

Roundtable

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Sarah B. Snyder, *From Selma to Moscow: How Human Rights Activists Transformed U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018). ISBN: 9780231169479 (paper, \$32).

Contents

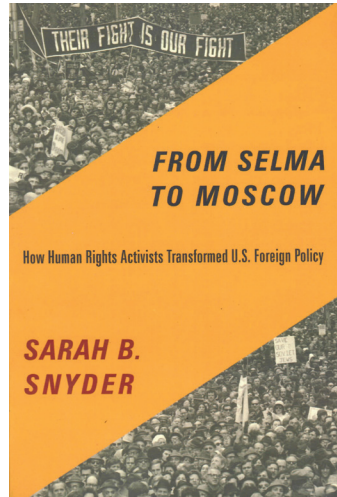
Introduction by Paul Adler, Colorado College

Review by Theresa Keeley, University of Louisville

Review by Robert Rakove, Stanford University

Review by Matthew K. Shannon, Emory & Henry College

Author's Response by Sarah B. Snyder, American University



Introduction by Paul Adler, Colorado College

There comes a time for academic sub-disciplines when enough scholars produce enough works that a distinct historiography becomes evident. In such moments, different interpretational factions arise. Discussions and debates emerge over chronology and causality. One relatively recent example involves histories of human rights abuses and diplomacy. Starting in the late 2000s, historians have created a rich and wide array of works examining everything from philosophical conversations over defining “human rights” to granular accounts of particular atrocities in specific countries and various actions taken to stop or at least ameliorate them.¹

One of the richest fields within this wider historiography has grown from the long-standing world of histories of United States diplomacy. By necessity and

¹ Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007); Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012); *The Human Rights Revolution: An International History*, Akira Iriye, Petra Goedde, and William I. Hitchcock, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

interest, many of the works seeking to understand U.S. governmental policies around international human rights have also dealt with non-state actors, such as professional human rights advocacy groups or faith-based grassroots organizations. For many years, this scholarship tended to emphasize the 1970s as chronologically crucial, with the main actors being organizations like Amnesty International and the Carter administration. Narratives zeroing in on this time period and those actors have told of how post-Vietnam War priorities and the changing international consensus on the Global Cold War converged to lay the groundwork for the U.S. government's official inclusion of human rights as part of its foreign policy.²

Sarah Snyder's 2018 book, *From Selma to Moscow: How Human Rights Activists Transformed U.S. Foreign Policy*, represents a notable intervention into this historiographical narrative. Specifically, starting with the very first two sentences of the book, Snyder's research aims to complicate the existing historiography of later 20th-century U.S. human rights politics. She does so through one of the principal mechanisms of historiographical complication: re-periodization. *From Selma to Moscow* pushes back against the idea of the Carter administration or the end of the U.S. war in Vietnam as initially promoting human rights politics. Rather, as the third sentence of her book makes plain, Snyder "identifies transnational connections and social movements during the 'long 1960s' as the foundation for human rights activism." The rest of the book consists of five case studies of U.S. diplomats, politicians, and activists' engagements with abuses in the Soviet Union, Rhodesia, Greece, South Korea, and Chile, followed by a chapter on congressional activism in confronting international human rights abuses and the emergent institutionalization of U.S. human rights policies in the mid-1970s.

The three reviewers for this roundtable, Theresa Keeley, Robert Rakove, and Matthew K. Shannon, agree that there is much to value in Snyder's work. The authors unanimously commend Snyder for engaging with what Shannon calls an "astounding array of U.S. state and non-state archives with interviews and deep dives into the historiography." The authors also appreciate Snyder's use of case studies as a way of showing commonalities and distinctions among disparate parts of the world and human rights causes stemming from them. And the three

² Barbara J. Keys, *Reclaiming American Virtue: The Human Rights Revolution of the 1970s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014); Vanessa Walker, *Principles in Power: Latin America and the Politics of U.S. Human Rights Diplomacy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020); Mary E. Stuckey, *Jimmy Carter, Human Rights, and the National Agenda* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008).

reviewers are unanimous in finding Snyder's central historiographical contribution both compellingly argued and noteworthy.

First, Theresa Keeley emphasizes the usefulness of the book's case study approach both for understanding contingency in the unfolding of different efforts at promoting human rights and, crucially, for making the book particularly suited for "potential classroom use." Throughout her comments, Keeley points to fruitful questions and discussions for students and teachers to glean from Snyder's work. For instance, she identifies Snyder's closely observed dissections of intra-governmental and even intra-agency debates over U.S. policies as illuminating and especially helpful in nudging students to understand that the U.S. government's foreign policy apparatus is anything but a "monolith." While Keeley poses some questions about case study selection, she closes by recommending the book to anyone interested in U.S. foreign policy history.

Robert Rakove similarly compliments Snyder for highlighting the mechanics of human rights politics before its mainstream explosion in the later 1970s. In particular, he highlights what he finds as the "book's most surprising element": its detailed discussions of the influential involvement of U.S. diplomats, often mid-level staff at individual embassies or in the State Department, on the advancement of human rights politics. Furthermore, Rakove identifies the chapter on Rhodesia as generating rich conversation about how domestic politics, particularly on civil rights, influences U.S. foreign relations.

Finally, Michael K. Shannon's review identifies four key takeaways in *From Selma to Moscow*: Snyder's identification of institutional and professionalized advocates over grassroots activists as important players, the dynamic of domestic U.S. debates over civil rights as encouraging human rights activism in what he dubs "Cold War Human Rights" (riffing on Mary Dudziak's term, "Cold War Civil Rights"), the significance of "presidential inaction or obstruction," and the importance that relationships forged between members of Congress and what Snyder calls the "identifiable political prisoner," individuals such as former Chilean ambassador to the U.S. Orlando Letelier or Greek political leader Andreas Papandreou. At the same time, Shannon's review offers the strongest critique of Snyder of the three. In a criticism common to many works of "U.S. in the World" scholarship, Shannon calls for more background to fill in what he describes as a "lack of information on some of the national histories around which the book revolves." More specifically, Shannon wonders about the absence of Iran from the narrative as an example of how a case study approach excludes even as it uncovers. This leads Shannon

to highlight a methodological critique of how “archival determinism” can distort historical narrative.

The final entry of the roundtable offers Professor Snyder’s replies to the praise, questions, and critiques articulated by the reviewers. Helpfully, Snyder “pulls back the curtain” to discuss her process for choosing the case studies that appear in *From Selma to Moscow*, noting how she often highlighted those examples that appeared most frequently across archives. This attention to archival detail also appears in Snyder’s explanation for a lack of attention to the United Nations, an entity whose importance Snyder does not deny but which she does not see as crucial for this specific story. She also addresses Shannon’s questions, including explaining why she did not choose Iran. Overall, *From Selma to Moscow* offers an important new benchmark in the ongoing project of deepening the historiography of human rights politics.

Review by Theresa Keeley, University of Louisville

In her newest book, *From Selma to Moscow: How Human Rights Activists Transformed U.S. Foreign Policy*, Sarah B. Snyder shows how activists worked—and succeeded—in making human rights a key part of U.S. foreign policy. Snyder examines “the long 1960s,” which she defines as between the inaugurations of John F. Kennedy in 1961 and Jimmy Carter in 1977. In doing so, she is part of a growing group of historians analyzing human rights activism during decades other than the 1940s or the 1970s.¹ Snyder argues that human rights activists shifted from focusing on either the United Nations based in New York City or foreign governments to the U.S. government in Washington, DC. This redirection led to the “institutionalization of attention to human rights in U.S. foreign policy” (170). Activists included academics, members of Congress, diplomats, journalists, missionaries, and both established nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and those specifically created to address particular human rights crises. Snyder, however, prioritizes government actors in her analysis.

¹ For recent examples, see Kelly J. Shannon, *U.S. Foreign Policy and Muslim Women’s Human Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), and Rasmus Sinding Søndergaard, *Reagan, Congress, and Human Rights: Contesting Morality in US Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020). Snyder’s previous book examines the mid-1970s to the end of the Cold War. *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network* (New York: Cambridge, 2011).

From Selma to Moscow contains six chapters. The first five are case studies of the Soviet Union, Southern Rhodesia, Greece, South Korea, and Chile. Snyder explains that she chose these nations and crises to show “geographic diversity, ideological diversity, and diversity in terms of human rights violations” (1). The final chapter describes congressional activism. To build her case, Snyder uses an impressive array of sources, including documents from presidential libraries, the State Department, members of Congress, the United Nations, and NGOs. She also conducted interviews. These sources allow her to compare governmental and nongovernmental perspectives as well as intragovernmental conflicts. For example, as Snyder points out, the Nixon administration claimed to be speaking sternly to Chile about human rights abuses, yet cables reveal more moderate language.

One of the aspects of the book I most appreciated is its potential classroom use. I often find that undergraduate students struggle to see the U.S. government as anything other than a monolith. Students focus only on the president, and they tend to assume that differences of opinion result from individuals’ political affiliations. Through case studies, however, Snyder pushes back against these notions by highlighting intragovernmental tensions. She helps students appreciate that the U.S. government is comprised of independently minded individuals by showing how different levers of power have often been at odds with one another. Given this strength of the book, I am going to suggest some of the useful ways *From Selma to Moscow* raises questions that students might explore and then potentially use Snyder’s work as a jumping-off point for further research.

What similarities or differences existed between Democratic and Republican administrations? Snyder explores ways that political party did not matter when it came to human rights. Administrations from Kennedy to Ford responded uniformly to Soviet human rights abuses, especially against Jews. All considered three options: not acting either to avoid interference in another country’s internal affairs or because other U.S. concerns were more paramount, quiet diplomacy, or public shaming. All administrations pursued paths one and two. Similarly, security concerns dictated the Johnson and Nixon administrations’ approaches to Greece after the military coup in 1967. Greece was a NATO member that bordered two Warsaw Pact countries. The Johnson White House initially condemned the regime and embargoed military exports, but the 1967 Six-Day War and the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia led the administration to begin military aid shipments. President Richard Nixon fully resumed military aid in 1970. As Snyder notes, however, both presidents still considered potential domestic political backlash when framing their response, demonstrating the increasing importance

of human rights to the public and Congress. Students could explore what these case studies tell us about how and why presidential administrations weighed the U.S. relationship to foreign nations versus domestic pressure to speak out about human rights abuses.

What was the relationship between administrations' stances on human rights and their domestic agendas? Domestic civil rights influenced the Johnson and Nixon administrations' responses to Ian Smith's unilateral declaration of independence in 1965, which created the minority white-led government of Southern Rhodesia. Human rights concerns included "censorship, restrictions on individual liberties, detention camps, beatings, and employment regulations" (43). Many within the Johnson administration saw a strong stance against Smith as consistent with Johnson's civil rights agenda, especially as civil rights advocates took an interest in Southern Rhodesia. Likewise, Nixon matched his foreign and domestic approaches, but in the opposite direction. His Southern Strategy focused on southern white Democrats, prompting a closer U.S. relationship with Southern Rhodesia and South Africa. Students might consider how presidents have linked their human rights stances and domestic positions rhetorically and whether they prioritized one over the other or whether they regarded them as equally important.

Who raised concerns about human rights abuses abroad? There were some similarities among human rights advocates, but overall, some countries received more attention than others. Those concerned about the fate of political prisoners and torture in Greece and Chile included academics, members of Congress, and nongovernmental organizations, such as Amnesty International and newly created organizations including the U.S. Committee for Democracy in Greece and the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA). Despite this variety of concerned parties, I was surprised to learn that more than any other example in the book, those protesting human rights abuses in the Soviet Union were "the most diverse and likely the largest group of Americans driven to action" (23). They included Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., Republican Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson of Washington, and the College Students' Struggle for Soviet Jewry.

By contrast, South Korea did not receive the same attention. Human rights activists included missionaries, journalists, members of Congress, and lower-level diplomats. NGOs did not play a key role, and there were not many outside observers who traveled to South Korea and reported on the human rights situation. There also was not the same degree of domestic pressure or congressional action. However, some State Department officials raised concerns. Ambassador

Philip Habib and others in the embassy pushed the issue in South Korea even as President Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in Washington remained mum regarding Park Chung Hee's abuses. Students might explore the links across human rights campaigns and how their rhetoric compared.

How did members of Congress advocate for human rights? Congress tried to force the integration of human rights into policy making with a new tactic: restricting military aid to countries with poor human rights records. The first time Congress did so was with Greece. Congress passed measures ending military aid in 1971 and 1972, but U.S. aid continued because Nixon signed waivers. Greece avoided the issue by rejecting U.S. military aid in 1973. Likewise, Congress reduced aid to Chile for 1974, ended new military aid in 1975, and cut off aid with no exceptions in 1976. The move "marked the first time that Congress had ended military assistance to another country without any exceptions or loopholes" (130). Besides military aid, Congress tied human rights concerns to other U.S. foreign policy measures. Frustrated with presidential inaction, Congress passed the Jackson-Vanik Amendment in 1974, which tied most-favored-nation status to Soviet emigration policies.

On the other hand, Congress undermined integrating human rights concerns regarding Southern Rhodesia. The Byrd Amendment, passed as part of the 1971 Defense Procurement Bill, prohibited the United States from banning importation of Rhodesian chrome. The move overturned prior U.S. policy and flew in the face of United Nations sanctions. Although the amendment shows that Congress did not always agree regarding the role of human rights in U.S. foreign policy, Congress passed this bill before many of the human rights measures that Snyder discusses. Students might consider whether and how congressional activism built on earlier congressional efforts and whether members of Congress explicitly cited prior human rights abuses in pushing for new legislative changes.

From Selma to Moscow's case study approach allows one to compare and contrast foreign policies and human rights activism during the same or closely related time periods; I wondered about the potential interaction across case studies and how developments not mentioned in the book affected the examples Snyder analyzes. For example, Snyder mentions how the war in Vietnam influenced both Johnson's and Nixon's decisions not to speak out regarding human rights abuses in South Korea. On the other hand, the war inspired Minnesota Representative Donald Fraser to become more concerned about the role human rights should play in shaping U.S. foreign policy. Beginning in 1973, as head of the Foreign Affairs

Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movements, Fraser held hearings on human rights, drawing attention to the issue and offering a way for NGOs and other nonstate actors to voice their concerns.

I also wondered what case studies Snyder considered but did not use. How did she make her decisions? In aiming for geographic diversity, did she select cases based on U.S. policies? For example, did she choose Chile instead of Brazil or Argentina because of the U.S. government's involvement in President Salvador Allende's overthrow? Did she consider including the Dominican Republic, given the role U.S. policy toward the country played in shaping both Senator William Fulbright's public stance against Johnson's Vietnam policy and Representative Donald Fraser's interest in the relationship between human rights and U.S. foreign policy? In terms of other areas of the world, did she consider Uganda, South Africa, Northern Ireland, or the Philippines?

From Selma to Moscow is an important addition to scholarship exploring how human rights have become a more integral part of U.S. foreign policy. Even those not primarily concerned with human rights but interested in exploring the tensions between foreign and domestic policy, between the legislative and executive branches, and between Washington-based policymakers and those stationed abroad will find valuable insights in the book.

Review by Robert Rakove, Stanford University

On August 2, 1962, almost exactly two years before they cast the sole congressional votes against the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, Senators Wayne Morse (D-OR) and Ernest Gruening (D-AK) offered another notable dissent. Holding the floor of the U.S. Senate, the two declared their joint opposition to U.S. military aid programs in Latin America. "Unfortunately," Gruening lamented, "we have supported dictators in many parts of the world, and still continue to support some of them. That is a very deplorable situation, in my view." He decried the continued provision of arms to autocrats who employed them against civilian populations, who would inevitably associate the United States with the regimes oppressing them. His colleague, Morse, rhetorically asked if the criticism applied to U.S. support for the dictatorship of Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista before his ouster in 1958. "That is correct," Gruening replied.¹

¹ 108 Cong Rec. 15417-8 (1962).

Much as they would in August 1964, Morse and Gruening professed opposition to an article of Cold War strategy. They did not expressly invoke principles of human rights, nor the Universal Declaration of Human Rights while doing so. Repeated mention of Cuba and complaints about profligate spending spoke to the prevailing concerns of the day. Yet their protest, which cited a recent South American coup d'état (in Peru), invoked democratic American values, deplored acts of violent repression, and targeted military aid programs, bears more than a passing resemblance to legislative and public campaigns undertaken in the following decade, made explicitly under the banner of human rights.²

Elements of the powerful human rights movement that sought to redefine U.S. foreign policy can be glimpsed well before their decisive emergence in the 1970s, yet the task of identifying them is complex and subject to varying interpretations. The relative marginality of human rights as a popular cause before the early 1970s is uncontroversial, but the project of analyzing visible precursors to the broader movement remains. If the American public, at large, was otherwise preoccupied by Cold War tensions, by the domestic civil rights struggle, and then by war in Vietnam, a small yet visible subset demonstrated or lobbied passionately, if not always effectively, for the rights of oppressed peoples in the Soviet Union, Rhodesia, South Korea, and Greece, among other places. Additionally, after the horrific events of September 1973, in which a democratically elected Chilean government was violently overthrown by a military coup with the evident approval and complicity of the U.S. government, human rights advocacy achieved a prominence previously denied it. Activists lobbied and demonstrated, legislators like Minnesota Representative Donald Fraser held extensive hearings and strove to link arms sales to human rights policy, and the 1976 election brought an avowed proponent of human rights to the steps of the White House.

Five case studies mentioned above, and a study of legislative action in the critical 1973–76 period comprise Sarah Snyder's *From Selma to Moscow*, an invaluable contribution to the study of U.S. human rights activism and policy. While it provides a prologue to her 2011 book *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War*, the book primarily offers a deeply researched interpretation of the origins of U.S.

² Gruening was, of course, no stranger to such efforts. Four decades earlier, the then-journalist had testified before a Senate committee on a recent visit to Haiti, then in its seventh year of U.S. occupation. His description of the plight of Haitians under martial law is worth quoting: "They said, 'You never know what is going to happen. You live in constant fear of arrest, of being arrested on the charge that you at one time said or wrote something critical of the occupation.'" See *Hearings Before a Select Committee on Haiti and Santo Domingo*, Part 4, 67th Cong. 1208 (1922).

human rights advocacy, and an emphatic argument that the activism of the mid-1970s indeed came from somewhere. Human rights activism emerges here as a child of the 1960s: of civil rights protest, of improved transnational connections between peoples, and of a growing spirit of dissent from the Cold War.

From Selma to Moscow captures the tentative efforts and early stumbles of the forerunners to the human rights movement. Taken together, the eclectic cases balance each other out, while allowing recognizable commonalities to emerge. One is struck by the sheer variety of ad hoc nongovernmental human rights organizations (wondering idly, meanwhile, what proportion of their records remain accessible to researchers). The assemblage here appears heterogeneous and fluid; Snyder does not place specific causes along a left-right spectrum, allowing otherwise incongruous acts of advocacy to emerge.³ Her legislative cast is similarly varied. Alongside the now-familiar Fraser emerge portraits of other legislators: Jonathan Bingham, Paul Findley, and Don Edwards among them—successors of a kind to Morse and Gruening.

The case studies presented in this book should spark considerable discussion. Some are relatively straightforward, of course—outrage over the Greek junta's use of torture and its imprisonment of dissidents makes this case a clear analogue to the campaigns of the 1970s. Rhodesia, however, is the most intriguingly complex example. The rogue colony's 1965 declaration of independence from Great Britain sparked an international crisis and calls for Western intervention from both African states and the U.S. civil rights movement. Assessments of Rhodesia activism vary considerably, and other accounts do not type it as human rights advocacy. Yet, can the two ultimately be treated separately, when, as Snyder writes, activists seized upon the Rhodesian regime's persecution of dissidents (43–44)?⁴

Rhodesia, furthermore, stands at a crucial nexus of the book, illuminating connections between U.S. civil rights advocacy and international human rights advocacy. We know, of course, that civil rights activists understood the battle against white supremacy to be fundamentally international. Overlapping usage of the terms “civil rights” and “human rights” in the era can convey that linkage

³ Take, for example, Senator George McGovern's (D-SD) castigation of Richard Nixon for his failure to speak on behalf of Soviet Jewry (32), or the activism of Representative Robert Drinan (D-MA)—better known for his criticisms of the Vietnam War and U.S. policy in Latin America—on this same issue (28–29).

⁴ Considering the activism sparked by the police killings of George Floyd and, more recently, Daunte Wright and Adam Toledo, I wonder what distinction can be made presently between anti-racist and human rights advocacy.

as well. Notable as well in Snyder's account, however, is the recognition by the civil rights leadership of similar struggles. Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.'s participation in the campaign to free Soviet Jews offers one of the book's most indelible images (28).

Each of the cases presented rests on deep archival research, especially in the National Archives at College Park, Maryland, illuminating the rhetoric of activists, the reporting of diplomats, and the dilemmas perceived by senior officials of the Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, and Ford administrations. Research in Santiago further bolsters Snyder's strong treatment of the all-important, albeit better-known Chilean case.

Deep use of diplomatic records yielded, for me, the book's most surprising element: the roles played by diplomats in the gradual advance of human rights advocacy. Repeatedly, in Snyder's words, "U.S. diplomats serving abroad appraised the human rights violations more seriously than officials in Washington did (71)." In Athens, Ambassador Phillips Talbot – himself a product of remarkable transnational experiences – wrote with evident horror of the "rape of Greek democracy."⁵ Hamstrung by his superiors, who attached greater value to the Greek alliance amid upheaval in the Middle East, Talbot had scant cause for satisfaction, although his intercession with the junta might have helped to save the life of opposition leader Andreas Papandreou. Years later, U.S. Ambassador Philip Habib intervened forcefully with the South Korean government after it kidnapped dissident (and future President) Kim Dae Jung from a Tokyo hotel room.

The point of embassy-level human rights advocacy is not unique within recent scholarship, which has identified compelling case studies of such activity.⁶ Yet Snyder apprehends a broader pattern within the State Department: a rising, if uneven sentiment that stemming human rights abuses should constitute part of the diplomatic mission.⁷ Along these lines, an intriguing, even enigmatic character in *From Selma to Moscow* is Winston Lord. A senior advisor to Henry Kissinger,

⁵ Two decades earlier, Talbot had reported on the decolonization of British India for the *Chicago Daily News*. His reports are reprinted in Phillips Talbot, *An American Witness to India's Partition* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2007).

⁶ Two that spring readily to mind are Gary J. Bass, *The Blood Telegram: Nixon, Kissinger, and a Forgotten Genocide* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013); William Michael Schmidli, *The Fate of Freedom Elsewhere: Human Rights and U.S. Cold War Policy toward Argentina* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

⁷ Notably the dissent cable transmitted on April 6, 1971, by the U.S. consulate in Dacca was endorsed by nine colleagues in Washington. See Bass, *The Blood Telegram*, 77–79.

ultimately director of the Policy Planning Staff, Lord stands in stark contrast to the transnational activists featured in the book. Yet he repeatedly emphasized, in memoranda to Kissinger, the “moral imperatives” of factoring human rights into policy. Hardly a gadfly or a policy martyr, *a la* Archer Blood, Lord enjoyed a storied career in diplomacy. His 1975 efforts to protect Kissinger from his own obstinacy have previously been noted, but Snyder’s extensive research establishes them as a culmination of earlier advocacy.⁸

Were *From Selma to Moscow* to feature a seventh chapter, this gradual emergence of human rights advocacy within the State Department would have been a worthy topic. Lord’s cognizance on this question set him apart from Nixon and Kissinger, who were wont to rationalize or enable domestic brutality on the part of their allies. Further development of this theme would have been intriguing: identifying the shared biographical traits and politics (if any) linking internal advocates.⁹ The role of Kissinger as the *bête noire* of the human rights movement is also worth considering. Within each of these chapters, the entry of Kissinger and Nixon widens the gap between policy and the aspirations of advocates, precipitating the breakthrough of the mid-1970s. An administration less enamored of authoritarian allies or contemptuous of human rights advocacy could have struck a prudent compromise with the legislature.¹⁰

To write of the long 1960s is to write of the Vietnam era. From my own experience, I tend to think that the war is inescapable in any discussion of the period. Snyder plainly locates the origins of human rights activism before Vietnam, observing in her first endnote, “I have not seen evidence of the emotions shame or guilt as factors motivating the activism under analysis here (174n1).” Certainly, the cases presented here antecede the peak of the Vietnam War, and her portrait of Fraser

⁸ Barbara J. Keys, “Congress, Kissinger, and the Origins of Human Rights Diplomacy,” *Diplomatic History* 34, no. 5 (November 2010): 843–44.

⁹ While studies of human rights policy on the national level are now abundant, considerable room exists for further work on the local (mission) level. The Holocaust scholarship of Melissa Jane Taylor, who has examined the responses of different U.S. embassies and consulates to the mounting persecution of Jews in the 1930s and 1940s, offers one potentially invaluable model. See, for example, Melissa Jane Taylor, “Diplomats in Turmoil: Creating a Middle Ground in Post-Anschluss Austria,” *Diplomatic History* 32, no. 5 (November 1, 2008): 811–39; Melissa Jane Taylor, “American Consuls and the Politics of Rescue in Marseille, 1936–1941,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 30, no. 2 (January 1, 2016): 247–75.

¹⁰ Joe Renouard, *Human Rights in American Foreign Policy: From the 1960s to the Soviet Collapse*, Pennsylvania Studies in Human Rights (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 43–49; Barbara J. Keys, *Reclaiming American Virtue: The Human Rights Revolution of the 1970s* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014), 153–77.

suggests that the war was far from the sole source of his disaffection from the Cold War consensus (149). Barbara Keys makes a strong case that the war's end was a prerequisite for sustained human rights advocacy, "open[ing] up political space" previously consumed by opposition to the war.¹¹ In the South Korean case, war-related considerations clearly inhibited the Johnson administration from pressing the Park regime. Yet in other instances, notably Greece, Vietnam appears to have fueled dissent, reinforcing an emerging critique of Cold War strategy. Taking advantage of this roundtable format, I would invite Snyder to address the concurrent (and perhaps paradoxical) effects of the war on human rights activism at length. I wonder, moreover, if the protests and disruptions of 1968 made a visible mark on these efforts.

A deeply researched, cogently worded, and remarkably concise work of scholarship, *From Selma to Moscow* makes a compelling case for looking seriously at the deeper roots of 1970s human rights advocacy. For all that was distinctive and contingent about the mid-70s human rights boom, there is good cause to treat it as a consequence of developments and tendencies visible earlier: of a shrinking world, a broadening of civil society, a restive legislature, and a fraying Cold War consensus.

Review by Matthew K. Shannon, Emory & Henry College

Sarah Snyder's most recent book on human rights during the Cold War received the Robert H. Ferrell Prize from the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations—and for good reason. *From Selma to Moscow* couples an astounding array of U.S. state and non-state archives with interviews and deep dives into the historiography to present a compelling history. Many historians point to the mid-to-late 1970s as the watershed moment for widespread concern for human rights, but Snyder brackets "the years between John F. Kennedy's inauguration in 1961 and Jimmy Carter's in 1977" to argue for "the 'long 1960s' as the foundation for human rights activism" (1–2). This re-periodization is significant, and Snyder's argument that Americans became concerned about the civil and political rights of "others" earlier than previously assumed is convincing. The 172 pages of text are organized into six chapters that revolve around at least four common themes.

¹¹ Keys, *Reclaiming American Virtue*, 270. Along similar lines, consider Brian Balogh, "From Metaphor to Quagmire: The Domestic Legacy of the Vietnam War," in Charles Neu ed., *After Vietnam: Legacies of a Lost War* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000) 24–55.

The first theme is the importance of off-campus, liberal activism. In contrast to most writing on the 1960s, Snyder's framework is more akin to "the dissent channel" than "radicals on the road."¹ In the 1940s and 1950s, Freedom House, the International League for the Rights of Man, and the NAACP were active in New York City. But "human rights work in these decades was largely a privileged affair" (3). The changes of the 1960s were less ideological in Snyder's reading than they were about how, with major civil rights legislation in the United States and decolonization around the world, human rights networks became more participatory, transnational, and influential. They were effective in Washington, DC, where activists, armed with information about atrocities abroad, found allies in Congress and, in some cases, the White House.

The second theme is how "Cold War Civil Rights" became "Cold War Human Rights."² "Of the abuses considered in this book," Snyder writes in the first chapter, "human rights violations in the Soviet Union produced the most diverse and likely the largest group of Americans driven to action" (23). The "cold war" and the "transnational" were not mutually exclusive. Indeed, instrumental superpower concerns informed legislative and executive agendas at the same time that activists borrowed from "Cold War rhetoric" to amplify their messages about "Captive Nations" outside of the Eastern Bloc (46). The second chapter shows how "veterans of the black freedom movement as well as others concerned about the United States' racial record" protested against Southern Rhodesia's unilateral independence in 1965 and, perhaps for the first time, professed a global commitment to "the universality of human rights" (43). As a result, presidents from Kennedy to Ford felt pressure to weigh human rights in America's bilateral relationships—not just with U.S. adversaries and international pariah states, but with authoritarian allies, too.

The third theme is presidential inaction or obstruction. Most chapters begin with the Democratic administrations of the 1960s waffling on the issues. For example, Johnson's policy response to the 1967 coup in Greece was narrowed by Greece's NATO membership and strategic calculations related to the Arab-Israeli War

¹ Hannah Gurman, *The Dissent Papers: The Voices of Diplomats in the Cold War and Beyond* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, *Radicals on the Road: Internationalism, Orientalism, and Feminism during the Vietnam Era* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013).

² Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000). As Snyder notes, previous historians have made other causal arguments about why human rights became important to Americans during the mid-20th century. Rather than rehash these historiographic debates here, I direct the readers to the many insightful explanatory endnotes in the book under review.

of 1967 and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. In most of Snyder's chapters, the lukewarm human rights policies of the 1960s were diluted by the Nixon-Ford-Kissinger team during the 1970s. Henry Kissinger quips abound; on one occasion he instructs an ambassador to "cut out the political science lectures" (116, 133), and on another he speaks sarcastically about how "Human Rights make me love the State Department" (141). Because of such views, nongovernmental advocacy was essential.

The fourth theme—which emerges quite clearly in the three core chapters on Greece, South Korea, and Chile—is the interrelationship between transnational and congressional activism. The transnational networks included missionaries, Peace Corps volunteers, lawyers, elected officials, and others who translated their causes into "the clinical language of Washington" (121). Interest was often sparked by an "identifiable political prisoner" (66): Andreas Papandreou in the colonels' Greece and Kim Dae Jung in Park Chung Hee's South Korea. The anti-Pinochet movement in Chile was broader, but the Letelier-Moffitt murder (143) was significant.³ NGOs such as Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists were united with their partners in the belief that the U.S. government was "the entity that could have the greatest effect on human rights violations abroad" (169). In Congress, the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movements was receptive. With Donald Fraser as chair, the subcommittee held hearings and drew upon NGOs to catalog human rights violations around the world. In the mid-1970s, as chapter six shows, Congress passed legislation to link U.S. foreign assistance to human rights, and in some cases, sanctioned countries with murderous records.

The narrative is crisp, but also swift, which leads to some temporal and spatial gaps. The leap from the final case study to a conclusion that discusses the aftermath of September 11, 2001, will leave unanswered questions about the intervening decades. There is also a lack of information on some of the national histories around which the book revolves. Readers invested in these dramas might ask: What were the implications of U.S.-based organizing for the countries that, in the first place, animated the movement, both during the long 1960s and in the post-1977 period? Did human rights organizing have as significant an impact in these parts of the world as Snyder argued it had in Europe in the late Cold War?⁴ There

³ Alan McPherson, *Ghosts of Sheridan Circle: How a Washington Assassination Brought Pinochet's Terror State to Justice* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019).

⁴ Reference here, of course, to Sarah Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

are no references to, on the one hand, “Robert Mugabe,” or, on the other, “June Struggle” or *Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia*. Nor is there context about related struggles in other parts of the world.⁵

It is this lack of context that allows Snyder to write that “countries such as Iran...had widespread human rights violations but sparked little outrage in the United States” (174n. 2). This is a minor statement, but it caught my attention for obvious reasons. The Shah of Iran enjoyed U.S. support prior to the activism of the 1960s and 1970s. Amnesty International sent a team to Iran in 1965, two years before sending a delegation to Greece (62), and it produced reports on both countries. William Butler of the International Commission of Jurists traveled to Iran in 1975 to conduct an investigation, as he did with South Korea (99). Butler reported his findings on Iran to Fraser’s congressional subcommittee alongside testimonies from other “identifiable” parties in 1976–77. Outside of government, Americans formed the “U.S. Committee for Democracy in Greece” (65–66), the “Chile Emergency Committee” (117), and, yes, the “U.S. People’s Committee on Iran.” Grassroots calls for divestment and sanction were often met by executive obstinance, but Americans were outraged about human rights violations in Iran—and Greece, South Korea, and Chile—prior to Carter’s inauguration. Two pillars of Snyder’s bookend argument—the creation of the Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs in, and the start of annual human rights country reporting by, the State Department—are also relevant to U.S.-Iran relations.⁶

My point is not about Iran or the need for more case studies. My point is twofold, and both relate to methodology. The first relates to the scientific method, namely independently verifiable evidence and the ability of a hypothesis to withstand repeated tests. I was struck by how much the history of U.S.-Iran human rights organizing tracked along the narrative arc of *From Selma to Moscow*. The national case studies end differently, but the patterns of activism and influence in the

⁵ See Michael Fischbach, *The Movement and the Middle East: How the Arab-Israeli Conflict Divided the American Left* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020); and James Goode, *The Turkish Arms Embargo: Drugs, Ethnic Lobbies, and US Domestic Politics* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2020).

⁶ Matthew Shannon, *Losing Hearts and Minds: American-Iranian Relations and International Education during the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017), chapter 5; Matthew Shannon, “Reading Iran: American Academics and the Last Shah,” *Iranian Studies* 51, no. 2 (2018): 299–301. See also Javier Gil Guerrero, *The Carter Administration and the Fall of Iran’s Pahlavi Dynasty: US-Iran Relations on the Brink of the 1979 Revolution* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), chapter 3; and Luca Trenta, “The Champion of Human Rights Meets the King of Kings: Jimmy Carter, the Shah, and Iranian Illusions and Rage,” *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 24, no. 3 (2013): 476–98.

United States seem quite consistent when considering how human rights concerns about countries across Cold War blocs derived from a transnational space and were channeled through NGOs to politicians, policymakers, and presidents in Washington. The second observation relates to the methodological dilemmas that confront scholars of transnational history. In this case, the statement about Iran was more about selection bias and archival determinism than it was an accurate reflection of American human rights *mentalités* during the long 1960s. I raise the Iran example because it reaffirms Snyder's thesis, I think, and provides opportunity for methodological reflection in this roundtable.

Snyder is persuasive that, for a moment in the 1960s and 1970s, state and non-state actors "called into question one of the tenets of U.S. foreign policy since the 1920s—that the United States preferred reliable, stable allies" (86). If nothing else, activism for human rights certainly contributed to the democratization of U.S. foreign policy during the late Cold War.

Author's Response by Sarah B. Snyder, American University

I appreciate Benjamin Guterman organizing a *Federal History* roundtable on my 2018 book and for the invitation to respond to these generous and thought-provoking reviews. I thank Theresa Keeley, Robert Rakove, and Matthew Shannon for their thorough engagement with the book's arguments, evidence, and significance. *From Selma to Moscow: How Human Rights Activists Transformed U.S. Foreign Policy* identifies how transnational connections and social movements in the "long 1960s" spurred activists and ushered in the institutionalization of human rights in U.S. foreign policy. As an author it is gratifying to discover the varied ways in which your book is interpreted and utilized. I was particularly struck by the overlapping and complementary themes the reviewers identified in *From Selma to Moscow*: the continuity of foreign policy across different presidential administrations; the intersection of domestic politics and foreign policy; the genealogy of human rights activism in the 1970s as "a child of the 1960s"; the diversity within the U.S. government; the significance of interventions by diplomats; and the democratization of foreign affairs in the long 1960s. I hope that the reviews suggest to scholars of and within the federal government that *From Selma to Moscow* might intersect in productive ways with their scholarship and teaching.

The luxury of the roundtable format is that it provides reviewers the opportunity to pose questions directly to the author, to the benefit of the readers of the journal.

Keeley, Rakove, and Shannon have pushed me to discuss in greater detail the framing and structure of the book. My response will address the context and impact of the war in Vietnam; case selection; and what I left out, or in Rakove's formulation, what might have been the topic of an imagined seventh chapter in the book.

Rakove, who characterizes the influence of Vietnam as “inescapable” on any account of the 1960s, asks for further reflection on the impact of the war on the human rights activism I describe. In many ways, it is hard to imagine a foreign policy story from the 1960s in which Vietnam and the protests it inspired at home and abroad don't loom like a long shadow. Just as Richard Nixon argued that Vietnam had “dominated our field of vision” and “distorted our picture of Asia” so too has scholarship on the era been anchored in the war in Southeast Asia. The majority of activists I analyze in *From Selma to Moscow*, however, were living or working abroad as missionaries, academics, and diplomats during these years. Thus, they were physically and emotionally removed from many debates over the war and its conduct. Similarly, these activists were older and in professional careers, rather than the draft-age students who drove the protests in Washington, New York, and Paris in 1968. I write in *From Selma to Moscow*: “Many accounts chronicling the 1960s focus on protests on college campuses, the radical politics of the left, and the youth counterculture, whereas Americans active on human rights were beyond university age, liberal rather than radical, and elite actors rather than participants in a mass movement.”(14) Instead of students, it was “elite liberals” such as Representative Donald M. Fraser who transformed U.S. foreign policy. Nonetheless, I show how disillusionment with the war in Vietnam weakened the Cold War consensus in favor of containment and enabled new ideas and actors to shape U.S. foreign policy going forward.

In his review, Rakove suggests that the chapters on South Korea and Greece reveal a paradoxical influence of Vietnam on U.S. policy. From my perspective, the cases illuminate more similarities than differences. Members of Congress and nonstate actors who opposed U.S. support for dictators in Chile, South Korea, and Greece also questioned U.S. objectives and strategy in Vietnam. Uniformly, disillusionment with the war in Vietnam eroded Americans' trust in government generally and the White House specifically. And questions about the wisdom of intervening in Vietnam, the South Vietnamese government's treatment of its own people, and American military tactics all corroded the Cold War consensus. These developments facilitated the rise of new voices and priorities such as human rights in the foreign policy making process.

Keeley asks if I considered writing chapters on Brazil or Argentina instead of Chile, or the Dominican Republic, Uganda, South Africa, Northern Ireland, or the Philippines.¹ The answer is mostly yes. Initially, I imagined writing a chapter on the southern cone of Latin America that would include Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay (James Green's excellent *We Cannot Remain Silent: Opposition to the Brazilian Military Dictatorship in the United States* (2010) and my lack of Portuguese skills limited my interest in including Brazil).² I shifted away from Argentina given the compressed timeline between the coup (March 24, 1976) there and Carter's inauguration in January 1977. But, the overriding factor in my decision to focus exclusively on Chile in the fifth chapter was the sheer volume of records I collected, and my inability to squeeze in anything else. I had, however, found interesting material on human rights activism relating to Uruguay, which I published separately in an article in *Cold War History* with similar arguments about the impact of transnational connections in shaping American action against the junta in Montevideo.³

Similarly, I imagined writing a chapter on activism related to human rights violations by U.S. allies in East Asia—South Korea, the Philippines, and Taiwan. Again, the amount of material relating to South Korea in the years 1961–1976 dwarfed what exists regarding the Philippines and Taiwan. Given the general accessibility of State Department, White House, and congressional records from these years, I interpreted the volume or absence of records to indicate not only interest in a country's human rights violations but the influence of those Americans and their agenda on those pressing for a new approach to abusive regimes. Thus, my focus narrowed.

Although there was controversy within Amnesty International regarding prisoners of conscience in Northern Ireland, neither that issue nor the human rights abuses in Uganda resonated as strongly in the United States. Other

¹ Outstanding accounts examining anti-apartheid activism by scholars such as Thomas Borstelmann, Ryan Irwin, Francis Nesbitt, and David Hostetter suggested I might not be able to contribute much new to this rich literature. Ryan M. Irwin, *Gordian Knot: Apartheid and the Unmaking of the Liberal World Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (London: Harvard University Press, 2001); Francis Njubi Nesbitt, *Race for Sanctions: African Americans against Apartheid, 1946–1994* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004); and David L. Hostetter, *Movement Matters: American Antiapartheid Activism and the Rise of Multicultural Politics* (London: Routledge, 2006).

² James N. Green, *We Cannot Remain Silent: Opposition to the Brazilian Military Dictatorship in the United States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

³ Sarah B. Snyder, "Ending Our Support for the Dictators": Ed Koch, Uruguay, and Human Rights," *Cold War History* 21:1 (January 2021): 19–36.

countries I searched for in White House subject files, congressional hearings, and diplomatic cables included Spain, Portugal, the German Democratic Republic, Israel, Iran, Indonesia, and China. Shannon disagrees with my contention that there was “little outrage” about Iranian human rights abuses, but in contrast to the voluminous records on U.S. engagement with human rights violations in the Soviet Union, Chile, South Korea, or South Africa, I found far less evidence of American activism against the Shah. I wish I had had the benefit of his scholarship on this topic, nonetheless, I am heartened to hear that my analysis complements Shannon’s own on Iran.

Although it did not come up in these reviews, I have been repeatedly pressed, most pointedly after two talks in Lebanon on the book, about my exclusion of Israel as a case study. My answer was that, for a range of reasons, governmental and nongovernmental actors were less focused on the human rights violations there than elsewhere. This is where Shannon’s point about selection bias and archival determinism raises the most questions. Michael R. Fischbach’s 2018 *Black Power and Palestine: Transnational Countries of Color* shows that many Black Americans condemned Israeli treatment of Palestinians, but their activism was largely invisible in the congressional, State Department, presidential, and nongovernmental records I examined.⁴ Reading Fischbach’s account before I submitted my book in 2017 would have changed, or at least complicated, my analysis. Taken together, Shannon’s research on Iranian students in the United States and Fishbach’s on Black Power activists raise important questions about the intersection of activism and influence on U.S. foreign policy in the long 1960s.

Rakove, in asking what a seventh chapter might have looked like, proposes a biographical examination of American diplomats who were early human rights advocates and how their work grew within the State Department over time. Rakove’s idea is intriguing, and I would be interested to read a full book on the topic. Anyone wishing to undertake such a project will undoubtedly find the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training’s oral history collection a rich resource, as I did.

In addition to utilizing material collected for the book in an article on Uruguay, I excised three other chapters at varying stages in the project. The first, published in *Human Rights Quarterly*, examined the challenges Amnesty International faced

⁴ Michael R. Fischbach, *Black Power and Palestine: Transnational Countries of Color* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018).

in establishing a national section in the United States in the 1960s.⁵ I separated it from the book once I realized that the founding of Amnesty International USA had not significantly influenced U.S. human rights advocacy in the years of my study. Second, I had imagined, mistakenly I learned, that the 1968 United Nations Year for International Human Rights might have heightened Americans' attention to human rights issues. But, when I realized their attention was already consumed with the dramatic protests, political turmoil, and assassinations of the year, I published it separately in *Diplomatic History*.⁶ Finally, as the book developed into a study of human rights activism by lower-level or nonstate actors rather than an analysis of U.S. human rights policy, I shifted a chapter on the Kennedy administration's approach to human rights out of the book and published it in *International History Review*.⁷ I outline this process to show that there could have been many different seventh chapters, or maybe even ten chapters in total.

I appreciate the opportunity to respond to Keeley, Rakove, and Shannon's gracious reviews, to share the messy journey to this book's publication, and to reflect on possible future research agendas.

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⁵ Sarah B. Snyder, "Exporting Amnesty International to the United States: Transatlantic Human Rights Activism in the 1960s," *Human Rights Quarterly* 34:3 (August 2012): 779–99.

⁶ Sarah B. Snyder, "The 1968 International Year for Human Rights: A Missed Opportunity in the United States," *Diplomatic History* 42: 5 (November 2018): 831–58.

⁷ Sarah B. Snyder, "Human Rights Rhetoric and Policy in the Kennedy Administration," *International History Review* 43:3 (2021): 638–56.

