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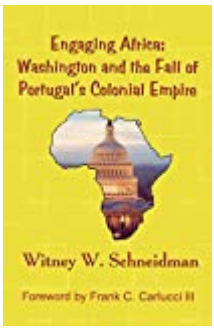

Witney W. Schneidman. *Engaging Africa: Washington and the Fall of Portugal's Colonial Empire.* New York: University Press of America, 2004. xvii + 293 pp. $33.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-7618-2812-9.

Reviewed by Daniel Byrne (Department of History, University of Evansville)

Published on H-Diplo (September, 2005)

Drifting towards a Decolonization Disaster

Witney Schneidman studiously examines United States policy towards the decolonization of Portuguese Africa and leaves the reader struck by the fact that, like the decolonization of Portuguese Africa, Schneidman's monograph was unfortunately delayed in arriving. Luckily, Schneidman was prodded by the renowned historian Piero Gleijeses to transform his nearly two-decade-old dissertation into a published book. While suffering from some of the difficulties of translating a dissertation into a monograph, Schneidman maintained the strength of his research within an enduring critique of United States foreign policy. In doing so, Schneidman adds to a growing historiography on the U.S. response to decolonization in the postwar period–a response which was notably confused, conflicted, and adrift.

Schneidman begins his examination with the Kennedy administration's seemingly bold challenge to Eisenhower's lackluster policies on decolonization. In a move to reconnect the United States with the Third World and specifically emerging African nations, Kennedy openly challenged Portugal's presence in Africa. On April 20, 1961, Adlai Stevenson voted for a United Nations General Assembly resolution calling on Portugal to move Angola towards self-determination. Unsurprisingly, the staunchly imperialist dictator Antonio Oliveira Salazar refused to heed this call. Thus, Kennedy was left struggling to define his decolonization policy in the light of the Bay of Pigs disaster which ironically occurred on the same day as the vote on Angolan independence.

Like the presidents before and after him, Kennedy found himself straddling between his hopes to support national liberation movements and his efforts to sustain alliances which provided essential bases and international support for the United States. Stubborn allies, nebulous nationalist movements, challenges from the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba, and a strongly Eurocentric policymaking hierarchy all contributed to the consistent difficulty Kennedy and his advisors had in organizing a coherent response to impending crises in Portuguese Africa and elsewhere. In addition, U.S. goals for developing Africa through an "evolutionary" process of decolonization clashed with both Portuguese desires to retain their colonial possessions and nationalist demands to have immediate, unconditional independence.

Schneidman does an excellent job of showing how the United States attempted to develop relations with non-communist nationalists in Guinea-Bissau, Angola, and Mozambique, but failed to do the same in Portugal. As long as Salazar and his supporters maintained power, it seemed impossible for Kennedy to develop avenues of decolonization. By May 29, 1963, President Kennedy told Portuguese Foreign Minister Franco Nogueira that his 1961 decisions had been "precipitous" (p. 52). With the Cuban Missile Crisis reinforcing the essential nature of the Azores base agreement, Kennedy accepted a policy defined by its ambiguity. As a result, Lyndon Johnson would inherit a policy toward African decolonization as conflicted as the one Kennedy had inherited from Eisenhower.

The Johnson administration initially attempted to keep some attention on the question of Africa and the decolonization of Portuguese Africa, but U.S. covert intervention in Congo further weakened U.S. credibility among African nationalists. Equally, by working with Belgian and mercenary forces to crush the Simbas, the United States had shown what it perceived to be the limits of African development outside the U.S. supported "evolutionary" independence process. By 1965, Vietnam began to take the administration's focus away from Africa. Schneidman believes that U.S. decolonization policy was "a policy in search of direction" (p. 78). His descriptions of the battles between senior policymakers and regional specialists in the State Department echoes the repeated dogfights over decolonization among officials of the regional bureaus during the postwar period. Africanists within the State Department, led by Assistant Secretary of State G. Mennen Williams, found themselves outweighed by senior officials who were unwilling to overturn an alliance with Portugal to gain the support of the African continent. Schneidman highlights this conflict with a 1966 quote from Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, who stated that "the United States has no mandate on high to police the world and the inclination to do so. There have been classic cases in which our deliberate nonaction was the wisest action of all" (p. 90).

While accepting the ideas behind this deliberate inaction, President Johnson, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, and National Security Advisor Walt Rostow attempted to recapture the rhetorical platform of self-determination and decolonization by announcing "a Johnson doctrine for Africa" on May 26, 1966. Schneidman believes that the speech "was an eloquent, nonconfrontational testimony of American sensitivity toward self-determination in Africa" (p. 95). Like Kennedy before him, Johnson hoped to capture with rhetoric that which he refused to press in his policies towards Portugal: namely the perception of the United States as a leader of the movement for decolonization and self-determination. Having heard much of the rhetoric before, African nationalists across the continent and political spectrum met the speech with an increasing degree of skepticism. In the final years of the Johnson administration, even after the death of Salazar in 1968, the rhetoric failed to meet the reality of continued, if limited, United States support for Portugal.

In the second half of his work, Witney Schneidman focuses on the Nixon administration and the powerful and negative influence of Henry Kissinger on United States policy towards the decolonization of Portuguese Africa. In his first year as National Security advisor, Kissinger helped to revamp U.S. policy in Africa through National Security Study Memorandum 39 (pp. 114-118). During this review, Kissinger diminished, diluted, or deleted the opinions of regional experts and ranking State Department officials. Discounting intelligence reports that nationalist movements in Guinea-Bissau, Angola, and Mozambique as well as those challenging white minority-rule in Rhodesia and South Africa were growing, Kissinger boldly stated "the Whites are here to stay" (p. 119). From this flawed conception, Kissinger set off to undermine Africanists in the State Department and to strengthen U.S. support for the Portuguese government regardless of its continued colonial wars in Africa. As a result, the United States gained a new Azores base agreement by December 1971 and the increasing enmity of the majority of Africa. After nearly two decades of inaction and ambiguity in United States policy, the Nixon administration had made a clear policy statement that the United States would stand with Portugal and its determined effort to stop decolonization.

The Nixon administration's confidence in Portugal's abilities to thwart nationalist victories in its colonies began to collapse with the February 1974 publication of General Antonio de Spinola's book, *Portugal and the Future*. Noting the continued failures to secure victories in its colonial wars, Spinola argued that Portugal must come to a political solution with the various nationalist movements. Schneidman clearly shows how this realization sent shockwaves through Portugal and galvanized the military to launch a coup which overthrew the last vestiges of Salazar on April 25. More importantly, Schneidman carefully reveals how Kissinger, now Secretary of State as well as being National Security Advisor, misread the coup and revolution that was taking place in Portugal. Discounting embassy assessments that the United

States could work with the leftist government, Kissinger believed that the Soviet Union would gain a foothold both in Europe and Africa if the United States did not take countermeasures. As a result, Kissinger fired the politically appointed ambassador, Stuart Nash Scott. On the counsel of the legendary Vernon Walters, Kissinger sent Frank C. Carlucci III with a team of trained diplomats and spies to help shape the direction of the Portuguese revolution.

In a chapter that takes the reader away from the liberation wars in Africa, Schneidman details how the United States engaged in an effort to prevent a permanent communist presence in the government of Portugal. During Carlucci's extended stay in Lisbon, a growing conflict between Carlucci and Kissinger emerged as Carlucci's network of contacts revealed that communist strength, while significant, was not the decisive factor in the emerging Portuguese government. Kissinger's growing paranoia of Soviet deception and personal distaste for the appointed leaders led him to challenge Portugal's status in NATO and to begin undermining the very military which he had assisted only a few years earlier. Schneidman paints a vivid scene of efforts by Carlucci and European leaders attempting to convince a hardened Kissinger that the Portuguese socialists would win the elections, be committed to NATO, and not be a "Trojan horse" (pp. 170-180). Despite the instability of the Nixon-Ford Administration and Kissinger's doubts, Schneidman shows that Carlucci succeeded, along with many European governments and political parties, in funneling aid and support to "acceptable moderates" and in assisting them in their electoral victories in 1975-1976.

However, Ambassador Carlucci's success in moderating the Portuguese revolution failed to be repeated in Africa. While Kissinger's doubts and efforts to undermine the Portuguese revolution failed to prevent Carlucci from continuing his efforts, Kissinger's prolonged antagonism toward Africanists in the State Department allowed him to dominate policy towards the final decolonization of Africa. Additionally, the Nixon administration's active support for Portugal had severed most of the ties which U.S. officials had with nationalist groups. As a result, Kissinger's deep fears of Soviet or Chinese intervention in Africa came to fruition as many of the nationalist groups turned to the East for aid and weapons. As the Portuguese revolution continued, the African nationalists prepared themselves for immediate independence and sought to negotiate the rapid departure of Portuguese forces. In an effort to reconnect with these groups, Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Donald Esaum urged Kissinger to support Guinea-Bissau's early admission to the United Nations and to avoid aligning the United States with any of the several Angolan nationalist movements. Having been rejected on both counts, Esaum attempted to develop relations with the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO). In an unauthorized visit to Mozambique, Esaum promised to bring USAID teams into the country quickly and assess the requirements. Essentially trying to undermine Chinese and Soviet promises of aid, Esaum's trip was mistakenly seen by Kissinger as disloyal. Kissinger was equally angered by Esaum's open statements about the need for change in South African apartheid. In November 1974, Esaum's unplanned promotion to Ambassador to Nigeria highlighted the strength of Kissinger's resolve to support Portugal and South Africa.

Kissinger's consistent disdain for the Africa Bureau left him with little accurate intelligence or understanding of the devolving situation in Angola. Relying on limited CIA contacts, Kissinger embroiled the United States in another covert operation at the very moment when the Vietnam conflict ended and U.S. aversion to interventionism of any kind peaked. Equally, the inclusion of South African forces in the intervention to remove the communist-supported Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) outraged African nations regardless of their position on the MPLA. Although he had been warned of such a reaction by advisors such as Esaum, Kissinger still pressed ahead with his demands for aid to the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) and the Front for the National Liberation of Angola (FNLA) by arguing that Soviet and Cuban support for MPLA made them unacceptable partners in negotiations.

By the end of 1975, a full-scale civil war had broken out in Angola. United States efforts to develop decolonization policies which resulted in peaceful, stable, western-oriented nations had collapsed and would lead to increased United States intervention and support for insurgencies in Angola and Mozambique that cost millions of African lives. Schneidman correctly points out Kissinger's complicity in these decisions and the larger systemic failures of United States policy towards decolonization. Nixon and Kissinger's willingness to support undemocratic, white colonial governments that denied basic human rights to their black inhabitants ultimately cost the United States much support in Africa and, ironically, opened the door wider for Soviet, Chinese, and Cuban intervention. Ultimately, Schneidman confronts the legacy of these decisions and questions Frank

Carlucci's foreword to Schneidman's book. In the foreword, Carlucci wonders, "would Africa have developed differently had it [U.S. policy] been otherwise?" Carlucci bluntly asserts "I doubt it Ã¢?Â¦ Africa can blame many of its problems on colonialism and rightly so–but that doesn't excuse a lack of leadership in many countries in the post-independence period" (p. xi). After reviewing the history of U.S. policy toward Portuguese Africa during the fifteen years prior to independence, Schneidman finds it impossible to come to Carlucci's conclusion. Having idly witnessed the assassination of many of the leaders of the various nationalist movements and lacking contacts with those that remained, U.S. policymakers squandered opportunities to develop relations with these leaders and created a growing distrust. While certainly many of these leaders worked with or were communists, the failure to comprehend their nationalist roots and their drive for independence left many U.S. policymakers unwilling and ultimately unable to work with the emerging nations of Guinea-Bissau, Angola, and Mozambique. Carlucci's own misunderstanding of Africa is highlighted by his role in Portuguese revolution combined with his lack of interest in the colonial question which had triggered it.

Throughout his work, Schneidman provides an excellent and consistent theme of ambiguity and inattention within United States policy towards the decolonization of Portuguese Africa. Although Nixon and Kissinger did choose to support Portugal actively, their decisions were based on disinterest in Africa and a distrust of African nationalists. The tragic lack of interest in Africa or the Africans helped facilitate further tragedy during the collapse of colonialism by undercutting knowledgeable, engaged career officers who proposed alternative policies. Kissinger's disdain for the State Department led him to focus on his limited understanding and that of a small group of advisors who remained distant from the realities on the ground in Guinea-Bissau, Angola, and Mozambique. The consequences of their decisions fostered decades of conflict and should serve as a lesson to modern policymakers about dismissing policy alternatives and intelligence that fails to fit senior policymakers' ideology and prejudices.

Unfortunately, this consistent of lack of interest and understanding is found in the administrations preceding Schneidman's study as well as among some historians. Luckily, in the past decade and a half, several United States diplomatic historians have followed up on the pioneering work of William Rogers Louis, Robert McMahon, and Cary Fraser on the United States policy towards decolonization. From the Roosevelt administration onward, United States policy has vacillated between the rhetorical connections to self-determination and support of nationalist movements and the realities of inaction and tacit support for European powers. This rhetoric encouraged nationalists around the globe to press their demands for political freedoms and independence. Nascent independence movements drew strength from the language, but generally gained little substantive support from the United States. The consistent failure to match its words with its actions eventually earned the United States dismay and enmity from nationalists across the globe. Whether looking at Indonesia, Algeria, Ghana, or Guyana, a growing number of studies reveal a consistent inconsistency in U.S. policy; a policy once attacked by Senator Mike Mansfield as "a policy of drift."

Schneidman would have benefited greatly from a review of these new works and their new documentary evidence as he revised his manuscript. Although there is an unquestionable quality in his own research and writing, Schneidman failed to connect his work directly with the broadening historiography on United States decolonization policy. Despite this regretful deficiency, Schneidman's book adds its weight to the developing argument and challenges historians to continue to delve more deeply into the problems in United States decolonization policy which have helped to shape the post-colonial world in which we live today.