Nancy Mitchell, *Jimmy Carter in Africa: Race and the Cold War.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016. Xvi + 883 pp. $45.00 US cloth, ISBN 978-0804793858.

In her extensively researched book Jimmy Carter in Africa: Race and the Cold War, the historian Nancy Mitchell centers Africa in President Carter's diplomacy. Using government documents from twelve different countries, impressive oral history interviews conducted with key actors – including Carter himself – and a plethora of U.S. media sources and secondary literature, Mitchell constructs a comprehensive narrative of Carter's approach to African issues. In so doing, Mitchell makes two key interventions in the historiography of Jimmy Carter's foreign policy. The first assertion is that contrary to historical representations, Carter was not "indecisive, weak, or irresolute," but decisive and central to his administration's foreign policy. Secondly, and perhaps more significant, are Mitchell's contentions that Africa preoccupied Carter's foreign affairs agenda and that race was critical to his handling of African crises (4, 654). These accomplishments make Mitchell's book a landmark text on Carter's presidency appropriate for any specialist on U.S. Cold War diplomacy.

Central to his book are Mitchell's challenges to common myths surrounding the thirty-ninth president. Mitchell grapples with the belief that Carter built his campaign and presidency on human rights, instead contending that he trained his attention on restoring transparency and morality to Washington in the wake of Watergate and the Vietnam debacle (33, 68). In fact, Mitchell cites Carter's admission that human rights entered his campaign rhetoric once Walter Mondale joined the ticket (87). Furthermore, Mitchell debunks the conception that Carter was indecisive and torn between the conflicting advice of dovish Cyrus Vance and the hawk Zbigniew Brzezinski. These diplomats, despite holding key positions in Carter's cabinet, had relatively uncritical roles in the formulation of foreign policy – a task often conducted by the president himself (654-656). For Mitchell, Carter was always a Cold Warrior who sought the protection of U.S. interests vis-à-vis a more effective containment of communism (9-10). Mitchell demonstrates this through Carter's commitment to forging a settlement over Rhodesian majority rule in the face of Soviet-Cuban intervention and his diplomatic foray into establishing an alliance with Somalia – the former a victory, but the latter a failure. In this light, Mitchell reframes 1970s détente as an "organic continuation of Cold War containment" with Carter as its persona (661).

In this analysis, the reader sees that Carter was not a post-Cold War president nor irresolute, but an ardent Cold Warrior not easily influenced by his advisors. Carter won the U.S. a Cold War victory in aiding Rhodesia's quest for an independent democracy grounded in majority black rule. In this case, Carter did not lift sanctions against the racist minority white government of Ian Smith and labored hard to bring all parties of the Rhodesian liberation war to a negotiated settlement on racial equality in the newly created Zimbabwe (121, 353). Conversely, he embarked on an ad hoc response to a Cold War battle in the Horn of Africa, resulting in an Ethiopia flush with victory over Somalia through the military aid of Cuba and a new diplomatic alliance with Moscow. Mitchell, however, claims that Carter's blunders in the Horn stemmed not from a dysfunctional cabinet or misplaced idealism, but from the fact that Carter "had a vision but lacked a clear ideology" (654). The juxtaposition of Carter's approaches in Africa shows that Carter was able to uphold his objectives when patient and strategic, but rather ineffective when situations required rapid reaction. In this vein, Mitchell contrasts negative depictions of Jimmy Carter by Gaddis Smith and Adam Clymer and builds on the wave of recent scholarship – such as that of John Dumbrell and Donna Jackson – that reframe Carter as a competent and deliberate maker of foreign policy.

Mitchell also foregrounds Africa in Jimmy Carter's foreign policy agenda above more familiar situations in Iran or Afghanistan. Carter saw the strategic value in protecting U.S. interests in the Horn and knew he had to counter the communist threat in southern Africa. Mitchell breaks new ground in her inclusion of race in these decisions, weaving government documents and personal interviews to do such. She demonstrates that Carter – a southern progressive who lived through the civil rights movement – drew on personal experience to liken the Rhodesian liberation crisis to the U.S. civil rights struggle (23, 673-674). That, coupled with his realization that he could wage a Cold War battle in Rhodesia while simultaneously defending racial equality abroad, influenced how Carter viewed the majority rule crisis in southern Africa.

Despite these noteworthy accomplishments, Jimmy Carter in Africa is not without flaws. Mitchell largely neglects the pre-1975 relationship between the U.S. government and southern African states – an oversight that led to some misrepresentation. For example, Mitchell portrays Julius Nyerere as "a thorn in Washington's side since 1961" when the Tanzanian president had been a respected ally of President Kennedy (53). In addition, the author does not fully explore the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations' efforts to contend Soviet influence in Ethiopia, instead favoring the contention that Moscow supplied Ethiopia's military in the mid-1970s (374). Another drawback of this book is its size. Running 689 pages, it makes for a difficult read for anyone other than a specialist in U.S.-African relations or the Carter administration. There are several parts in the book where Mitchell unnecessarily delves into minutiae, such as in her lengthy discussion of Carter's presidential campaign. Mitchell also becomes repetitive, evident in her consistent rehashing of the link between Carter's southern roots and his views on race. Consequently, this book poses a challenge to anyone looking to implement it into undergraduate or graduate coursework.

Nancy Mitchell's Jimmy Carter in Africa makes a notable contribution to the historiography on President Carter and U.S.-African relations during the Cold War. The book reframes Carter as a Cold Warrior who actively conceptualized and implemented foreign policy. Furthermore, it centers race as a critical aspect of Cold War diplomacy and places Africa at the center of Carter's foreign policy. Despite its drawbacks, this book enhances our understanding of 1970s U.S. diplomacy and therefore, merits reading from any scholar of U.S. foreign relations of the era.

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