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*From Selma to Moscow: How Human Rights Activists Transformed
U.S. Foreign Policy* by Sarah B. Snyder (review)

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Journal of Cold War Studies, Volume 21, Number 2, Spring 2019, pp. 197-199
(Review)

Published by The MIT Press



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BOOK REVIEWS

Sarah B. Snyder, *From Selma to Moscow: How Human Rights Activists Transformed U.S. Foreign Policy*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2018. 320 pp. \$30.00.

Reviewed by William Michael Schmidli, Leiden University

In this deeply researched and accessible study, Sarah B. Snyder provides a rich analysis of human rights activism and U.S. foreign policy during the “long 1960s,” a period she defines as the years from John F. Kennedy’s inauguration in 1961 to Jimmy Carter’s inauguration in 1977. Since the publication of her award-winning first monograph in 2011, a transnational history of human rights and the end of the Cold War, Snyder has been a pioneer in a rapidly growing field. *From Selma to Moscow: How Human Rights Activists Transformed U.S. Foreign Policy* makes a signal contribution to this body of scholarship.

The research underpinning *From Selma to Moscow* is impressive. In addition to extensive research in U.S. government archives, Snyder examined dozens of manuscript collections of members of Congress, human rights activists, and non-governmental organizations in U.S. cities and towns ranging from Sleepy Hollow, New York, to Boise, Idaho, along with archival collections in Chile, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. Students and specialists alike will find Snyder’s thick bibliography a useful tool in navigating the field of human rights and U.S. foreign relations.

A commonality in much of the existing scholarship is an emphasis on the waves of human rights activism in the 1940s and 1970s. The twenty years between these inflection points have generally been characterized as a human rights ebb tide; in particular, there is a lack of scholarly work on the significance of human rights in U.S. foreign policy in the 1960s, rendering the explosion of human rights activism in the following decade a distinctly 1970s phenomenon.

By framing the sixteen years from 1961 to 1977 as a “long decade,” Snyder seeks to illuminate how the flowering of 1970s human rights activism was rooted in a growing awareness of human rights in the 1960s. “The long 1960s was a period during which Americans who fought against racial discrimination, U.S. support for repressive regimes, and the use of torture came to adopt the lexicon of ‘human rights’ to describe their activism,” she writes (p. 170).

As the book’s title makes clear, Snyder is especially interested in non-state actors. *From Selma to Moscow* is organized into chapter-length case studies of human rights activism concerning the Soviet Union, Southern Rhodesia after 1965, Greece after the 1967 military coup, authoritarian South Korea, and Chile after the 1973 military coup. The case studies convincingly demonstrate how a wide range of non-state

Journal of Cold War Studies

Vol. 21, No. 2, Spring 2019, pp. 197–209

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actors advocated for human rights improvements in target countries and lobbied the U.S. government to emphasize human rights considerations in foreign policy. In her chapter on the Soviet Union, for example, Snyder draws a connection between Jewish Americans' participation in the African American civil rights struggle and their growing human rights activism on behalf of so-called refuseniks—Jews in the Soviet Union who had been denied exit visas. Unlike Samuel Moyn's influential argument in *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* that the civil rights movement had little influence on the rise of human rights activism in the United States, Snyder's research reveals a considerable degree of overlap. "In many ways, human rights activists were building on the successes of the civil rights movement in that white and black liberals sought to export the movement's victories abroad," Snyder writes (p. 8).

Similarly, in her chapter on Greece, Snyder innovatively explores the case of Greek political leader Andreas Papandreou, who pursued an academic career at numerous U.S. universities before returning to Greece and becoming involved in politics. Imprisoned by the military after the coup, Papandreou's plight became a cause célèbre among hundreds of U.S. economists, including the influential White House insider John Kenneth Galbraith. Snyder uses the episode to reveal both rising interest in human rights in the United States and the growing power of human rights activists. Unlike Barbara Keys's important recent study *Reclaiming American Virtue: The Human Rights Revolution of the 1970s*, Snyder sees little evidence that Americans' sense of guilt stemming from the U.S. intervention in Vietnam impelled them to human rights activism. "Call up Ken Galbraith and tell him I've told those Greek bastards to lay off that son-of-a-bitch—whoever he is," Lyndon Johnson reportedly declared after weathering the economists' blizzard of letters and calls on Papandreou's behalf (pp. 67–68).

As non-state activists picked up the banner of human rights, influential members of Congress followed suit, and *From Selma to Moscow* adds to the existing scholarship on key figures such as Senator Henry M. "Scoop" Jackson (D-WA) and Representative Donald M. Fraser (D-MN). Focusing on congressional activism, Snyder's final chapter argues that Congress—not successive occupants of the Oval Office—played a crucial role in advancing the human rights agenda. Congressional legislation in the 1970s "that curbed military and economic assistance to governments that abused human rights and also created institutions to monitor human rights around the world formalized the growing attention to human rights in the preceding years," Snyder writes. "As the executive branch's commitment to the issue fluctuated depending on who occupied the White House, persistent congressional attention to the issue was essential to its continued salience" (p. 167).

There are many actors in *From Selma to Moscow*: presidents and their advisers, Foreign Service Officers, members of Congress, delegates to the United Nations, and activists ranging from former Peace Corps volunteers to missionaries and academics. But one individual runs through the narrative: Henry M. Kissinger, whose tenure as national security adviser and secretary of state spanned the administrations of Richard M. Nixon and Gerald R. Ford and left a defining imprint on U.S. foreign relations

from the late 1960s to the mid-1970s. Kissinger's fierce opposition to human rights as a U.S. foreign policy priority emerges as a powerful theme in Snyder's narrative. "The emigration of Jews from the Soviet Union is not an objective of America foreign policy," Snyder quotes Kissinger telling Nixon in 1973. "Why, if they put Jews into gas chambers in the Soviet Union it is not an American concern" (p. 32).

Kissinger's much-vaunted "realism" and corresponding intransigence on human rights issues will come as no surprise to readers familiar with the existing scholarship on human rights and U.S. foreign relations in the 1970s. Snyder reinforces that narrative, revealing in fresh detail Kissinger's seemingly indefatigable efforts to head off, water down, circumvent, or simply ignore the initiatives of human rights supporters on Capitol Hill and their non-governmental allies. "Human rights emerged as a relevant issue for U.S. foreign policy despite the obstructionist efforts of Henry Kissinger," Snyder concludes (p. 170).

Some readers will find Snyder's use of the "long 1960s" problematic. Many of the developments she analyzes—for example, human rights activism toward Chile after 1973—seem more firmly rooted in the 1970s than in the 1960s, and unique and significant developments of the 1970s are sometimes flattened out to make the narrative fit the chronological frame. Snyder also takes a rather narrow view of human rights by focusing on civil and political rights. Although she rightly points out that most U.S. human rights activists took this approach, she could have gone further in exploring the broader contestations over the meaning of human rights that played out during this period, both in the Cold War contest and along North-South lines. That said, *From Selma to Moscow* is an important and thought-provoking book and should be essential reading for human rights scholars and practitioners.



Robert Pee, *Democracy Promotion, National Security and Strategy: Foreign Policy under the Reagan Administration*. London: Routledge, 2015. 219 pp. \$145.00.

Reviewed by Rasmus Sinding Søndergaard, Georgetown University

In recent years, diplomatic historians have produced a burgeoning literature on the role of human rights in U.S. foreign relations during the Cold War, but the related topic of democracy promotion has received much less attention. In *Democracy Promotion, National Security and Strategy: Foreign Policy under the Reagan Administration*, Robert Pee offers a well-researched, balanced, and astute analysis of the Reagan administration's campaign to promote democracy. Focusing on both the administration and the broader foreign policy elite, the book traces the tensions between democracy promotion and U.S. national security strategy in the 1980s.

Pee asserts that the era of Ronald Reagan represented a turning point in the U.S. government's approach to democracy promotion by bringing about a reassessment of the relationship between democracy and security at the strategic level. This led to