

2004

Inevitable Surprises: Thinking Ahead in a Time of Turbulence,

Frank Hoffman

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Recommended Citation

Hoffman, Frank (2004) "Inevitable Surprises: Thinking Ahead in a Time of Turbulence," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 57 : No. 3 , Article 14.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol57/iss3/14>

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BOOK REVIEWS

HOW TO AVOID SUDDEN SHOCK

Schwartz, Peter. *Inevitable Surprises: Thinking Ahead in a Time of Turbulence*. New York: Gotham, 2003. 245pp. \$27

The intelligence community is getting a bad rap these days as it attempts to help policy makers weather the myriad national security challenges in the Age of Disruption. The controversy over weapons of mass destruction and protracted post-conflict insurgency in Iraq are only two incidents in a series of surprises. Whether it is the demise of the Soviet Union, economic collapses in Southeast Asia, the development of nuclear weapons in India and Pakistan, North Korea's nuclear and missile programs, terrorist attacks on the United States, or the subsequent anthrax attacks, being taken by surprise is becoming the norm.

Peter Schwartz, however, was not knocked for a loop by many of these events—in some cases he predicted them. Schwartz is an expert at avoiding surprises. Starting with his work with Royal Shell in the 1970s, his efforts with the Pentagon's eighty-year-old futurist and director of the Office of Net Assessment, Andrew Marshall, and the U.S. National Security Commission in the last decade, up to his present consulting work with the Global Business Network,

Schwartz has made a career out of helping clients avoid strategic surprises. He does not necessarily make forecasts, but he does predict that denial, defensiveness, and ignorance are the principal preceptors for sudden shock.

Schwartz's specialty is researching the innumerable drivers and wild cards in our environment from which he can craft scenarios that will help strategic planners and decision makers anticipate crises well before they happen. He is no stranger to naval readers, who will be familiar with his *The Art of the Long View: Planning for the Future in an Uncertain World* (Currency, 1991), once required reading at the Naval War College. In *Inevitable Surprises*, Schwartz points out that we will face numerous sharp jolts or major discontinuities in political, military, and economic areas. "If anything," he notes, "there will be more, not fewer, surprises in the future, and they will all be interconnected."

These interconnected surprises, which Schwartz calls discontinuities, will bring about a different world, one in which the rules of the game are fundamentally altered. The critical value of

this work is the author's belief that many of these discontinuities have their roots in ongoing trends and that we can anticipate them. By realizing what today's driving forces are, we can alter our perception about today's emerging realities, anticipate the consequences, and avoid surprise.

Schwartz offers a simple process for thinking anew and avoiding major shocks. The first step is to pay attention and identify and monitor the driving forces that influence tomorrow's world, get ahead of the so-called inevitable surprises, and prepare for them. The second step is to remove ourselves from the rigid mental paradigms about what is fixed and what can be changed in the landscape. The final step is to envision new strategies for dealing with new circumstances.

Most of this book discusses macro-level factors in terms of social, economic, and technological change. Some of the discontinuities Schwartz deals with in chapter-length detail include: dramatic extension in human longevity based on improvements in medical science, with substantial influences on retirement, social institutions, and the political power of influential centenarians; a "great flood" of immigration with resultant social tensions in China, Europe, and the United States; continued economic growth in the developing world and a return to what Schwartz called the "long boom," predicated upon the enhanced productivity of the Information Age and the updated critical infrastructure that undergirds it; a series of inter-related breakthroughs in science and technology, especially nanotechnology, biomaterials, and regenerative medicine, quantum computers, and fuel cells; and a few environmental crises, including the

impact of global climate warming and the coming of a great plague.

Military professionals and policy analysts will be particularly interested in Schwartz's range of geopolitical scenarios. In one scenario, the European Union consolidates into an effective bloc and begins to challenge what it perceives as America the rogue superpower. China also grows in political and military muscle, and it too seeks to check the global dominance and influence of the United States. On the other extreme, Schwartz paints a scenario of American preeminence, including complete dominance of space with instant global strike. In this scenario, because the benefits of a benign superpower are shared, a quiet and sustained Pax Americana emerges.

Before anyone gets complacent about American preeminence, read chapter 5, in which the author details the dismal prospects of the near future. His "catalog of disorder" includes an updated version of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, beginning with terrorism, religious wars—including evangelical Christianity in Africa—criminal statehood in Mexico, ethnic conflict, and HIV/AIDS. Schwartz's grasp of the interrelated nature of many of these depressing transnational problems is masterful. His grim projections of such disorders are largely predetermined, thus inevitable and therefore troubling. These future flashpoints are all too rarely identified as issues in the national security community until U.S. military forces are dispatched to provide some form of stability.

Inevitable Surprises is well worth anyone's time, as long as the reader understands that predicting is like planning—it is not the prediction or the plan itself

that is important but the diligent process of identifying drivers and developing scenarios that is invaluable. To paraphrase Helmuth von Moltke, no forecast survives contact with reality; good forecasters, like good planners, excel because they have gone through the rigorous intellectual process of examining the mental geography of a problem and anticipating the various contours and conditions that could arise. Read this book only if you would like to avoid being surprised by tomorrow's predictable discontinuities.

FRANK HOFFMAN
Center for Emerging Threats and Opportunities
Quantico, Virginia



Gray, Colin S. *The Sheriff: America's Defense of the New World Order*. Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 2004. 232pp. \$29.95

What role should the United States play in contemporary international politics? This question, or rather debate, began at the end of the Cold War and has never really concluded. It is a unique debate because while everyone disagrees on the question, all agree on its substance—the United States is the preeminent power in the world. People refer to the United States by various names: the lone superpower, the unipolar moment, Pax Americana, and from some of its erstwhile allies and former enemies, the unilateral hegemon or hyperpower. All such names try to capture the signal fact that America carries tremendous weight in world affairs, though for obvious reasons everyone interprets the implications differently. In the United States, two different groups dominate the contemporary

study of strategy: defense analysts and scholars of international security. In both fields most writers seem content to work on very specific problems. Defense analysts tend to emphasize what many have called the Revolution in Military Affairs or military transformation, while many in international security still contend for a theory-driven approach to international conflict. However, despite the fact that strategy bridges politics and war, defense analysts narrowly focus on the details of defense policies to the exclusion of the larger political issues. On the other hand, security theorists miss even the most basic issues pursuing theoretical elegance and, consequently, tend to write only for one another. Colin Gray avoids the pitfalls of each approach in *The Sheriff*.

Colin Gray is professor of international politics and strategic studies at the University of Reading, England, and senior fellow of the National Institute for Public Policy in Virginia. He has written extensively on strategy, geostrategy, and defense policy, and has long been connected to the defense establishments of the United States and NATO. Many of his former students are working in both places and in the academy today.

Gray begins this work by trying to understand some of the major issues facing the United States in the post-post-Cold War era and finishes by noting it is the little things that imperiled everyone's ability to see the larger picture. "I found that so much about the U.S. role in the world is coming into contention, that were I to devote most of my pages to military issues, as long intended, I would be analyzing secondary issues while leaving matters of first-order significance insufficiently addressed." It is