

# 2017

## H-Diplo

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**Roundtable Review**  
**Volume XVIII, No. 18 (2017)**  
*13 March 2017*

*Roundtable Editors:* Thomas Maddux and Diane Labrosse  
*Roundtable and Web Production Editor:* George Fujii

Introduction by Andy DeRoche

**Nancy Mitchell. *Jimmy Carter in Africa: Race and the Cold War.*** Palo Alto: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Stanford University Press, 2016. ISBN: 9780804793858 (cloth, \$45.00).

URL: <http://www.tiny.cc/Roundtable-XVIII-18>

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## Introduction by Andy DeRoche, Front Range Community College

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The four distinguished reviewers contributing to this roundtable on Nancy Mitchell's *Jimmy Carter in Africa* all agree that it is an exceptional book that features lively writing based on a tremendous amount of original research. They further concur that it provides many important new insights about President Jimmy Carter, his relations with Africa, and his presidency overall. They all applaud her careful consideration of two major case studies, the difficult transition from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe, and the war between Somalia and Ethiopia. I share the reviewers' generally laudatory judgment wholeheartedly and could easily offer many additional pages of praise myself, but will instead focus on one specific contribution by Mitchell which struck me as particularly significant, given my own work, and then briefly summarize the reviewers' arguments.

Many years ago, my biography of Andrew Young, Carter's ambassador to the United Nations from 1977 to 1979, was published and received solid reviews.<sup>1</sup> One mild corrective, by the esteemed scholar Brenda Gayle Plummer, was that my interpretation was slightly too favorable towards Young and gave him undue credit for championing sanctions against South Africa.<sup>2</sup> In an excellent article, Simon Stevens echoed Plummer's criticism and contended that the evidence cited in my book did not support my contention that Young advocated for tough sanctions.<sup>3</sup>

Occasionally I have considered trying to find more evidence to support my claims about Young's role in the Carter administration, and have thought about writing a more comprehensive biography of the former ambassador. Thanks to the incredible research and brilliant analysis by Nancy Mitchell, however, that is no longer necessary. Her revisionist interpretation of the place of Young in Carter's approach to Africa is spot on, and she backs it up with scores of documents that either were not available when I wrote *Andrew Young* or were not turned up by my less-thorough research.

Mitchell provides us with countless examples of Young weighing in on policy matters and influencing events, but the most compelling for me was her lengthy discussion of Young's "long, passionate letter" to Carter and secretary of state Cyrus Vance from October 1977, in the aftermath of the murder of South African anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko. Young seconded Carter's preference for a gradual, carrot-and-stick approach to the Pretoria regime, but concluded that "now is the time for a stick" (332-333). Mitchell's examination of

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew J. DeRoche, *Andrew Young: Civil Rights Ambassador* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> Brenda Gayle Plummer, "Black Ambassador: Andrew Young Appraised," *Diplomatic History* 29:3 (June 2005): 565-67. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7709.2005.00505.x>.

<sup>3</sup> Simon Stevens, "'From the Viewpoint of a Southern Governor': The Carter Administration and Apartheid, 1977-81," *Diplomatic History* 36:5 (November 2012): 843-880, especially 873. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7709.2012.01067.x>.

Young's role has not only attracted praise from other historians, but also from the former Ambassador himself.<sup>4</sup>

Of the four reviewers in this roundtable, Louise Woodroffe offers the closest thing to actual criticism, although even her comments are mostly positive. After praising Mitchell's research and the topics she covered, Woodroffe mildly questions the interpretation of Young's role in the Carter administration. Her critique focuses on Mitchell's claim that Young played a key part in late 1970s U.S. relations with Africa, and in Woodroffe's analysis this point by Mitchell is not supported in the documents. Woodroffe's conclusion, in which she praises Mitchell for producing an "outstanding work" that is "ambitious" but does the subject "justice," is much closer to the evaluations offered by the other reviewers.

Jamie Miller offers a mostly laudatory assessment of Mitchell's book, judging it a "major advancement in historical knowledge over existing work," featuring "exhaustive research." He congratulates Mitchell for her approach and focus, and for providing a "new model for future historians of Carter's foreign policy." In Miller's concluding paragraphs he does suggest that there are areas for future scholars to add to what Mitchell has done, in particular by exploring why Carter opted to focus more on race in foreign relations than he did in domestic policy. Miller also points out that while Mitchell does include several important African actors in her story, none of them had a major role and none were allowed to express their own visions for the future. He ends by again praising Mitchell's undertaking overall, because it prompted him to go through such a challenging thought process as he wrote his review.

Elizabeth Schmidt to some extent echoes the analysis in the last paragraphs of Miller's review, characterizing the African voices in the book as "muted." To her challenge that other historians could undertake projects more firmly rooted in Africa, as well as to Miller's point that the African actors in Mitchell's story did not play central roles, I would humbly point to my latest article on Kenneth Kaunda, which makes an attempt to emphasize African agency.<sup>5</sup>

Aside from the suggestion that future historians might take a more Afro-Centric approach, Schmidt's review of Mitchell's book is full of praise. She finds Mitchell's portrayal of Young to be "especially insightful," and congratulates Mitchell for the skill of her contextualization and also for the "nuance" of her analysis. In the end, Schmidt finds *Jimmy Carter in Africa* to be a "masterful and compelling account," which rightly puts Africa (instead of the Middle East) at the center of Carter's foreign relations.

All of us who research and write about United States-Africa relations owe a great debt to the fourth reviewer in this roundtable, Thomas Noer. He did as much as any historian to establish this as a viable sub-field in diplomatic history, and has told me that he often attended conferences where no one else was working on African issues. We have come a long way since those days, but Noer is still contributing thoughtful writing to our now vibrant sub-field.

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<sup>4</sup> DeRoche phone interview with Andrew Young, 19 May 2016. Young asked me if I had seen Mitchell's book, and told that he was reading it with great interest. His only critique was that the print was too small.

<sup>5</sup> Andy DeRoche, "Asserting African Agency: Kenneth Kaunda and the USA, 1964-1980," *Diplomatic History* 40:5 (November 2016): 975-1001. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/dh/dhv047>.

Noer has always been a gracious colleague who inspired other historians (and especially graduate students) through his words and deeds. For example, while still in the Ph.D. program at Colorado, I attended my first Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations meeting at Annapolis in 1995 and participated in a session chaired by him. After my paper received some deserved criticism from an audience member (former U.S. ambassador to Zambia Stephen Low), Professor Noer offered me nothing but encouragement. It meant a lot to this aspiring historian.

In his review of *Jimmy Carter in Africa*, he once again displays the grace that has allowed him to do so much to create our sub-field, opening with some self-deprecating humor, than candidly admitting that his review will be a “rave.” Noer then proceeds to applaud everything about Mitchell’s study, from the research and the topics to the analysis and the writing style. According to him, “The book is long. It is detailed. It is never dull.” He concludes by praising Mitchell for providing, through her “detailed and nuanced analysis,” a “major reassessment of Carter.”

Noer judges Mitchell’s tome to be not only one of the best books he has ever read about U.S.-Africa relations, but one of the best he has ever read about U.S. foreign relations in general. I completely agree.

### Participants:

**Nancy Mitchell** is the author of *Race and the Cold War: Jimmy Carter in Africa* (2016) which was awarded the American Academy of Diplomacy’s Douglas Dillon Award, and *The Danger of Dreams: German and American Imperialism in Latin America, 1895-1914* (1999). She contributed the chapter on “The Cold War and Jimmy Carter,” in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War* (2010) and that on “The United States and Europe, 1900-1914,” in *American Foreign Relations since 1600: A Guide to the Literature Online*, (2007). Her articles have appeared in *Cold War History*, *International History Review*, *Diplomatic History*, *Prologue*, *Journal of American History*, *H-Diplo*, and *H-Pol*. She received her PhD from the School of Advanced International Study of the Johns Hopkins University, and she is a professor of history at North Carolina State University where she was elected to the Academy of Outstanding Teachers. Her next project is an analysis of U.S. foreign policy in the 1970s.

**Andy DeRoche** teaches history at Front Range Community College. His latest book is *Kenneth Kaunda, the United States and Southern Africa* (Bloomsbury, 2016). He is currently in the early stages of a research project comparing the lives of a Zambian soccer player (Collins Mbesuma) and a retired hockey player from the United States (Eric Weinrich). DeRoche lives in Longmont, Colorado with his wife Heather and their two children.

**Jamie Miller** earned his doctorate from the University of Cambridge in 2013, and has been a Fox Predoctoral International Fellow at Yale University, a Visiting Assistant Professor at Quinnipiac University, and a Postdoctoral Fellow at both Cornell University and the University of Pittsburgh. His first book, *An African Volk: The Apartheid Regime and its Search for Survival*, was published by Oxford University Press in September 2016, while his most recent article, “Africanising Apartheid: Identity, Ideology, and State-Building in Independent Africa,” appeared in the Fall 2015 issue of the *Journal of African History*. His commentary on historical and contemporary global affairs has appeared in the *London Review of Books*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age*, the *History News Network*, the *Imperial & Global Forum*, and *The Conversation*.

**Thomas Noer** is the Valor Distinguished Professor of Humanities at Carthage College. He is the author of *Briton, Boer, and Yankee* (Kent State University Press, 1978), *Cold War and Black Liberation* (University of Missouri Press, 1985), and *Soapy: A Biography of G. Mennen Williams* (University of Michigan, 2005). He is currently working on the politics of Frank Lloyd Wright.

**Elizabeth Schmidt** is a professor of history at Loyola University Maryland. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her books include: *Foreign Intervention in Africa: From the Cold War to the War on Terror* (Cambridge University Press, 2013); *Cold War and Decolonization in Guinea, 1946-1958* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007); *Mobilizing the Masses: Gender, Ethnicity, and Class in the Nationalist Movement in Guinea, 1939-1958* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2005); *Peasants, Traders, and Wives: Shona Women in the History of Zimbabwe, 1870-1939* (Heinemann, 1992); and *Decoding Corporate Camouflage: U.S. Business Support for Apartheid* (Institute for Policy Studies, 1980). Her next book, *Foreign Intervention in Africa after the Cold War*, will be published by Ohio University Press.

**Louise Woodroffe** is a historian in the Office of the Historian at the U.S. Department of State, where she compiles *Foreign Relations of the United States* volumes on Africa. She received her PhD from the London School of Economics and Political Science and is the author of *“Buried in the Sands of the Ogaden”: the United States, the Horn of Africa, and the Demise of Détente*, published by Kent State University Press in 2013.

**Review by Jamie Miller, University of Pittsburgh**

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More than a decade in the making, Nancy Mitchell's *Jimmy Carter in Africa* details the trials and tribulations of the Carter Administration's foreign policy in Africa. This is an area of American foreign policy that is little studied and poorly understood. As such, Mitchell's study constitutes a major advancement in historical knowledge over existing work, an achievement of exhaustive research.

Mitchell explains how the Carter Administration responded to two major foreign policy problems that were unfolding in parts of the world about which American policymakers, journalists, opinion shapers, generals, and others knew almost nothing. The first was Rhodesia-Zimbabwe. By the time Carter took office in January 1977, the renegade Ian Smith regime in Salisbury was struggling to contain a sharply escalating insurgency operating both out of Zambia to the north and Mozambique to the east. The writing was on the wall. Political change was coming. The challenge facing Washington was how to realign American power behind the inevitable; actively encourage a diplomatic transfer of power and forestall any escalation into a widespread, conventional racial war; and prevent the socialist backers of the anti-regime forces from gaining too much Cold War credit from the eventual triumph of their clients. Needless to say, this was an imposing task for Washington.

The second problem was the sudden emergence of conflict in the Horn of Africa between Somalia and Ethiopia. Mitchell exquisitely details the story told to stunned freshmen and –women in Cold-War classes everywhere, as the U.S. and the Soviet Union effectively swapped client states and soon found themselves in a shameless proxy conflict against their erstwhile allies. The Ogaden War remains even more poorly understood than the Rhodesian dilemma, with the inaccessibility of Ethiopian and Somalian archives providing a major barrier to further understanding.

Mitchell's central argument concerns Carter himself, with whom she spoke at length for this study. She argues that Carter should be understood not as an idealistic outlier in the history of post-war American foreign policy, but as a consistent "Cold Warrior" (8). Carter approached his predicaments both in Southern Africa and the Horn of Africa through a fairly conventional lens, in which potential benefits to the United States were inseparable from the costs to the Soviet Union and its allies. She further argues for the primacy of Carter himself in his Administration's policy-making. On Rhodesia and the Ogaden, at least, the conventional story of a Secretary of State Cyrus Vance-National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski split is not borne out by the evidence. Instead, the documents show a policymaking process that was ultimately centralised in the Oval Office, with Carter often prioritising his own judgment over that of his staff and experts. The argument is broadly persuasive on both fronts, and provides a new model for future historians of Carter's foreign policy outside of Africa to engage with.

Mitchell's concern is overwhelmingly with policy: what the United States did; what the Administration's goals were; tensions between the executive and legislative branches of government; what other courses of action were proposed or considered; whether these might have offered more productive avenues for statecraft; how these choices and their consequences affected the powerplay in the Carter White House. On all fronts, the analysis across 689 pages, plus notes, is rigorous and persuasive. The benefits of international archival research, coupled with interviews with many of the key policymakers, are everywhere to be seen.

Depth is prized over breadth. This is, as Mitchell points out, a granular study. Even other fronts of Carter's overall African or global south policies—for instance, the sudden realisation of the importance of African

states like Nigeria, the deep misgivings across the Administration about the continuing support for Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaïre, or the diplomatic machinations over South-West Africa/Namibia, which were deeply intertwined with the Rhodesian/Zimbabwean negotiations—are not covered on their own terms, but instead feature as background to the central terrain of the study.

The two broader themes of this book feature in the subtitle: race and the Cold War. The approach to both is experiential and pragmatic. Mitchell's concern is not to engage with the theory or literature on either, or to suggest how her study might reshape understandings of those terms themselves. There is no discussion of what race means as a concept, for instance. Rather, the focus lies on how the historical protagonists themselves understood events through the lens of 'race'. In this sense, the audience of the book is overwhelmingly going to be diplomatic historians: those who can take as given the definition of the terms as Mitchell (and her protagonists) understand them.

This approach yields plenty of insights, one of which merits particular attention. When Mitchell observes that “It was much less treacherous for American politicians to discuss the racial politics of a faraway African country than to wade into the explosive domestic topics of busing and affirmative action”, she makes an overdue and worthwhile point. (8) The Carter White House's policy in Southern Africa was infused with altruistic rhetoric. It emerged from good intentions too. The positions taken by the Carter Administration represented a vastly more progressive understanding of social justice and American values than the Ford Administration had and the Reagan Administration would. However, Mitchell's observation opens up a worthy and under-appreciated perspective: how hollow much of this rhetoric sounded in Southern Africa. White leaders there felt that America had very little high ground from which to make such pronouncements, given its ongoing urban decay and white flight, huge gaps in living standards between racial groups, and continuing de facto segregation. (Readers might wonder upon reading Mitchell's account of Carter's Rhodesia diplomacy whether events ultimately bore out Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's assumptions when forming his own Southern Africa policy in 1975-1976: that such moralising was counterproductive and, ultimately, self-serving and indulgent.)<sup>1</sup>

However, Mitchell's decision to engage with race through her subjects, rather than through the ideas and concepts of other scholars, means such issues end up being raised rather than engaged with or resolved. The ways in which race shaped the Carter Administration's Africa policy are ascribed to personal experience; Carter's childhood in rural Georgia and early political career receive attention, for example. But the obvious question raised by Mitchell's above-quoted insight is: Why? Why did a generation of American politicians choose to pontificate on race to leaders in Southern Africa, earning plenty of ire and (often) thwarting their own ends, rather than focusing more deeply on urban renewal at home, improving inner city education, or promoting equality of health outcomes? What structural, political, or intellectual tools can help us resolve this question? This leads to all sorts of other interesting questions. Did Carter's promotion of social justice abroad come at a cost at home? Or is the hypothesis, in fact, unfair to Carter: Did political transformation in Southern Africa ultimately promote principles of racial equality in American public discourse? In fall 2016,

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<sup>1</sup> See for instance South African Department of Foreign Affairs Archives, 1/33/8/3, 22, USA: Policy on Africa, Buro vir Staatsveiligheid (BOSS) report, “n Sowjet-waardering van Dr. H. Kissinger se siening van Afrika suid van die Sahara,” 30 January 1974. For more, see Jamie Miller, *An African Volk: The Apartheid Regime and its Search for Survival* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 93-95.

during a presidential election that has largely become a referendum on the racial content of American nationalism, such questions merit attention.

As for the second key theme here, the Cold War is conceptualised in a way that is at once multi-faceted rather than binary (South Africa, Cuba, and others feature as important actors in Mitchell's history), but simultaneously reflects a fairly traditional, top-down perspective. For example, in outlining how the Cold War in Africa should be understood in her book, Mitchell summarises that, "Africa was where the superpowers shadowboxed" (6). In this view, Africa can be seen as a forum for Cold War competition. It can even provide actors, though not major ones. But what was ultimately at stake, the ideas of humanity's future that were at issue, these were (still) ultimately defined in the global north. To put it another way, Mitchell's approach strongly reflects one part of the new approach to the Cold War enshrined in Odd Arne Westad's *Global Cold War*: the idea of geographical breadth and actors in the global south.<sup>2</sup> But it seemingly rejects the other: the idea that these actors had their own visions for the future which *themselves* drove the conflict, visions which involved adapting, perverting, or even inverting existing Cold War ideas in ways totally unfamiliar (and frustrating) to their authors in the global north. More explicit engagement with the literature would have enabled Mitchell to fully argue her position here and I will be intrigued to read the take of other reviewers. It would also have enabled her to position herself more resolutely *outside* the conceptual world of her protagonists, where often the reader gets the impression that while she and her subjects may understand policy problems and outcomes differently, ultimately they use the same terms to process those problems and appreciate the meaning of those terms in the same way.

It is yet another measure of the merit of this book that it prompted such deep introspection from this reviewer. Good books do that. And ultimately, *Jimmy Carter in Africa* convinces the reader both that the subject is important and that this is (comfortably) the best book on it.

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<sup>2</sup> Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

Review by Thomas Noer, Carthage College

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Many years ago (when dinosaurs still roamed the earth) while finishing my dissertation I was offered my first chance to write a book review. I quickly went to my adviser for guidance. “Now Tom,” he said, “you don’t want to be too critical. You will just anger the author, his friends, and colleagues. Nobody likes a wiseass. But, you can’t just heap on praise. You want readers to see that you know the topic and have some insights. Nobody likes a dumbass. So find some good things to say and some weaknesses and suggest the need for more books on the topic.”

This ‘radical middle’ approach to reviews seems to be a popular model: First find something good—the topic, the research, the writing, the interpretation. Then note some areas that “need improvement.” Conclude with: “This is a solid study but only further work can test the author’s conclusions.”

This formula cannot be applied to this book. Reader warning: this review is going to be a rave. Nancy Mitchell’s *Jimmy Carter in Africa: Race and the Cold War* is not only one of the best books I have read on the U.S. and Africa; it is one of the best books I have read on American diplomatic history. It not only offers a fresh and provocative analysis of Jimmy Carter and his diplomacy, but raises significant questions about both the goals and process of American foreign policy. The topic seems narrow, but the author’s insights have wide implications.

If we look at the usual standards for evaluation of a book (importance of the topic; depth of research; quality of writing; and significance of analysis) Mitchell’s work merits high marks in each category. Those of us who labor in the field of American relations with Africa recognize that the continent was rarely at the center of U.S. diplomacy. Mitchell acknowledges that the Panama Canal agreement, the continued conflict in the Middle East, arms reduction (SALT), and the Iranian hostage crisis were more significant than African policy. She does, however, make a strong case that Carter’s actions in Africa can be used to understand his diplomatic priorities and style that were reflected in these other areas. Her topic is Africa, but the book offers a framework that is applicable for other regions and issues.

The research is truly impressive. It includes archival material in eleven foreign nations and eighteen U.S. archives, along with dozens of revealing interviews with British, American, and African politicians and diplomats—including Carter himself. The interviews not only offer refreshing interpretations of decisions, but telling reflections on the impact of those decisions three decades later.

A major strength is the quality of writing in the book. As readers of H-Diplo well know, books on foreign relations are often heavy going. The literary quality of a work is an important area which is often neglected in reviews. Mitchell’s writing is clear, flowing, and filled with telling anecdotes, detail, and critical judgments. The book is long. It is detailed. It is never dull. Brief character studies, revealing quotations, literary excursions (such as the impact of the TV series “Roots”, and Carter’s infamous interview in *Playboy*), and succinct conclusions about individuals and policies hold the reader’s attention and keep the narrative flowing. The writing is not only clear, it is stylish. Consider Mitchell’s evaluation of historians’ preoccupation with ‘détente’: “Détente clouds the 1970s like a thick fog. It dazzles scholars. And yet it is as elusive as mercury: just when it seems to adhere and make sense, poof! It shatters into tiny globules and defies definition. Détente is not all it is cracked up to be” (661).

Finally, there is the issue of the significance of the book's findings. Perhaps most obvious is a new view of Jimmy Carter. Dismissed by the public (and many historians) as naïve, overly idealistic, and weak, Carter emerges in this book as flawed but far from naïve and weak. Despite his pledge to focus on 'human rights,' Carter was very much a traditional Cold War diplomat. As the author asserts; Carter "was a Cold Warrior from day one" (8). His southern background led to an identification of Africa's racial problems with the U.S. civil rights movement, but he never rejected the traditional Cold-War battle between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. He focused a great deal of attention on Africa because "Africa was at the heart of the Cold War. It was where the superpowers shadowboxed" (6).

The author also rejects the prevailing view that Carter was dominated by his two top advisers, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, and was caught between their intense rivalry. Mitchell acknowledges that there were often disputes between the two, but at the heart of the administration's foreign policy was Jimmy Carter. "Jimmy Carter was not in the thrall of his advisors. He ran the ship. He made the decisions" (442). Carter's diplomatic style was to listen, consult, withdraw (often for long periods), and then make a unilateral decision. Ponderous and slow going, his method led to a perception of indecision and weakness but he felt obligated to be the sole decision-maker. As Mitchell notes: "Carter was transparent: you got what you saw. And what you saw was Jimmy Carter, a driven, intelligent, disciplined and stubborn man" (69). This approach often led to problems. For example, when deciding on policy towards the Somali invasion of Ethiopia, "Carter articulated three goals and offered no way to achieve any of them" (392).

*Jimmy Carter in Africa* focuses on two crises on the continent: the continuing problem of the white racist regime in Rhodesia, and the Somali invasion of the Ogaden section of Ethiopia. Since its defiance of Britain with its unilateral declaration of independence in 1965, Rhodesia, led by the uncompromising Ian Smith, had resisted majority rule and endured economic sanctions from Europe and the United States. Linked with the Rhodesian problem was the larger issue of the future of the apartheid regime in South Africa. Carter, like presidents before and after, was faced with the dilemma of supporting black rule in Rhodesia without provoking a racial war and the radicalization of all of South Africa. The issue was further complicated by the continued presence of Cuban troops in Angola and fear that the Cubans would be involved in the liberation of Rhodesia.

Mitchell devotes nearly 300 pages to the complex negotiations involving the U.S., Europe, South Africa, other African nations, Rhodesia, and the United Nations, as well as the domestic battles over American policy. In the end, Carter was successful. Rhodesia became the independent nation of Zimbabwe. There was no Cuban intervention and no racial war. Carter's lengthy diplomacy did, however, contribute to the image of indecision and weakness. Ironically, Zimbabwe's independence resulted in the vicious dictatorship of Robert Mugabe that endures today.

If possible, the issues in the Horn of Africa were even more complicated. The Marxist regime in Ethiopia enjoyed massive Soviet military and economic aid and was seen as a strain on 'détente.' When Somalia invaded Ethiopia to annex the 200,000 square mile barren region of the Ogaden, it appealed to Washington for aid. Ethiopia turned to Cuban troops to defeat the invasion. The Cuban presence led to more demands to 'get tough' and force Cuban leader Fidel Castro to withdraw. Eventually, as in Rhodesia, the crisis passed when Somalia withdrew. The result, however, was a chilling of the Cold War, an image of Carter as weak and, according to Brzezinski, the end of the SALT agreement. Mitchell argues convincingly that Brzezinski was wrong as "The Ogaden war killed neither SALT nor détente" (415).

Mitchell's detailed analysis of the two crises reflects larger issues in U.S. diplomatic history. The Rhodesian crisis shows the continuation of a dilemma that began with the decolonization of Africa in the late 1950s. How could Washington show its support of African independence, majority rule, and equal rights, yet continue to wage the traditional East-West Cold War? As Mitchell notes, Carter 'inherited' the Rhodesian crisis just as he inherited the problem of American policy towards apartheid. The Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson administrations were split between 'Africanists' who argued that Washington needed to throw its support to the end of white rule on the continent and 'Europeanists' who saw Africa as a sideshow in the more important battle with the Soviet Union. The issue of race did not begin or end with Jimmy Carter but has been a persistent element in America's approach to Africa. Some, like Carter's UN Ambassador Andrew Young, argued that racism was a larger issue than communism and even contended that Cuban troops in Angola brought "a certain stability and order" (141). "More than anyone in the administration, according to Mitchell, "Young... articulated a new vision of the Cold War . . . ." (224). But he was calling for a radical departure from the traditional Cold War perspective that many, including Carter, were unwilling to fully embrace.

The book also illustrates the incredibly complicated nature of American foreign policy. U.S. policy towards Rhodesia involved discussions with England, Germany, France, China, Cuba, the Soviet Union, South Africa, the United Nations, and numerous African nations. The Ethiopian crises drew in Saudi Arabia (a strong supporter of Somalia), Egypt, Israel, as well as European and African nations. The two issues also led to battles among dozens of governmental officials. Young, Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Richard Moose, and, surprisingly to me, Vice-President Walter Mondale all promoted an "African first" policy, while others in the State and Defense departments viewed the problems from a more traditional Cold-War perspective. Complicating the issue were repeated failures of U.S. intelligence in both regions. As Mitchell notes: "Throughout the crisis, US intelligence was groping in the dark . . . ." (339).

A final issue raised in this study is the impact of domestic politics and Congressional actions in the making of U.S. policy. Rhodesia and South Africa had powerful lobbies in the U.S. that contended that their regimes were bastions of stability, order, and anti-Communism on a chaotic continent. They were successful in mobilizing a strong faction in Congress that opposed any efforts to topple the white regime in Rhodesia or impose sanctions on South Africa. Led by North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms, they were successful in attacking efforts by Carter to take a more aggressive stance against white rule. In contrast, African-American organizations were largely uninterested or ineffective in their efforts to shape a stronger policy. As Mitchell summarizes; "there was no effective domestic constituency that pressured Washington about African policy" (568). The book does, however, make a strong case for the influence of New York Congressman Steven Solarz in moderating Helms and other critics of U.S. policy.

The Jimmy Carter of this book is not the idealistic and incompetent peanut farmer manipulated by his advisers. He was a traditional cold warrior sincerely dedicated to racial equality, but unwilling to abandon the prevailing ideology of global anti-communism and well aware of the enduring threat of the Soviet Union. He was consistent in his policies, but unable to articulate their goals to gain public and congressional support. As Mitchell concludes: "Together, the study of Carter's handling of two major African crises—Rhodesia and the Horn—elucidates his priorities, strengths, and weaknesses. Both crises reveal the centrality of the Cold War in Carter's worldview and counter the assumption that he assumed office as an unsophisticated if well intentioned dreamer and departed an unsentimental realist" (684).

The book offers a major reassessment of Carter. It provides a detailed and nuanced analysis of two major crises in Africa and the complexity of the American response to each. More importantly, it shows the persistence of racial issues in Cold-War diplomacy. Is racial equality a major goal of U.S. foreign policy? If so, what price were American officials willing to pay to achieve it? Is it in the national interest to pursue this objective or is equality only deserving of verbal support?

Historians old enough may well remember the realist/idealist structure for analysis of U.S. foreign policy. Realism was good; idealism bad. American relations with black Africa call into question this arbitrary dichotomy. Was support of decolonization, majority rule, and racial equality idealistic? Was the global containment of communism realistic? The terms are now out of date. The dilemma persists.

**Review by Elizabeth Schmidt, Loyola University Maryland**

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Focusing on the Africa policy of the Carter Administration (1977-1981), Nancy Mitchell's masterful and compelling account provides a corrective to the dominant narrative that places the Middle East at the heart of Jimmy Carter's foreign policy. This significant work breaks new ground and alters our understanding in two important ways. First, it argues that Africa was the central theater of the Carter Administration's foreign policy battles, and it was in Africa that tensions between American concerns about human rights and the Soviet threat were most evident. Second, it undermines the image of Carter as a naïve idealist whose concern for human rights blinded him to political realities. Mitchell presents instead a portrait of a complex man haunted by contradictions, who believed deeply in the cause of peace, justice, and human rights, but who, like his predecessor Gerald Ford, was at root a Cold Warrior. Although Carter demonstrated greater nuance in his understanding and recognized the local origins of many conflicts, his fundamental goal—like that of Ford—was to obstruct Soviet gains in the developing world. When deemed necessary, he abandoned his human rights agenda for Cold War realpolitik.

Mitchell explores Carter's values, goals, policies, and leadership through the lens of two critical case studies—Rhodesia and the Horn of Africa—where issues of race and the Cold War were deeply intertwined. In Rhodesia, the tenacity of the illegal white minority regime risked opening the door to Soviet and Cuban intervention, which could in turn radicalize the entire region. Carter was determined to promote a negotiated settlement that would end the liberation war and undercut Soviet gains—goals that could be achieved only if the agreement included all parties to the conflict and led to majority rule. In the Horn of Africa, where more than 10,000 Cuban troops and 1,000 Soviet advisors were helping Ethiopia stave off Somali aggression, Carter took a different tack. Ignoring the advice of several high-level advisors, Carter acted as a Cold Warrior, initiating a policy that supported Somali aggression with military assistance—albeit through third parties.

The value of Mitchell's new study is enhanced by her careful historical contextualization. She begins with an examination of U.S.-Africa policy during the Ford Administration, when Henry Kissinger, who served both as National Security Advisor and Secretary of State, dominated the foreign policy-making establishment. Carter would both build on and depart from Kissinger's agenda in Southern Africa and the Horn. Mitchell explores commonalities and differences with American allies in Europe and the Middle East, and she regularly reminds readers how other world events impinged on Africa policy making, including: the Vietnam War, détente with the Soviet Union and the SALT II arms control treaty, the Middle East peace talks, the Panama Canal Treaties, evolving relations with the People's Republic of China, the U.S. civil rights movement, and the emergence of powerful African American voices that championed African liberation. Mitchell's discussion of race and American domestic politics and her reinterpretation of Cuba's role in Africa are especially welcome.

Mitchell's assessment of Carter's foreign policy team is also characterized by nuance. Her study reveals disagreements, debates, and fissures, exposing not only the well-known differences between Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, but it also illuminates the dissenting voices of lower-ranking officials who sometimes swayed those above them. Mitchell's subtle portrayal of Andrew Young, Carter's controversial and outspoken UN ambassador who was also a veteran civil rights leader, close associate of Martin Luther King, Jr., and former member of Congress, is especially insightful.

Thoroughly researched, this groundbreaking work is based on newly available documents from archives in Africa, Europe, and North America—including East German, Soviet, and Cuban sources—and on interviews with key players in the United States, the United Kingdom, Zambia, and South Africa. Because the focus is

the foreign policy-making establishment of the United States and, to a lesser extent, its Western allies, the vast majority of documentary and oral sources are from the United States and Europe. Nonetheless, Mitchell does not portray African actors simply as pawns on the Cold War chessboard. She demonstrates their interests, agency, and power in shaping events. However, voices from the African continent—primarily African heads of state and government and leaders of liberation movements—are relatively muted. It would be unfair to argue that Mitchell should have extended her analysis in a book that runs to nearly 1,000 pages. Yet, many readers would appreciate more attention to African perspectives, actions, and impact. As a historian of American foreign policy, Mitchell has made an enormous contribution and laid the groundwork for another project firmly rooted in the African continent. She has opened the door for historians of Africa; it is up to them to take up the challenge.

**Review by Louise Woodroffe, Office of the Historian, U.S. Department of State<sup>1</sup>**

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President Jimmy Carter and newly elected Prime Minister Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe met at the White House on 27 August 1980. For President Carter, this was the culmination of a long, carefully thought-out process that Nancy Mitchell so ably traces in her book.

*The President* warmly welcomed the Prime Minister on his first visit to Washington. The entire world was thrilled on seeing Zimbabwe admitted into the United Nations and admired the stature, courage and sensitivity with which the Prime Minister was guiding his nation. The United States was pleased to have played a small role in this outcome. Our two nations had a common commitment to peace and justice in southern Africa and this occasion provided an invaluable opportunity to forge closer bonds and a process of consultation.

*The Prime Minister* said how grateful and inspired he was to be in Washington. Yesterday, he had paid tribute to the United Nations; today he wished to express gratitude and joy for the support his cause had received from the President and the United States during the struggle for independence.<sup>2</sup>

This conversation is notable because U.S. intervention in African independence struggles rarely benefitted Africans, and this moment seemed to herald a more constructive engagement with the continent. In retrospect, the moment was something of a false dawn. Despite this apparent success, Jimmy Carter lost his next election only a few months later, and Mugabe embarked on decades of disastrous rule. Still, the story of Carter's policy toward Africa is important to understand, and sometimes even worthy of emulation.

*Jimmy Carter in Africa* manages to be many books at once. It is a much-needed assessment of Jimmy Carter's foreign policy. It is a multi-archival exploration of an under-researched area of the Cold War. It is also an excellent sketch of the intersection of race and politics in American decision-making. Finally, it is a worthy attempt at understanding the inner workings of Jimmy Carter himself.

Mitchell focuses on the two most important aspects of Carter's Africa policy to draw a contrast between the carefully planned proactive approach toward Rhodesia and the more haphazard reactive approach toward the Horn of Africa. These two foreign policy tests nicely represent the many challenges Carter faced in the world. His successes came largely from carefully planned policies implemented from the onset of his presidency. His perceived failures came largely in instances where he and the administration were forced to react quickly to events. Mitchell combed through a notable collection of archives to draw as complete a picture as possible. Though her focus is on American foreign policy, the breadth of her research helps her avoid the common trap of assuming far too much agency by American officials vis-à-vis European allies, international competitors or, indeed, local actors on the ground.

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<sup>1</sup> The views presented here are my own and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of State or the United States Government.

<sup>2</sup> "Memorandum of Conversation, August 27, 1980." *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977-1980, Volume XVI, Southern Africa*, 739.

Through an impressive array of interviews, including with Carter himself, Mitchell draws a nuanced picture of the President's personality and style of governing. This is the riskiest part of the book, perhaps especially for diplomatic historians who like the comfort of documentary evidence. She likely gets much of it right. One intriguing premise she puts forth explains, in part, why Carter receives little credit post-presidency for his many foreign policy successes. She argued that, unlike his reputation, the President was extremely decisive and he made his decisions alone. The negative impact of this was that he could not share ownership of any of his decisions, which would have had the effect of building loyalty (658). "When Ronald Reagan entered office in January 1981 and claimed Carter's successes as his own, almost no one, including Carter's closest aides, tried to protect Carter's reputation" (659). This is, of course, a fascinating contrast with fierce protection of Reagan's reputation by his administration's officials, despite his mixed record.

The book also convincingly lays out the connection between Carter's experience with race as a southern white man and his interest in human rights as it related to Africa. The perspective of U.S. Representative to the United Nations Andy Young and his influence on Carter's understanding of the intersection of civil rights, human rights, and progressive Christianity in formulating an approach toward southern Africa is likewise stimulating. Despite an inability to move beyond a Cold War mindset when dealing with most foreign policy issues, the administration was able to do that when it came to being on the right side of history in dealing with racist regimes in Rhodesia and South Africa.

Mitchell attributes the shape of the Carter administration's foreign policy to the President himself, arguing that accounts of the conflicts between Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski were overplayed. While she is right that Carter was more in command than the credit he received, her opening anecdote about Andrew Young's resignation and Carter's sustained bitterness toward Vance demonstrate that those divisions within the administration mattered greatly (1). Mitchell argues that Carter "made the decisions. If those decisions appeared inconsistent, it was because Carter had a complex, nonideological worldview, not because he was listening to Vance one day and to Brzezinski the next" (442). However, theirs were the two loudest voices in his administration, and when foreign policy challenges cropped up that had not been carefully planned, Carter did tend to parrot the language of his advisors. It was not that he flip-flopped. He sometimes tried to find a happy medium between the strong opinions of his two most important advisors. This does not have to make him either naive or wishy-washy. He simply did not know everything about every new issue and had to make a decision from the information he received. This information largely came from Vance and Brzezinski, because that is how the U.S. foreign policy apparatus is designed.

Mitchell also ascribes roles to various members of the administration that are not necessarily borne out by the documents. While Young may have had a more prominent role than many of his predecessors at the UN, he sat in on very few of the high-level meetings dealing with either Rhodesia or the Horn. He was a recognizable face to African leaders, but he was not present when the administration made major decisions. Likewise, Mitchell attributes a cynicism to Vance that is usually assigned to his rival Brzezinski. Regarding Somali President Siad Barre's intentions toward the Ogaden in the summer of 1977, she writes: "Vance was gambling that Somalia could swiftly and easily seize the Ogaden, thereby severing Mogadiscio's alliance with Moscow, weakening the Derg, and pleasing the Saudis and Egyptians." There is no evidence that Vance wanted a conflict in this remote region. It is far more likely that he had not given it much thought until Somalia had actually invaded Ethiopia. The document that Mitchell cites to make this point is a routine recommendation from the Department of State's Executive Secretary to Brzezinski suggesting that the President meet with the

Somali Ambassador as a way to improve relations and reduce Somalia's dependency on the Soviet Union (267). These quibbles, however, are minor when up against the achievements of the work as a whole.

Carter's presidency deserves to be assessed anew, and Mitchell has given us an outstanding work to study. This is an ambitious book, and she does the subject justice. Likewise, President Carter had an ambitious Africa policy, and though the results are mixed, on balance he got much of it right. Though stuck in a Cold War mindset, particularly when responding to the crisis in the Horn of Africa, the administration ultimately did not intervene in a meaningful way and subsequent history proved that what had appeared a Soviet 'success' was instead a bad investment in an unsavory and ineffective dictator in Ethiopia. In Rhodesia, the administration's willingness to deal with Mugabe as well as the Presidents of surrounding states revealed that success was achievable when local players were consulted and not marginalized by paternalistic world powers. Mitchell has done a great service in upending the often simplistic narrative that has frequently defined the character of Carter's term in office. By demonstrating the complexities of the issues he faced, as well as the thoughts and debates that animated the decision-making process, she has helped lay the foundation for a more fulsome reappraisal of those years.

**Author's Response by Nancy Mitchell, North Carolina State University**

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I thank Jamie Miller, Thomas Noer, Elizabeth Schmidt, and Louise Woodroofe, and not only for their generous praise but, even more, for their careful analyses of *Jimmy Carter in Africa: Race and the Cold War*. I am honored that Tom Maddux organized this roundtable, and I thank Andy DeRoche for introducing it.

I was particularly grateful that the reviewers, all of whom are Africanists, situated my book as a reassessment of Jimmy Carter. The African crises allowed me to think afresh about the strengths and weaknesses of Carter's leadership.

Several of the reviewers commented on the complex ways in which race affected both foreign relations and domestic policy. Miller asked why U.S. politicians chose to focus on race relations abroad rather than on "urban renewal at home, improving inner city education, or promoting equality of health outcomes." The answer of United Nations (UN) Ambassador Andrew Young, Carter's right-hand man in Africa, was characteristically blunt: "It's simple. Because at home it costs money, and Carter inherited a country in debt. He did everything he could do—that didn't cost money." (476)

I fully agree with Miller's observation that the Americans' preaching to Africans about race rang hollow—at best. This was most striking in the response to Young's speech at a UN anti-apartheid conference in Maputo. Young, who had been a close aide to Martin Luther King, addressed the Africans at the conference as 'brothers' and explained, "We are not immune to the struggles which Africa faces for we have known those struggles ourselves." The response among Africans was swift and scathing. "What Mr. Young said was totally irrelevant to Zimbabwe," Robert Mugabe declared. Leslie Harriman, the Nigerian Ambassador to the United Nations and a close friend of Young, announced that he was "very disappointed. One could have hoped that Andy Young would ... not lecture us on civil rights. ... I listened ... with considerable irritation." The president of Mozambique, Samora Machel, who was hosting the conference, was offended. In a meeting with Young and the U.S. ambassador, Machel "patiently explained that progressive Africans did not see the current conflicts in southern Africa as race wars—but instead as struggles against colonialism and economic exploitation and domination." He then asked Young "to refrain from delivering any more 'racist speeches' while in the country" (233-234). Nevertheless, Young—and President Carter—continued to draw a parallel between the U.S. civil-rights struggle and the crises roiling southern Africa. The persistence of this rhetoric—over the clear objections of Africans, Britons, and scholars worldwide—is one of the most fascinating aspects of my story.

This brings me to a comment on the influence of Andrew Young, a point raised by Woodroofe. Had I looked only at the documents, I would have understated Young's influence. This was a case where the interviews helped me to see a layer of truth that was not obvious in the written record. Young provided the African leaders a direct conduit to Carter's ear. When I asked Carter if he could imagine developing his Rhodesia policy without Young, he answered, "No. ... Andy was the key to it because the African leaders ... they all came to Andy because ... people knew the way to get to me with their ideas or hopes or fears was through Andy Young." Carter noted that his communication with Young had been almost entirely oral and that Young bypassed the State Department to speak directly with him. "He would not have submitted his recommendations to me through the State Department in writing," Carter added. (251-252)

I am delighted that reading my book prompted these reviewers to pose big questions—about idealism and realism, about the intersection of domestic and foreign policy, and about race and the Cold War. I hope to have the pleasure in the future of reading works that challenge and extend its findings. I sincerely thank these reviewers for beginning this discussion.