

keeping and democracy building in the aftermath of terrible trauma.

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Sarah B. Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network* (Cambridge University Press: 2011) 293 pages, ISBN 978-1-107-00105-3.

What caused the end of the Cold War and how can we explain the dramatic growth of human rights politics since the 1970s? Both questions have animated historical inquiries into international relations in recent years, and for good reason. Few issues have cast a larger shadow on the recent geopolitical stage than the Cold War's demise and the global proliferation of human rights discourses. These questions are often tackled separately, however, or at least with considerable priority accorded to one over the other. Sarah Snyder fuses them together to compelling effect in *Human Rights Activism and the*

End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network. This well researched, clearly written, and capably argued study is a welcome contribution to scholarship examining the history of Cold War diplomacy, international human rights, political development, and global civil society. While appropriate for upper division undergraduates and graduate students, seasoned scholars will also find much to contemplate in the book's framework, assertions, and evidence.

Snyder places human rights advocacy squarely in the center of existing explanations for the end of the Cold War. The book examines what has come to be known as "the Helsinki effect," a term popularized by political scientist Daniel C. Thomas that references the broad geopolitical and human impact of a cluster of international conferences, agreements, and monitoring activities begun in 1972 by the Soviet bloc, Western Europe, and the United States. The first chapter demonstrates how the core agreement in the process, the 1975 Helsinki Final Act (or Accords), aimed to balance Soviet desires for recognition of secure post-World War II borders in Eastern and Central Europe with Western demands that human rights be respected by the Soviet bloc. The Soviets were initially eager about the process while the Ford administration involved itself more warily, positions that Snyder shows would nearly reverse themselves as the human rights provisions in the agreements grew teeth. Critical to the Accords' long-term influence, according to Snyder, was the guarantee that conferences would be held regularly among

to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General; and, of course, Senator Gordon McIntosh of Western Australia, a thorn in the side of successive Australian governments as they ran interference for Indonesia. With apologies to many deserving others, this is their footnote.

the signatory states to track compliance. Snyder argues that this monitoring apparatus nurtured a robust transnational network of human rights advocates from Moscow to Washington DC and places in between. The middle chapters of *Human Rights Activism* examine with impressive detail the emergence and growth of this "Helsinki Network." They reveal the roles played by the network's key participants, including members of the United States Congress, the Carter and Reagan Administrations, the US-based Helsinki Watch, the Moscow Helsinki Group, various other human rights activists throughout Eastern and Western Europe, and the umbrella entity that helped to formally unite them all: the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights. Snyder argues that this network, in turn, proved critical in putting human rights squarely on the foreign policy agendas of both the United States and the Soviet Union beginning in the mid-1970s and mid-1980s respectively.

Drawing on research conducted in North America, the United Kingdom, and former Soviet satellite states, Snyder provides a textured, nuanced account that strives to supplement more than supplant dominant explanations for the end of the Cold War. As marshaled by historians and political scientists—including John Lewis Gaddis, Constantine Pleshakov, Archie Brown, Charles Maier, and Jeffrey Checkel—the most common explanations for the disintegration of the Soviet empire have emphasized material factors such as overstretched militaries and economic stagnation, "great man" approaches that highlight the outsized influence of visionary leaders, the regional effects of Soviet bloc dissidence, and ideological paradigms that attribute transformative force to the growth of liberal precepts in the East. Snyder generally accepts each of these explanations so far as they go, but

argues that the story is woefully incomplete without attending to the remarkable activities and impact of the Helsinki Network. Diverse yet interconnected webs of transnational human rights advocacy are the keys to Snyder's rendering.

Particularly noteworthy is Snyder's critical analysis of the impact that human rights discourses had on state leaders, an issue she deftly engages in the book's final two chapters. Snyder amasses considerable evidence—both direct and indirect, as she puts it—to argue that the activities of the Helsinki Network ultimately convinced such reform-minded Soviet leaders as Mikhail Gorbachev and Eduard Shevardnadze that the Soviet Union could only continue eschewing the human rights components of the Helsinki Accords at the country's peril. Snyder differentiates her approach, however, from those who have attributed the end of the Cold War to Soviet leaders having undergone an ethical change of heart over human rights. Even while arguing that such leaders' perceptions of human rights did indeed matter, Snyder suggests that this "power of personality" argument has its limits. She asserts that available evidence may prevent us, for instance, from knowing absolutely whether Mikhail Gorbachev had a deeply *personal* human rights epiphany in the 1980s that contributed to his promotion of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. But Snyder insists that her research demonstrates without doubt that the activities of the Helsinki Network persuaded Gorbachev and other Soviet leaders to see that the acceptance of some human rights measures had become part of the Soviet Union's *national interest*. Snyder suggests that whether they personally approved of this development or not is not only more difficult to prove, but less important than the fact that the Helsinki process succeeded in tying leaders' perceptions of Soviet prestige,

trade, internal stability, and international security to human rights promotion.

Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War is not the first sustained attempt to emphasize the role of human rights in bringing the Cold War to an end. Nor is it the first to highlight the role of the Helsinki process in this development. Readers will find Snyder's general focus similar to that of Daniel Thomas' fine study from 2001, *Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of Communism*. Both works insist that the human rights components of the 1975 Final Act and their attendant monitoring mechanisms are critical for understanding the end of the Cold War. The two books' foci and arguments differ, however, in two principal ways. As a political scientist, Thomas concentrated on assessing the utility of differing theoretical approaches for understanding international relations (especially constructivism, liberalism, and realism), whereas the historian Snyder has different sets of disciplinary priorities. More substantively, Thomas argues that it was the human rights *norms* embedded in and fueled by the Helsinki Accords that created the necessary environment for transnational human rights advocacy to flourish and for Soviet reformers like Gorbachev to envision a new future.

Snyder subtly flips the script, arguing that the diverse *activities* of the Helsinki Network produced an environment where human rights *principles* could gain traction more than the other way around. She opines that while the influence of human rights norms on reform-minded Soviet leaders was important, the power of these norms "in explaining the transformation of Eastern Europe has at times

been overemphasized."¹ Indeed, the various human rights advocates involved with the Helsinki process were often not even "directly inspired by international norms," but rather by locally oriented issues that only became associated with the idea of universal human rights once they entered the emerging conversation of others in the network.² The distinction that Snyder mobilizes between norms and activity may seem small, but it is important. The book's approach—and the extensive empirical research buttressing it—encourages us to conceive of human rights as a deeply contingent, historical phenomenon, one produced and reproduced more through the disparate ground-level actions of myriad human agents than in a relatively stable environment structured by norms.

In addition to the insights it provides on the geopolitics of the late Cold War period, *Human Rights Activism* makes a welcome, if somewhat less explicit, contribution to the broader historiography on international human rights. It joins an emerging body of literature charting the dramatic emergence of a widespread human rights politics beginning in the 1970s. An "origins" question has emerged through some of this literature in recent years, fueling a lively and fascinating debate animated by Samuel Moyn, Elizabeth Borgwardt, Kenneth Cmiel, Lynn Hunt, Mark Mazower, and others over whether a "human rights era" began only in the 1970s or at various moments prior. Snyder stays largely to the side of these discussions on origins. She instead trains her analytical sights on building a textured account of how domestic and transnational human rights politics operated in the 1970s, 1980s, and

1. SARAH B. SNYDER, *HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISM AND THE END OF THE COLD WAR: A TRANSNATIONAL HISTORY OF THE HELSINKI NETWORK* 12, n.21 (2011).

2. *Id.* at 12–13, n.21.

early 1990s, as well as the profoundly important legacy they bequeathed to the post Cold War world.

The book does, however, engage the “origins” question in a rather muted, but nonetheless fruitful and potentially provocative way. Snyder suggests that the monitoring mechanisms built into the 1975 agreements had no real analog in previous international attempts to promote human rights. Signatory states to the Final Act committed themselves to meet periodically to gauge states’ compliance with the terms of the Accords. This created, in Snyder’s reckoning, a new milieu where human rights concerns became grafted onto the formalities of international diplomacy. From this grew the transformational Helsinki Network, and thus, a regime of transnational human rights promotion that was both more influential and widely representative than anything witnessed previously. One hopes that Snyder’s framing of this issue challenges others to take fresh views on earlier human rights agreements and institutions that also boasted mechanisms—whether deemed as effective as the Helsinki Accords or not—for deliberation and compliance. These might include the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (est. 1946), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the European and Inter-American Commissions on Human Rights (est. 1954 and 1959), and the Tehran Conference on Human Rights (1968). Why, Snyder prompts us to ask, did these earlier phenomena not produce the same flurry of transformational activity as the Helsinki Final Act in the realms of state diplomacy, interstate organization, or global civil society? The kinds of conversations sparked by this question will bequeath a richer understanding of international human rights in the modern era just as other aspects of *Human Rights Activism*

will surely animate fruitful discussions about the Cold War and transnational political movements in the coming years.

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Elaine Thomas, *Immigration, Islam and the Politics of Belonging in France* (University of Pennsylvania Press 2012), 314 pages, ISBN 978-0-8122-4332-1.

This is an insightful and thought-provoking book about citizenship which will have wide scholarly appeal. The title suggests a narrow focus on immigration, Islam, and belonging in France; however, this does not do justice to the ambitious scope of the work. Thomas’s focus is not just on France, but rather on conceptualizing citizenship and belonging in an increasingly diverse and complex world. For the most part, she does a very good job of presenting a new typology of citizenship and applying this to the French case.

The typology is developed in chapter two, and is referred to throughout the book in relation to the case studies explored. This is, therefore, a crucial chapter, and Thomas provides a suitably nuanced account of some very complex issues. What emerges, on the basis of ordinary language analysis, is a framework of five membership types which moves the debate about citizenship far beyond the traditional ethnic and civic dichotomy. It builds on the many critiques of this approach to offer a robust and detailed alternative, which is then used