself with informally eliciting from Stalin and Chiang Kai-shek "what they considered preliminary endorsements of his own unformulated soundings about a trusteeship for postwar Indochina". No less significant was

13. "The War and Human Freedom" (a radio broadcast by Cordell Hull on 23 July 1942), *Department of State Bulletin*, 25 July 1942, 642.

14. On 23 February 1945, Roosevelt noted that the British were opposed to trusteeship over Indochina because "It might bust up their empire, because if the Indochinese were to work together and eventually get their independence, the Burmese might do the same thing to England" (ROSENMAN 1969: vol. 13, 563).

Roosevelt's inability to convert his own generals to his vision. By July 1944, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) had made clear its opposition to placing the Japanese mandated islands under international trusteeship, advocating, instead, their annexation as American strategic outposts. Consequently, Roosevelt scuttled his original plan (Louis 1978: chap. 3, 373, 437-449; Hull 1948: 1599, 1706-1707; Chand 1991)¹⁵. I would argue that Roosevelt's inability to sell his trusteeship formulation to these crucial external and domestic elements masked a deeper cause.

Roosevelt did not really intend trusteeship as a mechanism to facilitate the independence of the colonial areas or even improve their quality of life. Of greater importance to him was an institutional framework which would bestow legitimacy to his international concerns: ensuring the security of the United States; securing an Open Door for the United States in European colonies; and building China up as a strong power, so that, in concert with the United States, a new balance of power would emerge and displace the Europeans in Asia; and generally, projecting United States power as the stabilizer of the international system. Thus, he wanted the Japanese mandated islands "internationalized for the purpose of keeping the peace"; "security points in many parts of the world"—Truk, the Bonin Islands, Rabaul (or some portion of the Solomons), appropriate sections in the Dutch East Indies, Ascension Islands in the South Atlantic, Dakar and some section of Liberia—were all to be placed under international trustees; Korea was to be placed under international trusteeship to forestall Soviet preeminence there; Britain was to return Hong Kong to China, and China would "immediately declare Hong Kong a free port under international trusteeship". To secure Chinese acquiescence, Manchuria and Formosa were to be returned to China; and to secure Soviet cooperation, Moscow was to take control of the Kurile Islands (Hull 1948: 1584)¹⁶. To get all these bits and pieces into one format (trusteeship) was no easy task. This explains why it was such a tough sell for Roosevelt, even among his own generals.

There was another factor which compromised Roosevelt's anticolonialism. Wm. Roger Louis (1978: 567-68) asked himself the question: "To what extent did anti-colonial sentiment in the United States contribute to the decolonization of the British Empire?" His response, based on a painstaking study, was that "from about 1943 into the period of the cold war the general policy of the American government, in pursuit of security, tended to

15. The islands in question were the Micronesian Islands, now known as the United States Trust Territory of Pacific Islands. The islands cover an ocean area as large as continental United States. Japan, which had originally acquired the islands under the League of Nations Mandates System, used them to support the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

16. Also see DE GAULLE (1984: 572-573) for de Gaulle's understanding of Roosevelt's postwar diplomatic objectives, following their meeting in Washington in July 1944. For scholarly discussions of these issues, see ORDERS (2000) and PUNGONG (2000).

support rather than break up the British Imperial system". Hull (1948: 1599) was later to recall that "At no time did we press Britain, France, or The Netherlands for an immediate grant of self-government to their colonies". The United States, he concedes, had "frequent conversations" with those countries, but "could not press them too far... in view of the fact that we were seeking the closest possible cooperation with them in Europe. We could not alienate them in the Orient and expect to work with them in Europe".

Hull most certainly had the Second World War in mind. But even before the end of that war, Washington's suspicions and perceptions of Soviet strength and intentions were already beginning to shape its position on colonial matters¹⁷. On 12 April 1945 (that is, ten days before Roosevelt's death), the Office of Strategic Studies (oss) issued a policy paper which projected a grim picture of post-war international balance of power. The paper recalled that the United States had joined the Second World War to prevent Germany and Japan from dominating Europe and Asia respectively. It held that at the cessation of hostilities, the United States "will be confronted with a situation potentially more dangerous than any preceding one" for in the long run, the Soviet Union alone, given its human and natural resources, was in a position "to dominate Europe and at the same time to establish her hegemony over Asia". Such an outcome, it was felt, would greatly upset the global balance of power to Washington's disadvantage (oss 1945).

The oss insisted that the United States should not "wait until Russia's policy is fully revealed" before taking security measures. It recommended "a clear, firm, and thoroughly non-provocative policy" in restraining the Soviets. In addition, the paper suggested that the United States should construct an anti-Soviet alliance, with Britain and France as the cornerstones, and that this involved doing "everything possible to restore France to the rank of a great power". The oss linked the European colonies with the preservation of an international balance of power which would be favorable to the United States. Emphasizing that the imperial ties would enhance United States national security, the paper urged that Washington "should realize its interest in the maintenance of the British, French, and Dutch colonial empires... We have at present no interest in weakening or liquidating these empires or in championing schemes of international trusteeship

17. In March 1945, de Gaulle pleaded with the United States to provide assistance to French forces in Indochina. Roosevelt had previously rejected such pleas. This time, de Gaulle played his trump card: "What are you [Americans] driving at?", he asked. "Do you want us to become, for example, one of the federated states under the Russian aegis?... When Germany falls they will be on us... We do not want to become communist; we do not want to fall into the Russian orbit but we hope you do not push us into it." This allusion to the Soviets was the clincher. Within forty-eight hours, Roosevelt ordered American air forces to the aid of the French (LAFEBER 1975: 1293).

which may provoke unrest and result in colonial disintegration, and may at the same time alienate from us the European states whose help we need to balance the Soviet power” (*ibid.*).

Harry S. Truman (1945-1953)

Early in May 1945, the OSS paper was forwarded to Harry Truman, the new president. There is no indication of his initial reaction to the paper. But, from the inception of his presidency, Truman embraced the Soviet threat as the organizing rationale of his diplomacy: when de Gaulle visited Washington in August 1945, he found that Truman had “abandoned the plan of a world harmony and admitted that the rivalry between the free world and the Soviet bloc now dominated every other international consideration” (de Gaulle 1984: 906). Consequently, as Scott Bills (1990: 21) has aptly observed, “the attitudes and priorities discussed in the OSS paper... became the basis for American foreign policy: a Eurocentric focus, a global struggle to contain Soviet influence, a retreat from advocacy of anticolonial views which might interfere with consolidation of a Euro-American security system”.

In general, the Truman administration regarded the “colonial question” as an integral component of United States national security interests. Those interests were broadly conceived to include “such remote elements” as an adequate landing strip “on an obscure Pacific atoll or a friendly administration in a little known territory of Central Africa”¹⁸. This expansive national security formulation was given great urgency and concreteness by the Cold War. In this setting, many in Washington agreed with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) that independence for European colonies was “no longer a purely domestic issue between the European colonial powers and their dependencies”—it was related to the complications in United States-Soviet diplomacy. And in this regard, independence worried Washington for “In contrast to the ever closer integration of the Satellites into the Soviet system, there is an increasing fragmentation of the non-Soviet world” (CIA 1948). There was also the fear that independence may result in a “situation of weakness” in the new states which creates an opening for Soviet penetration¹⁹. Given these calculations, the administration believed that “In most dependent areas of the world the security interests of the United States at

18. Paper prepared by the Colonial Policy Review Sub-Committee of the Committee on Problems of Dependent Areas, “United States Policy Toward Dependent Territories”, 26 April 1950, *FRUS 1952-1954*, vol. 3 (1979), 1078.

19. Ridgway B. Knight, “Preliminary Thoughts on the Subject of a U.S. Policy Towards Colonial Areas and Colonial Powers”, 21 April 1952, *FRUS 1952-1954*, vol. 3 (1979), 1106-1107.

the present time will best be served by a policy of support for the Western Colonial Powers"²⁰.

By 1948, American anticolonialism had so mellowed that Arthur Creech Jones, Britain's secretary of state for the colonies, told his cabinet colleagues that the United States had "largely come round to our point of view... [and] are at present too much preoccupied with communism to spare much time for 'British imperialism'"²¹. Two years later, the British ambassador in Washington confirmed that "Anti-colonialism in the United States today is a traditional attitude rather than an active crusading force... the broad masses of the American people, including the liberals, are convinced that the supreme danger confronting their civilization is not old-fashioned colonialism but modern communism. They therefore regard the democracies of Western Europe, among whom the chief colonial powers are numbered, as their natural and indispensable allies"²².

As if to buttress the ambassador's observation, George McGhee, assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs, spoke on 27 June 1951 on how the European colonial presence served as a bulwark against the "communist" threat to Africa. He noted that European colonial rule had ensured Africa's automatic orientation towards the West: "Since three-fourths of the Continent's inhabitants are under European control, and the sovereign countries of Africa are allied both economically and politically with Europe and the United States, Africa is firmly associated with the free world." McGhee (1951: 97-101) also acknowledged the strategic importance of Africa to the Europeans. "The Europeans", he emphasized, "regard their African territories as essential to their economic well-being, their military security, and their political position in the world community. Since the Second World War, Africa's importance to them has been greatly enhanced".

Given that Africa's linkage with the West, and thus insurance against "communism", derived from the European colonial presence and given that Africa was so important to Europe, McGhee's logic implied that the United States should not be expected to support the anticolonial crusade. This way, he shows that the fear of Soviet penetration does not entirely explain the policy of the Truman administration on the "colonial question". In the calculations of the Truman administration, Africa had no intrinsic value; the region's relevance was, instead, a derivative of Washington's European

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20. Paper prepared by the Colonial Policy Review Sub-committee of the Committee on Problems of Dependent Areas, "United States Policy Toward Dependent Territories", 26 April 1950 (*ibid.*: 1078-79).
 21. CAB 129/24, CP (48) 36, Memorandum by colonial secretary, "United Nations General Assembly, 1947: The Colonial Question", 30 June 1948 (Public Record Office [PRO], London).
 22. CO 537/7136, Confidential Desp. from the British ambassador in Washington (Oliver Franks) to the secretary of state for foreign affairs, 14 January 1950 (PRO, London).

concerns. In the first place, United States strategic interests were predicated upon a strong, economically healthy Western Europe. And the United States believed that to be strong and prosperous, Europe needed access to Africa's markets, raw materials, and foodstuffs. Consequently, there were even "serious thoughts [in Washington] about integrating Africa and Europe" (Leffler 1988: 302).

This strategy was eloquently articulated in a February 1948 policy paper prepared by the Policy Planning Staff of the State Department. The paper dwelt on how the exploitation of Africa's resources could help the United States to rehabilitate the European political economy. It defined the basic issue for United States objectives in Europe in terms of the constitution of some "form of political, military and economic union in Western Europe if the free nations of Europe are to hold their own" against the Soviet Union. The key to the realization of this goal was Africa: "a union of Western European nations" should "undertake jointly the economic development and exploitation of the colonial and dependent areas of the African Continent"²³. As it turned out, this thinking and its policy implications—expressed through the exploitation of Africa's raw materials for Europe's benefit—constituted the cornerstone of United States diplomacy and involvement in Africa in the 1950s (Nwaubani 2001: esp. 59-66). In May 1950, McGhee (1950: 1002) graphically illustrated the significance of Africa to Europe's well-being. He pointed out that the volume of Africa's exports to Western Europe in 1948 "totaled about 2.5 billion dollars, or approximately half as much as the United States itself exported to Europe", so that "a relatively small increase in Africa's production will go far toward improving the present dollar deficit position of the Western European countries". This strategic relevance of Africa partially explains why, in the words of Gabriel Kolko (1988: 41-43), "Washington opposed accelerated decolonization process that [would] have cut the economic ties" that bound Africa to Western Europe.

There was also what Kolko calls the "implicit racist disdain American officials had for Africans" (*ibid.*: 112), a disdain which derived from the American hierarchical construction of race which privileges peoples of European descent while ghettoizing peoples of African descent (Hunt 1987: 77-79). In February 1950, the United States consul general in Dakar informed the State Department that "Peoples in Black Africa are basically primitive rather than backward due to racial characteristics and environmental influence". He believed that without European tutelage and

"without the discipline and control of Western nation, ancient antagonisms would burst their present bounds and numerous races or tribes [sic] would attack traditional enemies in primitive savagery. The native people of Africa tend always to mistrust the leadership of their own kind because in themselves they have not yet as a people

23. Report by the Policy Planning Staff, "Review of Current Trends—U.S. Foreign Policy", 24 February 1948, *FRUS, 1948*, vol. 1 (1976: 510-511).

achieved sufficient evolutionary stature to understand the existence of motivation other than the compulsion of self-interest of a very low order or fear.”

Based on this warped anthropological analysis, the consul general could not accept that Africans were capable of managing their independence. “To endow these African groups prematurely with independence and sovereignty”, he continued,

“would only result in creating political entities which would almost immediately become pawns of the Kremlin. Constructive effort without European simulation would cease and the advances already achieved in bringing these areas a few steps forward from the conditions of the bush and the jungles would in a few years under native control, and as a result of native sloth, dishonesty, incompetence and uncooperativeness revert to the status of conditions now observable in these portions of Liberia which are under direct native supervision”²⁴.

The consul general’s views were quite emblematic of the Truman administration. At the May 1950 tripartite foreign ministers’ (France, Britain, United States) meeting in London, the United States excluded Africa from its belief in the “progressive development of all dependent people towards self-government and where conditions are suitable towards independence”. The excuse was that “the peoples of ‘Black Africa’ have not yet achieved full understanding of modern political, social and economic institutions”. Consequently, Washington proposed a paternalistic mission for the colonial powers: “we believe that there must be an orderly, guided development of these people towards political maturity which only time and patience can provide”²⁵.

Truman’s approach to the “colonial question”—and especially the African dimension of this issue—bears the imprint of Secretary of State Dean Acheson. John McNay (2001: 61) has recently emphasized that as secretary of state in 1949-52, “Acheson’s influence over foreign policy... was extraordinary because of his success in ‘managing’ Truman’s decision-making”. Unlike his successor, John Foster Dulles, “Acheson was more responsible for the foreign policy of the United States during his tenure in office than was the president he served, and it is to Acheson more than to Truman that the historian must look to understand the substance of that policy”.

McNay quite deliberately and significantly titled chapter 1 of his book on Acheson: “Champion of Empire”. This must have been informed by his findings that as a young man, Acheson “had nothing but sympathy for the British and their empire”; that he had “personal reasons for celebrating British imperialism”; that he had “lifelong allegiance to the [British]

24. 611.70, 1950-1954, Box 2844, consul general Dakar to State Department, 23 February 1950. Quoted in KENT (2000: 170-71).

25. Policy paper prepared by the Bureau of Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs, “Future of Africa”, 18 April 1950, *FRUS, 1950*, vol. 5 (1978), 1524-1538.

empire”; and that in many ways, Acheson, as a high United States public official, “encouraged the British to believe that it was possible that long-term United States policy could be established to support the empire” (*ibid.*: 11, 12, 42). These dispositions stemmed from the fact that Acheson “grew up in a family whose tradition associated him with the British aristocracy, with service to the Crown, and the Ulster Protestant ascendancy” (*ibid.*: 15). Acheson proudly recalled that his father was “a British subject” and that his mother’s “loyalties were clear too”. She had deep roots in England and one of her brothers was knighted by King George V. Not surprisingly, Acheson (1965: 10, 12) observed that her “enthusiasm for the [British] Empire and the Monarchy was not diluted by a corrupting contact with Canadian nationalism. On the contrary, it was renewed from the very headwaters when she went to boarding school in England”. The Acheson household was one that celebrated the queen’s birthday. Acheson remembered that on that day, “the Union Jack flew from the flagpole, and at dinner we were given a few drops of diluted claret, with which we stood solemnly while my father said, ‘The Queen’, at which we all said, ‘The Queen’, too, and drank our claret” (*ibid.*: 12)²⁶.

“From his early days, Acheson was”, according to McNay (2001: 13), “conscious of his ethnic heritage, and as an adult molded it to suit the identity he fashioned for himself”. He particularly admired the Pax Britannica of the nineteenth century, and, more generally, the age of European imperialism. In a speech at the University of Virginia in 1966, Acheson celebrated the nineteenth-century world-system as a stable

“international order than at any time since or for more than a millennium before... The Peace of Vienna brought about a durable concert of the great empires of Europe. Their colonial possessions spread authority and sanction for order almost everywhere; and where their wits did not run their frigates and gunboats navigated... The result was in large measure the maintenance of peace, security of person and property, respect for the obligation of contract, and greater economic development than in the whole period since the invention of sail and wheel” (Quoted in *ibid.*: 34).

To restore this world-system “was the ideal to which Acheson committed United States foreign policy, despite the imperialism and Eurocentrism that had characterized it...” (*ibid.*: 30).

Lucius Battle, Acheson’s former special assistant, recalls that as secretary of state, he “considered the core relationship that the United States had in the world was with Europe... This point of view assumed the preservation, as much as possible, of the status quo of the various empires or near-empires that existed at the time”²⁷. Acheson marched in lock step with the colonial powers for another reason: he believed that Africans needed a

26. *Ibid.*, 12.

27. Letter from Lucius Battle to Helen Kitchen, 19 January 1988, quoted in KITCHEN (1990: 177).

long period of institution-building, under European tutelage, to get them ready for independence²⁸. Even in March 1961, Acheson could write to his Portuguese friend, Pedro Pereira: “No sensible person can believe that African peoples can find their way toward a stabilized and civilized life without the help of the Europeans who know them best”²⁹. Out of office, Acheson supported continued European domination of Africa, especially in the white settler colonies of Southern Africa and Portugal. Acheson never had any sympathy for anticolonial efforts. “Whatever may be said about colonialism”, Acheson wrote in 1964, “one thing must be said about our attitude toward it, an attitude which we have had for nearly a hundred and fifty years, and that is that anticolonialism is not a policy. It is merely an attitude of mind and not a very sensible one at that” (Acheson 1964: 232).

George McGhee was Acheson’s assistant secretary for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs. Born and raised in Texas, McGhee had a lot in common with Acheson. Like his boss, McGhee was proud of his ethnic background: in his memoir, he introduced himself as an “Old-South English stock”. Like Acheson too, McGhee admired British imperialism. At Oxford, where he went, as Rhodes scholar, for his doctorate, McGhee admits that he “went through a conservative reaction” in his thinking at a time many of his “fellow Rhodes scholars were undergoing a liberal—even a socialist—phase”. As a result, he became “greatly influenced by reading of the life of [his] benefactor, Cecil Rhodes, and his success in expanding the British Empire in Africa. Rhodes, along with Robert Clive and Warren Hastings, who had spearheaded British imperial interests in India, became [his] heroes. Colonialism appeared to [him] not an instrument of oppression but the bearing of the ‘white man’s burden’”. For good measure, McGhee adds: “I regretted being too late to be part of the colonial era.” Writing his memoir against the background of the civil rights movement of the 1960s, McGhee found it prudent to add that by 1949, when he became an assistant secretary, he had come to see racism and colonialism “in quite a different perspective”. Nonetheless, even at that point, he could not “fault the British attitude toward colonialism, since they had”, in his judgement, “adapted their colonial rule to changing circumstances and deserved credit for their accomplishments. Also, they appeared quite willing to withdraw once their colonies had been prepared for self-government” (McGhee 1969: xvi, 8).

With Anglophiles such as Acheson and McGhee in charge of the formulation and execution of United States policy, it was only logical that the basic strategy of the Truman administration should be Eurocentric, defending European interests and power, which for the administration, included the colonial empires.

28. For a more detailed account of the position of the Truman administration on the African dimension of the “colonial question” (NWAUBANI 2001: 34-38, 74-84).

29. Quoted in McNAY (2001: 28).

These factors—United States geopolitical interests and concerns (including the Cold War), the inherent Eurocentric orientation of United States diplomacy, Africa's centrality to Europe's economic recovery, the "racist disdain" for Africans, the ethnic and ideological loyalties of Acheson and McGhee—all combined to ensure a diplomatic and political entente cordiale between the United States and Africa's colonial powers during the Truman presidency. Thus in respect of French West and Equatorial Africa, the stated United States "primary objective" was to keep them under "friendly and effective administration", and this meant the recognition of the "legitimacy and desirability of French political control". As a consequence, Washington approved what it called "the liberal measures" of the 1946 French Constitution and committed itself to the "orderly development of democracy in both territories within the structure of the French Union"³⁰.

At the July 1950 Anglo-American colonial policy talks, John Hickerson, the United States assistant secretary for UN Affairs, assured the British that the United States "was not out to break up the [British] Empire. We consider it as a great force for stability"³¹. Using exactly the same words, he gave a similar assurance to the French at the Franco-American colonial policy talks which followed a few days later. This time, McGhee pointed out the inconsistency "if the United States followed a policy of encouraging European unity and at the same time fragmentation in Africa"³².

Dwight D. Eisenhower (1953-1961)

By the time Eisenhower moved into the White House in January 1953, "Third World" issues—notably, anticolonialism or nationalism and non-alignment—had acquired prominence in international relations. Eisenhower was aware of this reality. On 6 January 1953, two weeks to his first inauguration as president, his diary entry was: "Nationalism is on the march and world communism is taking advantage of the spirit of nationalism to cause dissension in the free world. Moscow leads many misguided people to believe that they can count on communist help to achieve and sustain nationalist ambitions... The free world's hope of defeating the communist aims does not include objecting to national aspirations. We must show the wickedness of purpose in the communist promises and convince dependent

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30. Policy paper prepared by the Bureau of Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs, "Future of Africa", 18 April 1950, *FRUS, 1950*, vol. 5 (1978), 1528.
 31. Summary Record of Colonial Policy Talks with the UK, 5 July 1950, File 350, Accra Consulate, Classified General Records, 1950-52, Box 5 (National Archives (NA), Washington DC).
 32. Summary Records of Colonial Policy Talks with the French, 11 July 1950, Lot 53 D246, Records of the French Desk, 1941-51, Box 1; also 350/8-1450, enclosure in Memorandum, State Department to American consulate general, Dakar, 11 August 1950 (all at NA).

peoples that their only hope of maintaining independence, once attained, is through cooperation with the free world” (Ferrell 1981: 223).

Much of the literature shows that to Eisenhower and his men, “the revolutionary changes that seemed to be activated all over the globe by the collapse of European colonial empires... were regarded as merely the newest form of world communist aggression, requiring an American response not unlike that undertaken in Europe”. The result was that from “its first years in office”, the administration began “to develop and elaborate a conception of containment in those non-Western areas regarded as peripheral by [George] Kennan, Acheson, and the other framers of the containment policy”. It is thus contended that by its failure to “distinguish international communism and nationalist or anticolonial revolution, by seeing the latter as indistinguishable from the former”, the Eisenhower administration “set American policy against the nationalist revolutions of the non-Western world” (Nathan & Oliver 1988: 146-147, 155-156, 176; Gaddis 1990: 218-220; McMahan 1986).

Eisenhower’s personal disposition on the question of European empires was shaped by a number of factors. As was the case with other American public figures, his “fundamental point of reference in foreign policy” was, by instinct, Europe (Alexander 1975: 5-7; Melanson 1987). In the case of Eisenhower, this traditional European orientation was reinforced by his top military command positions in Europe: first as commander of United States troops in Europe (June-July 1942), as head of the Allied invasion of French North Africa and Italy (July 1942-December 1943), as supreme commander of the Allied Expeditionary Forces in Western Europe (1943-1945), and finally, as supreme commander of NATO (1950 to early 1952). The point is not simply that Eisenhower was stationed in Europe, but that in the course of this career, he had close working and personal relationships with the Western European elite and must have internalized much of their perspective on issues such as colonialism. Second, as the “man on the spot”, he was aware of the strategic relevance of colonial resources in Washington’s effort to rehabilitate Western Europe. On these accounts, Eisenhower was ordinarily inclined towards a sustenance, not a negation, of colonialism. In 1951, he stated that he considered Morocco a part of France³³. And when the Republican congressional caucus informed him on 2 July 1957 that Senator John Kennedy intended to propose a resolution in favor of Algerian independence, Eisenhower held that the “people of Algeria still lacked sufficient education and training to run their own government in the most efficient way” (Ambrose 1984: 378). It was therefore no surprise that he desired that the Europeans retain their “stabilizing” influence in their colonies and former colonies. Consequently, he applauded the French Community which

33. 611.71/4-951, Dispatch No. 480 from Amlegation, Tangier, to State Department, 9 April 1951 (NA).

sustained colonial linkages in postcolonial francophone Africa (Eisenhower 1965: 429).

In addition, Eisenhower shared the geopolitical (including Cold War) concerns and presumptions of his predecessor. In this regard, he believed that nationalism lacked any autonomy or the innate capacity to withstand “communist” advances, and therefore that independence had the potential of opening up the “Third World” to Soviet expansion. These positions, it must be said, epitomized his administration’s stand on the “colonial question”. Eisenhower himself (*ibid.*: 572) testifies that his administration was not enthusiastic about Africa’s transition to independence because “with a position of leadership in the Free World, we... could not afford to see turmoil in an area where communists would be only too delighted to take an advantage”.

The basic tenor of the administration’s position on the “colonial question” was better represented by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. His official involvement with the matter goes back to the 1945 San Francisco Conference: as a member of the United States delegation, he opposed “independence” as the objective of UN trusteeship³⁴. Dulles had a lot in common with Acheson: like the latter, he believed that Europe was at the core of United States diplomacy (Pruessen 1982: 214-215, 229-307). And like Acheson, he was concerned, above else, with the dynamics of a favorable global balance of power. On this score, Dulles, like his predecessor, also worried that independence would weaken the colonial powers (*ibid.*: 408-505).

In November 1952—two months before his assumption of office as secretary of state—Dulles proposed to Anthony Eden, Britain’s foreign affairs secretary, that “when Western nations had to face such non-Western problems as those of Colonial Africa... it was of the utmost importance” that Britain, France and the United States “should first... create a united position”³⁵. Given this predisposition, he was unwilling to diverge from, and alienate, the colonial powers. In 1953, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru urged that the United States should use its influence to get the colonial powers to adopt more liberal policies in Africa. The response from Dulles was: “we did not (repeat not) feel we could afford open break with the British and French in this matter”³⁶.

The preoccupation with establishing a common front with the Europeans over Africa was indeed the dominant theme of the Eisenhower presidency.

34. Minutes of the 45th Meeting of the United States Delegation, held at San Francisco, Friday, 18 May 1945, 9 a.m., *FRUS 1945*, vol. 1: *General—The United Nations* (1967), 795.

35. Letter by John F. Dulles to General Dwight D. Eisenhower, 14 November 1952, Ann Whitman Files (AWF), Dulles-Herter Series, Box 1 (Dwight David Eisenhower Library, Abilene (DDEL), Kansas).

36. Telegram No. 1772 from Karachi to the secretary of state, 22 May 1953, Dulles Papers, Box 6 (DDEL).

It is therefore not surprising to find a delighted (British) Colonial Office observe in June 1954 that

“It is the case that, especially since the advent of the Republican Administration, the State Department has been markedly more sympathetic towards the colonial policies and activities of H.M. Government... We believe that this has been the result of an increasing American realization that the grant of premature self-government to colonial peoples, and attempts to apply in practice such catchwords as ‘self-determination’, would merely increase the areas of political instability in the world and expose any newly independent but economically and socially unstable countries which might emerge from it to infiltration by communism”³⁷.

Just a month before the Colonial Office’s glee, the State Department had enumerated a number of policies required to counter the “the aggressive strategy and techniques of Soviet communism”. One of them was “Vitalizing liberty and freedom within the free world so that it becomes a dynamic force countering the revolutionary spirit with which communism imbues its followers”. The department regretted that this objective had been “stifled by U.S. identification with the ‘colonialis’ of UK, France and Belgium... By defending our allies at the UN and at international conferences and failing to play our historic role as an apostle of political liberty, we have enabled communist propaganda plausibly to brand us as today’s leading ‘imperialist’”³⁸. In spite of this diplomatic liability, there was hardly any change in Washington’s position, including its voting behavior at the UN.

In 1960, Washington voted in the UN Political Committee against a resolution calling for independence for Algeria (Hamilton 1960). Later in the same year, the Fourth Committee of the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution holding that Portuguese colonies were in fact not self-governing, and that Lisbon was therefore obliged to submit information about them to the UN as required by Article 73e of the organization’s charter. The United States abstained from this important resolution (*ibid.*), important because Lisbon had, in 1951, incorporated its colonies into the Portuguese state. From then, Portugal regarded any issue relating to its colonies as an “internal” affair, not subject to any external meddling.

In this sequence, the Eisenhower administration ended on a melodramatic note: along with Australia, Belgium, Britain, the Dominican Republic, France, Portugal, Spain and South Africa, the United States abstained from the UN General Assembly “Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples”. The declaration, adopted in December 1960, by a vote of eighty-nine to zero (with nine abstentions), held that the

37. CO 936/317, no. 13, “Notes on Colonialism for Washington Talks”: Note prepared in the Colonial Office for use by Sir W. Churchill and Mr. Eden, June 1954 (PRO, London).

38. State Department Memorandum, “United States Foreign Policy”, 16 May 1954, AWF, Dulles Papers, Box 8 (DDEL).

subjection of peoples to alien domination constituted a denial of fundamental human rights and was contrary to the UN Charter and an impediment to the promotion of world peace and cooperation. The Assembly asserted that all peoples had the right to self-determination and that inadequacy of political, economic, social or educational preparedness should never be a pretext for delaying their independence. It therefore urged that immediate steps be taken in all territories which had not yet attained independence to “transfer all powers to peoples of those Territories, without any conditions or reservations”³⁹.

The United States delegation, it must be noted, had the prior approval of the State Department to vote for the declaration. Eisenhower personally ordered the United States abstention following a request by British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan. When the instruction arrived from the White House, James Wadsworth, the United States representative at the UN, “tried to reach Eisenhower to argue the case. Eisenhower declined to accept his call” (Schlesinger 1965: 510-511)⁴⁰.

I have conceded that more than its predecessor, the Eisenhower administration understood the reality and force of “Third World” nationalism. However, this appreciation clashed with a long-standing Washington culture: its underlying Eurocentric priorities. This, in general, required the United States to safeguard Western European interests and power, which included the colonial status quo. The administration also shared the wider strategic concerns of its predecessor, in terms of a favorable global balance of power. In early 1960, the Navy Department prepared a position paper as part of a broader National Security Council (NSC) study of the possible changes in the global distribution of power. The paper estimated that “Within the next 5 to 10 years virtually all of Africa”, as well as some Middle Eastern and Far Eastern territories “presently under Western control will gain either complete independence or a high degree of autonomy, often associated with an increased drift from Western influence”. The department envisaged that independence would entail “the withdrawal of Western military and naval forces from, and the denial or restriction of Western military base facilities in, many of these areas”. The West’s loss, it was believed, would be the Soviet’s gain. The department anticipated that “In some of these areas significant indigenous military forces... are likely to be developed only with the direct or indirect assistance of the Soviet bloc”. It was also calculated that independence would lead to the “strengthening of anti-Western voting strength in the UN”; but worse was that it promised to provide a pool which the “Soviet bloc” could, “under the guise of ‘peace’ and ‘anti-imperialism’”, mobilize to further its interests at the UN⁴¹. This kind

39. See *General Assembly Records* (15th session), 947th Plenary Meeting, 14 December 1960, 1273-74.

40. See also *The New York Times*, 16 December 1960.

41. Navy Department, “Factors Affecting Changes in the Power Position in Areas Bordering the Southern Oceans (Indian Ocean, South Atlantic)”, enclosure 1 in memorandum from director, Long Range Objectives Group, “Long-Range Requi-

of reasoning counted for much in policy formulation, and thereby heavily compromised the United States position on the liquidation of colonial rule in Africa.

The inescapable conclusion is that like its predecessor, the Eisenhower administration did not consider the transfer of power to Africans a topical issue. The 1959 study prepared for the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations by the Program of African Studies at Northwestern University regretted that the United States had “been reluctant to acknowledge the principle of self-government as fully applicable” to Africans, with the result that

“We [the United States] write many prescriptions for self-government. African leaders must be able to withstand ‘extremist’ pressures, and forsake ‘short-term’ domestic political rewards; they must show moderation; they must be able to ‘rise above mere chauvinism’ in border disputes; they must show preference for democracy as a political form; they must expand the area of their competence as legislators; they must be friendly to the metropolitan powers, recognizing the colonial contributions and showing a willingness to continue or expand existing ties with the metropole; they should demonstrate a preference for free enterprise, at least to the extent of choosing a ‘mixed’ economy; they should be receptive to Western economic cooperation”⁴².

Guinea is a splendid example of the administration’s reluctance to acknowledge the applicability of the principle of self-government to Africans. As is well known, by voting massively against the constitution of the Fifth French Republic on 28 September 1958, Guinea, alone of all the French territories in Africa, automatically opted out of the French Empire and immediately became independent. In the eyes of the French, however, Guinea had sinned. A day later, Paris told Conakry that French officials, about 3,000 in all, would be withdrawn over two months; all French economic and financial aid to Guinea ceased immediately; Guinean students in Paris and Dakar suddenly lost their French scholarships; equipment—including files, maps, telephone sets and lines, medical supplies, even plates and cutlery in the Government Palace—were either “withdrawn” or destroyed. The police and army left only after destroying their barracks⁴³.

Guinea formally proclaimed its independence on 2 October 1958. From then until the end of the Eisenhower administration, it was treated like a pariah by Washington. Explaining his country’s frigid relationship with

rements for the Southern Oceans”, Ser. 0079P83, 31 May 1960 (Naval Historical Center, Washington, DC).

42. Program of African Studies, Northwestern University, *Africa: A Study Prepared at the Request of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, United States Foreign Policy*, No. 4, October 23, 1959; 86th Congress, 1st session (Washington, DC, 1959), 1-2.

43. See confidential paper titled “Guinea: Economic Background Highlights”, (author and date not given), AWF, International Series, Box 25 (DDEL); MORTIMER (1969: 333); HODGKIN & SCHACHTER (1960: 423).

the Eisenhower administration, Sekou Toure pointed out that “there is incontestably a sort of hiatus in these relations, conditioned, I think, on the side of the United States by French-American relations. If you prefer, we have a feeling the evolution of our relations with the United States is closely dependent on the evolution of relations between France and Guinea. There is a sort of subordination of our interests which has been particularly marked recently”⁴⁴.

Toure’s observation—that United States policy towards Guinea mirrored the French mood—is substantiated by United States sources. In his memoir, John Morrow, the first United States ambassador to Guinea, blamed those he called “Washington officials” who “wanted everyone to exercise great care that nothing was done in Guinea to offend General de Gaulle” even when

“It was perfectly clear that de Gaulle hoped that the Guinean experiment would fail and that its failure would serve to deter other French African territories from taking a similar leap toward independence... American officials were unwilling to heed my fervent pleas concerning the necessity of treating Guinea as an independent nation and making good on our oft-repeated assertions of interest in the self-determination of emerging nations. Instead of seizing the initiative... the State Department saw fit to stick to its ‘notion of residual interest’ in its dealings with Guinea” (Morrow 1968: 249-250⁴⁵).

In a memorandum of 21 August 1959, the State Department observed that “Since September 1958 when French Guinea voted to secede from the French Union as it was transformed into the new French Community, United States policy has been hesitant. In the earlier period of Guinean independence the State Department deferred to French sensibilities”⁴⁶. Similarly, the NSC noted that “In an effort to support France’s special relationship, the U.S. after close consultations with France, recognized Guinea about three weeks after receiving Guinea’s request for recognition although strongly urged to grant immediate recognition by Liberia and other African states”⁴⁷. It is not possible to discuss this matter at any length here; suffice it to say that the deference to French sensitivities delayed United States recognition of Guinea, and also affected United States position on Guinea’s admission into the UN, assigning an ambassador to Conakry, and inhibited any United States economic assistance to Guinea (Nwaubani 2001: chap. 7).

44. *The New York Times*, 30 April 1959.

45. Morrow was the first United States ambassador to Guinea, 30 July 1959 to 3 March 1961.

46. 611.70B/8-2159, State Department Office Memorandum, “Guinea”, 21 August 1959 (NA). Also see “United States Relations with Guinea”, enclosure in 611.70B/7-259, Memorandum for the president, “Call of Ambassador John H. Morrow”, 2 July 1959 (NA).

47. NSC 5818, “Report on Africa South of the Sahara Prior to Calendar Year 1960”, 14 January 1959 (Record Group 273, NA).

Eisenhower's response to Guinea's independence shows that in dealing with Africa, the United States was unable to divest itself of the *a priori* thought that it needed to give first consideration to Western European sensitivities, even after colonial rule had ended. More fundamentally, like the Truman administration, Eisenhower's desired a continuing, strong European presence in Africa. Thus as independence became a reality, the administration advocated a strong neocolonial relationship between Africa and Europe in the postcolonial era. NSC 6005, adopted as a policy statement on 9 April 1960, urged that the United States should impress upon Western European countries "the continuing importance to them of a stable and prosperous West Africa and conduct all U.S. activities with a realization that a continued close Eur-African relationship is important to the United States itself". In turn, West Africans were to be impressed with the "fact that their national well-being depends in large part on a continued close economic and cultural relationship with Western Europe". It was therefore recommended that the Western Europeans be urged "to expand their efforts to influence and support their respective dependent and recently independent areas"⁴⁸.

In all, the Eisenhower administration operated within the institutional framework instituted by its predecessor. As Gabriel Kolko found, Washington, in the 1950s, "relegated Africa south of the Sahara to the place of least importance in the Third World and assigned it, despite certain reservations, to the European sphere of influence". As a consequence, the "Eisenhower Administration adopted wholeheartedly its predecessor's policy of opposing political independence, favoring the use of African resources to strengthen Western Europe's recovery, and asking in return only an Open Door for the relatively modest American business interests involved there". Kolko emphasizes that this "European-oriented perspective defined Washington's policies completely, and while a small group that saw Africa as a problem in its right emerged towards the end of the decade to create relatively minor internal differences in its discussions, policy itself remained firmly in the hands of the Europeanists in the State Department... [Thus at] the end of 1960 [Africa] was firmly assigned to Europe's sphere of influence as ever" (Kolko 1988: 19, 111, 115).

48. NSC 6005, "U.S. Policy Toward West Africa", 29 February 1960 (Record Group 273, NA). Its amended and final version is NSC 6005/1, "Statement of U.S. Policy Toward West Africa", 9 April 1960, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 14 (1992), 117-126.

John F. Kennedy (1961-1963): The Limits of the “New Frontier” in Angola⁴⁹

Relative to his predecessors, Kennedy came to the presidency in 1961 with good anticolonial credentials⁵⁰, and a deep interest in Africa⁵¹. Angola, then a Portuguese-ruled territory, was to be the litmus test of both attributes. The brutal nature of Portuguese colonial rule worked very much against nationalist activity and gave the colonial regime a sense of security (Duffy 1962; Newitt 1981). This illusion was shattered in Angola in 1961. On 4 February 1961, the main Luanda prison and two police barracks were attacked by members and supporters of the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA). More serious was the outbreak of widespread violence in northern Angola on 15 March, the handiwork of the União dos Povos de Angola (UPA) (Marcum 1969; Macqueen 1997). As a result of these developments, Angola became the dominant issue in United States/Portuguese relations during the Kennedy presidency. It was also one of the African issues which received “proportionally more” of Kennedy’s attention: only the Congo and Ghana shared this spotlight (Mahoney 1983: ix).

On 20 February 1961, following the incident of 4 February, Liberia formally requested the UN Security Council to take up the situation in Angola. On 2 March, C. Burke Elbrick, the United States ambassador to

49. The general outline of Kennedy’s response to the nationalist effort in Angola is already wellknown (NOER 1985: chap. 4, 1989: 269-274; MAHONEY 1983: chap. 7-8). I am drawing on the more recently declassified materials to shed more light on the subject.

50. This derived from Kennedy’s sharp 1956 criticism of Eisenhower’s “indecision, confusion, haste, timidity, and an excessive fear of giving offense” on the colonial question; and his 1957 speech on Algeria. For the speeches, see “Remarks of Senator John F. Kennedy, Fourth Annual Rockhurst Day Banquet of Rockhurst College, Kansas City, Missouri, Saturday, June 2, 1956”, *Congressional Record—Senate*, 6 June 1956; “Facing facts on Algeria”, speeches of Hon. John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts in the Senate of the United States, Tuesday, July 2, 1957 (Washington, DC, 1957).

51. He is said to have made 479 references to Africa during the 1960 presidential campaign, emphasizing that “we have lost ground in Africa because we neglected and ignored the needs and aspirations of the African people” (SCHLESINGER 1965: 554). Richard MAHONEY (1983: 30-31) has pointed out that much of this was sheer political opportunism. Kennedy’s “Senate record on liberal issues”, he says, “was weak and, in the case of civil rights, particularly so”. Set in this context, “Kennedy’s handling of the African issue in the 1960 campaign—his pitch to the liberal and black vote—was a minor classic in political exploitation in foreign policy”. Mahoney therefore dismisses the references to Africa as a strategy to woo “American blacks without alienating Southern whites”. Nonetheless, before Kennedy was inaugurated as president, he assembled an impressive team of academic specialists on Africa; this team prepared a 134-page (plus nine appendices) policy guideline on Africa for him. See “Africa Task Force Report”, Pre-Presidential Papers, Transitional Files: Task Force Reports, 1960, Box 1073 (John F. Kennedy Library, Boston).

Portugal, reported from Lisbon that he regretted that the United States was considering an affirmative vote on the Liberian proposal. He noted that such a vote would produce an immediate anti-United States reaction in Portugal and would also jeopardize any chance of persuading Portugal to make political reforms in Angola⁵². Two days later, the State Department instructed Elbrick to “seek soonest” a meeting with Antonio de Oliveira Salazar, president of the Portuguese Council of Ministers. The meeting was intended to make Salazar understand that he could not “reasonably expect” United States support in the UN “on this issue”. The causal context, Elbrick had to stress, was that “on [the] basis [of the] most sympathetic examination [of] Portuguese African policies”, Washington had concluded that “those policies are so totally out of step with political and economic advancement elsewhere in Black Africa that unless Portugal adjusts her policies to African realities, increasingly serious outbreaks in her territories may be expected in future”. The department insisted that systematic actions “are now imperative for the political, economic and social advancement of all inhabitants Portuguese African provinces towards full self-determination within realistic timetable”⁵³.

Having thus given Portugal an advance warning, the United States voted, on 15 March, in favor of a Security Council resolution which urged Portugal to introduce reforms aimed at permitting Angolans to exercise the right of self-determination. In addition to the United States, the sponsors of the resolution (Ceylon, Liberia, and the United Arab Republic) as well as the Soviet Union voted for it; but the other six members of the Security Council (including Britain and France) abstained; there was none against. The resolution thus failed of adoption since it did not get the required seven votes. In spite of this outcome, the vote was a turning point for the Kennedy administration. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., Kennedy’s special assistant, has written that “the President seized the opportunity afforded by the Angolan resolution in the UN to dramatize the new American attitude toward African colonial question”. The vote, he added, “liberated the United States from its position of systematic deference to the old colonial powers” (Schlesinger 1965: 556, 561).

Explaining its vote, the United States stated that it would be failing in “its duties as a friend of Portugal if it failed to express honestly its conviction that step-by-step planning within Portuguese territories and its acceleration is now imperative for the successful political and economic and social advancement of all inhabitants under Portuguese administration—advancement, in brief, toward full self-determination”. The statement pointed to the Congo where the “pressure of nationalism rapidly overtook the preparation of the necessary foundation essential to the peaceful and effective exercise of sovereign self-government” and stressed that it was very important

52. See *FRUS, 1961-1963*, vol. 21 (1995), p. 541, notes 1 and 2.

53. Telegram from the State Department to the United States embassy in Portugal, 4 March 1961, *FRUS, 1961-1963*, vol. 13 (1994), 895-897.

that “similar conditions do not exist for the Angola of tomorrow”⁵⁴. Anxious to maintain the momentum, Kennedy, on 18 July 1961, approved that a special envoy be sent to inform Salazar that the United States “is convinced Portugal must without delay institute basic and far-reaching reforms for her African territories”. He specified that the scope of the reforms must be such as “to lead eventually to self-determination”⁵⁵.

The administration’s anticolonial position amounted to an anti-Portuguese policy—and this, by definition, raised a number of complications. First, through NATO, Portugal was a close ally of the United States. And there was the related issue of the United States military bases in the Azores, islands belonging to Portugal. The demands of a united NATO alliance, coupled with the Azores, meant that there were also a powerful pro-Portugal (notably, the Bureau of European Affairs and Pentagon) voices within the Kennedy administration (Schlesinger 1965: 562). There were equally powerful pro-Portugal lobbies outside the administration, the most notable and influential being Dean Acheson (Brinkley 1992: chap. 10). The immediate complicating factor was that the agreement by which Portugal authorized United States use of the Azores was to expire on 31 December 1962. As Secretary of State Dean Rusk recognized, the United States “interest in retaining the Azores is the only lever by which the Portuguese can hope to obtain a modification of our African policy... It is expected that they will not press this advantage to the full immediately, but will maintain constant pressure down to the termination date of the Agreement and beyond in seeking to obtain modification of United States policy”⁵⁶.

The differences within the administration over Angola were already evident by June 1961. The State Department insisted that the administration “must maintain our posture as a champion of self-determination in Africa... [and] press Portugal strongly to undertake adequate reforms in its African territories now”. In the department’s view, the United States should be prepared to pay the necessary price for this policy, that is, “abandon the [Azores] base and/or see Portugal withdraw from NATO in the interest of larger and more important considerations”⁵⁷. On the other hand, the Defense Department forcefully argued that the Azores was absolutely vital for United States military operations in Europe and the Middle East. “Accordingly, courses of action which would gravely jeopardize retention

54. “U.S. Supports Afro-Asian Resolution on Angola—Statement by Ambassador Stevenson”, *Department of State Bulletin*, 3 April 1961, 497-499.

55. Memorandum No. 60, from the president to the secretary of state, 18 July 1961, *FRUS, 1961-1963*, vol. 13 (1994), 901-902.

56. Memorandum from Secretary of State Rusk to President Kennedy, “Negotiations of the Renewal of the Azores Base Agreement”, 12 June 1962, *FRUS, 1961-1963*, vol. 13 (1994), 932-933.

57. Memorandum from Samuel H. Belk of the NSC staff to the president’s special assistant for NSC affairs (Bundy), “Angola”, 29 June 1961, *FRUS, 1961-1963*, vol. 21 (1995), 545-546.

of the Azores would be unacceptable from a military point of view for the foreseeable future"⁵⁸.

By July 1961, Kennedy himself was beginning to couple the Angola policy with the Azores. Late that month, it was widely reported in the media that there was a "Made in America" mark on a bomb dropped by the Portuguese on an Angolan village. This was evidence that United States military hardware, made available to Portugal under the Military Assistance Program, were being diverted to Portuguese military forces in Angola. On 2 August, Kennedy worried that "This is going to present problems to us both in Angola and in Portugal". Consequently, he wondered: "Have we considered (1) whether we can be successful in persuading the Portuguese of this, or (2) whether this will have an adverse effect upon use of the Azores base"⁵⁹. In response, the secretary of defense advised that: "The critical military importance of our rights and continued use of our facilities in the Azores... are such that any further public pressure on the Portuguese regarding the use of U.S. military matériel in Angola should be avoided"⁶⁰.

What followed was a gradual retreat from the Africanist, anticolonial position on Angola. On 27 November 1961, Kennedy met with Elbrick to discuss "Portugal's recent problems in Africa" and in the UN and their bearing on United States/Portuguese relations, including the renegotiation of the Azores base agreement. Kennedy acknowledged that Portugal was unhappy about United States actions in the UN and felt that it would be "unwise to open the negotiations under the present circumstances". Above all, he was anxious to find the "best ways of improving the situation over the next few months". His conclusion was that "it might be wise for the U.S. to abstain on some of the votes affecting Portugal in the UN"⁶¹.

From 1962, the United States became very cautious, toning "down the Afro-Asian assaults on Portugal" (Schlesinger 1965: 562). That was why, as Schlesinger observed, "we took part in the drafting of resolutions" (*ibid.*). There was, at the same time, a determined effort to repair relations with Portugal. Thus in June 1962, Secretary of State Rusk had a two-and-a-half hour meeting with Salazar⁶². That meeting was said to have "provided an opportunity to make some progress in resolving some of the problems" between the United States and Portugal⁶³. The caution at the UN and the

58. *Ibid.*

59. *Ibid.*, 548, n. 1.

60. Memorandum from the president's special assistant for NSC affairs (Bundy) to President Kennedy, "Portuguese Use of U.S. Military Equipment in Angola", 31 August 1961, *FRUS, 1961-1963*, vol. 21 (1995), 548-549.

61. Memorandum of Conversation, "Portuguese Matters", 27 November 1961, *FRUS, 1961-1963*, vol. 13 (1994), 907.

62. See Memorandum of Conversation, "Secretary's European Trip (June 18-28, 1962)", 28 June 1962, *FRUS, 1961-1963*, vol. 13 (1994), 936-941.

63. Memorandum of Conversation, "Portuguese-American Relations", 5 September 1962, *ibid.*, 944.

effort to repair United States/Portuguese relations were paralleled by an equally radical shift in Washington's accommodation of Holden Roberto, the leader of the UPA.

About the only difference between the UPA and MPLA led by Agostinho Neto was that the MPLA was Marxist-oriented. On this account, the United States easily chose Roberto over Neto. In March 1961, the State Department learned that the CIA had been giving Roberto "financial assistance for some years"⁶⁴. Barely two months later, Rusk instructed that "We must take immediate steps to cut off any relationship with Holden Roberto which would interfere with or discredit an official denial that the U.S. Government is giving aid and support to the terrorists in Angola". This, he explained, would mean, "as a minimum, two steps: (1) to stop any regular monthly payments from any official agency to Roberto; (2) to cease direct contacts between him and *any* members of our Embassy staff in Leopoldville". Also excluded was "assistance with arms or any funds which could purchase arms"⁶⁵. In October 1962, this policy of no contact with Roberto was expanded. The State Department pointed out that the United States had pledged that "in an effort to accommodate" Portugal, Roberto would not be received at "our UN Mission in New York and officials of our UN Mission will not seek him out for conversations. Roberto furthermore will not be received at the Department. We would not change this practice without first notifying the Government of Portugal that we are doing so"⁶⁶.

G. Mennen Williams, assistant secretary of state for African Affairs, protested that "If we cut ourselves off from these [nationalist] leaders, the result can only be... to abandon them to anti-Western agitators and Soviet agents". This, he stressed, was particularly true with respect to Roberto, who "has sought to remain aloof from the Communists... By turning our back on Roberto, we may force him to an accommodation with the MPLA and thus ease the way for the expansion of Communist influence throughout the Angolan nationalist movement". Williams added that a policy of aloofness "may also prevent our acquiring some influence with the MPLA" itself since Neto "has recently let it be known that he would like to have overt contact with our Embassy in Leopoldville. If we could establish relations with him, we might be able to counteract Communist influence in his group"⁶⁷. Responding, George McGhee, the under secretary of state for

64. Letter from the director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Hilsman) to the president's special assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy), 23 May 1961, *FRUS, 1961-1963*, vol. 21 (1995), 543.

65. Memorandum from Secretary of State Rusk to the deputy under secretary of state for Political Affairs (Johnson), 18 June 1961, *ibid.*, 544-545. Emphasis in original.

66. Memorandum of Conversation, "Portuguese Negotiations", 24 October 1962, *FRUS, 1961-1963*, vol. 13 (1994), 949.

67. "Contact with African Nationalist Leaders", Memorandum from the assistant secretary of state for African Affairs (Williams) to Secretary of State Rusk, 23 October 1962, *FRUS, 1961-1963*, vol. 21 (1995), 561.

Political Affairs, urged Williams to desist from pressing for a review of the policy on contacts with Roberto. Williams was reminded of the importance of the “current” United States negotiations with Portugal, which had given rise to the “commitments regarding contacts” with the Angolans⁶⁸.

The policy shift went full-cycle in 1963. At the UN, the United States started abstaining from votes on Angola. On 4 April 1963, the Committee of 24 adopted a draft resolution which noted “with deep regret and great concern” Portugal’s continued refusal to implement UN resolutions relating to the territories under its administration. The committee also observed that through its military forces, Portugal had continued its repressive measures against Angolans. The resolution therefore drew the attention of the Security Council to the “present situation with a view to its taking appropriate measures”, including sanctions, to secure Portugal’s compliance with the relevant resolutions. The resolution was adopted by a vote of 19 to 0, with five abstentions, including the United States⁶⁹.

On 1 July 1963, the State Department instructed the United States embassy in Leopoldville not to “initiate or seek out contacts” with Angolan nationalist leaders. “If they seek [to] see Embassy officer, [they] should be received by officers other than Ambassador, preferably at Pol[itical] Officer level.” In case the Angolans insisted on seeing the ambassador and the latter was convinced that “direct contact by him desirable, he should submit appropriate justification and request prior authorization from Dept.”. The embassy was further instructed to inform the Portuguese embassy in Leopoldville of any meetings with the Angolans, and that “nationalists seen at their request”⁷⁰.

In mid-July 1963, against the background of an impending consideration of the Angolan issue by the UN Security Council, the Kennedy administration felt the need to revisit its policy on the matter. The State Department recognized that the United States had reached the point where it had to take a “difficult decision” in the council. There were, it believed, two choices: (1) pursuing “our present policy”; and (2) “Moving to a stronger and more vigorous anti-colonial stance, but recognizing that there is greater risk of deterioration in United States-Portuguese relations”. The department explained that with the first policy option, “we are likely to have serious difficulties in the Council and will almost certainly find that within several months our position will be almost universally understood as one of support for Portugal against Africa”. The second would lead to an increased deterioration in United States relations with Portugal, “but would strengthen our position on the colonial issue throughout the non-Communist world,

68. *Ibid.*, 562, n. 1.

69. *Ibid.*, 566, notes 1 and 2.

70. Telegram from the State Department to the United States embassy in the Republic of the Congo, 1 July 1963, *ibid.*, 567-68.

increase and diminish opportunities for Communist settlement of the hard-core problems of the southern third of Africa. It would probably be applauded by those who are fighting for equal rights for Negroes here at home"⁷¹.

The department regretted that after "years of advocating moral suasion and peaceful evolution and opposing coercive measures, such as sanctions and ostracism, our moderate approach has not moved Portugal toward acceptance of self-determination". At the same time, "African diplomatic pressures are increasing on the United States as foremost among those countries... believed to have it in their power to effect a peaceful change in Portuguese policies". The department was not oblivious of the need to "maintain close relations with Portugal despite our strong disagreements with its colonial policy" because a sharp "break with our past position may cause Portugal to decide to terminate our use of the Azores, to adopt a policy of non-cooperation with or even withdrawal from NATO, and to cancel the Radio Free Europe broadcasting agreement"⁷².

Nonetheless, the department concluded that the "totality of U.S. interests argues strongly for a further step forward, analogous to our action in the Security Council on Angola in March 1961". To this end, it proposed that the United States should initiate or support a Security Council resolution containing four basic elements: (a) a reaffirmation of "our support for the timely exercise of self-determination" in Portuguese-controlled territories; (b) a call upon Portugal and the African nationalists to "seek a peaceful solution in accordance with the Charter, making clear that negotiations must be directed toward establishing a timetable within which this principle will be exercised, and negotiations should include nationalist leaders from Portuguese territories and other African leaders"; (c) a request that the UN secretary-general should designate a special representative "who would help facilitate such talks and otherwise assist the parties concerned"; and (d) "A request that all member states refrain from providing Portugal any arms for use in the Portuguese African territories and otherwise refrain from actions rendering more difficult the peaceful and timely achievement of self-determination in the Portuguese African territories". In anticipation of the strain on relations with Portugal which would follow, the department suggested that "we consider on a contingency basis any alternatives to the Azores which may exist"⁷³.

As usual, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) presented a counter viewpoint. They stressed that the loss of Azores "would seriously degrade the responsiveness, reliability, and control of major United States forces. With regard

71. Memorandum from Secretary of State Rusk to President Kennedy, "U.S. Policy re Portuguese Territories and that U.S. Strategy in UN Security Council", 10 July 1963, *ibid.*, 568-72.

72. *Ibid.*

73. *Ibid.*

to air transportation to Europe, the Middle-East, and Africa, costs in tonnage and time would be raised appreciably, with direct effect on limited war or contingency actions". They also drew attention to the "divisive effect on NATO of further censure of Portugal", adding: "At a time when the Alliance is already strained, the withdrawal of Portugal as a result of affronts by her Allies could dangerously weaken our efforts to revitalize NATO⁷⁴".

The JCS therefore advised that any UN resolution on the Angolan issue "should be consistent" with the organization's charter. This meant that "measures which advocate (a) elimination of colonial rule by force, (b) support of military or subversive action in any of the territories or countries, or (c) interfere with internal affairs or legally established governments, should be resisted as being inconsistent with the principles of the Charter". Above all, the JCS insisted that in order to protect vital United States strategic military interests in the Azores and avoid further straining the NATO alliance, the United States should resist any strong measures against Portugal⁷⁵.

The decision day was 18 July—the day the administration had to weigh the two proposals and take a position. For this, Kennedy met with officials from both the State Department and the Defense Department. Leading the State Department were Secretary Rusk; Adlai Stevenson, the ambassador to the UN; and Assistant Secretary Williams. Secretary Robert McNamara and another official came for Defense. From the White House were special assistants Schlesinger and William Brubeck⁷⁶. Kennedy intended to present a test ban treaty to the Senate that summer—thus, he "had to take into account the possibility that the loss of the Azores, on top of a test ban treaty, might open the way to a Republican attack on the administration for alleged neglect of vital national interests". He was therefore more persuaded by the JCS proposal. Consequently, he wondered, why "should we take the initiative in pressing a resolution on Portugal? It would only get us in trouble with the Portuguese". Besides, he thought "the French might use an American lead as a pretext to criticize us to the Portuguese. What if we hung back, did nothing and let nature take its course? He hated, he said, to have the United States become the scapegoat. We could not afford to loose the Azores with the test ban coming up" (Schlesinger 1965: 582; Martin 1977: 767).

Stevenson replied that the absence of a United States initiative "might leave the field clear for an extremist resolution". But Kennedy "insisted that we take it easy" (Martin 1977: 767). He then asked Stevenson what

74. "U.S. Policy Toward Portugal and Republic of South Africa", Memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Secretary of Defense McNamara, 10 July 1963, *ibid.*, 498-500.

75. *Ibid.*

76. Memorandum for the Record, "Meeting with the President on Portuguese Africa", 18 July 1963, *ibid.*, 573.

the probable French attitude would be; the response was that “France, as usual, would seek the best of both worlds”. Following this, Kennedy urged, “Well, let us try that this time” (Schlesinger 1965: 582). In the end, Stevenson was instructed, “in light of the guidance of this discussion and the President’s desire to avoid a conspicuous American initiative to use his own discretion in the development of tactics of a Security Council debate”, bearing in mind that “it is of the utmost importance to avoid a risk of losing the Azores”⁷⁷.

On July 22-31, the Security Council met on Angola. Stevenson not only attended the meetings—but, as usual, he worked behind the scenes to water down the resolution. In its final form, the resolution, amended to reflect Stevenson’s position (Martin 1977: 767), called upon Portugal to recognize the right of the peoples of its colonial territories to self-determination and independence. The council requested that “all States should refrain forthwith from offering the Portuguese Government any assistance which would enable it to continue its repression of the people of the Territories under its administration”⁷⁸. When the resolution came to vote on July 31, Kennedy “at the last minute decided the United States should abstain” (Martin 1977: 767). The resolution was adopted 8-0 with the United States, Britain, and France abstaining.

By October, a month before Kennedy’s tragic death, the policy environment was such that William Brubeck, one of his top national security aides, could assert that “The key fact is that we are reaching a point where no further concessions can be made to the Africans. We are going to have to take positions which will be more pleasing to the Portuguese and less so to the Black Africans”. He advocated that Salazar “should be cultivated assiduously...” “We should”, Brubeck emphasized, “take every opportunity for quiet cooperation and avoid unnecessary frictions” with Portugal⁷⁹. He argued that there was nothing to worry about Africans—for “the Africans’ bark is much worse than their bite on the Portuguese African issues”. Above all, the “cost of resisting the Africans at the UN has been overstated”⁸⁰.

Thus, in the end, the day was carried by Acheson, the European Bureau, and the Pentagon, all of whom favored a European-oriented policy, and insisted on the strategic indispensability of the Azores. “In a reversal of policy, secret arms shipments first intended for the Angolan nationalists were rerouted to Salazar to use against the nationalists” (Brinkley 1992: 313-314; Mahoney 1983: 220-222; Marcum 1969: 275-277).

77. Memorandum for the Record, “Meeting with the President on Portuguese Africa”, 18 July 1963, *FRUS, 1961-1963*, vol. 21 (1995), 573.

78. See *FRUS, 1961-1963*, vol. 21 (1995), 578, n. 1.

79. Memorandum from William H. Brubeck of the NSC staff to the president’s special assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy), 29 October 1963, *FRUS, 1961-1963*, vol. 21 (1995), 505-506.

80. *Ibid.*

“In no part of the third world”, Schlesinger wrote, “did Kennedy pioneer more effectively than in Africa” (Schlesinger 1965: 551). Beyond the symbolic gestures, Kennedy represented no departure from his predecessors: in April 1962, Assistant Secretary Williams told Secretary of State Rusk that the administration had to observe the African Freedom Day “To show our official continuing concern, admittedly ceremonial, for African freedom”⁸¹. In a January 1962 essay, Rupert Emerson observed that “The traditional American hostility to colonialism has lost its vigor... because the demands of ordinary courtesy make it difficult to denounce as wholly evil what their allies are inclined to point to with pride”. The Kennedy administration, he stressed, had “adopted a more positive and flexible policy toward Africa, and Africans have expected great things of it, but the basic American positions remain unchanged... we are conservative in our effort to preserve what we find good in the colonial regimes and the heritage they leave behind” (Emerson 1962: 309).

The Kennedy administration shared the same policy benchmarks with its two immediate predecessors. Quite evident, as the Angolan case shows, were the wider geopolitical concerns—notably, the Cold War and the unity of NATO. William Attwood, Kennedy’s ambassador to Guinea, recalled the continuing influence of what he (Attwood) called “Eurafrica”—“the idea that Africa remained a European semi-dependency and the United States should not intrude”, even after independence (Attwood 1967: 290). In 1961, the Kennedy White House acknowledged that relative to the United States, Britain and France “are still bearing a primary responsibility” in Africa. No change was envisaged, because “the U.S. has quite enough commitments in the world, and there is no compulsion in the American Government to extend those commitments where our allies, much strengthened by their remarkable growth in the 1950’s can deal with the situation”⁸². A 1963 report again described Africa as “an area of European responsibility”, which meant that “U.S. role should be limited or supplemental”⁸³.

Contrary to David Gibbs’ claim, the Kennedy administration incessantly canvassed for a continued European influence in postcolonial Africa. At their meeting on 7 May 1961, Secretary of State Rusk assured Franco Nogueira, the Portuguese foreign minister, that the United States “has no desire [to] get Portugal out of Angola; on the contrary we hope they will be able to make arrangements with local inhabitants which will permit them to

81. Internal State Department memorandum, AF—G. Mennen Williams to the secretary, 11 April 1962, Records of G. Mennen Williams, 1961-66, Box 10 (NA).

82. Memorandum from the president’s deputy special assistant for National Security Affairs (Rostow) to the president’s special assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy), 13 May 1961, *FRUS, 1961-1963*, vol. 21 (1995), 291.

83. This report, part of a larger study for “FY 1964 Congressional” has no title or date, but one will find it under Papers of John H. Ohly, Foreign Aid Files: Subject File, 1950-68, Box 113 (HSTL).

stay on to their mutual benefit”⁸⁴. Twenty days later, the State Department prepared the “talking points” for Kennedy’s impending meeting with Charles de Gaulle. The department emphasized: “We strongly believe France should continue to play a major role in Africa especially in the former French territories... We are impressed with the strength of the cultural and other relationships between France and these territories and consider their continuation in our common interest”⁸⁵.

Any explanation of Kennedy’s policy behavior must take into account that although United States interest in Africa expanded in the 1950s, concrete and identifiable interests remained sparse; during Kennedy’s presidency, there were still no deep commitments, no vested interests, whether one talks in economic or strategic terms. This point was succinctly made by George Ball, Kennedy’s under secretary of state. On 29 August 1963, Ball had a lengthy meeting with Salazar, the Portuguese leader. The meeting was designed to clear the misunderstandings which had arisen from the March 1961 United States vote on the Angolan issue at the UN. In the course of the meeting, Ball pointed out that after World War II, the United States “felt obliged to move into certain power vacuums created by the retirement of certain European countries from areas in which they had previously been vitally interested, e.g., Viet Nam, Laos, etc.”. At the same time, the United States had given “billions of dollars to India and Pakistan to protect the sub-continent from communism and to meet what had previously been a British responsibility”. On the other hand, Ball—according to the minutes of the meeting—“emphasized that the continent of Africa was only of marginal interest to the U.S. as far as American national interests are concerned”. Commercial possibilities in Africa, he said, “are limited and we have no large economic ambitions there... He said that he would like to emphasize again that of all the areas in the world Africa was the least important from the point of view of American national interests”⁸⁶.

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It is clear from the survey here that the United States was anything but a catalyst in the “transfer of power” from the Europeans in sub-Saharan Africa. A study of the United States role in the “demise of the Central

84. Telegram from Secretary of State Rusk to the State Department, 8 May 1961, *FRUS, 1961-1963*, vol. 13 (1994), 898.

85. Talking Points, “President’s visit to de Gaulle, Paris, May 31-June 2, 1961”, 27 May 1961, *ibid.*, 657. Also see “Bilateral Talks with French on African Problems: Memorandum of Conversation”, 9-10 July 1962, National Security Files, Box 2 (John F. Kennedy Library, Boston).

86. Telegram from the United States embassy in France to the State Department, 31 August 1963, *FRUS, 1961-1963*, vol. 13 (1994), 971.

African Federation” in the period 1959-63 similarly found that “the United States was remarkably consistent in its backing for British policy in the Federation” (Butler 2000). There is therefore no evidence to substantiate the view by Wm. Roger Louis and Ronald Robinson, referenced earlier, that the United States insisted on “liberal advances toward independence”. It is worthy of note that in 1964, Assistant Secretary G. Mennen Williams examined the records and concluded:

“In reviewing our relationships with the British in Africa on the question of whether we ‘pushed’ them, I believe I can safely say that in no place in Africa did we push them in any way at all with the possible exception of Southern Rhodesia. In Southern Rhodesia our push wasn’t so much relating to time as to how favorable terms should be given to the African Nationalists... Publicly, even to UN support when it was tough, we have supported the British in Southern Rhodesia”⁸⁷.

What Williams said concerning Britain was equally true of the other colonial powers: in the period up till 1963, the United States pressured none of them into making political concessions to Africans.

A 1954 policy paper was explicit that a “major U.S. interest” in Africa was: “Support of the colonial powers’ presence in the area and of their responsibility for the security, political and material progress of the African peoples, and the latter’s adherence to the free world”⁸⁸. In the period covered in this paper, the colonial powers had considerable political, economic, and sociocultural leverage in Africa. It was thus convenient for the United States to rely on this European influence as the stabilizing force in Africa. This arrangement implicitly ruled out alienating those powers or undermining their position in Africa in any real sense. Washington desired that the Europeans should continue with this stabilizing role even after independence. At the April 1959 tripartite (Britain-France-United States) talks on Africa, the United States delegation surveyed the political developments in Africa at the time and assured the Europeans that Washington considered it “essential” that the changes should take place “in an orderly manner and in the closest cooperation with the Western powers. Europe and Africa are complementary, and the closest ties must be preserved after the colonial period has passed”. The Europeans were further assured that the United States regarded them as “best equipped” for sustaining Western influence in Africa⁸⁹.

87. State Department memorandum, G. Mennen Williams to Governor Harriman, “Did U.S. Push’ British into Giving Independence in Africa”, 12 February 1964, Records of G. Mennen Williams, 1961-62 (NA).

88. Paper prepared by the National Security Council (NSC) Staff for the NSC Planning Board, “Africa: Major U.S. Interests”, n.d., *FRUS, 1952-1954*, vol. 11 (1983), 102. (This paper was sent to the NSC Planning Board by NSC Executive Secretary Lay on 17 March 1954. See *ibid.*, n. 1, p. 101.)

89. Memorandum of Conversation, “First Tripartite Talks on Africa”, 16 April 1959, *FRUS, 1958-1960*, vol. 14 (1992), 47.

These policy papers point to Washington's endorsement of European colonialism, and then neocolonialism, in Africa. Indeed, one of the major themes of my book, *The United States and Decolonization in West Africa*, is that from the mid-1950s—with the imminence of independence in British West Africa—the translation of decolonization into neocolonialism became the thrust of United States policy in Africa. It is therefore safe to say that from Truman to Kennedy, the one constant in United States policy was a continuing, strong European presence and influence in Africa.

Scholarly and popular interest in the role of the United States in the decolonization process is, in large part, fed by a mythology frequently invoked by the American political and intellectual establishment. In his memoir, Truman, for example, conveniently side-stepped the experience of the Native Americans and asserted that “colonialism in any form is hateful to Americans. America fought her own war of liberation against colonialism, and we shall always regard with sympathy and understanding the desire of people everywhere to be free of colonial bondage” (Truman 1955: 275, 237-238). We need not bother about the “sympathy and understanding” which the Truman administration showed to the African cause. The real issue is the fallacy that white America itself had been a victim of colonialism: this would have been analogous to the French settlers in colonial Algeria or the British settlers in colonial Kenya or their kinsmen in then Rhodesia claiming that they, and not the Africans, were the colonized. Similarly, the claim by Anglo-America that they were the first to win independence from British rule would have been analogous to Ian Smith and his kinsmen in then Rhodesia asserting that their unilateral declaration of independence in 1965 was intended to end British colonial rule in the territory. Bernard Lewis has made the point that “the colonized in the U.S. were the Native Americans, not British settlers” and that the American Revolution was engineered and fought “not by Native American nationalists but by British settlers, and, far from being a victory against colonialism, it represented colonialism's ultimate triumph—the English in North America succeeded in colonizing the land so thoroughly that they no longer needed the support of the mother country”⁹⁰.

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90. Bernard Lewis, “The Revolt of Islam”, *The New Yorker*, 19 November 2001, p. 54.

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ABSTRACT

In the existing literature on the end of European colonial rule in Africa, the United States (U.S.) occupies a pride of place. The U.S., it is said, played a facilitating role, by prodding the Europeans into speedy political concessions to Africans. This viewpoint remains quite influential and is still regurgitated in textbooks and classrooms in African history. It does not matter that the claims for American anticolonialism are based, not on study of the relevant primary records, but on assumptions. The increasing availability, through declassification, of the U.S. official records strongly argues for an empirical study of a subject so germane to the Africanist discourse on decolonization. This is precisely what this paper does—and it clearly shows that the popular perception of the U.S. role in the decolonization process is very misleading. The U.S., its is quite apparent, desired and worked for a strong European presence in Africa, even after the independence. The paper also offers explanations for this policy behavior, and in the process, draws attention to other salient aspects of the U.S. policy towards Africa in the period 1941-1963: for example, the overly Eurocentric bias of policy, the interest in exploiting African resources for the rehabilitation of Europe, and Africa's low rating in U.S. strategic calculations.

RÉSUMÉ

Les États-Unis et la liquidation de l'autorité coloniale européenne en Afrique tropicale, 1941-1963. — Les États-Unis occupent une place de choix dans la littérature consacrée à la fin du colonialisme en Afrique. Ce pays, dit-on, a facilité le processus en poussant les Européens à de rapides concessions politiques avec les Africains. Ce point de vue a encore du poids aujourd'hui, et il est fréquemment exprimé dans les livres et les cours consacrés à l'histoire de l'Afrique. Peu importe que les prétentions d'un anticolonialisme américain soient fondées non pas sur une étude de sources de première main mais sur des suppositions. Le nombre croissant de documents officiels désormais accessibles à tous plaide en faveur d'une étude empirique d'un sujet intimement lié au discours africaniste sur la décolonisation. C'est exactement l'objectif de cet article qui montre que la perception courante du rôle des États-Unis dans le processus de décolonisation est trompeuse. Les États-Unis, de manière tout à fait évidente, souhaitaient et s'efforçaient de conserver une forte présence européenne en Afrique, même après les indépendances. Cet article explique les raisons de cette attitude et attire l'attention sur certains aspects saillants de la politique américaine envers l'Afrique entre 1941 et 1963 : un parti pris excessif en faveur de l'Europe, le souhait d'exploiter les ressources africaines pour reconstruire l'Europe, et le peu d'importance accordée à l'Afrique dans les calculs stratégiques des États-Unis.

Keywords/*Mots-clés*: Europe, United States, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Roosevelt, Truman, decolonization, diplomacy/*Europe, États-Unis, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Roosevelt, Truman, décolonisation, diplomatie.*