

Naval War College Review

Volume 73
Number 3 *Summer 2020*

Article 18

2020

The Final Act: The Helsinki Accords and the Transformation of the Cold War

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Recommended Citation

Sarantakes, Nicholas Evan and Morgan, Michael Cotey (2020) "The Final Act: The Helsinki Accords and the Transformation of the Cold War," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 73 : No. 3 , Article 18.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol73/iss3/18>

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less concerned with knowledge for its own sake—and at times more rough-hewn than their academic counterparts—were not always welcomed by pure academics, and vice versa.

Smith details how a powerful connection between the Navy's ever-increasing knowledge of the maritime environment and seagoing commerce was forged and strengthened from the beginning. Time (and safety) was money to merchant captains and the owners for whom they worked. Matthew Fontaine Maury's wind and current charts cut days or weeks from sailing times, and time saved was money earned. One of the book's illustrations—a whaling chart produced by the Navy and used extensively by the captains of Herman Melville's era—speaks to the cooperation between the commercial and military spheres. And whaling was not the only industry to have such close ties to the Navy; as underwater cables began to knit together continents and colonies, the requirement to map the topography of the deep ocean floor became more significant as the mechanisms to achieve this goal advanced.

As steam supplanted sail and Alfred Thayer Mahan's strategic insights grew to dominate naval thinking, charts became essential enablers of U.S. imperial ambitions. Using the Spanish-American War as a backdrop, Smith demonstrates how charts became tools of conquest. Spanish charts of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines were incomplete, and without accurate hydrographic information American naval commanders' difficulties increased. After victory in the Spanish-American War, accurate charts were vital in selecting the locations of future naval installations and coaling stations. The diligence

of U.S. hydrographers in accurately charting these waters is nowhere more apparent than in a comparison of prewar charts of Guantánamo Bay with those created after the American victory.

To Master the Boundless Sea also acknowledges the Naval War College's role in the development of naval hydrography and the evolution of the nautical chart into not only an aid to war but also a critical component of campaign and battle planning. Of particular note was the work of Captain William McCarty Little in bringing wargaming to Newport. Whereas Mahan articulated a strategic vision, McCarty Little's wargaming charts mapped ways of making that vision a strategic reality.

Smith fills a major niche in understanding the role of nautical charts, the people and organizations that created them, and how they all advanced scientific understanding and a larger American identity. *To Master the Boundless Sea* is a superb work that will reward the interested and discerning reader.

RICHARD J. NORTON



The Final Act: The Helsinki Accords and the Transformation of the Cold War, by Michael Cotey Morgan. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2018. 424 pages. \$35.

One of the bigger questions in history—right up there with why did the Roman Empire fall—is why did the Cold War end. This question becomes even more significant when one remembers that the United States and its allies defeated the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact without a direct, military confrontation. Other long-term strategic confrontations

did not end so well. There are many examples, but three will suffice: Athens versus Sparta generated the Peloponnesian War, Rome versus Carthage produced the Punic Wars, and Britain versus Germany resulted in World Wars I and II. As a result, the issues that Michael Morgan explores in *The Final Act* are rather large.

While historians will continue wrestling with the issue of why the Cold War ended, it is a testimony to the intellectual power that Morgan brings to bear that this book, in all likelihood, will remain *the* book on the final act of the Helsinki Accords for decades to come. Why? Both the depth and breadth of the research are nothing less than astonishing.

Morgan draws on material from fourteen archives in eight nations; this material, combined with published sources, is in nine different languages. There are 103 pages of notes for 258 pages of text. The writing also is quite impressive, with sections reminiscent of Barbara W. Tuchman's work; Morgan even invokes her book *The Guns of August* with a chapter entitled "The Pens of August." With that point made, some sections read as if a PhD dissertation committee wrote and rewrote some paragraphs until all the flavor was removed—which actually might have been the case. Fortunately, these passages are not frequent.

What does Morgan do with these strengths? The short answer: he looks at the accords of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe "in the round," examining the perspectives of powers large and small. After a series of crises in the 1960s that raised questions about the legitimacy of the Soviet Union, Leonid I. Brezhnev pushed for the conference, desiring Western European recognition of the post-1945 borders in Eastern Europe—which also would

constitute an acknowledgment of the validity of the Soviet system. The United States agreed to this gathering because it had suffered significantly in the 1960s from the trauma of Vietnam, which raised questions at home and abroad about the United States and its leadership in world affairs. While the Soviets pushed for the conference, the smaller states of Europe were the ones most eager to take part. The gathering granted them a voice, and in Morgan's narrative they often play key roles—for instance, in resolving diplomatic deadlocks.

Americans also were important, but more in support than in the lead. Presidents Richard M. Nixon and Gerald R. Ford both saw the gathering's potential. Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, on the other hand, did not believe in this diplomatic effort, and the best thing that can be said about his role is that he did not get in the way of its progress. American diplomats were good, and often bested their Soviet counterparts, but mainly because Brezhnev wanted to reach an agreement quickly, so he often compromised on issues involving personal freedoms, conflict resolution, and sovereignty, in ways that ended up working against the long-term interests of the Communist system. As Morgan notes (turning some issues upside down), "Human rights provided a weapon for fighting the Cold War, not an escape from it" (p. 6).

The most intellectually impressive part of the book is the epilogue. Morgan looks at the legacy of Helsinki on bringing about the end of the Cold War. What gives this chapter power is that he uses the words of the defeated. Using source after source from the other side of the Iron Curtain, he shows how the final act changed Communist policies and behavior.

Wars and conflicts end only when the defeated accept their loss, and this section shows how new thinking developed in the capitals of the Warsaw Pact.

Even with all these points made, not everyone will accept Morgan's arguments. The crisis of legitimacy in the 1960s certainly explains Soviet actions, but the decade was not identical for the United States. The constitutional legitimacy of the U.S. government and American leadership of its alliance were different

and much, much, much stronger than those of the Soviets. Despite all the persuasive power of the epilogue, it comes up a bit short of convincing its readers, even if Morgan is right . . . probably.

In the end, though, most historians are lucky if they produce one book that endures; odds are that Morgan has done that. Expect to see this book in print for five or six decades—it is that good.

NICHOLAS EVAN SARANTAKES

OUR REVIEWERS

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