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In "Diplomacy and the End of Empire: Evolving French Perspectives on Portuguese Colonialism in the 1950s and 1960s," Melissa K. Byrnes provides a unique insight into the legacy for France and Portugal of the demise of colonial empire in Africa. By examining the decolonization process through the lens of diplomatic encounters between the two Western allies as the Cold War intensified and the pressure to relinquish colonial control mounted, Byrnes provides a nuanced understanding of the ways in which empire still mattered for France even after its own possessions attained sovereignty and how Portugal was able to withstand those global constraints and hang on to its empire well into the 1970s. Byrnes argues that the key to understanding that bilateral interconnection was the durability of the "ideology of empire and its civilizing goals" within the French diplomatic corps (3). For Byrnes the "French experience and memory of empire informed their engagement with Portugal as the last remaining colonial power in Africa" and, consequently, allowed France to play at empire vicariously through Portugal's ongoing effort to hang onto its colonies (3). By framing the analysis through the foreign office encounters between France and Portugal, Byrnes shifts the historical analysis of decolonization away from the superpower struggle between the U.S. and Soviet Union. As a result, the article aims to de-center the Cold War within the narrative of decolonization while also complicating the history of that global engagement by exploring the independent and unique relations among lesser powers as they relate to an emerging space of contestation among the nuclear giants.

Byrnes's article fits within an established and growing historiography that explores the end of the French colonial empire and the re-visioning of France in the post-colonial era framed by the constraints of the Cold War. As such it builds upon the work of Elizabeth Schmidt whose important study of the ways in which decolonization in Guinea was impacted by the Cold War and France's position within that bipolar global environment. As the only territory to vote "no" on the referendum creating Charles de Gaulle's Fifth French Republic in 1958, Guinea became a test case for France's management of the end of its colonial empire as well as the ways in which Cold War competition constrained the metropole's room for maneuver while impacting the political trajectory of Guinea.<sup>1</sup> Going beyond the case study and returning gaze to France, Todd Shepard uses the traumatic experience of the war in Algeria (1954-1962) to analyze how the imagining and conceptualizing of that conflict helped to forge France's post-colonial identity. With the end of the armed struggle France could reposition itself as a mediator between the aspirations of the Third World and those of the developed West thus casting French diplomacy as a vital bridge in preserving international peace as well as promoting the interests of the formerly colonized world.<sup>2</sup> Finally, Byrnes is also engaging with Dominic Thomas's recent study of the role that racism has played in France's relations with Africa and how those concepts, often denied by official France, structure domestic politics and society.

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Schmidt, *Cold War and Decolonization in Guinea, 1946-1958* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).

Thomas explores how the experience of colonial empire continues to cast a long shadow over France in the form of racism that persists to the present.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, Byrnes's aim of examining how empire, racism, and the Cold War played out in the diplomatic engagement of France, a country recently divested of its colonies, and Portugal, desperate to maintain its imperial hold as a marker of its continued relevance in the Cold War world, engages with a rich body of scholarship.

Throughout the essay Byrnes relies on the records of the French Foreign Ministry and other government agencies as well as making extensive use of the secondary literature as it pertains to the subject. Overall, the piece is adequately researched and deftly handles the major scholarly approaches to the subject of decolonization from the French and Portuguese perspectives. What is particularly novel, and the strongest aspect of Byrnes's article, is the emphasis she places on the role that the "ideas of race and empire" played in structuring the conceptual framework through which French diplomats worked and how that informed France's official position with regard to the maintenance of Portugal's colonial rule in Africa (3). Rather than superpower rivalry or even geostrategic interest, Byrnes sees race as the driving factor in the bilateral relations of the two imperialist countries in the age of decolonization. Throughout the article, Byrnes urges the reader to view racism as one of the main intellectual forces determining the policies of France and Portugal, while that shared racialized thinking also facilitated close relations between the two countries despite mounting global pressure to divest from overseas empire. This leads to the conclusion that one should "not discount the pervasiveness and durability of racialist thinking and imperial legacies in today's world," which is both the central critical contribution of the article as well as the contextual space in which Byrnes's contribution is situated (15).

While the article admirably sustains the main argument and does provide the reader with much food for thought in the conclusion, there are moments where it could be strengthened. Much of the base conceptual contribution is framed by an assertion that the Cold War was not the structuring factor in the bilateral relations between France and Portugal and does not help us to understand why France supported Portugal's implacable defense of its empire. However, Byrnes sometimes slips from that explicit de-centering of the Cold War and actually argues that by 1964 there is a clear turn in Franco-Portuguese relations from "declarations of shared imperial values" to "military and strategic support," which she asserts "aligns with the narrative that Cold War concerns [that] trumped a growing distaste for colonial pursuits" (9). From that moment, Byrnes sees the French becoming more critical of Portugal's unwillingness to even entertain the idea of reform, much less relinquish its colonial rule in Africa. For Byrnes, the shifting conceptual framework of Franco-Portuguese relations from the 1950s and 1960s "help us trace the process by which France came to terms with the end of empire" (13). Here the argument is a bit overstated. It is a stretch to claim that France actually or fully came to terms with the end of its empire in that period. One could make a compelling argument that France has yet to meaningfully reconcile itself with the demise of its imperial power by examining the treatment of immigrant communities from precisely its ex-colonies in France today or the deeply imbricated relationship that France maintains with the former colonies in Africa such as Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, and the Republic of Congo, to name a few, where France has a military presence, is directly involved in local power struggles, and seeks to perpetuate a cultural and economic footprint in those countries.

Finally, it is not entirely convincing that an exploration of Franco-Portuguese diplomatic relations is the best window into changing French mentalities with regard to France's imperial experience. Byrnes does not fully lay out the case that those relationships were more significant or revealing than Franco-American relations (where there was real concern among the French of U.S. penetration of 'French' African spaces), or even Anglo-French encounters where imperial rivalry, including over appropriate pathways to self-governance, were critical components of the decolonization drama of the 1950s. Finally, what is missing throughout is any African voice in the process. Did the African political movements and the assertion of African sovereignty play any role in shaping French mentalities or the foreign relations among the imperial powers? The reader is left with a framework that is almost entirely contained within the halls of state officials in the foreign offices, and through their interactions alone policies are hammered out and approaches agreed upon. However, Byrnes does frame the

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<sup>3</sup> Dominic Thomas, *Africa and France: Postcolonial Cultures, Migration, and Racism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).

article as a focused examination of the diplomatic relations between France and Portugal in this critical period of African history as well as of the Cold War.

The strengths of the article significantly outweigh any shortcomings. Most of the limitations of the piece derive from its nature as a short article. Space considerations necessitate limitations on how extensively one can delve into any given subject and require leaving out certain aspects of the story that in a larger setting would most certainly have to be explored. The article makes an important contribution to the study of the Cold War by de-centering the superpower rivalry between the Soviet Union and the U.S. and instead reminding the reader that the world was much larger than those two countries alone. Moreover, it confirms that states such as France and Portugal maintained their own independent foreign policies, even at times in defiance of the general proclivities of their dominant ally, in this case the U.S. Finally, and most importantly, Byrnes has put race front and center in the conversation about empire, decolonization, post-colonial experiences, and international relations. This is the major strength of Byrnes's piece and it does effective work in bringing the reader's attention to what was, after all, the critical dimension of imperialism from its very origins, the assertion of racial distinction and superiority that was animated and sustained by the structures of rule that subjugated African societies throughout much of the first 75 years of the twentieth century. In the twenty-first century it is vital to understand the ways in which the racialized thinking of the imperial age persists well after the colonies won their political sovereignty and how it endures as a structuring mechanism in international relations today. Byrnes's study provides the reader with that critical recollection.

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