

Herman Kahn

Futurist

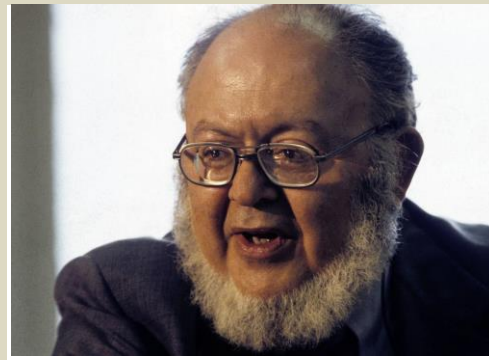
“Herman Kahn was a founder of the Hudson Institute and one of the preeminent futurists of the latter part of the twentieth century. He originally came to prominence as a military strategist and systems theorist while employed at the RAND Corporation.” [Wikipedia](#)

The reason for featuring Herman Kahn and vicissitudes of the long-past Cold War in **CharacterTowns.org** is to illustrate the importance and sophistication of strategic planning. He also demonstrates that there are people outside the planning profession who can be instrumental in our thought processes.

Mr. Kahn, a very controversial figure, advised the highest public officials about matters of global importance. His preparation, methods and publications are great examples of the rigors of strategy that can and should be applied to planning cities. His work on scenario planning along with the work of Peter Schwartz a generation later presents a way of thinking and analyzing situations that is instructive. *We can all study the masters of strategic thinking.*

More from Wikipedia...“Kahn's major contributions were the several strategies he developed during the [Cold War](#) to contemplate "the unthinkable" – namely, [nuclear warfare](#) – by using applications of [game theory](#). Kahn is often cited (with [Pierre Wack](#)) as a father of [scenario planning](#).”

Illustrating his thought process...“During the mid-1950s, the [Eisenhower administration](#)'s prevailing nuclear strategy had been one of 'massive retaliation'. Consequently, the United States had no choice but to proclaim that its response to any Soviet aggression anywhere would be a nuclear attack. Kahn considered this theory untenable because it was crude and potentially destabilizing.”



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Born: February 15, 1922, [Bayonne, NJ](#)

Died: July 7, 1983, [Chappaqua, NY](#)

Education: [University of California, Los Angeles](#), [California Institute of Technology](#)

He became known for analyzing the likely consequences of [nuclear war](#) and recommending ways to improve survivability, making him one of three historical inspirations for the title character of [Stanley Kubrick](#)'s classic [black comedy](#) film satire [Dr. Strangelove](#).^[1] His theories contributed heavily to the development of the [nuclear strategy](#) of the [United States](#).

LINK: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herman_Kahn

He argued that New-Look theory invited nuclear attack by providing the [Soviet Union](#) with an incentive to precede any [conventional](#) localized military action somewhere in the world with a nuclear attack on U.S. bomber bases, thereby eliminating the Americans' nuclear threat immediately and forcing the United States into the land war it sought to avoid.

“In 1960, as Cold War tensions were near their peak following the [Sputnik crisis](#) and amidst talk of a widening "[missile gap](#)" between the United States and the Soviet Union, Kahn published [On Thermonuclear War](#), the title of which clearly alluded to [On War](#), the classic 19th-century treatise by the German military strategist [Carl von Clausewitz](#).”

Vision begets strategy which begets actions.