"14 characteristics" are drawn in a rather arbitrary manner (interestingly, the micro dimension is nonexistent here: yet, don't individuals display complex belief systems?). Fourthly, a similar reservation is directed toward the list of "structural factors" sustaining conflict (Chapter 9). What is a structure and how does one select its components? These concerns cannot simply remain at the level of assumptions.

Power and Conflict is a difficult book. It is not light reading, it is almost purely theoretical, and heavily deductive (though inductive insights inevitably emerge). It will invite more criticism and debate; for this reason, it must be considered as a significant addition to the field of conflict studies.

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Melko, Matthew. *Peace in Our Time*. New York: Paragon House, 1990.

The title of this book recalls Neville Chamberlain's premature evaluation of the consequences of his meeting in Munich in 1938. Matthew Melko points out that Chamberlain actually said "I believe it is peace for our time." Yet the author uses the popular version of the discredited phrase to signal the reader that this is a book which challenges popular assumptions about the origins of peace and war.

Melko argues that, in fact, there is peace in our time, but that it is limited in three ways. *Peace* is conceived here not as a state of perfect harmony, but as the relative and imperfect "absence of physical violence." It is *our* peace in that is not enjoyed by all, but resides in the Western World — Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand. Russia may or may not continue to share in the peace of the West, according to Melko, and East Asia may be in the early stages of its own long period of peace. The current peace is also limited in *time*, but its duration may be longer than many would expect. Melko confidently predicts that the period of peace which commenced after World War II will extend another six to ten decades more, providing a breathing space during which it may be possible to address the serious problems which beset the world. He interprets modern history in a "civilizational perspective" which draws on the writings of Oswald Spengler, Arnold Toynbee, Carroll Quigley and others. These authors share the view that civilizations go through a series of predictable periods.

Melko undertakes three major tasks throughout the book. I will consider each in turn. First, he presents data on the incidence and intensity of war to show the existence of cycles of peace and general war over the last five

centuries of Western history. Since the late fifteenth century he identifies four ages of relative peace, each of which endured for at least a century, and each of which was followed by three decades of crisis and war: the Age of Reformation followed by the Thirty Years War; the Baroque Age followed by the Napoleonic Wars, and the Victorian Age followed by the two World Wars. If the "Present Age" is similar to the four previous normal periods, it will persist until the late twenty-first century or the early twenty-second century. This is the central hunch of the book.

Melko measures the dimensions of war and peace in the West (Europe and North America only) by determining the average annual number of war deaths per 100,000 population for each normal period, and for each crisis period. (p. 56) This is an original and fruitful approach not found in most standard quantitative studies of the patterns of war. His data do not extend to the first historical cycle, but both the late Baroque Age and the Victorian Age experienced 7.5 annual war deaths per 100,000. This is below the annual homicide rate for the United States in the 1980s. For the Napoleonic Wars and the World Wars, by contrast, this indicator was 47.2 and 219.8 respectively. The period since 1946 has been exceptionally peaceful by this measure, with a rate of only 0.2 annual war deaths per 100,000 in Europe and North America. These simple measures seem to indicate a similarity between the post-World War II period and the Victorian and Baroque Ages. However, the exceptionally low rate of war deaths for the current period raises the question whether it is unique in some way, requiring special explanation. Melko does not address this possibility.

In the second major task of the book, Melko suggests an explanation of these cycles which can justify his predictions. It is one thing to observe the existence of peaceful periods in the past, and quite another to predict the length of the current peace. To make that leap with confidence would require an explanation which can account for the length of the previous normal periods. Here the analysis falls somewhat short of its ambitions. Melko discusses several factors which influence the length of a normal phase, including "the inherent stability of a particular balance of power, the opportunities for new powers to emerge, the given capacities of leadership at the time, and possibly the power of the outlook of the time." (p. 15) He is unable to say whether the decisive factor is the rise of powerful states to challenge the status quo, or a shift in cultural outlook which renders normal political processes ineffectual. Finally he admits, "This is not an adequate explanation." (p. 15) On what foundation, then, can confidence be based that the present age is at least six decades away from breakdown into global war? What remains is the simple historical analogy that past normal periods preserved for between ten and fourteen decades, so our present peace may endure as long.

Melko directly challenges the widely held view that peace has been maintained since 1945 through nuclear deterrence. In an original and effective chapter he suggests, "It may be that nuclear weapons neither preserve peace nor cause war, because the times are already peaceful." (p. 31) Indeed, the book can be read as a chide and a challenge to those in both the national

security community and the peace movement who take nuclear weapons too seriously.

Other contemporary scholars have observed cycles of war and peace among the great powers in the West, and have elaborated historical-structural theories to explain them. One would welcome a comparison of Melko's civilizationist approach with, for example, the "long cycle" literature which explores successive periods of global order each maintained by a dominant world power.

Much of the book, especially the final two chapters, is really a wide-ranging commentary on contemporary history and social life in light of the *possibility* that we in the West may be living in another long, normal period of peace, and that we may be in a cultural transition to the "Relational Age." This is the third major task which Melko undertakes. This part of the book is full of trenchant observations, outrageous generalizations, and frustratingly brief forays into a wide range of global, national and personal issues.

One of Melko's intentions is to offer a reasoned exhortation, especially to the young, that the future is open-ended to a limited but vital extent. There is nothing in the history or nature of humanity which either guarantees or forecloses the possibility that we will solve the nuclear, ecological, or poverty problems before the next crisis period arrives. But there is time — time to work, to experiment, and to wait for solutions to emerge which are not yet visible to us. For those who worry about emerging global catastrophes, Melko the civilizationalist advises, "It is best to take life one century at a time." (p. 178)

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