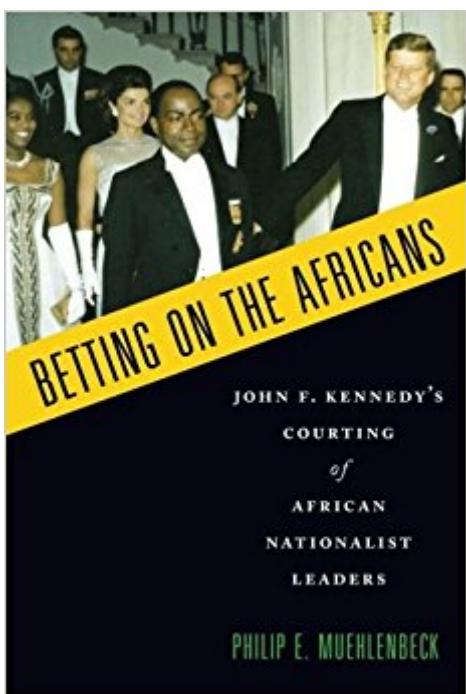


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# Betting On The Africans: John F. Kennedy's Courting Of African Nationalist Leaders



## Synopsis

As a presidential candidate, John F. Kennedy established a reputation across Africa as a sympathetic supporter of African nationalism, who if elected would realign Washington's priorities toward the continent. Once in office, Kennedy indeed made changing the image of America in Africa a top priority of his administration, believing that the Cold War could be won or lost depending upon whether Washington or Moscow won the hearts and minds of the Third World. Africa was particularly important because a wave of independence saw nineteen newly independent African states admitted into the United Nations during 1960-61. By 1962, 31 of the UN's 110 member states were from the African continent, and both Washington and Moscow sought to add these countries to their respective voting bloc. Kennedy feared that neglect of the newly decolonized countries of the world would result in the rise of anti-Americanism and needed to be addressed irrespective of the Cold War. Philip Muehlenbeck demonstrates how Kennedy used all means at his disposal-economic, cultural, personal-to appeal to the leaders of the developing world, including Nkrumah, Senghor, TourÃƒÂ©, Nyerere, and Ben Bella. Drawing on archival sources from Africa, the United States, and the United Kingdom, Muehlenbeck closely examines Kennedy's policies towards Guinea, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Egypt, Algeria, Tanganyika, and South Africa, which were to a large extent successful in winning the sympathies of its peoples, while at the same time alienating more traditional American allies. Betting on the Africans adds an important chapter to the historiography of John F. Kennedy's Cold War strategy as well as the history of decolonization.

## Book Information

Paperback: 362 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; Reprint edition (March 1, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0199380716

ISBN-13: 978-0199380718

Product Dimensions: 9.2 x 1 x 6.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 2 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #174,618 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #109 in Books > Textbooks > Humanities > History > Africa #137 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > International & World Politics > African #156 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > International & World Politics > Diplomacy

## Customer Reviews

"Unlike other accounts of U.S.-Africa relations, Muehlenbeck's monograph covers the entire continent. Muehlenbeck's portrait of a charismatic American president engaged with the details of African political and economic aspirations is a contribution to the study of U.S.-Africa relations as well as the JFK era."--Larry Grubbs, *Journal of American History* "Muehlenbeck's well-researched work offers a compelling challenge to the conventional wisdom of continuity in American Cold War foreign policy toward Africa. The book's deep examination of the courtship of African leaders by President John F. Kennedy provides a unique perspective on personal diplomacy, specifically, and U.S.-African relations, generally, during one of the more volatile periods of the Cold War. A thought-provoking opening to our ongoing analysis of Kennedy foreign policy." --George White, Jr., *American Historical Review* "In this fine book, Muehlenbeck...makes a significant contribution to the growing literature on US policy toward Africa...[A] well-written, crisply argued book that scholars, students in applicable classes, and general readers with a serious interest in US foreign policy and African affairs will love. Highly recommended." --CHOICE "Challenging the conventional wisdom that judges John F. Kennedy's Africa policies to be little different from those of other American presidents, Muehlenbeck argues convincingly that JFK's strategy of personal diplomacy won the friendship of radical nationalists that other American leaders deemed lost to the Soviet camp. Based on extensive archival research, Muehlenbeck's in-depth analysis of the courtship of African leaders offers a unique window into U.S.-African relations during the early Cold War years." --Elizabeth Schmidt, author of *Cold War and Decolonization in Guinea, 1946-1958* "Phil Muehlenbeck provides the most comprehensive analysis to date of Kennedy's high-profile outreach to African leaders. He challenges previous interpretations that placed the Cold War at the center of Kennedy's relations with that continent's new nations. Muehlenbeck emphasizes instead the ways in which U.S. policy toward Africa in the early 1960s responded to the imperatives of decolonization and nationalism. Kennedy's personal attention to individual African leaders, in *Betting on the Africans*, represents a farsighted exception to the more common pattern of American disinterest in the lands between the Mediterranean and the Cape of Good Hope. Important reading for all those interested in America's relationship with the world, in African history, and in the global history turning point of the early 1960s." -- Thomas Borstelmann, University of Nebraska-Lincoln "Betting on the Africans is the most comprehensive and well-researched look at the Kennedy Administration's African policy, a policy designed to sway newly-independent African leaders toward the United States. Philip Muehlenbeck makes a strong and persuasive case for the significance of President Kennedy's leadership in formulating and implementing this policy, especially in his personal relationships with African

leaders. This is an essential book for anyone interested in understanding the development of American relations with African nations during a key period of the Cold War." --Thomas Schwartz, Vanderbilt University "Muehlenbeck's illuminating comparative study will be of equal interest for those wanting to understand more about President John F. Kennedy's Cold War strategy as well as for those seeking further insights into the diplomacy of Africa's independent nations. Muehlenbeck works through each of the major US-Africa Cold War relationships to show how Kennedy's strategy, often in conflict with his own advisers and Cold War hawks, attempted to create important allies of Africa's new leaders. He skillfully argues that JFK's personal diplomatic gamble ultimately created more allies than enemies among Africa's first generation of post-colonial leaders." --Timothy Scarneccchia, Kent State University

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Most people know about JFK Administration with his issues with Cuba, Berlin Wall and beginning of U.S. involvement in Vietnam,, not much was known about his foreign policy regarding Africa, well this book covers that aspect of his administration with the emerging countries of Africa and his problems of balancing his support of the newly independence countries and while supporting France and Britain and their reluctance of freeing those Countries. This book does a great job of covering these and other issues in dealing with Africa, mostly ignored by the previous administration.A book that needs to be read by JFK historians and people interested in U.S. foreign policy

This book is simply a tour de force of new research on the subject of Kennedy's foreign policy in Africa and how it differed from Eisenhower and Dulles and how it was then halted by LBJ and Nixon. The author has dug up so much new material on the subject that I cannot hope to do it justice in a short review. But please read this longer review of the book here[...]In a nutshell, Kennedy broke with the previous policy, challenged his NATO allies, and even sympathized not just with black nationalism in Africa but through Nasser, Arab nationalism in the Middle East. When he died, all of Africa realized they had lost a true friend and went into mourning. He is still remembered there. Some have named their kids after him.A marvelous book that anyone can benefit from.

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