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# the rest: journal of politics and development

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*\* The surnames are listed in alphabetical order.*

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# BOOK REVIEW

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John C Hulsman

**To Dare More Boldly: The Audacious Story of Political Risk**

(Princeton University Press, 2019, xiv+ 323 Pages, \$29.95)

This discursive, interesting, insightful book draws on the claimed list of ten warnings underlying the Pythia's (never quite clear whether she is singular or plural) wisdom as the Oracle of Delphi in ancient Greece. These guidelines are offered as the basis of political risk analysis and by extension as the basis for wise policy. They are: "I. Know Thyself," "II. Nothing in Excess," and "III. Make a Pledge and Mischief is Nigh," and they are further broken down into 10 chapters covering know the world, your place, your geopolitics and game changers (under I); balance, lunatics, and chess players (under II); and the Las Vegas syndrome, the Promised Land fallacy, and Butterfly Effects (under III).

The chapters are illustrated by a number of historical vignettes, scattered non-chronologically and retrieved to fit the point, sometime personal and sometimes dealing with state policy. Hulsman summarizes his viewpoint at the end. The lessons add up to an engaged, conservative take on policy with penetrating judgments much like Cassandra (who was right much of her time).

Case 1 on "We are all at risk" uses the decline and fall of Rome, the role of Sejanus under Tiberias, the 2003 hot summer in France, the 2011 shame of the German defence minister, and the Ponzi scheme that is Europe's (and others') social security system to make the point, which is that modern societies are rotting from within. Jumping to mega-

guideline II, Case 2, congenial to the Pythia(s), is that so-called madness can contain wisdom, citing the Assassins and the Third Crusade, the Manson family and the police, and ISIS and Iraq, although the three madmen do not seem to be similar in their madness. Case 3 on chess players—actors with long term strategic goals—uses Machiavelli, Putin, Cesare Borgia and Pope Julius II, Washington and Hamilton as its motley cast, with the mottled lesson that somebody will finish at last if one wait long enough. Case 7 continues mega-guideline I of knowing your country's place by invoking Lord Salisbury and the Meiji *Genro* who sensed their respective country's future and acted to seize it. Case 9 examines the fate of the Beatles and the Rolling Stones to illustrate, somehow, how to factor in time in understanding the world about.

Case 4 lauds game changers against odds, like Adams, Jefferson and Churchill, with Hitler as the bad better, with Venice and Napoleon throw in in case 5 as not knowing when is enough, and Gettysburg and Vietnam in case 6 showing the folly of throwing good resources after bad. Case 8 follows the theme, here termed the Promised Land Fallacy for some reason, citing von Tirpitz and Khrushchev. Finally, case 10 from mega-guideline III discusses the Butterfly Effect as an ability to meet the unexpected shown by

Deng Xiaoping and Harold Macmillan and morphing into the challenge of China today.

As can be seen, the collections are diverse and often take a little shoehorning to fit. There is a lot of repetition in the text and incidents are revved to fit several cases as needed. Yet it is food for thought and right-headed in its risk analysis. It is good reading for college undergrad (assuming that they read) on up and enlightening afternoon fare for cooped up adults these days.

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