

1980

## Final Harbor

Hugh G. Nott

Harry Homewood

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

---

### Recommended Citation

Nott, Hugh G. and Homewood, Harry (1980) "Final Harbor," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 33 : No. 5 , Article 18.  
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol33/iss5/18>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu](mailto:repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu).

## PROFESSIONAL READING 107

Modelski draws several other important conclusions in his analysis, both authors seem to agree that the predominance of the United States has begun its decline in an increasingly complex (and dangerous) global system. The final selection in part I appears to be a bone thrown to the "number-cruncher" school of political analysis. While Ms. Critchley admits to developing only a "highly simplified exposition," her attempt to define strategic value (in this case using oil as an example) in terms of worth qualified into a 64-cell matrix, ultimately demonstrates that "In terms of oil, Saudi Arabia is much more important to the United States than Iran or China." This selection adds little to the book.

Part II, which makes up nearly half the book, deals with a wide range of selected issues in contemporary American security policy. Joseph Coffey leads off the section with a brief discussion of the cruise missile, cleverly showing the distinction between the military capabilities of the weapon itself and its psychological effects on the NATO alliance. Similarly, Steve Canby develops a strong case for his interesting thesis that the main problem besetting NATO's military capabilities is *not* one of resources, but rather of conception and organization. Canby's thesis is certainly controversial, if not downright iconoclastic, but deserves consideration. Larry Korb discusses some of the problems of bureaucratic politics and the budgetary process at the macro level, while Judith Reppy focuses a little more sharply on the budget as it affects military research and development. Together they illustrate important relationships of budgetary politics, force modernization, and arms control.

Part III is reserved for four selections that deal with "approaches" to the use and control of force. Here the book shifts to a much more theoretical plane of discussion that ranges from

psychological considerations to the use of game theory in the analysis and explanation of arms control situations. It is in two of the articles in part III, by authors George Quester and Patrick Morgan, that this reviewer reaped the rewards of patience and persistence. Quester, in a lesson on "how to avoid isometric exercises," cautions against posing strategic issues in ways that mislead decisionmakers into reacting to their own concerns rather than to the behavior of likely adversaries—a condition of "fearing fear itself." Using the issue of missile accuracy as an example, he shatters the myth and conventional wisdom concerning the effects of decreasing circular error probable (CEP), and even makes an interesting case for the proposition that missile accuracy (and reliability) might indeed be *decreasing!* Morgan contends that despite our intense interest in arms control, we have little or no theoretical grasp of the subject. He does an excellent job of providing a conceptual framework for evaluating the prospects for arms control today, and stipulates a set of preconditions for future arms control agreements.

The individual theses, contentions and conclusions contained in the selections that make up *American Security Policy and Policy-Making* will certainly not appeal to all readers. Yet in the aggregate they provide useful insight into a much-muddled subject. The editors' purpose was to produce a book that contributes "to the lowering, if not the dismantling, of . . . conceptual and institutional barriers" to the understanding of the American security policy process. They succeeded.

DALLACE MEEHAN  
Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Air Force

Homewood, Harry. *Final Harbor*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980. 371pp.

Only rarely, for reasons of predictable professional military officer interest,

## 108 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

are works of fiction addressed in this section of the *Naval War College Review*. World War II submarine novels, however, often fall into this category simply because the corresponding nonfiction literature is so sparse. After one has read Roscoe's comprehensive *U.S. Submarine Operations in World War II* and Adm. Charles Lockwood's personal account, *Submarine*, of the wartime Pacific Fleet undersea force he commanded, there isn't much left. Accordingly, the fictional contributions of authors like Ned Beach, Clay Blair, and now Harry Homewood, have added much to our understanding of that era's submariners who repeatedly drove their bold offensive patrols into enemy waters and, in doing so, both inflicted and sustained awesome losses. In a very real sense, although on a much smaller canvas, World War II submarine novelists have added to history in the same way Herman Wouk has fleshed out the entire naval conflict of that period.

Harry Homewood's *Final Harbor* is clearly one of the best of such World War II submarine books. Like Beach, a famous exec and skipper, and Blair, an enlisted man at that time, Homewood was there. As a veteran of 11 war patrols, Homewood has clearly retained the sight, sound, feel, and flavor of submarines and submariners in their tense, lonely, and hazardous war. The clarity of Homewood's memory, even after 40 years, is perhaps indicative of the intensity of experience he and others like him shared.

Everything is here—the symbology of ships and men, the casual references to real people and real events, the early torpedo problems, the acquisition of tactical expertise, and the binary realities of good-bad, on-off, up-down, and right-wrong. The author has wisely chosen to limit his character development to a few protagonists but even these, a handful of officers and enlisted

men, seem oddly two-dimensional. Their harshly demanding lives at sea and their personal lives ashore, although parallel, never quite meet or blend. This separation, of course, is not untypical of some military professionals but it is hardly universal and many readers will be troubled by the standard personalities.

Much of Homewood's novel will be familiar. His story-telling techniques are conventional and the men and women who inhabit his novel fit popularized molds. Nevertheless, as any submariner will recognize, he has captured the essence of a largely unique world dominated by machinery and danger where competence is the most highly valued personal quality and, simultaneously, the only key to survival.

This is the kind of book that publishers formerly described as a "rousing good yarn." It also offers a first-rate nostalgia trip for those still-living authentic submarine heroes, most now in their sixties, who lived through those grim 1941-45 years when risk and fear were shipmates on every run and "overdue, presumed lost" was the silent service's terse acknowledgment that another 80 brave young men had paid for America's ultimate victory in the Pacific.

*Final Harbor*, however, is recommended for others. The story of U.S.S. *Mako* and its crew is somehow reassuring in recreating a simpler more elemental time when the question of life or death made other issues trivial and courage and sacrifice were celebrations of human stature.

HUGH G. NOTT  
Naval War College

International Institute for Strategic Studies. *The Military Balance 1979-1980* and *Strategic Survey 1978*. London 1979. 199pp. and 140pp. respectively.

Those familiar with these annual publications of the International Institute for Strategic Studies will not be