

1990

## War and Peace in the Nuclear Age

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John Newhouse

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### Recommended Citation

Galdorisi, George and Newhouse, John (1990) "War and Peace in the Nuclear Age," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 43 : No. 4 , Article 20.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol43/iss4/20>

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tunately for Mr. Mazarr, Hugh Thomas' encyclopedic *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom* is, and will be for some time, the reigning chronological narrative of Cuban history, weighing in at a truly impressive 1,696 pages. (To his credit, the author generously quotes from and refers to Thomas' important work.) Of course, Mr. Thomas devoted a separate work of 771 pages to the Cuban revolution itself, a topic to which Mr. Mazarr devotes less than one-tenth of his book, in an apparent desire not to stray too far from his timeline by actually analyzing something.

It is probably unfortunate that the author was unable either to limit his subject matter adequately or devote the necessary time to interpret properly the subject matter he decided to include. In those rare instances when he does comment rather than simply chronicle events, he provides generally balanced and non-ideologic insight, a difficult feat with a topic of this volatility. For example, his discussion of the root causes of the revolution and the nature by which Castro radicalized it provides a fairly complete review of the major positions in this continuing debate. But in this portion of the book where the author is arguably at his best, he emerges as something of a synthesizer, summarizing the literature without really contributing to it.

The concluding chapter expresses Mr. Mazarr's hope that "the reader has not discerned any blatant political bias, or any attempt to foster one

particular view of Cuban or American policy." Small chance of this. Indeed, the author scrupulously avoids exposing any particular viewpoint at all. In a literature deeply tainted by the arresting hues of the political extremes, this is the book's sole achievement. However, one is left with simply an almanac of Cuban-American history, supported by prose that does little more than summarize the works of others. If one desires an encyclopedic reference of Cuban-American relations, this book provides that, but there are better available. If it is historical analysis the reader is after, look elsewhere.

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Newhouse, John. *War and Peace in the Nuclear Age*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989. 427pp. \$22.95

*War and Peace in the Nuclear Age* is a companion book to the highly acclaimed, thirteen-part television series of the same name, produced by the Public Broadcasting System. It is both a historical work that chronicles the development of nuclear power from its earliest days, and a strategic guide that offers insight into dealing with nuclear power. Organized into thirteen chapters and an epilogue, with extensive notes and an outstanding bibliography, the book is doubly useful as both a fast-paced narrative and a significant

reference work for issues in the nuclear age.

It is difficult to imagine anyone more qualified to write this book than John Newhouse. He was a staff member of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and served as counselor and subsequently as assistant director of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency in the mid and late 1970s. He was intimately involved with America's maturation as a nuclear power and the efforts to develop a coherent nuclear policy. As a staff writer for *The New Yorker* and a guest-scholar at the Brookings Institution, he has had unique access to many who have been, and are, key decision makers in the United States. Additionally, he has had access to newly released documents and has conducted exhaustive research on nuclear issues.

It is impossible, in any short review, to capture the essence of the entertaining and thought-provoking narrative that Newhouse presents. He relates a fascinating account of world events that is much deeper than a mere recounting of headlines. He manages to put events into context and focus. His examination of successive presidential administrations offers insight into why each president and his advisors were, or were not, equipped to deal with the awesome nuclear issues. Throughout this fast-moving account, Newhouse explains how the superpower struggle for strategic supremacy and the ongoing internal conflict over

methods of managing nuclear weapons has had a profound impact on international events for the past half century, such as how nuclear weapons have never been used and how they have altered relations between allies and enemies.

It is only after much reflection that the reader realizes how much he has learned about the extraordinary impact that nuclear weapons have had on world history, intergovernmental relations and our day-to-day lives.

This is a wonderful book. It is easy to see why the PBS documentary of the same name was so critically acclaimed. It has the excitement of a "whodunit" and yet is able to serve as an excellent historical work chronicling the past five decades. Its weakness, if it can be called one, is that it covers some important subjects in little depth. It could easily have been twice as long.

*War and Peace in the Nuclear Age* is a valuable resource book for the national security community. It offers policymakers valuable acumen into how the awesome weapons that we live with today have affected world events, and in so doing may enable them to more effectively deal with these weapons tomorrow.

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McInnes, Colin and Sheffield, G.D., eds. *Warfare in the Twentieth Century: Theory and Practice*. Lon-