Empire of Individuals: American Expansion, British Angst and Tanzanian Anger

Timothy Nicholson

Abstract

In providing a more imperial theoretical paradigm, highlighting earlier and more informal intervention by T.E.A. and Peace Corps volunteers and addressing their successes and failures, this article demonstrates the complexities created by new transnational connections and interactions between young Americans and East African students and their importance specifically in Tanzania. It delves into the conflicts with the T.E.A. and Peace Corps and the departing British colonial teachers worried about their declining influence, the American volunteers and the Tanzanian government, as well as organizational conflict between the T.E.A. and the new Peace Corps.

Keywords: United States; Tanzania; John F. Kennedy; Peace Corps; Decolonization

Timothy Nicholson: Saint Peter's University (United States)
Contact: tnicholson@saintpeters.edu
Timothy Nicholson is an Assistant Professor of History at Saint Peter's University in Jersey City, NJ. He is writing a manuscript on East African youths and their interaction with local and global paradigms of authority during the Cold War.

In 1961, 150 Americans arrived in Uganda as part of the new Teachers for East Africa (TEA) organization to serve as instructors in schools throughout East Africa. As the first large-scale American engagement with the three East African countries (Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania[1]), these teachers represented a seminal moment in the expansion of an informal American empire in Africa. In providing a more imperial theoretical paradigm, highlighting earlier and more informal intervention by TEA and Peace Corps volunteers (PCVs), and addressing their successes and failures, this article demonstrates the complexities created by new transnational connections and interactions between young Americans and East African students, and their importance specifically in Tanzania. It also highlights American engagement with the rapidly changing non-Western world during the critical years of the early 1960s. Additionally, this article notes how the personal and everyday interactions of the volunteers of these organizations tended to subvert the overall goals of the organizations involved. Lastly, the article delves into the conflicts between the British and American teachers, the TEA and the Peace Corps and, finally, the American volunteers and the Tanzanian government. Consequently, the article will work to demonstrate the challenges that individuals faced as American involvement evolved over the course of the 1960s from an informal to a formal empire with the arrival of the Peace Corps, leading to a stronger American presence, but also a more visceral reaction from Tanzanian leaders and the local population. Simply, individual Americans conflicted with the institutional presence of colonial-era education, new American programs, and the Tanzanian government itself, and through this struggle they worked to forge and maintain connections with local Tanzanians.

Prior to the start of the Peace Corps and the growth of an official American presence, the involvement of the United States in Africa and relationships with African countries can be characterized as an informal empire of individuals. This American expansionism must also be considered with regard to global paradigms of authority and the deliberate posturing of Tanzanian leaders who sought transnational resources to develop their own nascent but expanding state institutions. The power of individuals needs to be stressed, as they pushed American expansion without a common agenda, causing chaos and conflict between groups, and with the organizations themselves being subverted by their own members. Supporting information exists largely outside of traditional sources and is to be found in oral histories, memoirs and private papers, as well as Tanzanian newspaper letters and other accounts. Through an examination of these sources, this article strives to highlight the often chaotic nature of American involvement in the region, with the individuals involved driven less by Cold War ideology and its connections with African decolonization than previously thought. After an overview of the organizations involved, the paper focuses on the messiness of an empire of individuals and its ultimately unsuccessful replacement by a more formalized American presence.

1   Background and Historiography

From the late nineteenth through the first half of the twentieth century, Americans possessed a small but varied presence in African education, existing largely outside official government channels. Scholars debate the extent and degree to which the US was engaged with Africa during this period, with recent work on this issue showing a greater number and diversity of connections than previously thought. Americans established and staffed Jeanes Schools, American missionaries worked throughout the continent, and African-Americans participated in back-to-Africa movements. Gerald Horne's *Mau Mau in Harlem* highlights these connections and demonstrates a number of previously overlooked ties that existed between the African-American community, among others, and the African population in Kenya, in addition to educating future West African anti-colonial leaders such as Nnamdi Azikiwe and Kwame Nkrumah in the 1930s.[2] While the number of transcontinental connections grew through-

---

[1]   For the purpose of simplicity, Tanzania will be used in place of Tanganyika, which was the official name of the country before its merger with Zanzibar in 1964.

[2]   Gerald Horne, *Mau Mau in Harlem?: The U.S. and the Liberation of Kenya. Contemporary Black History* (New York: Palgrave, 2009), 15. See also Penny M. Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937–1957* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

out the early twentieth century, especially among the African-American community and missionary societies, they still remained quite limited and confined to small segments of the population.[3]

In contrast to the limited American involvement prior to World War II, the postwar period witnessed a slow but growing interest in the continent. Pushed by organizations such as the Council on African Affairs, more Americans spent time in Africa, became interested in African affairs, and worked to gain knowledge about African people. In assessing claims of America as an ally to the decolonizing world, new scholarly attention focuses on American efforts to replace British influence and the complicating factors associated with this effort. John Kent and others argue that Cold War concerns, and a need to maintain strong alliances with traditional imperial powers, quickly superseded altruistic efforts to encourage decolonization. American officials now worked with the departing colonial powers themselves (and not African nationalists) to implement change.[4] Additionally, the American civil rights movement possessed multifaceted links to the international anti-colonial movement, with the actions and discourse of African leaders proving critical in shaping African-American politics.[5] Still, African affairs remained mostly overlooked as concerns over communism topped the foreign policy agenda and, through the 1950s, US officials concentrated on events in Europe and Asia. British Foreign Office officials closely monitored American interest in the region and their reports claimed Americans thought of Africa "as no more than a large area of steaming jungle inhabited by wild animals, naked savages and pompous officials."[6] While Eisenhower famously went golfing to avoid meeting newly installed African leaders and his foreign policy largely ignored the African continent, he and other American officials recognized that British power was on the wane and at least some sort of attention was needed to stop the spread of communism.[7] New Cold War tensions as well as specific events, such as the perceived bedlam in the Congo following Belgium's quick and chaotic withdrawal, served as the impetus behind increased US concern, with the government believing the spread of communism would benefit from the potential chaos in the decolonizing world. Despite the hope of British colonial officials to remain the dominant power in East Africa and limit opportunities for African students to study abroad, they quickly noted rising American concern over events in Africa by both government officials and the general public, starting in the very late 1950s. With a rising global presence, new Cold War concerns, and increased attention from the civil rights movement, American interest in Africa grew between the end of World War II and 1960, but still remained largely outside official government circles.

Much of the historiography over the past twenty years has focused on the transformative events of the 1960s and the rapid expansion of American interest in Africa. Only recently has greater attention been paid to the intellectual and domestic antecedents of these projects, with new works highlighting the influence of the Great Depression. For many coming of age in the 1930s and holding state power in the 1950s and 1960s, this defining event shaped views of state involvement in direct correlation with the economy, including modernization and the state-centered approach of American development policies from Truman's Point Four Program onward. These efforts were advocated by American intellectuals in order to transform backward cultures, push economic modernization, and effectively secure American interests abroad.[8] In addition to focusing on state development, Nils Gilman argues that American thinking of non-Western people was based on "Americans' understanding of their own

---

[3] Apollos Okwuchi Nwauwa, *Imperialism, Academe and Nationalism: Britain and University Education for Africans, 1860–1960* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 70.

[4] John Kent, "United States Reactions to Empire, Colonialism and the Cold War in Black Africa," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 33-2 (2005): 195–220.

[5] See Kevin Kelly Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006) and Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

[6] Horne, *Mau Mau in Harlem?*, 3.

[7] British National Archive, FCO 141/7092. "To Selwyn Lloyd." July 10, 1957, 3.

[8] See Michael Lantham, *The Right Kind of Revolution: Modernization, Development and U.S. Foreign Policy from the Cold War to the Present* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 2; also Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

identity."[9] Individual Americans also need to be considered more in an informal role and guided less by American ideology, although certainly possessing notions of superiority. Additionally, Larry Grubbs dubs a wide range of Americans as secular missionaries who were quickly disillusioned when confronted with the problems within the continent; instead of promoting a colonial "civilizing mission," they worked to uplift the continent based on the in-vogue modernization theory.[10] However, their role needs examining in connection to official aid organizations and developmentalist thinking—although teachers still possessed general notions of superiority and a desire to free locals from bonds of tradition. Seemingly, the greater the interaction American teachers enjoyed with their local counterparts, the more respect they developed for local cultures, and their viewpoints increasingly differed from Cold War ideologically.[11]

Furthermore, with the exception of Grubbs's work noted above, examinations of the Peace Corps are prone to focus on the Peace Corps as an institution, itself recently subject to reexamination, and are only now analyzing how this organization helped project American power throughout the world. Gerard Rice, author of *The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps*, provides a comprehensive overview of the organization, its important impact, and dramatically fast start.[12] Fritz Fischer's *Making Them Like Us: Peace Corps Volunteers in the 1960s* develops a more nuanced view, arguing that although Kennedy viewed the Peace Corps as a cornerstone of his Cold War policy, its volunteers realized the problems of dividing up the world into two camps, promoting a linear sense of development and, as was the case in Tanzania, became critical of American foreign policy itself.[13] However, the Peace Corps, as representative of American expansion into Africa, needs examining beyond simply viewing it as fulfilling the role of a domestic institution serving the needs of American politicians, and must be put into the larger context of American expansionism, British decolonization, the Cold War, and African state-building.

Connecting agendas between different actors with regard to decolonization in Africa, Frederick Cooper argues that "the modernization discourse of the bureaucrats" was a shared agenda between the departing colonial state and newly empowered nationalists throughout the British and French colonies, and the idea of the state serving as the driving force of postcolonial development continued.[14] Cooper writes that independence brought more than education—access to health care increased (infant mortality declined; life expectancy rose), the economies grew, and, through the growth of new institutions, governments delivered "at last something to their citizens—education, health services, roads."[15] Additionally, Priya Lal argues that state-building and ideological development were firmly connected to Third World networks and thought of as an alternative to Western modernization theory; Tanzanian nation-building in general needs to be considered with regard to global decolonization and the Third World nations.[16] Adding to this point, John Kelly and Martha Kaplan suggest that for the colonized: "Decolonization was not so much an exit but instead an entry into a global political scenario ... ."[17] Despite later eschewing foreign influence, Nyerere positioned his country at the forefront

---

[9]   Gilman, 12.

[10]   Larry Grubbs, *Secular Missionaries: Americans and African Development in the 1960s* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010).

[11]   Jonathan Zimmerman goes as far as calling American teachers "innocents abroad" in Zimmerman, *Innocents Abroad: American Teachers in the American Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 17.

[12]   Gerard T. Rice, *The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985); Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman, *All You Need is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Jonathan Zimmerman, "Beyond Double Consciousness: Black Peace Corps Volunteers in Africa, 1961-1971," *Journal of American History* 82, (1995): 999–1028.

[13]   Fritz Fischer, *Making Them Like Us: Peace Corps Volunteers in the 1960s* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998).

[14]   Frederick Cooper, "Modernizing Bureaucrats, Backward Africans and the Development Concept," in Frederick Cooper and Randall M. Packard, *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History of Politics of Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 64–92.

[15]   Frederick Cooper, *Africa and the World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 97.

[16]   Priya Lal, *African Socialism in Postcolonial Tanzania: Between the Village and the World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 16–17.

[17]   John Kelly and Martha Kaplan, *Represented Communities: Fiji and World Decolonization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,

of African affairs, the British Commonwealth and, following the Zanzibari revolution, the Cold War, prompting State Department official Francis Terry McNamera to succinctly note: "Dar [es Salaam, Tanzania's capital] was the liberation capital of Africa ... ."[18] Thus, by leveraging its location and activist foreign policy, Tanzania forged a unique place in the Cold War to which other countries, especially the United States and Soviet Union, needed to respond with offers of scholarships to Tanzanian students, direct foreign aid for school- and infrastructure-building, local advisors, and teachers—all of which helped develop Tanzanian state institutions.

As American interest in Africa slowly increased, education throughout East Africa, especially Tanzania, was experiencing a revolution as the decolonization process commenced. Although mostly a reward for the political and economic colonial elite, colonized people used education as a method of self-advancement, a means to counter British perceptions of their ethnic group or religion, and a method of justifying greater political participation, which prompted many to actively campaign for new missionary or government schools. The late colonial period witnessed a huge expansion in the demand for education and, with colonial officials leaving, the need for a trained workforce. With less than a hundred college graduates, Tanzania's need was especially acute and nowhere could existing African institutions match the demand for advanced degrees. Secondary school students, both male and female, realized the new opportunity for advancement and worked to obtain access to universities so they could become technocratic and bureaucratic leaders, and members of the new government elite.[19] To deal with this demand, the late colonial state and its postcolonial successor drastically increased enrollment capacities within the school systems throughout the continent, with Tanzania at the forefront in primary school expansion. Compared with fewer than ten thousand mostly male African students during the late colonial period, government figures show that 486,470 students were enrolled in schools in 1961, rising to 537,725 students the following year. By 1966 schools taught 774,604 students, and that rose to 829,182 in 1967.[20] As outside observers quickly noted, however, the school system did not have the necessary trained teachers to match this growth, which hampered the overall functioning of the schools and slowed expansion efforts. Overall, access to education remained an ongoing battle and the demand for education constantly exceeded the available space, forcing East African governments to search for possible solutions. Thus, this important nation-building endeavor contained important transnational connections and components and needs to be considered in a global context.

2   Incoming Americans and British Conflicts in Tanzania

Recognizing many of the issues that decolonizing countries faced, American scholars, celebrities, and journalists—among others—worked to provide new forms of assistance to African countries. As part of these new efforts, Professor Kenneth Bigelow and R. Freeman Butts, both associated with Teachers College of Columbia University and with funding from the Carnegie Corporation, hosted a meeting in December 1960 with the governments of the United States and United Kingdom, along with representatives from the British East African territories.[21] Responding to urgent requests from East African officials for teachers, the pair established a new organization, Teachers for East Africa, whose mission was to help staff and consequently expand the education systems in East Africa, hoping to increase the

---

2001), 5.

18   Francis Terry McNamera interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy, March 18, 1993, Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project Archive, Library of Congress.

19   Andrew Ivaska, *Cultured States: Youth, Gender and Modern Style in 1960s Dar es Salaam* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

20   Statistics differ between Lene Buchert's *Education in the Development of Tanzania, 1919-90* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1994), 110, and "Twenty Years of TANU Education" in *Towards Ujamaa: Twenty Years of TANU Leadership*, Gabriel Ruhumbika (ed.), (Dar es Salaam: East African Literature Bureau, 1977), 227.

21   P.C.C. Evans, "American Teachers for East Africa," Symposium on Education in Africa, *Comparative Education Review*, June 1962, 69–77.

stability and overall development of the countries.[22] By providing teachers, the TEA hoped to foster cooperation between the United States and United Kingdom aid agencies, the three East African governments, and various universities in the United States. With financial and logistical support from the US government, the program reflected broader American goals of rapidly improving the educational situation in the region at all levels, in addition to undertaking larger infrastructure projects. Thus, the newly established TEA worked to address school-related problems and became one of the first large-scale American organizations in East Africa, demonstrating the quick response of determined collectivized interests. Despite the stated cooperation, the organization became symbolic of a new American dominance and provided American entry into the region.

To recruit teachers, the organization visited universities throughout the United States, mailed over 12,000 letters, and utilized the resources of the National Education Association to increase awareness of the TEA program. Demonstrating a new interest towards overseas engagement and volunteering, thousands of college students and recent graduates applied for teaching positions, which allowed the organization to be highly selective—only approving 150 teachers with master's degrees.[23] In providing an overview of the TEA's recruitment efforts to the *New York Times*, Butts stated that the teachers "must be professionally first rate … they must be personally resourceful and imaginative … with no trace of paternalism, they must be able to cooperate with Africa in educating itself … they must be animated by a spirit of service."[24] Thus, the organization worked to distance itself, although sometimes unsuccessfully, from colonial-era entities, thus attacking their British partners, and show new enthusiasm while reproducing some imperial attitudes of service. What Butts was arguing for was more of an alternative, humanistic approach to modernization that would not rely predominately on infrastructural-based projects and, as mentioned in the quote, helping Africa to help itself, implying some degree of equality.

While the organization strove to include British teachers, work with the British government to become a joint Anglo-American venture suffered. After only a year of existence, the growing feeling of disappointment changed to a sense of failure within the British government, as Overseas Development Ministry [ODM] officials reported little success in attracting teachers to the TEA program. British students had long enjoyed opportunities to serve the empire and teach overseas, unlike in America, where this was a new opportunity, and consequently British students remained less enthusiastic. In one call for applications, H. Holmes at the ODM highlighted this problem, writing: "Although there were about 60 first enquiries, only 10 application forms were returned"; of the ten received, none of the applicants passed the initial recruitment stage.[25] Recruitment officials blamed the unfavorable press that was linked to larger debates over the future of the British Empire and pitted the Tanzanian government against the British over South Africa and the official severing of relations with Southern Rhodesia. Consequently, by the mid-1960s, the British ODM was no longer encouraging British volunteers to go to Tanzania, after an educational engagement of over fifty years.[26] The general British attitude that their power was waning and they were moving away from imperial rule, especially the controversies associated with decolonization, contrasted with the excitement of young Americans in developing a more informal relationship with the region. The program's failures demonstrated the limited support for imperial projects in Britain, especially in contrast to the American enthusiasm for volunteering for an exotic adventure untainted by their own imperialism.

Over its ten-year existence, the TEA supplied 631 educators for teaching and teacher training in East Africa and became a conduit for information between the region and the American public.[27] The volunteer teachers established important, albeit informal, links throughout the region, interacted with people at a local level, and provided the means whereby the education systems could successfully teach

---

22   R. Freeman Butts, "A Second Program of Teachers for East Africa," February 1, 1962, Teacher's College Archive [TCA], Columbia University, Butts Correspondence File, 33.

23   Butts, "Teachers for East Africa," 33.

24   Butts, "Teachers Sought in Africa Project," *New York Times*, February 5, 1961.

25   See B.N.A [British National Archive], "Applicants," ODM17/86.

26   B.N.A, ODM17/86.

27   Butts, "Teachers for East Africa," 34.

record numbers of students. Increasingly cognizant of events in the world and having a greater interest in Africa than previous generations, applicants possessed a strong desire to see foreign lands and wanted to discover themselves as well as help others.[28] Despite the slight difference in ages between TEA teachers (born in 1940 at the latest) and Peace Corps volunteers (born only 4–6 years later), the parents of TEA workers were more a product of the Great Depression, not as likely to have fought in WWII and raised in a period of American isolationism. The TEA also possessed a different attitude towards work, as they did not want to follow their parents into specific desk-based careers for the rest of their lives. Unlike the PCVs later in the decade, however, they were raised hearing tales of America's informal intervention in Latin America, rather than the conflict in Vietnam, and were largely unconnected to the civil rights movement that would define the later 1960s. Slightly older than PCVs, TEA participants were more likely to be married and have children than the next generation of volunteers and, as a requirement of the program, possessed a teaching degree. Finally, reminiscent of nineteenth-century British humanitarian predecessors, the desire to help the downtrodden throughout the world influenced the motivations of those going overseas. While possessing an almost blind faith in the value of education and its potential for individual and societal uplift, neither group of young volunteers was particularly educated in or dedicated to the modernization ideology promoted by developmentalist planners. Thus, with little experience to draw on, volunteers viewed their upcoming experience as the most exotic adventure Americans could partake in at the time and an escape from the boredom of middle-class lives. They held a desire to forge connections with unfamiliar peoples rather than impose a specific ideology (a larger concern after the start of the Vietnam War) on non-Western people.

Specifically in Tanzania, the TEA trained, transported, and placed over 300 American teachers in schools during the early 1960s. As a nascent organization and after only a few brief trips by its leadership to the region, the organization needed to establish an entire infrastructure to place, supply, and oversee the teachers. Consequently, a degree of chaos plagued the early efforts of the organization and it took a concerted effort by the incoming teachers to address these issues. Sometimes schools were unprepared for the teachers' arrival or did not know they were coming at all. However, the vast majority of issues centered on supplies and suitcases not arriving in a timely manner, leading the teachers to improvise and go without for two or three weeks until their carefully packed suitcases arrived. American researchers have noted that the first wave of teachers was "probably unconcerned about a number of facets of life they were entering, including such potentially important issues such as isolation, working under a system using teaching methods quite different from those to which they have been accustomed, loneliness and cost of living."[29] Lastly, there were expectations of gratitude that did not materialize. Teachers thought that their students would be more appreciative of their volunteer efforts, their small gifts, and their organization of many local trips, but many students believed these efforts were what the rich Americans did back home and that they did not entail much extra effort. Since most of these issues were not covered during orientation, they often caught the newly arriving volunteers by surprise and complicated an already difficult adjustment process. Furthermore, when examining American teachers abroad and outside of elite levels, the interactions and actions of Americans highlight an optimism powered more by a faith in education for uplift than support for modernization theory, and more for international adventure than global power struggles.

Despite the problems noted above, the TEA helped the Ministry of Education move closer to meeting the ambitious goals established by their first five-year plan for education released in 1963, in which education experts estimated a shortfall of 541 teachers in 1964, and greatly increased the scope of the education system.[30] In part, the political legitimacy of Tanzania's leader, Julius Nyerere, and his TANU party was based on meeting these demands. Teachers arriving through the TEA filled critical positions that the Ministry could not fill itself. By 1964, Tanzania possessed 143 such teachers (roughly one-third of the total teachers) and, although relatively small in number, they were critical for the

---

28 "Application Essay," December 7, 1960, TCA, Application File, 9.

29 Raymond L. Gold, *A Teaching Safari: A Study of American Teachers in East Africa* (Baltimore: PublishAmerica, 2004), 131.

30 Butts, "Teachers for East Africa," 33.

expanding school system.[31] These teachers allowed program director Butts to state "for the first time within memory, the schools are reasonably well staffed" and the presence of TEA teachers permitted "the development plan for the expansion of secondary education."[32] However, the TEA's immediate impact was limited. Although they successfully provided teachers to replace departing British ones, this also created an opportunity for African teachers to receive additional training or join the Ministry of Education, thus removing themselves from active teaching duties. While an important step in Africanizing the bureaucracy, such actions not only failed to solve the teacher shortage and increased reliance on outsider teachers, but they also demonstrated the importance of transnational resources in developing local institutions.

Issues began to surface between the British and American partnership, which was compounded by a generational gap, widely different attitudes, and limited cooperation between groups of teachers. Despite their official support, British officials both in London and throughout East Africa expressed their dislike of the program, although they appreciated its usefulness. First, the independence of Uganda and Tanzania now made it impossible to use Colonial Development and Welfare Funds. ODM officials assumed the East African governments would pay for half of the additional training of their teachers, but after encountering protests from East African governments, they reluctantly agreed to cover all the expenses.[33] Additionally, ODM officials, such as Bernard Ashley and George Dickson, viewed the TEA program as an attempt by the Americans to "force an entry into the field of teacher training," which they allegedly wanted to Americanize, thus changing Britain's carefully crafted legacy of imperial rule. With American teachers and funding playing an increasingly prominent role in the program, Colonial and Foreign Office officials began to feel marginalized and wondered about their future in the field of East African education. By developing a presence in a new region outside of formal government support, the TEA forged new connections to the region and increased American knowledge about East African life at the expense of the long-standing British presence. Despite pledges of cooperation, the Anglo-American venture showed the practical limitations of such efforts, especially as disputes began occurring between individual teachers.

In addition to officials in London, British teachers and other officials on the ground in Tanzania complained about the attitudes of the arriving volunteers, while remaining aware that they represented the arrival of a new imperial presence. With their long-standing ties to the Empire, these teachers and officials wrote about the "it is our turn now" approach of the Americans and argued the new teachers failed to recognize the contributions of their British colleagues. In researching the organization, Raymond Gold found instances of British headmasters, accustomed to living in East Africa and already insecure about their positions, protesting that Americans were "inclined to grumble about their extended work obligations and generally were overly concerned about their health," to the degree that many headmasters labeled them hypochondriacs. Many officials used this common attack to discredit the American volunteers and reinforce the divide between American and British educators.[34] Headmasters also complained about the long holidays their American teachers took. Americans interpreted the term "school holiday" liberally and viewed it as a vacation, not realizing that many students stayed at school and supervision was needed. Americans understood they would only be in Africa for a short time and wanted to tour as much as possible. These criticisms were not unwarranted, as the majority of teachers viewed travel as an essential component of their time in East Africa. In one instance, Gary Gappert and a fellow teacher planned to drive 3,500 miles from Tabora to Cape Town, consequently earning the scorn of the "old timers" and arriving late for the start of the school term.[35] The alleged holiday-first attitude of the teachers reinforced negative British attitudes towards the newly arrived American teachers, criticism based on real problems, but also the desire of British officials to condemn the Americans' actions in an attempt at self-preservation.

In contrast, the American teachers noticed the "aloofness, attitude, the formality of the older

---

[31]   Zanzibar is not included in this calculation.

[32]   Butts, "Teachers for East Africa," 33.

[33]   See B.N.A., FO 924/1473.

[34]   Gold, *A Teaching Safari*, 214.

[35]   Gary Gappert "Letter Home," TCA, TEA Personnel Communications File, 79.

British type teacher."[36] Arriving teachers perceived a sense of fatigue among British teachers compared to the American excitement and felt that many of the British teachers were simply waiting to return home. Finally, the arrival of African-American teachers added a degree of racial mixing and blurred the carefully maintained hierarchies the British had established. While still rare, African-American teachers permeated white-only clubs, arguably the last bastion of Europeans, and helped force the racially segregated colonial society to change. Thus, in opposition to the lasting British influence, where racial attitudes existed, the American presence was welcomed by the Tanzanian population as a viable postcolonial alternative to British teachers and by local politicians eager to demonstrate changes brought by independence.

Changes were also taking place in the classroom, as TEA teachers quickly began instructing students, often without lesson plans and with minimal guidance. The newly arriving teachers noted that few teaching supplies existed for their lessons.[37]As Jim Blair remembers, with regard to teaching, "I just did it. I found that I had unrealized talent. I could teach. Once I realized that I could accomplish whatever I put my mind to, I never looked back."[38] Spurred by their informality, TEA teachers questioned existing practices, including the need for Cambridge exams, much to the dismay of both the British and those needing to take the exams in order to advance in schooling. Other minor issues turned into larger disputes, as Americans also questioned the lecture-based system of memorizing facts practiced by the British, which turned out to be a major legacy of empire.[39] As a result, the students themselves initially questioned the effectiveness of American teachers, with Gus Lewis recalling that students asked: "What did these teachers know about British exams taken by African boys?"[40] Over the first year of teaching, many of these unexpected issues worked themselves out and the organization flourished, leading the three East African countries, especially Tanzania, to request more TEA teachers and showcase their expanding educational systems, replace more colonial-era educators, and respond to local demands.

Perhaps the area of greatest influence the teachers enjoyed came from informal interactions outside the classroom. For example, the new teachers went on hikes, organized visits to local places of interest, and, as part of their love of sightseeing, encouraged learning outside the classroom. Additionally, sports existed as a major draw at the local festivals and provided an opportunity to increase student participation and excitement. The fledgling Tanzanian state struggled for audiences at newly created state celebrations and students provided a captive audience and served as athletic contestants. Through organizing and participating in these events, people would be more inclined to embrace the new national holidays, and government officials could further develop nation-building activities and strengthen national unity. Moses Howard, an African-American TEA volunteer, remembers this informal interaction as an influencing factor in dating, which was going through renegotiation, as the young students established their own relationships and needed guidance on how to deal with these new issues.[41] He recalls: "My students often came to tea at my house. They asked me to explain lessons, but they were more interested in personal relationships."What is this dating?" "Do most boys have cars to drive around with girls as we see in the movies? ... They were always respectful and seemed convinced they could ask me anything ... ."[42] Thus, the informality of American teachers encouraged by the TEA program promoted a different degree of bonding and, for the rare African-American

---

36   R. Freeman Butts, "First Impression of Teachers for East Africa in Action," TCA, Butts Correspondence File, 11.

37   Pat Gill, "My English Challenge," *teaaki* (blog), November 20, 2013, http://teaaki.pbworks.com/w/page/70973781/My%20English%20Challenge%20-%20Pat%20Gill.

38   Jim Blair, "TEA Reflections," *teaaki* (blog), August 21, 2013, http://teaaki.pbworks.com/w/page/44447933/TEA%20Reflections%20-%20Jim%20Blair.

39   Joel Reuben, "The New Primary Approach," *teaaki* (blog), August 25, 2015, http://teaaki.pbworks.com/w/page/99582131/The%20New%20Primary%20Approach%20-%20Joel%20Reuben.

40   Gus Lewis, "Strike! to Study," *teaaki* (blog), November 27, 2011, http://teaaki.pbworks.com/w/page/48393046/Strike%21%20to%20Study%20-%20Gus%20Lewis.

41   Lynn Thomas, "Schoolgirl Pregnancies, Letter-writing and Modern Persons in Late Colonial East Africa," in *Africa's Hidden Histories: Everyday Literacy and the Making of the Self* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006): 180–207.

42   Moses Howard, "My African Students," *teaaki* (blog), January 30, 2017, http://teaaki.pbworks.com/w/page/114936556/My%20African%20Students%20-%20Moses%20Howard.

teacher, reinforced this bonding by commonalities of race.[43] The close connections helped students navigate the new world of the 1960s while learning about America outside the classroom. These unplanned interactions and new bonds continued long after the volunteers departed back to America and remained useful for Tanzanians wanting to attend university in America. Overall, the individual connections worked to augment many of the efforts of the TEA program and provide an alternative to colonial teaching methods. These spontaneous interactions, based more on intimacy than ideology, were not a component of modernization planning; replacing British teachers at the local level became more important than global Anglo-American cooperation or Cold War competition.

3   Peace Corps Volunteers and New Conflicts

In addition to the clashes occurring between Americans and departing British officials, a new conflict emerged as the American presence transitioned from an informal to formal presence with the arrival of PCVs to replace TEA teachers. Presidential candidate John F. Kennedy argued for an increased American presence in the region and the vital importance of the decolonizing world to America's strategic vision. At the same time, Kennedy combined his domestic and international agendas by encouraging American students to help develop (again reflecting colonial undertones) newly decolonized countries. In a brief speech while campaigning at the University of Michigan, Kennedy asked: "How many of you who are going to be doctors, are willing to spend your days in Ghana?"[44] Thus, Kennedy was able to create a sense of moral obligation and he reshaped American interactions with the developing world by introducing a more formal state program, utilizing volunteers who were now part of the US government. On March 1, 1961, this relationship was solidified as now President Kennedy signed an order establishing the Peace Corps, revolutionizing the method by which people could volunteer for government service and signifying a more formal American presence that was connected to official, anti-communist aid programs. With the birth of the Peace Corps, however, American aid programs that possessed different overall goals were often competing against each other; some elements, such as the Peace Corps itself, were less ideologically focused than other American aid-granting organizations.[45]

Kennedy's new engagement was a crucial response to Nyerere's aggressive foreign policies and desire to position Tanzania as a country that would dominate regional politics. Despite later agitating for self-sufficiency, Nyerere quickly realized the benefits for both educators in general and as replacements for the British. As an early proponent for PCVs, Nyerere actively sought international aid to build, staff, and fund schools, as well as the infrastructure more broadly, and worked to play different Cold War powers against each other. Nyerere also actively helped outside liberation groups, which only increased American interest in the country. The result was a newly formed government positioned to claim additional transnational resources and use them for state-building purposes. Consequently, Kennedy and officials in the State Department felt it necessary to quickly involve Americans in Tanzanian affairs.

New American engagement in the guise of PCVs created the problem of having two American organizations devoted to teaching on the ground in the region and highlights the second conflict complicating American foreign policy. For a brief moment, the organizations were more focused on competing with and discrediting each other, and proving their own worth rather than with global or ideological concerns. Despite efforts by the leadership of the Peace Corps and TEA to limit fraternal arguments, recognizing that both were at least partially funded by the American government, tempers flared on several occasions, especially as TEA teachers realized they were slowly being phased out. In one case, Professor of Education Margaret Lindsey stated her pro-TEA bias, "in favor of teachers who had a career commitment to teaching and who had received extended and specialized professional

---

[43]   Ibid.

[44]   John F. Kennedy, "October 14, 1960 Speech to Michigan University Students," The Founding Moment in About https://www.peacecorps.gov/about/history/founding-moment/.

[45]   Lantham, 141. Latham argues the Peace Corps in Latin America provided the literacy skills for more radical political advocacy.

training for their jobs," thus putting down PCVs who did not have the same education-related background or training.[46] Rumors circulated of disputes between the TEA and Peace Corps, prompting Butts and Bigelow to report: "T.E.A. teachers were being openly told that T.E.A. was 'through' and that the Peace Corps was going to take over," a disheartening statement to their volunteers and indicative of the rivalry that existed between the two organizations and the chaotic transition between informal and formal empire.[47] At Nyerere's urging, the Tanzanian government welcomed this transition to PCVs—in part due to the organization's connection to the American government, but also simply because Peace Corps teachers were free while TEA teachers cost money—and sought to use the new volunteers to its advantage. Thus, as the Cold War heightened, the American government became increasingly involved with this critical African country and brought development programs more under state control, a change host officials initially welcomed as the volunteers were crucial to staffing the schools and other needed programs.

Aware of the existing massive shortage of teachers within the country, Tanzanian education officials recognized the importance of making use of PCV teachers and other arriving American experts. Nyerere personally welcomed the first group of PCVs to East Africa and received a telegram from Kennedy stating that these volunteers reflected the true spirit of friendship from the American people.[48] Nyerere highlighted this precedent-setting project and the desperate need for teachers to fill existing vacancies throughout the region.[49] The PCVs helped staff newly built schools and interacted with newly appointed Tanzanian teachers and students, among others. These informal interactions largely mirrored those of the TEA but now carried a more formal role, with funding from the American government and connections to larger foreign policy goals. The transition generally went smoothly and ex-TEA teachers, such as Rod Hinkle, even helped train the more inexperienced incoming PCVs.[50] As TEA teachers and others within the organization recall, despite the savings in salary, East African ministries were not pleased with the need to replace the older and more experienced TEA teachers with PCVs.[51]

Despite these misgivings, PCVs arrived and were quickly incorporated into Tanzanian state-building institutions. Reflecting effects similar to the TEA programs, new PCVs, mostly placed in upper primary schools, freed existing local teachers to return to teacher-training colleges so they could further their own education, receive an upgraded classification, and create a better-trained workforce for the Tanzanian state. The presence of the volunteers helped provide expertise in science and math in particular, raise money for school projects, and simply allow children to attend school. Communication between the Ministry of Education and the PCVs themselves also served as a covert method of the national government assessing schools and implementing a new, more nationalistic curriculum. Thus, the PCVs served as informal educational officials who, as the Ministry quickly realized, possessed few biases or conflicts of interest. Furthermore, the level of interaction with ordinary Tanzanians also increased outside the school setting. PCV John Bush recalls how the Peace Corps brought Americans into the lives of everyday Tanzanians for the first time. Tanzanian children felt comfortable approaching American volunteers, associating them with the cowboys of global American television shows.[52] Again aligning with the experiences of TEA teachers, the friendships, bonds, and connections forged during the volunteers' two-year stay continued throughout their lives, and many unknowingly inspired Tanzanians to study, work, or travel to the United States. Consequently, due to their posting in rural areas with no more than two volunteers at a school, the level of interaction between Americans and Tanzanians was maximized and individual connections

---

[46]   R. Freeman Butts, "Butts to Williams" May 27, 1964, TCA, Butts Correspondence File, 41.

[47]   Ibid., 41.

[48]   "Teachers from Abroad Vital," *Tanganyika Standard*, September 12, 1964, 5.

[49]   "Teachers Told to Be Friendly," *Tanganyika Standard*, July 19, 1961, 3.

[50]   Rod Hickle, "Transition to Peace Corps," *teaaki* (blog), January 4, 2014, http://teaaki.pbworks.com/w/page/72285926/Transition%20to%20Peace%20Corps%20-%20Rod%20Hinkle.

[51]   Ibid.

[52]   John Bush interviewed by Ernest Zaremba, Return Peace Corps Volunteer Collection, John F. Kennedy Library, November 14, 2004.

remained an important aspect of the new program, at the expense of any loyalty to larger ideological and developmental concerns, aside from education itself.

American State Department documents, such as the 1965 Report, provide an overview of this new engagement with Tanzania, while also stressing the limited influence of the British. Ironically, as the United States praised Nyerere's regime as an anti-communist ally, advocated the need for building up state apparatus to replace the British, and increasingly recognized the strategic importance of the country, Nyerere moved further to the left and eventually began to question the necessity of the Peace Corps itself. Furthermore, the preoccupation of the American government with modernization and the Cold War came into competition with Nyerere's implementation of his third-world-influenced socialist *ujamaa* program.[53] Finally, over time the shortage of teachers lessened, leaving the Tanzanian government not as beholden to the outsiders. Mostly due to the connection between the Peace Corps and the American government, many locals attacked the general idea of the organization to show their anger at American actions in Africa and throughout the world. This quick shift from acceptance to condemnation demonstrates the third major conflict Americans experienced in Tanzania—a fight between the host people and government against the Peace Corps itself. Protests against the organization quickly became a rallying point for the Tanzanian population, which effectively limited the overall goodwill the organization hoped to foster. In one illustrative instance, PCV Leonard Levitt noted the protesters carried signs stating: "AMERICA GO HOME. AMERICAN SPIES. AMERICAN IMPERIALISTS … . These demonstrators, our friends, they were demonstrating against us."[54] Other demonstrators focused on American actions in the Congo, with the overthrow and killing of Lumumba, along with involvement in Vietnam and the close connection between Shriver, as leader of the Peace Corps, and Kennedy. In these demonstrations, the sons and daughters of those who advocated for independence in the 1950s, now frustrated with the limitations of independence, vented their frustration with charges that continued to resonate and motivate. Thus, the formal expansion of the American presence and global knowledge of events elsewhere subverted the goodwill the Peace Corps hoped to establish in Tanzania. However, for Nyerere's regime, the mere presence of the organization became a highly symbolic target that could unite the various ethnic groups in the country in a non-threatening manner.

While those with direct contact with the volunteers and those in the Ministry of Education were mostly thankful for their work and remained supportive, those lacking such connections became highly critical of their presence. In demonstrating the lack of an informed response to PCV presence, most Tanzanians differentiated between the individual PCVs, whom they generally liked and genuinely appreciated, and the broad American foreign policies that implied the Peace Corps program was a front by the American government to fulfill its ulterior motives. In one example, a Tanzanian teacher came up to two PCVs and made a concerted effort to make them understand that "what they were saying had nothing to do with us, [PCV] Mike or me. We were their friends, they all knew that. It was the government they were against. They were the spies. Not us. They all greatly appreciated what we were doing at Ndumulu; they knew how hard we were working, and how much we were trying to help them."[55] Still, nearly everyone remained wary of any American program in Tanzania, and debates over the formalized imperial nature of the program manifested themselves in periodic outbursts of anti-American sentiment.[56] Additionally, it was up to volunteers to distance themselves from the American government and make their individual views known. These contributions further developed the informal interactions that remained a cornerstone of American connections to the developing world and could often work to overcome more unpleasant Cold War exchanges. Thus, PCVs were caught between the increasingly unpopular US formal empire (mostly due to actions in the Congo and Vietnam) and the much more respected informal interactions with Tanzanians—and while working to support some aspects of American foreign policy they became the focus of nationalist attacks.

---

[53]   For more on the uniqueness of *ujamaa* see Lal, *African Socialism in Postcolonial Tanzania*, 17.

[54]   Leonard Levitt, *An African Season* (New York, 1967), 137.

[55]   Ibid., 137–8.

[56]   Gary Gappert, "Letter Home," TCA, T.E.A. Personnel Communications File, 79.

4   Conclusions

In perhaps the strongest reaction to the organization, Nyerere expelled the Peace Corps from Tanzania in 1969. Highlighting the ties between the organization and the US government, he cited the war in Vietnam (and the same problems of American actions cited by PCVs); but he was also caving to pressure from the more radical elements in Tanzania, those who had been writing letters and condemning the Peace Corps for the past nine years. The formal presence of Americans became contentious, causing the Tanzanian state to respond severely. Additionally, teachers were now arriving from Sweden, Denmark, and India.[57] By the late 1960s, Tanzania was also enjoying increased aid from other socialist countries, such as Cuba, China, the Soviet Union, and Sweden, which built schools during the early 1970s. Despite Nyerere's goal of limiting foreign intervention, the dispute with and dramatic elimination of American aid allowed other funding to continue. With increased global aid from diverse sources, Nyerere could afford to terminate the Peace Corps program and attack imperial American diplomacy, while at the same time improving his own domestic prestige and socialist credentials. Thus, even in its withdrawal, the transnational Peace Corps program helped to further legitimize Nyerere and his government.

Overall, the transition from informal to formal empire in Tanzania worked to push and solidify an American presence in the region, but ultimately backfired with the expulsion of the organization. The formal transnational links and important cross-cultural interactions sponsored by the American government now ended, as did the ability of the Tanzanian state to attract American youths, who simply went to other countries having a Peace Corps presence. Consequently, American connections to the county reverted to an informal relationship between individuals and separate from the American government. The conflicts between individuals and larger organizations thus limited the overall effectiveness of American intervention in Africa and damaged the efforts of many educators to teach or otherwise help in Tanzania. Thus, following a rapid replacement of British educators, individual connections forged in the 1960s remained as the lasting bonds between the two countries and now existed outside formal political debates and global Cold War concerns.

---

[57]   "160 Foreign Teachers to Work Here," *Daily News*, October 8, 1975, 5.

Art. #7293

References

Blair, Jim. "TEA Reflection." TEAKI (blog) Accessed January 12, 2018. http://teaaki.pbworks.com.

Buchert, Lene. *Education and the Development of Tanzania, 1919-1990*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1994.

Bush, John. Interviewed by Ernest Zaremba. Return Peace Corps Volunteer Collection, John F. Kennedy Library.

Cobbs Hoffman, Elizabeth. *All You Need Is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960s*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998.

—. "Modernizing Bureaucrats, Backward Africans and the Development Concept." In *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History of Politics and Knowledge*, eds. Frederick Cooper and Randall M. Packard, 64-92. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

Cooper, Frederick. *Africa and the World: Capitalism, Empire, Nation-State*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014.

Daily News [Tanzania]

Evans, P.C.C. "American Teachers for East Africa." Symposium on Education in Africa. *Comparative Education Review*, June 1962, 69-77.

Fischer, Fritz. *Making Them Like Us: Peace Corps Volunteers in the 1960s*. Washington: Smithsonian, 1998.

Gaines, Kevin Kelly. *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006.

Gill, Pat. "My English Challenge." TEAKI (blog) Accessed January 12, 2018. http://teaaki.pbworks.com.

Gilman, Nils. *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America. New Studies in American Intellectual and Cultural History*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.

Gold, Raymond L. *A Teaching Safari: A Study of American Teachers in East Africa*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004.

Grubbs, Larry. *Secular Missionaries: Americans and African Development in the 1960s. Culture, Politics, and the Cold War*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010.

Hickle, Rod. "Transition to Peace Corps." TEAKI (blog) Accessed January 12, 2018. http://teaaki.pbworks.com.

Hood, Samuel. Letter to Selwyn Lloyd. 10 July 1957. FCO 141/7092. British National Archive.

Horne, Gerald. *Mau Mau in Harlem?: The U.S. and the Liberation of Kenya*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Howard, Moses. "My African Students." TEAKI (blog) Accessed January 12, 2018. http://teaaki.pbworks.com.

Ivaska, Andrew M. *Cultured States: Youth, Gender, and Modern Style in 1960s Dar es Salaam*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

Kaduma, I.M. "Twenty Years of TANU 'Education.'" In *Towards Ujamaa: Twenty Years of TANU Leadership*, edited by Gabriel Ruhumbika. Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: East African Literature Bureau, 1974.

Kelly, John, and Martha Kaplan. *Represented Communities: Fiji and World Decolonization*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.

Kent, John. "United States Reactions to Empire, Colonialism and the Cold War in Black Africa." *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 33, no. 2 (2005): 195-220.

Lal, Priya. *African Socialism in Postcolonial Tanzania: Between the Village and the World*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Lantham, Michael E. *The Right Kind of Revolution: Modernization, Development and U.S. Foreign Policy from the Cold War to the Present*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011.

Levitt, Leonard. *An African Season*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967.

Lewis, Gus. "Strike! to Study." TEAKI (blog) Accessed January 12, 2018. http://teaaki.pbworks.com.

McNamera, Francis Terry. Interview by Charles Stuart Kennedy. Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, Library of Congress.

New York Times

Nwauwa, Apollos Okwuchi. *Imperialism, Academe and Nationalism: Britain and University Education for Africans, 1860-1960*. Portland: F. Cass, 1997.

Rice, Gerard T. *The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.

Singh, *Nikhil Pal. Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005.

Tanganyika Standard

Teachers for East Africa Papers. Columbia University Teacher's College Archive.

Thomas, Lynn M. "Schoolgirl Pregnancies, Letter-Writing and Modern Persons in Late Colonial East Africa." In *Africa's Hidden Histories: Everyday Literacy and the Making of the Self*, edited by Karin Barber, 180-207. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006.

Von Eschen, *Penny M. Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997.

Zimmerman, Jonathan. "Beyond Double Consciousness: Black Peace Corps Volunteers in Africa, 1961-1971." *Journal of American History* 82 (1995): 999-1028.

—. *Innocents Abroad: American Teachers in the American Century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009.